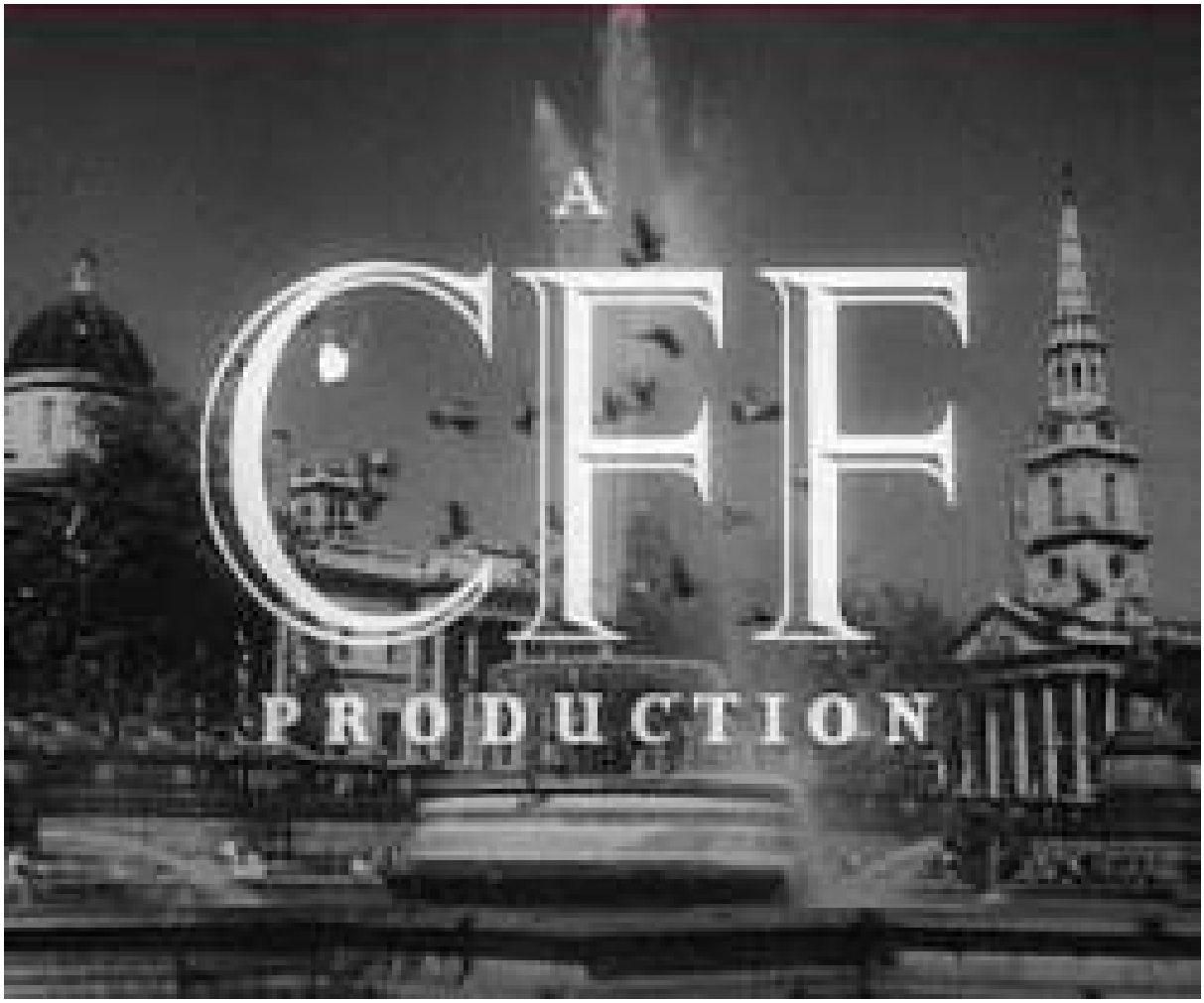
The Children's Film Foundation: an Investigation Into the Decline and Fall of a Unique British Institution



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Cover Illustration is a still taken from the introduction to the The Children's Film Foundation film *Cup Fever* (1965) produced by Century Film Productions Ltd.

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ABSTRACT

The Children's Film Foundation (the CFF) was a unique institution in British cinema history, created in 1952 to provide content solely for the Saturday matinee film shows and junior cinema clubs that were provided by cinema chains right up to the middle of the 1980s. It was non-profit making and funded by an annual grant from the industry, raised by a cinema seat tax - the Eady Levy.

The Foundation, which was the second largest producer of films in Britain, behind only Hammer Films, has had scant coverage by film historians. Only two titles have been published on the Foundation's history, and neither centred on the fight for survival and eventual demise of the CFF as the matinee market collapsed when the television stations targeted their traditional Saturday morning slots, and the British film industry floundered in the late 1970s.

This thesis builds on the previous works by Terry Staples and Robert Shail by utilising the unpublished CFF archive at the British Film Institute. I was lucky enough to be the only researcher to be allowed access to the archive for over thirty years, since the archive was donated to the BFI, and this research is the basis of this new history and analysis of this underreported area of British film history. I have ordered this thesis chronologically, foregrounding the story and development of the British children's film, to trace the trends that the CFF had to adapt to, as the mainstream cinema audience and in particular, the matinee audience on which the Foundation depended, shrank in the face of television domination. The early chapters deal with the history of the children's film and the forerunner to the CFF, Lord Rank's CEF. The research is then ordered by decade - tracing the development of the Foundation, with specific and relevant productions subject to close scrutiny. Use of film reviews, CFF documents from the archives and close inspection of the texts and storylines, along with detailed analysis of the personnel of the films, build to give more than a basic synopsis of the important films and serials. The final chapters are a detailed investigation into the efforts of the CFF board to ensure survival, again with previously unpublished documents from the archive giving a more complete picture of the intense pressures and the supreme efforts of the board to try to remain a producer of children's content, for cinema, or more pertinently, television.

The main research question is "could the CFF have been saved as a production entity as its main audience disappeared" and is addressed in the final chapters, centring on the board's reaction and their concerted efforts to remain in business, and an analysis of their 'co-production' deals with terrestrial television stations, which proved less than satisfactory and only served to hasten the Foundation's demise.

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation will investigate and discuss the reasons, both internal and external, which led to the decline and eventual demise of the Children's Film Foundation (henceforth the CFF), a unique movement in the western cinematic world, which produced drama and comedy features solely for an audience of under sixteens - specifically for the patrons of the Saturday matinee club circuit, from the 1950s until the mid 1980s. The main research question is "could the CFF have been saved as a production entity as its main audience disappeared" and is addressed in the final chapters, centring on the board's reaction and their concerted efforts to remain in business.

Included is a brief history of British children's film, collected from secondary sources, including published research by Terry Staples, Robert Shail and Noel Brown, along with newspapers and Internet resources, and is used to place the creation and development of the CFF in the context of British cinematic history. Also included is a chronological oversight of the trends, productions and audiences of Britain's mainstream cinema, in order to gauge the CFF's performance and reaction to trends and the changing attitudes as home cinema-going peaked and began a steep decline towards the beginning of the 1980s.

I began this journey of research by completing my final undergraduate thesis on the history of the CFF (as part of a History with Film and TV degree), and finding it a fascinating and basically under reported part of the British cinema story, decided to deliver an abstract for a PhD to the Midlands Three Cities body, which eventually funded my research based at Nottingham Trent University. Building on the work of Robert Shail, who has published the only history of the CFF in print, I was fortunate to be given access to the unpublished and previously unaccessed official CFF archive, held by the Reuben Library at the BFI. I am indebted to the librarians and staff of that institution for their patience and help given to me as I trawled through over one hundred bankers boxes of archives which greatly contributed to my unique research for this project. They delivered my requested boxes from the archive at Berkhamsted to the library at Southbank punctually and with good humour - making this massive research endeavour painless and enjoyable. Collating the mass of data and notes produced by this research was quite an effort, the logical way was to do it chronologically, so the chapters are ordered in this way, dedicating each chapter to a specific decade or period of time, opposed to using chapters committed to specific themes, such as cinematic productions, committee decisions, etc.

The journey has been exhausting, punctuated by personal loss and health problems, but has been ultimately satisfying, producing a body of work which I would like to feel adds to the studies of Shail, Staples and Brown in the field of British children's film. Also, I'd like to note that as these three authors have produced the only previous studies of this genre, and I have analysed and quoted these authors more than would be usual in the study of more 'popular' cinema genres.

As I mentioned earlier, I have ordered this thesis chronologically, foregrounding the story and development of the British children's film, to trace the trends that the CFF had to adapt to, as the mainstream cinema audience and in particular, the matinee audience on which the Foundation depended, shrank in the face of television domination. The early chapters deal with the history of the children's film and the forerunner to the CFF, Lord Rank's CEF. The research is then ordered by decade - tracing the development of the Foundation, with specific and relevant productions subject to close scrutiny. Use of film reviews, CFF documents from the archives and close inspection of the texts and storylines, along with detailed analysis of the personnel of the films, build to give more than a basic synopsis of the important films and serials. The final

chapters are a detailed investigation into the efforts of the CFF board to ensure survival, again with previously unpublished documents from the archive giving a more complete picture of the intense pressures and the supreme efforts of the board to try to remain a producer of children's content, for cinema, or more pertinently, television.

In order to understand what the CFF meant to previous generations of cinema-goers, I instigated a survey of older patrons in my local area - the East Midlands. Starting with a questionnaire handed out at more mature screenings ('Silver Screen' events and at screenings of *The Exotic Marigold Hotel, Judy* and *Fisherman's Friends*, etc.). Replies were followed up by interviews, the results of which are included in this thesis. This gave an important overview of recollections and experiences from my local area to compare with the national picture (usually London-centric) that other researchers have reported.

Tracing the history of the CFF through its productions is more than just a nostalgic exercise for the researcher. Because they were mostly filmed on location, you are treated to a potted history of Britain from 1952 to the mid 1980s. The changing landscape, from wasteland and bombsites to high rise flats and the spread of suburbia can be noted, and the relationships with and attitudes to adults and authority can be subtly traced as the decades roll on. Wearing my historian's hat, I have included references to the changing landscape and attitudes in general that the CFF reacted to and portrayed in their productions, along with the cinematic trends of the time that influenced their films. Raymond Williams suggests that however difficult it may be in practice, we have to try to see the process as a whole, and to relate our particular studies, if not explicitly at least by ultimate reference, to the actual and complex organisation. I have attempted to do this, and while the thesis is centred on the CFF as a cinematic producer, I have tried to ensure that the research is placed in the context of both a changing cinematic environment and a changing social background as Britain progressed through four decades of immense change.

LITERATURE REVIEW (PART I)

OPENING THE BOX: EXISTING RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

> "As I look back on the history of the British film industry, it seems to me that we have made three unique contributions to world cinema: the documentaries of the 1920s and 1930s, the Ealing comedies and the Children's Film Foundation." (Daily Mail film critic Margaret Hinxman, 1976)[1]

In 1976, the Daily Mail film critic Margaret Hinxman, a constant champion of the Children's Film Foundation in the daily press

, alongside her contributions to various CFF trade releases, made this observation placing the importance and uniqueness of the CFF within the context of British cinematic history. She followed up in 1979 with the comment "the Children's Film Foundation is one of the great, largely unsung achievements of the British film industry. *Electric Eskimo*, costing marginally less, I imagine, than the petty cash for *Superman*, is more fun and certainly more imaginative".[2]

However, the importance that Hinxman placed in the productions produced by the Foundation does not seem to have resonated with academic writers of British cinema history. Until very recently, little had been published specifically on the history and influence of the Children's Film Foundation, with most volumes covering the period of the Foundation's existence, offering only scant, if any, references to this unique arm of British cinematic production. The first detailed history of the Foundation was included in Terry Staples' *All Pals Together* (1997), his comprehensive study of British children's Saturday cinema clubs. In 2016, Noel Brown's *British Children's Cinema: From the Thief of Baghdad to Wallace and Gromit* included a chapter dedicated to the CFF, titled 'J. Arthur Rank, Saturday Morning Cinema', though running to only 25 pages of a total of over 300. It was not until later that year that Robert Shail published *The Children's Film Foundation: History and Legacy*, the only full academic work about the Foundation.

History of the Children's Film Foundation

Prior to 2016, the prime published source of reference for the Children's Film Foundation and Saturday Morning Cinema was Terry Staples' *All Pals Together*, a comprehensive history of British children's cinema and the Saturday children's matinee movement. Citing many interviews with both matinee attendees and industry insiders, it is both enlightening and fascinating. Obviously nostalgic, as such works tend to be, it offers an insight into the growth of and the difficulties of maintaining the matinees, which in many cases struggled to turn in a profit.

Staples infers it was the cinema chain owners who benevolently oversaw the matinees, in order to encourage new generations of cinema goers, and as a nod to Lord Reith's BBC's public service remit, "to inform, educate and entertain." However my research, informed by unique

[1] Quote from Terry Staples in *All Pals Together: The Story of Children's Cinema* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1997) p. 186

[2] Margaret Hinxman's Film Review of Electric Eskimo, Daily Mail, 6th April, 1979.

access to letters and memorandums held in the BFI archives 'special collection' will detail how the owners and managers were complicit in bringing down the Foundation. As the seventies ended many cinemas saw the trend for late night shows featuring horror and sexploitation/sex comedy movies as a profitable lifeline. However, running cinemas into the early hours of a Saturday morning led to staffing issues for the barely profitable matinees, inevitably resulting in the closure of even the better attended shows. Staples cites that due to ''falling audience numbers EMI, Rank and ABC could no longer justify the expense of running a Minor's office''[3] placing the blame on the demise of their Saturday clubs solely on a dwindling audience, an argument that will be explored with more explicit research into the decline of the High Street, the site of many traditional matinees, as independent grocers, butchers and bakers fell victim to the new out-of-town superstores, halting to a great extent the traditional Saturday morning shopping trip, and increased suburbanisation as town centre housing was cleared and new estates established. The cheaper urban housing that was home to many of the matinee regulars was now housing many immigrant families, and the changing attitudes of parents in regard to the safety of their children in the face of several high profile child abductions and murders resulted in more paternal restrictions on the child's freedom.

The introduction of the Hollywood blockbuster, the rise of the home video recorder and the targeting of the audience by the BBC and ATV television companies will also be investigated in an attempt to find out why pre-teens deserted the cinema in such high numbers in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Staples limits his coverage of the CFF's struggles for survival in the late seventies and early eighties into a single sentence; "While the prize giving (for the 1981 film *Friend or Foe*) was still going on, the Foundation concluded a lengthy series of negotiations with the various unions, and turned to face a multi-media future."[4] In contrast, my access to (until now, restricted) board minutes, accounts and letters to and from the CFF to government departments, cinema trade bodies, actors, directors, producers, writers, unions and television companies will be the basis of a detailed analysis of this period, highlighting the attempts made, and many frustrations experienced, by the board to maintain production of children's content in spite of decreasing outlets for their films in Britain. Staples also claims that only two films (*Friend or Foe* and *Tightrope to Terror*) recouped their production costs for the CFF, yet my research shows that by June 1979, the date of the last breakdown available for individual films on the CFF's directors report and accounts[5], five films and one series, the six episode *The Magnificent Six and a Half,* had accumulated revenue that exceeded their total production costs. A further omission in Staples work is any detailed analysis of the CFF's overseas revenue, given that he restricts himself to reports on several films that performed well overseas. Importantly, as the Foundation struggled with revenue as its home market decreased, I will detail the importance of the various overseas markets and their revenue in the Foundation's struggle for survival.

Noel Brown's chapter dedicated to the CFF in his *British Children's Cinema: From the Thief of Baghdad to Wallace and Gromit,* titled 'J. Arthur Rank, Saturday Morning Cinema' gives a concise but limited history of the Foundation, detailing Rank's influence, the importance of Mary

[3] Staples *All Pals Together* pp .236-7
[4] Staples in *All Pals Together* p. 238
[5] From Children's Film Foundation *Directors Report and Accounts*, June 30th, 1979, (appendix I, accessed February 2020)

Field in the CFF's initial years, and the Foundation's successes in the 1960s and early 1970s. However, he devotes less than a page to analysing its period of decline and demise, an area that I will deal with in particular detail. Brown's book is invaluable as a guide to British children's film in general, and helps place the importance of the CFF within the context of British film production. This, and his discussion on the question of a children's film genre will also be investigated later in this chapter. In his chapter citing the CFF, Brown states that "unlike Hollywood co-productions, which are forced to reflect international norms in pursuing a global audience, its (the CFFs) films unambiguously reflected and recapitulated British norms and values."[6] My research will show that in spite of the CFF productions having a particular sense of 'Britishness' to them, they were well received by the overseas market, with the results suggesting that children recognise the same problems, worries and fears no matter where in the world they are set.

Published in 2016, Robert Shail's *The Children's Film Foundation: History and Legacy* stands out as the major academic text on the Foundation. Dealing chronologically with the formation and history of the CFF, Shail provides a detailed study of the Foundation, with analysis of chosen film texts, interviews with major protagonists and audience surveys. Again, despite going into more detail than the previous authors, Shail gives only a general overview of the period of decline and demise, in his sub-chapter 'The Curtain Falls, 1979-86'. He comments "the most important factor providing fuel for those in government and the industry who favoured the closure of the CFF was the decline in the Saturday clubs".[7] No mention is made of the revenue being returned from overseas rentals, something that I will contend could have saved the Foundation, in spite of growing opposition from an industry which deemed servicing the home market as key.

He states in his first chapter "some of the Foundation's records still remain unexamined and awaiting full access but the materials currently available yield more than sufficient sources to construct a detailed account of its work."[8] With my access to the uncatalogued archive of the Children's Film Foundation Special Collection at the BFI, largely unseen since being donated to them by the board in 1989, a more detailed and thorough investigation into the reasons the audience abandoned the matinees, why the industry gave up on children's film production and how cultural and social changes dealt the CFF a deadly blow, can be produced. Unique access to the CFF board minutes, committee reports and correspondence with industry figures will also build a comprehensive picture of the battle for survival that the board faced in its final decade. Shail remarks, in introducing his chapter dealing with his assessment of a representative example of the CFF's films, that "the films also provide a remarkable visual record of wider social change in Britain."[9] He continues, in contrasting the 1950s product with its later output, that "the comparatively empty streets of the post-war era are soon filled with parked cars, as high rise blocks appear on former bomb-sites and are then demolished themselves to make way for newer developments. Short back and sides are replaced by long hair for both sexes, and

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[6] Noel Brown in *British Children's Cinema: From The Thief of Baghdad to Wallace and Gromit* (Cinema and Society Series) (London, I.B.Tauris, 2016) pp. 104 -105
[7] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation: History and Legacy* p .33
[8] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation: History and Legacy* p. 3
[9] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation: History and Legacy* p. 3

shirts and ties disappear as flared jeans become de rigueur. A whole history of everyday life is played out for us in the grain of these films."[10]

I will show that the Foundation's films not only provided a visual record of social change but also reacted to British children's current fads and interests. Detailed analysis of movies including *Johnny on the Run* (dealing with post-war orphan issues), *Skid Kids* (based on the early 1950s urban craze of cycle speedway), *Cup Fever* (pre-empting the football frenzy around the 1966 football World Cup), *The Battle of Billy's Pond* (highlighting the growing environmental concerns of the mid-seventies), *The Glitterball* (produced at the time of the 1970s Hollywood Sci-Fi boom) and *Pop Pirates* (tackling the video boom and the piracy of titles in the early eighties) will show that the CFF had a creative and interactive relationship with their child audience, tapping in to the zeitgeist of the times.

Shail deals in more detail than the previous authors with his coverage of the children's cinema clubs, and in discussing their legacy states "overshadowing the films themselves was the attraction of the clubs as a social event. Even if the details of some of the films have faded from the memory, the actual experience of being in the auditorium remains vivid."[11] Building on this I have completed a study of the child audience in the Derby and Derbyshire area to ascertain if there were any regional differences to be recorded. My research will also highlight any negatives thrown up by audience memories, as a counterpoint to both Staples and Shail's sometimes rose-tinted nostalgia.

Placing the Children's Film Foundation within the context of British cinema history

The Foundation was unique, in the sense that no other national cinema industry has produced so many films solely for the school-age audience. Unique, too, in the way it was organised and funded, continuing a nurturing tradition of cinema-going even in the face of a shrinking market as new technologies and broader social changes challenged its traditional audience. The Foundation, set up with the support of Lord Rank in 1951, following his limited success in founding the Children's Entertainment Films unit to produce films for his own chain's matinees, the first being *Tom's Ride* (1944, d. Darrell Catling) had a remit to "make films specifically for children to be screened at Saturday morning matinees and used in schools."[12] It was supported by the British Film Industry with an annual grant from a tax levied on the sale of cinema tickets, the Eady Levy, which enabled the Foundation to make around six low budget films a year. In little over thirty years, the CFF established itself as the second most prolific film producer in British cinematic history, behind only Hammer Films (in fact, it was out-producing Hammer in the 1970s). However, in the 1980s, with audiences falling and the Eady Levy being abolished by the Thatcher government in 1985, the Foundation found itself without its major source of income and, faced with rocketing production costs, was forced into a co-production partnership with the BBC before finally deciding that it had no choice but to end its film-making production. To establish the Foundations place in the historiography of the British film industry and to further

[10] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation: History and Legacy* p.3
[11] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation: History and Legacy* p. 145
[12] Anonymous homepage introduction to *Children's Film and Television Foundation website* www.cftf.org.uk (accessed July 2019)

my theory that the CFF had a different arc of decline to that generally reported of the industry in the 1970s, I have interrogated several sources pertinent to this period.

In 1983, Linda Wood, in *British Films 1971-1981*, commented that the ‘’British film industry suffered immensely from the withdrawal of finance by US companies in the early 1970s.’’[13] She reported that American companies importing monies to finance film making in Britain reached a peak in 1968 of £31.3 million. The loss of this finance as the US companies, among them Disney, United Artists and Universal deserted Britain resulted in a huge fall in production. Overall, the total number of British films registered fell from 98 in 1971 to 36 in 1981.[14] The Children’s Film Foundation, buoyed by the continued financing from the Eady Levy and its practise of reinvesting profits into further production, together with a burgeoning overseas distribution programme, maintained their goal of an average number of six features or serials a year until their budget request in 1980 was halved by the Cinematograph Films Council. Under industry pressure to divert Eady funds to the BFI, the National Film School and the Script Development Fund, the 1980 grant to the CFF was a little over that of the figure granted in 1974, and in view of the inflation and industry production cost rises since then, it proved to be the beginning of the end of the Foundation.

While the CFF were striving, in vain, to formulate a co-production deal with the BBC and various independent television companies during the 1970s, the mainstream industry increasingly turned to productions of television sit-com spin-offs. Indeed, Hammer Films, the most successful production company of the 1960s, diverged from their established horror programme to produce adaptations of successful TV comedy shows, including a trilogy of big screen adaptations of London Weekend Televisions *On The Buses* series, namely *On the Buses* (1971), *Mutiny on the Buses* (1972) and *Holiday on the Buses* (1973). Hammer also produced less successful film versions of independent television’s *Love Thy Neighbour* (1973), *That’s Your Funeral* (1973) and *Man About the House* (1974). Obviously keen to entice the TV audience into the cinema auditorium, it was a trick that the CFF never recognised, my research suggesting that the Foundation still regarded TV as the ‘enemy’, the only concession to the medium was the leasing of short film clips to the BBC children’s quiz show *Screen Test*, which first aired in November 1970.

Adrian Garvey’s chapter ‘Pre-sold to Millions’ in Paul Newland’s *Don’t Look Now – British Cinema in the 1970s* details this genre, concluding that in a period of declining foreign investment ‘‘these films achieved a remarkable success, attracting a mass cinema audience with the simple promise of television writ large.’’[15] Also included in Newland’s collection is a chapter by Dave Rolinson titled ‘The Last Studio System: A Case for British Television Films’. As the film industry faltered and began to concentrate on more extreme horror and adult films, the television industry developed a broader base of almost ‘cinematic’ drama productions.[16] Part of

[13] Linda Wood in *British Films 1971-1981* p. 143
[14] Wood *British Films 1971-1981* p. 143
[15] Adrian Garvey in Paul Newland’s *Don’t Look Now – British Cinema in the 1970s* (Bristol, Intellect Publishing, 2010) p. 184
[16] Dave Rolinson in Paul Newland’s *Don’t Look Now – British Cinema in the 1970s* (Bristol, Intellect Publishing, 2010) p. 165

my study will be a comparison of the Children's Film Foundation's drama and comedy with that produced by the television companies, particularly in the case of the 1985 production *Terry on the Fence* (directed by Frank Godwin) and the BBC's highly successful and ground-breaking children's series *Grange Hill.* Anna Home, former head of Children's content at the BBC, commissioning Grange Hill in 1979, and later to become the CEO of the Children's Film and Television Foundation, remarked to me at the premiere of Jason Gurr's documentary of the CFF in 2018, that had the BBC made *Terry on the Fence,* it would have been a very different film, suggesting a somewhat grittier version. My research reveals a sharp contrast in what the BBC themselves produced to what they would allow the CFTF to represent in their jointly produced ventures. Correspondence between the CFF and the BBC Head of Children's Entertainment Edward Barnes reveals advice for amendments in scripts for both *Break Out* (1983) and *Pop Pirates* (1984) as the BBC censored some portrayals of violence and some (barely) colourful language as unacceptable to their TV audience. Barnes even went as far as enclosing "a dozen copies of our guidelines on *The Portrayal of Violence in Television Programmes*"[17] which he hoped would be of some assistance. Here, Rolinson's chapter provides an invaluable grounding in the development of British Television production of the period, useful as a counterpoint to my research into the CFTF methods utilised at the time. For background reading regarding the British cinema industry reflecting it's society, Aldgate and Richards *Best of British: Cinema and Society from 1930 to the Present,* Hill's *British Cinema in the 1980s* and Murphy's *The British Cinema Book, Second Edition* all have useful contributions on the development of film-making in this period. As I have already noted, most works on British cinematic history either skirt around or completely avoid any mention of the Children's Film Foundation's productions or influence. For example, in Murphy's collection, the only mention of matinee fare is, in a chapter by Vincent Porter titled 'Methodism Versus the Marketplace: The Rank Organisation and British Cinema', a solitary line – "he (Rank) also promoted healthy entertainment for children with his Saturday morning film matinees."[18] The Children's Film Foundation fails to get any coverage in the collection.

As a background to my research into the adaptation of content as social and cultural changes were necessarily reflected by the CFF in their productions, a number of further texts have been examined, including Auty and Roddick's 1985 anthology *British Cinema Now*, Margaret Dickinson and Sarah Street's work *Cinema and State: Film Industry and the British Government,* from 1985. Higson's 1996 collection *Dissolving Views: Key Writings on British Cinema*, Harper and Smith's 2012 cultural history *British Film Culture in the 1970s* and Amy Sargeant's 2005 text *British Cinema: A Critical History* have also provided an account of a broader cinematic context. Ashby and Higson's 2001 collection *British Cinema, Past and Present*, particularly part II, the section on the distribution and reception of British films abroad, gives an overview of the condition of the mainstream industry's policies and aspirations of exporting productions in the 1960s and 1970s, enabling me to draw comparisons and contrasts with those of the CFF during that period, when the Foundation's overseas revenue was out-performing rentals in the home market. In analysing the changes in style and content that the CFF's productions underwent in

[17] Letter from Edward Barnes (Head of Children's Programmes, BBC Television) to Stanley Taylor (CTFT) dated 28th November, 1983

[18] Vincent Porter in Robert Murphy (ed) *The British Cinema Book, Second Edition* (London, BFI Publishing, 2001) p. 87

the years following the ‘British New Wave’ of the early 1960s, John Hill’s *Sex, Class and Realism* has been an important reference on the cinematic industry in this decade. An excellent study on the history of cinema exhibition in Britain, Stuart Hanson’s *From Silent Screen to Multi-screen*, gives an invaluable insight into the exhibitors’ policies of the 1960s and 1970s, especially in the major chain’s process of twinning and tripling screens at existing sites.[19] This process did indeed lead to more choice for exhibitors’ and audiences, but was to provide another nail in the coffin for the CFF, for although the number of screens increased, it was at the cost of closures to cinema sites nearby. The matinees were generally exhibited at clubs in urban areas, so as cinemas closed the audience did not necessarily travel further afield. A recent collection by Farmer, Mayne, Petrie and Williams, *Transformation and Tradition in 1960s British Cinema*, with its emphasis in part one on production and distribution in the 1960s offered me hope that the efforts of the CFF in this field would be recognised at last in a volume promising a comprehensive overview of British cinema of the 1960s. Unfortunately, despite being the second most prolific British producer of the sixties and formulating a ground-breaking distribution deal that fairly shared the new releases around the circuits on a rota basis, the Foundation merited only a short sentence in a discussion on distribution in the introduction; ‘‘smaller distributors included the group of satellites cluster around British Lion in the early 1960s…as well as the Children’s Film Foundation, specialising in production for under-sixteens and tied to Rank.’’[20] However, the volume does give new insights into this period of British film history, especially on the distribution and production practises of the day, the influence of the US on the home market, and examples of film budgets of both major and independently produced home fare, along with investigating the new relationship between cinema and television, which gives useful comparisons with the data gained from the CFF archive, which will be expanded on later in this text.

Defining the ‘children’s film’

In his introduction to *British Children's Cinema: From the Thief of Baghdad to Wallace and Gromit,* Noel Brown discusses the difficulties of defining a ‘children’s film’ genre that academics can agree on. He writes ‘‘British children’s films have performed a central formative role in the lives of generations of people and provide unique insights into the socio-political concerns of their time, reflecting, as all films must, prevailing values, customs and belief systems.’’[21] But what actually constitutes and defines a children’s film? Is it a film just for children, or for all the family? If it is for children, in what age range is a child defined? Is a children’s film one that features child actors? There have been many films produced featuring children that can in no way be described as being suitable viewing for children - for example *Lord of the Flies* (1962, d. Peter Brook). This particular film, featuring almost exclusively a cast of boys on an uninhabited island, was classified ‘X’ by the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC), meaning schoolchildren under sixteen were unable to view the film despite the novel being a key text in schools. Some local councils over-ruled the classification for special screenings in schools, but it was not

[19] Stuart Hanson in *From Silent Screen to Multi-screen: A history of cinema exhibition in Britain since 1896* (Manchester, University Press, 2007) p. 122
[20] Duncan Petrie and Melanie Williams in Farmer, Mayne, Petrie and Williams (ed) *Transformation and Tradition in 1960s British Cinema* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2019) p. 12
[21] Brown *British Children's Cinema* p. 2

re-classified by the BBFC until 1970 when the ‘AA’ certificate was introduced for audiences over the age of fourteen. In his work, Brown suggests that he “treats children’s cinema as a generic category: a body of films with their own internal structures and externally-imposed significations”[22] resulting in stories that “while acknowledging the possibility of an unpleasant or undesirable outcome, is finally upbeat, morally and emotionally straightforward, and supportive of the social status quo.”[23]

Cary Bazalgette and Terry Staples stated in a chapter in the 1995 collection *In Front of the Children: Screen Entertainment and Young Audiences* titled ‘Unshrinking the Kids: Children’s Cinema and the Family Film’ that the children’s film ‘‘deals with the interests, fears, misapprehensions and concerns of children in their own terms.’’[24] Brown also suggests he adopts the ‘imperfect’ understanding, cited by Cary Bazalgette and Terry Staples, that the child audience encompasses children up to and including the age of twelve.[25] Twelve, being the approximate age that British schoolchildren progress to secondary education, mostly expanding their circle of friends and widening their horizons, seems a more definitive age limit than that of the UK legal definition that extends right up to the age of eighteen. If we accept this argument, the Children’s Film Foundation productions can be defined as ‘true’ children’s films. Being produced initially for sole distribution in Saturday matinee clubs (infamous for the lack of parents in the audience) and schools, these films were described by Lord Birkett, in a Children’s Film Foundation Production Committee meeting in 1975 as ‘aimed at children in the 7-11 years age groups, but in view of steadily growing sophistication, it was essential that the films should appeal primarily to the upper age groups while at the same time ensuring that they were also acceptable to the younger children.’’ [26]

The policy of featuring children as the main protagonists to clearly resonate with the audience, and of casting many comedic actors in the role of authoritarian or criminal characters, ridiculing and poking fun at them on their audiences behalf also played to the tastes of the under twelves. With many ‘family’ films being produced today, ‘knowing’ lines and in-jokes targeting parents and grandparents are the norm. Although he suggests non-commercial children’s films are more likely to be explicitly moralistic or educational, a point that I will contest in regards to the CFF productions, especially in the case of the films from the 1970s and 1980s, Brown, in trying to define a genre, describes several broad, recurring textual characteristics peculiar to the children’s film; ‘‘these include the reaffirmation of nation, kinship and community; the foregrounding of children (real or symbolic); the exclusion and/or defeat of disruptive social elements; the minimisation of ‘adult’ themes and representational elements; and a story that, while acknowledging the possibility of an unpleasant or undesirable outcome, is finally upbeat, morally and emotionally straightforward, and supportive of the social status quo.”[27] In short, a typical Children’s Film Foundation production, an endorsement that shows it is clear that as the

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[22] Brown *British Children's Cinema* p. 5
[23] Brown *British Children's Cinema* p. 5
[24] Cary Bazelgette and Terry Staples in the Bazelgette and Buckingham (ed) *In Front of the Children: Screen Entertainment and Young Audiences* (London, BFI Publishing, 1995) p. 96
[25] Brown *British Children's Cinema* p. 92
[26] Lord Birkett in *Children’s Film Foundation Directors Report* Minute no 1914, 28 June, 1975
[27] Brown *British Children's Cinema* p. 5

CFF were making films starring children, from the viewpoint of the child, solely for the consumption of children – they were, in my view, producing a true cinema for children. Although other films may have children's modes, i.e thrillers, dramas, comedies, science fiction, fantasy, it is important to note that the Children's Film Foundation produced successful films in these areas, foregrounding the child rather than having them as an adult counterpoint.

The demise of the Children's Film Foundation

In order to investigate the question of the causes of its demise, source material detailing British cinematic trends, the social, cultural and economic changes in Britain during the 1970s and 1980s, and the effect of Thatcherism on the British film industry have been examined. For debate on the effect that Mrs. Thatcher's government and policies had on the industry and in particular the funding of the Children's Film Foundation, Lester Friedman's *Fires Were Started: British Cinema and Thatcherism* and Pilcher and Wagg's *Thatcher's Children? Politics, Childhood and Society in the 1980s and 1990s* have information and figures invaluable for reference in this argument. Friedman's work features a chapter by Leonard Quart, 'The Religion of the Market: Thatcherite Politics and the British Film of the 1980s' in which he relates Thatcher's stance toward the film industry as a personal crusade; ''(she) treated the Arts, and the film business - notwithstanding her personal preferences (she disliked film) - no differently to any other business.''[28] The Tory government ''applied market principles to the movie industry''[29] by introducing the Films Bill of 1985, abolishing the Eady Levy and failing to provide any replacement of revenue the levy raised to aid the home independent film industry. Unique access to the Children's Film Foundation's Special Collection at the BFI archives will underpin my own research into the efforts made by the directors of the CFF to woo industry and political figures into maintaining their production budget and find alternative sources of income as production costs rose sharply during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Harper and Smith's *British Film Culture in the 1970s* gives a remarkable insight into the policies of the Tory government in regards to the film industry, which in line with Mrs Thatcher's monetary policies, was intent on cutting spending and taxation and reducing public sector spending. In Sian Barber's chapter 'Government Aid and Film Legislation: An Elastoplast to Stop a Haemorrhage' she makes it clear that the industry itself had to bear some of the blame for the problems of the decade. ''The industry's own lack of cohesion and clear objectives, the intransigence of the film unions and the factionalism of such groups as the AIP, FPA and CFC thwarted progress in a period of economic crisis. Perhaps it was not so much that governments refused to help, but that the film industry did not help itself.''[30] This is a theme that I will expand on during this study, particularly in reference to the problems faced by the Children's Film Foundation as it struggled for survival.

The existing texts by Shail and Staples are fine examples on the history of the Foundation, but my study will concentrate on the CFFs final decade, on how and why they were forced to seek co-production deals, of the difficulties they encountered with members of Equity and the

[28] Leonard Quart in the Lester Friedman (ed) *Fires Were Started: British Cinema and Thatcherism* (London, UCL Press, 1993) p. 23
[29] Quart in the Lester Friedman (ed) *Fires Were Started* p. 23
[30] Sian Barber in Harper and Smith (eds) *British Film Culture in the 1970s* (Edinburgh, University Press, 2012) p. 21

production unions around fees for exploitation as they sought to lease out their back catalogue, and to identify why they were forced, as the Children's Film and Television Foundation, to abandon film production in 1985. Examination of children's earlier maturing and expectations of the matinee audience will be made, with a key text being Mathew Thomson's *Lost Freedom – The Landscape of the Child and the British Post-War Settlement*. In this detailed analysis Thomson examines the changes in society and family institutions from the end of the war through to the 1980s, a useful background into my research in this area.

For further detailed information on the economic and cultural changes in Britain in the 1970s, to help me analyse the factors leading to the demise of Saturday matinees, reference will be made to Sked and Cook's *Post-War Britain; A Political History*, Arthur Marwick's *British Society since 1945* and Blake and John's *Iron Lady – The Thatcher Years*.

The local picture

It is now generally accepted that, on the evidence of a poster held by the BFI, and indeed adopted by Terry Staples in *All Pals Together*, the first recorded matinee for children (charged half price because they could fit twice as many on each bench) was in Mickleover, a leafy suburb of Derby, on Wednesday February 7th, 1900. To bookend my study, I include references to the Saturday matinee in the Derby area, utilising a survey conducted with matinee-goers of the 1950 to the 1980s, in order to compare the local picture with that of the national experience. Ashley Franklin's *A Cinema Near You: 100 Years of Going to the Pictures in Derbyshire* is a collection of reminiscences and secondary sources charting the history of cinema in Derbyshire, a chapter of which gives a unique local insight to the question of why British children's cinema all but disappeared in the 1980s. Drawn from the memories of both cinema-goers and the projectionists, usherettes and managers of the day, it offers a unique glance into the pleasures of the Derbyshire cinema-going experience, without too being overtly nostalgic, which will be used to frame the comparisons along with references from Franklin's work. Franklin was also helpful during the distribution of my survey to the surviving Saturday matinee audience, inviting me to give a presentation to his regular 'Silver Screen' audience at the Ritz Cinema, Belper.

An invaluable reference in this respect has been Sam Winfield's *Dream Palaces of Derby*, a comprehensive history of all the cinemas located within the city's boundaries, complete with dates of openings, attendance figures, refurbishments and details of closures. Complementing this work is Allen Eyles collection of books detailing the history of British cinema houses - a source with a chronographic background, with useful sections on children's film clubs run by ABC, Rank and the Odeon. They also contain useful illustrations detailing club badges, posters and programmes.

To ground my research in the Derby study, local newspapers, council minutes and town planning records have been accessed at the Derby Local Studies Library, detailing the increasing shift from town centre living to suburban re-location in the area in the 1970s and 1980s. A survey of matinee cinema-goers of the area, drawn from respondents of an appeal at local 'silver screenings' and to on-line local history groups and school alumni sites has been completed. Conforming to the code of ethics underwritten by JICEC, reading has also been

targeted towards works on oral history and memory studies, and in order to verify statements made, strict cross referencing has been undertaken. A key text in this area of oral history is Paul Thompson's *The Voice of the Past - Oral History*, a concise guide to conducting interviews, collating information and quantifying results and advice to avoid pitfalls that can result from recollections from, in some cases, many years ago. In order to background this survey cinematically, *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory (Cinema and Society)* by Annette Kuhn has proved to be extremely useful. This book examines issues such as cinema spectatorship, childhood, adolescence and audience reception, and provides a basis to my ethno-historical understanding of both the role of cinema and its audience and the nature of popular memory. As Robert Shail remarked "memory can be a slippery, deceptive thing"[31] and I have been wary of accepting memories of the older generation without corroboration.

Other Sources and Further Reading

Although not strictly academic works, a number of further texts have been interrogated to provide a fuller picture on the Foundation. MacDonald's study *Emeric Pressburger: the Life and Death of a Screenwriter*, chronicles the life of one of Britain's most lauded directors. In his later years, Pressburger's former partner, Michael Powell, sat on the board of the Children's Film Foundation. There was, at the time, ''a dearth of decent scripts for children's film''[32] and Powell consequently persuaded Pressburger to submit one to the Board. This became the Powell directed *The Boy Who Turned Yellow*, one of the most critically acclaimed CFF productions of all time. Very popular on the Saturday morning circuit, its success encouraged the board of the CFF to continue production of children's films when cinema owners were questioning the viability of continuing Minor's matinee clubs.

The established academic works in cinema writing do seem to treat the CFF as an afterthought, mentioned only in passing in reference to the effect of abolishing the Eady Levy, so it was surprising to find a chapter dedicated to it in Julien Upton's *Offbeat: British Cinema's Curiosities, Obscurities and Forgotten Gems.* A collection of reviews of film titles from the 1950's onwards, it has a favourable review of the Harley Cokeliss film *The Glitterball* (1977) which precedes an informative chapter on the history and successes of the Children's Film Foundation, and the Saturday morning matinee titled 'Seen but not Heard Of'. James Oliver, the author of the chapter, has the initial view that the films produced ''were a slightly out of touch grown-up's idea of what a film for children should be: worthy, well-mannered and wholesome''[33] but gives an analysis that concludes the films did have tremendous merits. This is an argument that I intend to build on, that these film's gave an innocent enjoyment to children, with an overtly moral backbone, the like of which one struggles to find in today's commercial profit-hungry movie industry, where the text is now just one of a number of products to be exploited (the books, dolls, DVD's and chart-topping songs of Disney's *Frozen* and the multi-media spin-offs from *Harry Potter* are typical examples). Unfortunately, other than promotional pamphlets and

[31] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 125
[32] Kevin MacDonald, *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death of a Screenwriter* (London, Faber and Faber, 1994) p. 394
[33] James Oliver 'Seen but not Heard Of' in Julien Upton (ed) *Offbeat: British Cinema's Curiosities, Obscurities and Forgotten Gems* (London, Headpress, 2012) pp. 328-9

industry catalogues, the CFF's budgetary constraints and their policy of putting any revenue straight back into film production meant that cashing in on spin-offs was not an option.

The moral content and possible effect on children of the Children's Film Foundation output compared to contemporary evidence has been investigated, with the aid of Gunter and McAleer's *Children and Television, Second Edition* and Gerard Jones' *Killing Monsters: Why Children Need Fantasy, Super Heroes and Make-Believe Violence.* Along with records of investigations in the 1950's, detailed in Staples, Brown and Shail's texts, and further primary sources researched at the BFI archives, I will endeavour to explore any possible link between children's exposure to suggested violence on-screen and their behaviour outside the cinema. Having mentioned archival research, I was lucky to be granted unique access to the Children's Film Foundation special collection at the BFI, an archive that has yet to be catalogued and never before accessed by academic researchers. The material contained includes board minutes, accounts, reports on special committees and letters and correspondence to and from the CFF. This resource has been invaluable in compiling and assessing a detailed history of the Foundation in its final troubled years. Analysis of Children's Television on the BBC and Independent channels, a major factor in the decline of the matinee audience, is gained with help from Anna Home's *Into the Box of Delights: A History of Children's Television*, and *Grange Hill and Beyond*, McGown and Docherty's 2003 text.

A chapter on Chris Tarrant, producer and presenter of ITV's Saturday morning television show, *Tiswas*, in the Garry Vaux work *Legends of Kids TV* has an insight into the setting up of 'kids Saturday morning TV' and the now legendary Tiswas, initially a regional ATV Midlands show, that went on to change the viewing habits of millions of kids, and adults, alike. Primary sources from film trade press journals also form a major part of my research material, particularly *The Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, *Screen Internationa*l, the BFI's *Monthly Film Bulletin* and *Sight & Sound* magazines. For an insight into the life of a CFF child actor, Gary Kemp's autobiography *I Know This Much* has been very helpful and illuminating. And of course, there are the films. In order to closely analyse the Foundation's productions, critical viewing is obviously inevitable. The BFI have many complete and part films on the CFF channel on Youtube, and also on their own website, and have released many titles on DVD collections. The movie channel Talking Pictures TV are also screening a handful of CFF titles in their morning slot.

I am grateful to film-maker Jason Gurr, who kindly gave me a copy of his 2018 documentary *The CFF Story*, for reference purposes, which was included in the latest *BFI Children's Film Foundation* DVD collection. The intention is to collate all my research in order to ascertain to what extent cultural, economic, political and industry factors were responsible for the demise of Britain's children's home-grown and financed film industry, in particular the fall of the Children's Film Foundation and if so, could there have been any action taken by the British film industry and its partners which would have saved it, and secured a positive future for the production of home-grown long form children's drama.

LITERATURE REVIEW (PART II) A BRITISH CINEMA FOR CHILDREN: CHILDREN'S FILM FROM 1900 – 1950

The three publications that have to date researched the CFF, mentioned in the previous chapter, by Staples, Brown and Shail, each report on the first half-century of British children's film production and exhibition in varying detail. As this period is not within the scope of my research, but is important in foregrounding my study, I will use this chapter to chronologically graph the development of the British Saturday children's matinee tradition utilising these three works in particular, along with other secondary sources.

The first performance for children

As mentioned previously, Terry Staples prefers to take the view that children's cinema in Britain began at 5.30pm on Tuesday February 7th, 1900, in an infant schoolroom in the quiet suburb of Mickleover, just south of Derby; adopted too, according to my research within the CFF archives, by Henry Geddes, the CEO of the Foundation at that time, who acknowledged this date in a press release in the 1970s.[34] Staples wrote:

> "there was a separate performance for children of the Great American Bioscope (and the accompanying magic lantern show). The show would have been somewhere else a day or two before and somewhere else again a day or two later. The only reason we know about it is that the publicity poster has survived. Nonetheless, precisely because it was not a unique event, it is a useful starting point."[35]

This poster, now held by the BFI, pronounces, at the bottom in bold type ''Children's Performance at 5.30pm – Admission 1d. Adults 3d.'' Local historian Ashley Franklin writes that although the Derby newspapers contain no notices of the show, the evidence of the poster proclaims "the proprietor, Walter Fearn, brought a 'one night only' show of 'War Scenes, Comic Scenes, Interesting Scenes of all sorts' all part of a 'Refined, High-class and Thrilling Entertainment. Not only that, it was free from vulgarity throughout'."[36] The timing of the show was key – children were around, after the school-day, when most adults were either still at or travelling home from work. The adoption of a special children's admission fee, in this case a penny, was a policy to be adopted throughout the industry. In this initial case the proprietors realised that as children were smaller, they could fit at least twice as many on a bench than they could fully-grown adults, resulting in more paying customers.

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[34] Henry Geddes in *Press Release by The Children's Film Foundation*, August 1979, p. 3
[35] Staples *All Pals Together* pp. 2-3
[36] Ashley Franklin in A Cinema Near You: 100 Years of going to the Pictures in Derbyshire (Derby, Breedon Books, 1996) p. 17

The ‘Silent Era’

An important figure in the advancement and refinement of the production of films for children was the producer Cecil Hepworth. Noel Brown writes “that in the silent era, the mass audience, dominated by working-class patrons, was commonly constructed by films, and by surrounding discourses, as children.”[37] He adds that in his memoirs, Hepworth recalled “it was said, at one time, and it is still largely true, that cinema audiences were of an average mental age of eleven to thirteen years.”[38] Addressing the fact that British producers were failing to produce films solely for children, Brown uses Rachael Low’s quote that “children flocked to see the Westerns, the slapstick comic and crime stories, and even took the social dramas and sentimental moralising in their stride. The stories were immature enough in any case.”[39] Hepworth produced the first film considered to be a ‘family film’ in 1905, a seven-minute short titled *Rescued by Rover* and on account of this success he created Hepworth Studios in Walton-on-Thames, one of the first indoor film studios in the United Kingdom. In the silent era, Brown observes that “the idea of the ‘children’s film’ was largely alien to producers and exhibitors, who were concerned with attracting as broad an audience base as possible – films were suitable for children but not designed specifically for them.”[40] Hepworth popular-ised the ‘child star’ film, again for a family audience, with his series starring teenagers Alma Taylor and Chrissie White, *Tilly the Tomboy* (1910-1915). Alma Taylor was so successful in her role that Brown records that “she was massively popular amongst adults: a 1915 poll conducted by *Pictures and the Picturegoer* found her to be the country’s most popular British-born film star, ahead of Charlie Chaplin.”[41]

At the same time Hepworth was finding success with his *Tilly* series, the Clarendon Film Company, founded by Percy Stow in Croydon, produced the *Lieutenant Rose RN* series, starring P.G. Norgate in the title role as a typical *Boy’s Own* hero. Directed by Stow, this series captured the imagination of young boys, as Terry Staples wrote “it is easy to imagine that children, perhaps mainly boys, found Lieutenant Rose a fairly attractive hero, one with whom they could identify, one whom they looked forward to seeing again”[42] foreshadowing the reaction of future generations to their heroes such as Zorro and Dick Barton. Despite these British produced films, the majority of the fare exhibited in cinemas was of American origin. Brown states “allegedly more than 90% of films shown were North American, but where Hollywood held a decisive advantage in the children’s film market was in the production of serials, westerns, and by the early 1920s, cartoon shorts.”[43] Hollywood films and shorts, consistently produced throughout the Great War of 1914 -1918, filled the void as Britain’s studios suffered from shortages of stock and materials due to the war effort. From the early twentieth century cinemas had been including matinees, usually on weekdays, as part of their programme, generally the same titles that were shown in the evenings, but at discounted prices. Many reformers believed these weekday matinees with their ‘pocket money’ admission prices encouraged children to play

[37] Brown *British Children's Cinema* p. 16
[38] Brown *British Children's Cinema* p. 16
[39] Brown *British Children's Cinema* p. 16
[40] Brown *British Children's Cinema* p. 15
[41] Brown *British Children's Cinema* p. 15
[42] Staples *All Pals Together* p. 8
[43] Brown *British Children's Cinema* p. 18

truant from school, to watch questionable content, especially from Hollywood, with local authorities now acting as unofficial censors for the film industry. Brown notes, with a comment from Rachael Low, that "when the temptation to 'play wag' in the daytime was essayed as a reason for banning children from the afternoon performances as well, exhibitors felt that things had gone far enough."[44] In 1912, the industry financed and established the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC) who previewed all films, granting a 'U' or 'A' certificate ('U' suitable for universal viewing, 'A' for adults over the age of 16). 'U' films were "especially recommended for Children's Matinees."[45] The 'U' category, still in existence over one hundred years later, is described by Terry Staples as "a film regarded as being universally acceptable, totally safe for children to see."[46] Safety for the cinema audience was also now being monitored – following a fatal crush on a stairway at a Saturday matinee in Barnsley in 1908 where sixteen children were suffocated. The following year, the first Cinematograph Act was introduced, requiring local authorities to en-sure cinema safety regulations were being followed, ensuring theatres were not over-crowding and enough attendants were employed for children's performances. Through to the end of the 1920s, many cinemas were running children's matinees on a Saturday afternoon (despite the origin of the word 'matinee' from the French for a morning activity) though this was probably derived from the theatrical use of the word to describe a daytime, rather than evening performance. In 1929 however, the owner of the Granada cinema chain, Sidney Bernstein, adopted Saturday mornings as the natural home for children's cinema clubs. Bernstein, a prominent member of the Film Society, the first organisation in Britain committed to film appreciation, was curious to discover why people went to the movies. He organised a questionnaire which was "sent out to 250,000 people in March 1929, probably the first time a piece of market research of this kind had ever been carried out in England."[47]

This "same spirit of enquiry prompted Sidney, early in 1928, to set up film shows specifically for children. Cinemas had always been conceived of as family outings; but Sidney had long taken the view that it was not fair to sandwich the type of film that appealed to children into the middle of an adult section."[48] Staples wrote "he believed that there should be children's cinema for the same reason that there are children's libraries. He realised that the logic of his position was that just as children's libraries need special books, so children's cinemas need special films."[49] Bernstein's matinees were non-profit making, as mentioned previously were exhibited on Saturday mornings and perhaps most importantly "the films were not derived from the cinemas' ordinary show. Instead, they were specially selected as offering 'clean, healthy entertainment.' This included an attempt to represent British culture when possible, rather than settle for the easy option of one hundred per cent Hollywood."[50] For an admission of 3d, the Granada matinees offered a cartoon, a short and a feature, a programme that was to persist as matinee fare right up to the 1980s. However, the success of the club was short-lived, the audiences

[44] Brown *British Children's Cinema* p. 21
[45] Sarah J. Smith in *Children, Cinema and Censorship: From Dracula to the Dead End Kids* (London and New York, I. B. Tauris, 2005) p. 31
[46] Staples in *All Pals Together* p. 10
[47] Caroline Moorhead in *Sidney Bernstein: A Biography* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1984) p. 50
[48] Moorhead *Sidney Bernstein* p. 51
[49] Staples *All Pals Together* p. 42
[50] Staples *All Pals Together* p. 43

diminishing weekly, until the summer of 1929, when the project was abandoned. Staples remarks; “Bernstein himself said that the main reason for the failure was the lack of cooperation from the local education authority, but it seems more likely that the principal problem was the programming. Children preferred to go to an ordinary show of a newly released film, especially as it would not cost any more than a Granada morning programme, parts of which must have been perceived as old-fashioned, high-minded and long-winded.”[51] This, added to the fact that the chain was staffing cinemas now on Saturday mornings, and not recouping costs in admission fees, seems to pre-empt the problems faced in the 1970s by the Children’s Film Foundation.

Pre - War Children’s Matinees

Despite the apparent failure of Sidney Bernstein’s project, a number of exhibitors began to look at the possibility of creating their own Saturday morning clubs. In the United States concern had been growing about the effects of cinematic content on children, and as a result, as the ‘talkies’ arrived, the National Committee for Better Films, a movement with support from the Parent-Teachers Association, enlisted the help of the fledgling Walt Disney Company, to create their own children’s matinee club, the Mickey Mouse Club. Shail comments; “Ironically, the most influential model for the development of children’s screenings in the UK actually came from the US in the form of the Mickey Mouse Club. The particular innovation of the Club, which was subsequently franchised in Britain, was the inclusion in its programmes of a mix of short and feature items, along with competitions and other enter-tainments often overseen by a compere.”[52] He continues “Care was taken to select films designed to appeal to the intended audience and potential criticism was offset by such conceits as beginning every screening with the singing of the national anthem.”[53] The British chains, inspired by Berstein’s project, and the success of the Mickey Mouse Clubs in the USA, began to see the children’s matinee club as a potential money spinner. Shail writes “the Odeon chain tried its own version but then took the expedient step of simply licensing the American Mickey Mouse Clubs for the UK market.”[54] Bernstein re-launched children’s matinees in his Granada chain, creating the ‘Kinemates’ in 1935, using Disney’s Donald Duck as its mascot – “the name ‘Kinemates’ was short lived, perhaps because nobody was sure how to pronounce it”[55] Bernstein re-named the matinee clubs in the Granada chain ‘Granadiers’, and in his Empire cinemas ‘Rangers’ in 1937, also introducing a rousing club tune. Club songs, introduced by the Mickey Mouse Clubs, were to become a factor of enjoyment and a key memory for the matinee member’s right through to the clubs decline in the 1970s, none more so than the ABC Minors song. Adapted from the Union circuit’s song in their ‘Union Chums’ clubs, which was sung to the tune of a traditional British military march ‘Blaze Away’, the song was reworded when ABC took over the Union circuit. “This new song had to stress the identity of the parent company, as it’s cinemas did not share a common name. The result was a set of words that came into use in 1937, and carried on for

[51] Staples *All Pals Together* p. 43
[52] Shail *The Children’s Film Foundation* p. 5
[53] Shail *The Children’s Film Foundation* pp. 5-6
[54] Shail *The Children’s Film Foundation* p. 6
[55] Staples *All Pals Together* p. 53

more than forty years."[56] My own research shows that the memory of the club song is still strong, with Wendy, an ABC Minor from Derby recalling, from over fifty years distance, that "there was a special song we always sung – "we are the boys and girls well known as minors of the ABC, where every week we all line up to see the films we like and SHOUT ALOUD WITH GLEE!'"[57]

The general composition of the matinee programme remained a cartoon, a serial episode and a feature, and it was the serial that was to become key to the changing mind-set questioning what was appropriate for a child audience to view. The serial was revitalised by American producers when sound was introduced to the movies - "in the thirties and forties the three major serial-producing companies turned out nearly 200 separate serials. Since each series had at least twelve episodes, sometimes as many as fifteen, there were eventually around 2,500 episodes available."[58] Whilst most of the subject matter – westerns, jungle adventures, police serials, superhero adventures and space and science fiction, were perfect viewing for 8 to 14 year-olds, some definitely were not, Staples remarking that "there were even serials about serial killers."[59] In 1937 the BFI introduced a list of productions suitable for children in its *Monthly Film Bulletin*, recommending favourable feature films, comedies, cartoons and shorts, yet omitted serials from their recommendations. Some of the titles that slipped through the net and were included for matinee viewing were obviously unsuitable – amongst the *Zorro, Tarzan* and *Flash Gordon* serialisations children could see the sinister weekly *The Clutching Hand*, "a mystery thriller of blood-curdling dimension. In each weekly episode another victim would be strangled at the hand of the assassin – whose identity was not revealed until the final instalment."[60] J. Arthur Rank and the Odeon National Cinema Clubs Even in the late 1930s the British film industry were still not creating productions specifically for children. In 1938, a director of the British Film Institute, Oliver Bell, reported in the *Kinematograph Weekly* that "700,000 children a week attended special matinees and there are now over 250 theatres which go to the trouble of booking special films for their shows"[61] a huge audience of children watching largely un-vetted material. He added "the financial aspect means that there is very little likelihood for many years to come (if ever) of films being produced specially for exhibition at children's matinees."[62]

This was the situation that a devout Methodist millionaire movie supremo vowed to change. Despite being in the business for less than a decade, J. Arthur Rank had become the largest British exhibitor by 1942 with the acquisition of both the Gaumont and the Odeon chains, with an empire worth over £20,000,000, including five film studios, amongst them the Pinewood and Denham production studios. After a lull in matinee attendances at the beginning of the war (due to the initial closing of cinemas due to fears of mass destruction in the air raids, along with the evacuation of children from the major cities), the children's shows began to mirror the huge rise in attendances that the adult audience enjoyed as the war continued. Despite showing little

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[56] Staples *All Pals Together* p. 56
[57] Respondent to the Derby Matinee Audience Survey, interviewed by the author, January 2020.
[58] Staples *All Pals Together* p. 67
[59] Staples *All Pals Together* p. 67
[60] Staples *All Pals Together* p. 70
[61] Geoffrey McNab in *J. Arthur Rank and the British Film Industry* (London, Routledge, 1993) p. 149
[62] Staples *All Pals Together* p. 92

interest in his chain's matinees in the beginning, Rank took note of the perceived rise of anti-social behaviour in the young as the phrase 'juvenile delinquency' was becoming common-place. According to the *Summary of Statistics Relating to Crime and Criminal Proceedings for the Years 1939-1945*; "Corporal punishments on boys aged under-14 increased in the course of the War. In 1938 and 1939 there were 48 and 58 cases of birching's, respectively in England and Wales. This rose to a high of 531 in 1941, gradually dropping to 165 by the end of 1943."[63] Staples remarked "this time, however, it was not particularly the cinema that was to blame, rather, it was a lack of parental control, due to so many parents being engaged in war work."[64]

Rank sows the seeds

Oliver Bell had stated that the production of specialised children's films would only be possible with "the intervention of the state or a 'multi-millionaire philanthropist'"[65] and J. Arthur Rank, concerned at the lack of "pictures that would do the children good, decided "then we must make some.'"[66] He overhauled the existing Mickey Mouse clubs and he decided that his clubs "should aim to achieve positive good by making a contribution to character building, by looking ahead to post-war peace."[67] His re-vamped clubs, the Odeon National Cinema Clubs (ONCC) were launched with a new motto - 'Uplift with a Smile'. Once the clubs were launched, in April 1943, with a new song and a revised set of members' pledges, he then set about his plan to produce one ten minute film a week to be shown in all of his Rank clubs. This schedule was immediately beset by problems – the war effort meant that film stock was scarce, his studios were committed to producing projects for the wartime community, and the Children and Young Persons Act of 1933 decreed severe restrictions on the employment of children of 'school age'. In spite of this, by the summer of 1944, the first of the films was ready for exhibition – *Tom's Ride*. Produced by Gaumont British Instructional Films and directed by Darrell Catling, it immediately hit a chord with the audience by having an early scene set in the ONCC Saturday show at the Southgate Odeon. Terry Staples writes; "Contemporary accounts suggest that it made a great impact on children, and one can easily imagine why. It offered something that no film had ever offered them before – child characters with whom they could identify in a social and urban context that was indisputably contemporary England…Tom and his sister were unmistakably ordinary and of the here and now."[68]

This was a distinct change from the glamourous American child-stars that had so far starred in the majority of their viewing diet. "Rank, not wholly satisfied with the initial film but convinced of the importance of the larger initiative,"[69] felt he needed a more specialist approach. He set up the ground-breaking Children's Film Department, headed by an employee of British Instructional Films, Mary Field. She had a reputation as a producer of nature documentaries and official films

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[63] From the *Summary of Statistics Relating to Crime and Criminal Proceedings for the Years 1939-1945* (London, HMSO, 1946-1947)
[64] Staples *All Pals Together* p. 81
[65] Brown *British Children's Cinema:* p. 83
[66] Brown *British Children's Cinema* p. 84
[67] Staples *All Pals Together* p. 81
[68] Staples *All Pals Together* p. 96
[69] Brown *British Children's Cinema* p. 84

for the Ministry of Information during the war, and shared Rank's vision of educating and moulding his children's audience tastes, seeking to produce films that would "not only be entertaining but would also set a high moral tone and encourage good behaviour."[70] Field headed a team and often had under her twenty production companies on a freelance basis, whose output was edited by an advisory council which included representatives from the BBC, the Church, the Home Office and the Ministry of Education. However, some resentment was felt by the directors with their artistic control taken away by this board, a frustration that directors working for the Children's Film Foundation in later years would recognise. Rank found that the constraints of producing a ten minute live action drama too constricting for the form, so the CFD, under Field, now began to produce documentaries and magazine programmes suitable for the one reel format, including the successful Our Club Magazine series, produced once a month for over six years by Wallace Productions. *Tom's Ride* was the only drama produced and exhibited under Rank's initial stipulations – it was clear that more screen time was needed for a story to be told lucidly, and a longer two-reeler was produced in 1945, *Sports Day*, also known as *The Colonel's Cup* (directed by Francis Searle). However this film was refused a 'U' certificate by the BBFC until cuts were made to a scene of apparent cruelty to animals. Another problem was in the casting; the Education Act of 1944 had raised the minimum age of child actors to fifteen, resulting in the casting of an obviously older actor (in this case Jean Simmons) as a school-child much younger than her actual age. This situation would persist through the 1950s, where the Children's Film Foundation would wrestle with the same problem.

In 1947, Rank changed the name of the CFD to Children's Entertainment Films (CEF) and now began to produce three-reelers for children. *The Little Ballerina* (1947, d. Lewis Gilbert) was followed by the first feature length film specifically for children, running at 80 minutes, *Bush Christmas* (1947, d. Ralph Smart) which was "filmed and set in Australia to circumvent Britain's restrictive child labour laws."[71] This film was one of the CEF films later licensed by Rank to the CFF to bolster their catalogue, but it was criticised in some quarters as being 'overly moralistic', this adventure about four children foiling horse thieves found favour amongst the critics; "*Sight and Sound* thought it 'far better' than Ealing's *Hue and Cry* (1947, d. Charles Crichton), adding that ''if CEF films to follow are as good, they will be good enough.'' *The Times* called it ''an experiment in juvenile entertainment which is a complete success'' and *The Sunday Times*' Dilys Powell included it in her 'films of the week'."[72] The Rank Organisation had major financial problems by the end of the 1940s – taxation had risen considerably and the company had over extended itself, with the result that the company decided to close down its loss-making departments, which included the CEF. By the time of its dissolution in June 1950, Rank's children's productions "ran to 29 features, 164 shorts and several serials."[73] Despite these films not being released to other chains, Rank had made a substantial contribution to British children's film. Noel Brown notes that "many principles established by the CFD and the CEF were carried forward into the next phase of specialised children's cinema in Britain, with the

[70] Rowana Agajanian in 'Just for Kids?' Saturday morning cinema and Britain's Children's Film Foundation in the 1960s' in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* (volume 18, Issue 3, 1998) p.395
[71] Brown *British Children's Cinema* p. 86
[72] Brown *British Children's Cinema*) p. 86
[73] 'Films for Children' in *The Manchester Guardian* (June 2nd, 1950) p. 5

formation of the Children's Film Foundation."[74] This next phase would be heralded by a report from a government committee headed by an Oxford professor, Kenneth. C. Wheare.

[74] Brown *British Children's Cinema* p. 8

CHAPTER THREE

FINDING THEIR FEET: THE FORMATION AND EARLY YEARS OF THE CHILDREN'S FILM FOUNDATION

On May 5th 1950, the publication of a government report by the Wheare Departmental Committee on Children and the Cinema, concluded there was a gap in the market and that it was in the industry's interest to produce quality film for children, reinforcing J. Arthur Rank's earlier views and even "held the CEF up as an exemplar for what could be done with appropriate support."[75] The report ended by paying tribute to the work done by the CEF, by announcing "enjoyable, and often beautiful and interesting films are being increasingly made available to children through their efforts. We attach the greatest importance to the continuance and development of these projects."[76] Rank, with his company now undergoing serious financial difficulties, decided to approach the wider industry for support. Reaching agreement between four major trade associations; the British Film Producers Association, the Association of Specialised Film Producers, the Cinematographic Exhibitors Association and the Kinematographic Renters Society, Rank laid the foundations of what was to become the Children's Film Foundation, with each trade body appointing three representatives as directors and Rank taking the chair himself. Again he appointed Mary Field in the role of the organisation's chief executive officer. It was funded initially by a yearly grant from the British Film Production Fund, which sourced the money via a voluntary levy on cinema admissions, an idea by the President of the Board of Trade Harold Wilson, which was to become known as the Eady Levy when it became a statutory tax in 1957. Initially launched with a payment of £50,000 from the fund, the annual grants settled at around £120,000, rising to £137,000 by the turn of the 1960s. Administration staffing was to be kept to a minimum, as were distribution costs, hence children's admission prices remained low. The CFF made no profit out of renting out their films to exhibitors, so any excess monies could be ploughed back into production.

Organisation and Strategy

Mary Field, with her vast experience in children's productions, began to draw up both short term and longer term plans for production. A Production Committee was formed with four members, one from each of the trade bodies, and two other sub-committees were given responsibility for exhibition and PR. By the end of 1952, two major innovations had been announced, both unique to the industry. First, the production committee decided that commissions would be invited from anywhere within the British film in-dustry on a film-by-film basis. The film unions were approached and a deal was made for staff to work for minimum rates on CFF productions. The independent producers who undertook responsibility for filming for the CFF were guaranteed a return that covered their outgoings and a small profit, negating the risk associated with a traditional commercial venture and granting a freedom from box-office pressure, the opportunity to make the best film possible within its modest budget. This tended to outweigh their reluctance to work under the committees that made up the foundation. Goodwill from the industry was key, with the CFF "often managing to gain concessions from various branches including trade

[75] Kenneth C. Wheare in *Report of the Departmental Committee on Cinema and Children* (London, HMSO, 1950)
[76] Wheare *Report of the Departmental Committee on Cinema and Children*

unions, film stock manufacturers, processing laboratories, production companies and studio owners."[77] Then a groundbreaking distribution policy was announced. The major cinema chains had for many years dominated exhibition, with preference given to them for first-run features, whilst the smaller cinemas waited weeks or months to show popular movies. The CFF policy was initiated by the exhibition sub-committee, headed by W. G. R. Thom, and dominated by John Davis of the Rank Organisation. Although Rank and ABC had been supporters of the CFF from the outset, the other chains had shown little interest, and although the Foundation was launched with the industry's blessing, the independents were initially reluctant to book it's productions; "in 1952 only ninety out of over a thousand independents were lined up to show CFF films"[78] and so in order to give equity to the smaller exhibitors and gain their support for the matinee clubs, a unique democratic rota system for new releases was developed. The exhibitors were placed into four groups; Odeon, Gaumont, ABC and a fourth, Independents, mostly family run chains, but including the larger Granada, Clifton and Essoldo cinemas. The groups would be offered new films on a rotating basis, so no chain would have exclusive access to new releases. It did the trick, with over 700 independents regularly booking CFF films in 1953, and by 1955 the CFF Annual Report noted that "this scheme, which cuts across many customary practises in the film industry, was largely experimental, but thanks to the goodwill of the exhibitors, it may now be regarded as established".[79]

Into Production

On 11th October 1951 the CFF board announced plans for its first productions; two feature films *The Stolen Plans* and *John of the Fair*, a series of six magazine programmes and a short black and white cartoon entitled *The Magic Scissors.*[80] By the end of the year, the production budget had been spoken for, with total costs reported by the board being; *The Stolen Plans* £20,437, *John of the Fair* £25,171, *The Magic Scissors* £4036'11'11 and the magazine series between £1000 and £1100 per episode.[81] The magazine was christened *Our Magazine* and by the end of the decade Wallace Productions Ltd had produced sixteen 11 minute programmes for the CFF, described in the Foundation's Catalogue as "a factual series of sixteen films dealing with children's activities, combining entertainment with useful information, directed by J.E. Ewins."[82]

At this time it was estimated that the matinee audience was around one million a week, with the board reporting that there were 1552 cinemas running weekly children's matinees.[83] By February 1952 a distribution deal had been arranged with Associated British Film Distributors on a basis of 15% commission, and by the end of that year the films were being distributed using the innovative new rota.

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[77] Agajanian '*Just for Kids?*' p. 399
[78] Staples *All Pals Together* p. 179
[79] From *Children's Film Foundation's Annual Report,* March 8th, 1955, minute no. 530 (accessed June 2019)
[80] From *Children's Film Foundation Distribution Committee Report* October 30th, 1952, minute no. 227 (accessed August 2019)
[81] From *Children's Film Foundation Board Minutes* , October 11th, 1951, minute no. 38 (accessed October 2019)
[82] From *Children's Film and Television Foundation Catalogue and Index of Films*, 1980, p. 55
[83] From *Children's Film Foundation Board Minutes* December 13th, 1952, minute no.54 (accessed August 2019)

It is interesting to note that while the committee was in its first formative year, a number of decisions were taken that would hold firm for the next thirty years. Firstly, in the first meeting of the board "it was noted that in the executive officers report that reference was made to an exhibition of children's pastimes to be organised in London by the British Soviet Friendship Society. It was unanimously agreed that no action should be taken in connection with this exhibition."[84] Despite the formation of the CFF being perceived as a more socialist move in the context of British post-war cinema, it was obvious that in these immediate post-war years, with 'Cold War' suspicion of the Soviet Union increased, that the board did not want to be perceived as linked to the Soviets at this stage. Later, however, indeed from 1953, they did become more open to dealing with Eastern Bloc production companies. The Foundation imported and re-dubbed *Kekec* (retitled *Trapped by the Giant*), a winner at the 1952 Venice Film festival from Yugoslavia, and they began to regularly import films and cartoons from Eastern Europe to supplement their matinee programmes. Secondly, in 1952, it was reported that "Stratford Abbey films Ltd were offering to produce a cartoon film *The Boat Race* for £5,670, provided they could have distribution rights in certain territories. It was agreed that such a restriction of distribution rights could not be accepted."[85] The Foundation were keen to maintain the rota system in the UK, and were to announce a deal with J. Arthur Rank Overseas Distribution Ltd to undertake exclusive overseas distribution by the end of the year. And finally, "the (CFF) considered whether its films should be made with a view to a second feature release. It was agreed that the Foundation's films should be made especially for children but if some of them happened to be suitable for an adult release that would be an incidental advantage."[86] However, the CFF's agreement with the film unions whereby the technicians and crew were paid below union rates for their productions, on the strict understanding that they were for matinee use only, ensured that no film made under these conditions was ever exhibited as a feature to an adult audience.

The children's film genre – finding a place the CFF productions

In his work *Film/Genre* Rick Altman describes genre as "not your average descriptive term, but a complex concept with multiple meanings."[87] He continues to define these as:

"Genre as *blueprint,* as a formula that precedes, programmes and patterns industry production; Genre as *structure*, as the formal framework on which individual films are founded;

Genre as *label*, as the name of a category central to the decisions and communications of distributors and exhibitors;

Genre as *contract*, as the viewing position required by each genre film of its audience". [88]

Previously, Stephen Neale had declared that "the master image for genre criticism is the triangle composed of artist/film/audience. Genres may be defined as patterns/forms/styles/structures

[84] From *Children's Film Foundation Board Minutes*, October 11th, 1951, minute no. 40 (accessed October 2019)
[85] From *Children's Film Foundation Board Minutes* April 9th, 1952, minute no. 136 (accessed August 2019)
[86] From *Children's Film Foundation Board Minutes* April 9th, 1952, minute no. 130 (accessed August 2019)
[87] Rick Altman in *Film/Genre* (London, BFI Publishing, 1999) p. 14
[88] Altman *Film/Genre* p. 14

which transcend individual films, and which supervise both their construction by the film-maker and their reading by an audience".[89] Little wonder then, that there is confusion amongst writers seeking to define a children's film genre. In his introduction to *British Children's Cinema: From the Thief of Baghdad to Wallace and Gromit,* Noel Brown notes "it might be assumed that a children's film is simply one produced for, and primarily consumed by, children. (But) while this preliminary definition is useful, there are several problems with it."[90] He continues to analyse the difficulties of defining a 'children's film' genre that academics can agree on. He writes that "British children's films have performed a central formative role in the lives of generations of people and provide unique insights into the socio-political concerns of their time, reflecting, as all films must, prevailing values, customs and belief systems"[91]

But what actually constitutes and defines a children's film? Is it a film just for children, or for all the family? If it is for children, at what age is a child defined? Is a children's film one that features child actors? There have been many films produced featuring children that can in no way be described as being suitable viewing for children, for example *The 400 Blows - Les Quatre Cents Coups* (directed by Francois Trauffaut, 1959) and Stephen King's *It* (directed by Andy Muschetti, 2017). In his work, Brown suggests that he "treats children's cinema as a generic category: a body of films with their own internal structures and externally-imposed significations."[92] Cary Bazalgette and Terry Staples have stated that the children's film "deals with the interests, fears, misapprehensions and concerns of children in their own terms."[93] Brown also suggests he adopts the 'imperfect' understanding, cited by Bazalgette and Staples, the child audience as encompassing children up to and including the age of twelve.[94] It could be argued that twelve, and my research of the Derby and district matinee audience confirms this, being the approximate age that British school children progress to secondary education, mostly expanding their circle of friends and widening their horizons, seems a more definitive age boundary than that of the UK legal definition that extends right up to the age of eighteen. Bearing this in mind, it can be suggested that the Children's Film Foundation productions can be defined as 'true' children's films. Being produced initially for sole distribution in Saturday matinee clubs (infamous for the absence of parents in the audience), these films were described by Lord Birkett, in a CFF Production Committee meeting in 1975 as "aimed at children in the 7-11 years age groups, but in view of steadily growing sophistication, it was essential that the films should appeal primarily to the upper age groups while at the same time ensuring that they were also acceptable to the younger children."[95]

The CFFs policy of featuring children as the main protagonists to clearly resonate with the audience and of casting many comedic actors in the role of authoritarian or criminal characters,

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[89] Stephen Neale in *Genre* (London, BFI Publishing, 1980) p. 7
[90] Brown *British Children's Cinema* p. 4-5
[91] Brown *British Children's Cinema* p. 2
[92] Brown *British Children's Cinema* p. 4-5
[93] Cary Bazalgette and Terry Staples in Unshrinking the Kids in David Buckingham (ed.) *In Front of the Children: Screen Entertainment and Young Audiences* (London, BFI Publishing, 1995) p. 96
[94] Brown *British Children's Cinema* p. 92
[95] From Children's Film Foundation Production Committee Minutes , October 11th, 1951, minute no. 1914 (accessed April 2019)

ridiculing and poking fun at them on their audience's behalf, also played to the tastes of the under twelves. This is in contrast to the many 'family' films being produced today, where 'knowing' lines and in-jokes targeting parents and grandparents are the norm. Summing up their 'family' productions, the Walt Disney Company state that "children's films were initially created for children and were not necessarily aimed at the general audience, while family films were intended for a wider appeal with a general audience in mind."[96] Olga Lobanova writes:

> "As for the concept of children's cinema it should be noted that in science and practice of film production we face a synonymic number of combinations designating the same phenomenon. In the English-speaking world and even beyond its borders we find the terms children's cinema, films for kids, films for children, children films and other variations which are interchangeable and equally used. In the world film industry of the study period there can be defined two types of films for children: children's film and family film. They can be referred to as a film genre that contains children or relates to them in the context of home and family." [97]

She continues; "according to Bazalgette and Staples, the term family movie is essentially an American expression while children's film is considered to be a European expression." She continued "the difference between the two terms can be seen in casting methods adopted by American and European films respectively. In American family films, the search for a child protagonist involves casting children that meet a specific criterion or standard for physical appearance. In contrast, European children's films look to cast children who appear ordinary." [98]Bazelgette and Staples were also cited in Heather Addison's essay of 2000, reacting to reports that film executives were down scaling budgets or removing family film projects to television; "this trend may not be detrimental to the future of the family film, however. Bazelgette and Staples argue that more modest budgets usually dictate less adult-oriented content and more focus on children's interests and perspectives. More low budget family films may not mean big box-office, but it may mean a steady out-pouring of quality films that address children's concerns."[99] Brown also suggests non-commercial children's films are more likely to be explicitly moralistic or educational, a point that is valid in regards to the CFF productions of the 1950s, but I contest this view in respect to their later productions, as the Foundation developed content for an earlier maturing and more sophisticated audience during the 1970s and 1980s. Brown, in trying to define a true children's film genre, describes several broad, recurring textual characteristics peculiar to the children's film; "these include the reaffirmation of nation, kinship and community; the foregrounding of children (real or symbolic); the exclusion and/or defeat of disruptive social elements; the minimisation of 'adult' themes and representational elements; and a story that, while acknowledging the possibility of an unpleasant or undesirable outcome,

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[96] From The Walt Disney Company reports fourth quarter and full year earnings for fiscal year 2017 //www.thewaltdisneycompany.com/walt-disney-company-reports-fourth-quarter-fullyear-earnings-fiscal-2017/ (accessed June 2020)

[97] Olga B. Lobonava The role of children's cinema in supporting educational and cultural ideologies in the 1920s and 1930s in Russia in *Revista Espacios*, (Vol. 40, number 15, 2019) p. 11

[98] Lobonava *Revista Espacios*, (Vol. 40, number 15, 2019) p. 11

[99] Heather Addison 'Children's Films in the 1990s' in *Film Genre 2000: New Critical Essays* (New York, State University of New York Press, 2000)

is finally upbeat, morally and emotionally straightforward, and supportive of the social status quo."[100] The first point he makes, the reaffirmation of nation, resonates throughout the CFF productions, that may have been innately 'British' for the home audience, yet accessible enough to be appreciated by children when shown overseas. In short, Brown is describing a typical Children's Film Foundation production, an endorsement that shows it is clear that the CFF were making films starring children and for the consumption of children, exhibiting them in children-only spaces – the Saturday matinees. In short, it can be seen that they were producing a children's cinema in the purest sense of the definition.

Mary Field and 'A Study of Boys and Girls in the Cinema'

In 1954 Mary Field, who had been continuing her research into the response of the child audience to films that had started under Rank's guidance at the CEF, submitted her report to the Carnegie UK Trust. Taking her lead from the Wheare Committee Report of 1950, she stated in her introduction that "the time was more than ripe for a new type enquiry into the response of children to films, not merely investigation into the possible effects of adult films on the under-twelves but positive research into the principles underlying the production of entertainment films specially designed for children." [101]

Basing her studies on ground breaking infra-red photography on audience reaction to various scenes and texts, in different areas of the country with differing social backgrounds, she presented several 'suggestions on points for consideration' that went on to become an invaluable guideline for the producers and directors of CFF productions. The following, reproduced from her report, is a summary of some of the conclusions:

- Opening - The main titles are an integral point of the film, not an addition. The film should begin moving in the first shot, which is the title. Colour, drawing and music in the title can unite to give a compelling promise of pleasure. When such interest is aroused at the beginning it is wrong to spoil it with lists of credit titles, which are better placed at the end.
- Dialogue – The appeal should be to the eye and not the ear. Adult conversation has only a slight hold on audiences and adult verbal jokes pass over them. The children's dialogue calls for serious attention.
- Sound – The dramatic use of music may very frequently be drowned in conversation and therefore be unnoticed. Some children, but only some, appear to be affected by a good musical score.
- Anticipation – Great interest and pleasure arise from anticipation. On the other hand sudden action may be frightening or, alternatively, fail to register.

[100] Brown *British Children's Cinema* p. 5
[101] Mary Field in *Children and Film: A study of Boys and Girls in the Cinema* (Dunfermline, Carnegie UK Trust, 1954) p. 1

- Beauty – The child's idea of beauty does not conform with that of educated adults. Movement rather than static composition appears to satisfy the aesthetic tastes of the audience.
- Close-ups – It appears that close-ups should be used with discretion. The more quickly intelligent and highly educated children are the most susceptible to the impact of close views of people and objects. Close-ups in cartoons appear to have less effect than close-ups in actuality.
- The Familiar and the Strange – The familiar interest's children, but the strange compels attention, especially if children are implicated. It's not the familiar in itself but the presentation which catches the attention of the children.
- Boredom – On the whole attention wanders during adult conversation, adult jokes, sequences of buildings or views and sequences that are prolonged and induce tedium. Some boredom comes from exhaustion.
- Identification – Children appear to copy actions of the characters with whom they are in sympathy.
- Fear – Little of the fear aroused appears to be lasting and most children protect themselves against what they personally dislike – blood, violence, heights, etc. by shutting their eyes.[102]

Field concluded, in her reflections on the enquiry, that "what emerges from the enquiry is that film-viewing is a two-way affair and pleasure in the picture depends very largely on what the audience contributes to its own entertainment" – very apt in view of the atmosphere created by most matinee audiences. She continued "this enquiry, as a whole, suggests that specially produced films for children with an 'influence value' can have a 'pleasure value' that is equal to, though possibly different to, commercial films. It has also provided concrete evidence for film producers who wish to make entertainment films for children."[103] As CFF productions increased through the 1950s, these tenets became the guidelines that the Production committee were to give to the outside companies producing films for the Foundation.

A Summary of the CFF 1950s Productions

By the end of the decade, the CFF had produced 27 features, 13 shorts, 8 serials (comprising a total of 61 separate episodes) and two series of short magazine programmes.[104] The subject matter was typical of what was considered to be of interest to a child audience. Animal stories appeared to be popular, with six features, seven shorts and two of the serials featuring pets or animals. Intrigue and adventure, with the children protagonists foiling the 'baddies', be they poachers, thieves, spies or smugglers, featuring heavily in the scripts. Most films, to save money within the very strict budgets, were filmed in the summer months on location (with Bushey Studios in Hertfordshire used for rare interior shots) and, as Robert Shail notes:

> "The characteristic elements of a CFF feature are much in evidence already. A gang of assorted kids, or a brother and sister team, normally ranging in age from

[102] Field *Children and Film* p. 21-25
[103] Field *Children and Film* p. 25
[104] From *Children's Film and Television Foundation Catalogue and Index of Films*, 1980

> four to fourteen, accidentally uncover the plans of a criminal gang. Unable to go to the police (for some reason provided by the script) they have to catch the villains themselves. Alternatively, they find themselves in a competition, sporting or otherwise, with a rival gang whose underhand methods are resisted by our heroes who eventually win by fair means. Settings are mainly urban or suburban and boys typically take the lead with girls assigned a supporting role, as are younger children. Bravery, resourcefulness, loyalty and honesty are prized, whereas villains are also cheats and bullies. There are chases and mild fights but the villains are generally comic and/or incompetent so that there is little real threat."[105]

In 1953, three typical CFF feature films were released; Peter Rogers' *The Dog and the Diamonds*, a story of a children's zoo and some stolen diamonds, Lewis Gilbert's *Johnny on the Run,* telling of an unhappy young Polish immigrant, and Don Chaffey's *Skid Kids*, the tale of a gang of urban speedway cyclists (a very popular pastime in the 1950's) and their struggles to win the local championship while rounding up bicycle thieves (an echo of De Sica?). These three early contributors went on to become vastly important to the British film industry in uniquely different ways. Rogers, along with director Gerald Thomas (CFF director of *Circus Friends*, 1956) went on to write and produce the most successful of all British film series, the 31 incarnations of the *Carry-on* comedies, beginning with *Carry on Sergeant* (1958). Lewis Gilbert went on to direct several major titles, Don Chaffey, aside from cinematic successes *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963) and *One Million Years BC* (1966), went to international success as a TV director with, amongst others *The Prisoner* (1967), in the UK, and *Charlie's Angels* (1981) and others in the United States. Another chief producer for the foundation in its early years was Henry Geddes. Having formed his reputation at MGM as a wildlife specialist, he formed World Safari Ltd. producing *Toto and the Poachers* (1958, d. Brain Salt), and producing and directing *Ali and the Camel* (1960) and *The Last Rhino* (1961) for CFF - for all of which he also wrote the screenplays. He took over from Mary Field as executive producer of the Foundation in 1964, and with the new Rank Organisation boss John Davis as chairman, led the CFF into its golden era. All of which goes to justify Mr Watkin's comment at a board meeting in 1959 that "I agree that the CFF's activities were valuable as a training ground for technicians and artists." [106]

Lewis Gilbert - from *Cosh Boy* to *Johnny On The Run*

Lewis Gilbert was already well known to Mary Field as the director of *The Little Ballerina,* a film made for Rank's Children's Entertainment Films in 1947, so it would be no surprise that his script for *Johnny on the Run* was approved by the Production committee and the Board for one of the early films under the CFF banner. *The Little Ballerina,* a typical children's production told of a young ballet dancer, inspired by seeing Margot Fonteyn on a TV screen in a shop window, who overcomes all obstacles in achieving a scholarship to the prestigious sadler wells ballet troupe, and his new script for *Johnny on the Run,* the story of an orphaned Polish immigrant, Janek, who absconds from a neglectful foster family and gets involved with a pair of thieves before finding a home with other foreign orphans, was selected by the CFF for production.

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[105] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 14-15
[106] From *Children's Film Foundation Board Minutes* , January 6th, 1959, minute no. 879 (accessed May 2019)

However, Gilbert had just finished directing his own screenplay *Cosh Boy* (re-titled *The Slasher* for the American market) which was to gain notoriety as the first British film to be classified as an X certificate. *Cosh Boy*, despite it appearing tame if viewed today, was a very controversial film of it's time. *Time Out Film Guide* describes it as "much reviled at the time for it's sensationalism. Youthful James Kenney, who played the title role in Bruce Walker's play *Master Crook,* from which the film was adapted, is the kind of hoodlum who steals granny's savings and bashes old ladies over the head, while Joan Collins is the girl he gets pregnant then callously rejects. In fact it is a reasonably worthy social-conscience effort in the British style."[107] Watching this film recently, what struck me most was the Oedipus scenario between Roy, the (anti)hero and his widowed mother, who he loves and despises in equal measure, with the arguments/pacifications at home fuelling ever more violent crimes on the street with his gang. Before granting the X certificate, the BBFC asked for softening of some of the scenes involving the coshings and slashings carried out by Roy.

Johnny on the Run could not be a more different film. The comparisons between the two movies proves that the CFF had complete trust in their chosen directors to produce fare suitable for the Saturday matinee audience. Interestingly they were to show the same trust in selecting Michael Powell's film *The Boy Who Turned Yellow* for production twenty years later. Michael Powell, although serving on the board of the CFF, had still not been forgiven by the industry for his controversial 1962 psychological thriller *Peeping Tom.* Tastes in the 1970s had seen Powell's subject matter, namely excessive sexual and violent images, become commonplace on the cinema screen, but he was considered ''still the pariah of the British film industry – his last meagre foot in the door was a seat once a month on the board of the Children's Film Foundation''.[108] For the CFF, he succeeded in directing one of their most successful and memorable films.

Johnny on the Run was produced by International Realist Films, with Lewis Gilbert producing and directing the movie. It's production costs ran to £25,906 and was one of the few CFF features to recoup these costs and show a profit (due mainly to its international appeal) - by 1979 it had cumulative receipts of £26,458.[109] The feature went on to win the Silver Gondola Award at the 1953 Venice Film Festival and in 1955 it was given an award from the Stamford Films Council for ''the best film of it's kind in America''.[110] Filming was at Nettlefield Studios in Walton-on-Thames, with location shots in Scotland in Edinburgh, at Loch Earn and the Quarriers village (an actual village for war orphans in Renfrewshire). The screenplay was written by George Sturt and Patricia Latham. Latham was already known to Rank and Field, writing the screenplay for one of the CEF's more successful releases *The Mysterious Poacher* (1950, d. Don Chaffey). She went on to contribute over the next 25 years, over a dozen scripts that became CFF releases, including *The Camerons* (1974, d. Freddie Wilson), *Seal Island* (1976, d. Ronald Spencer) and *Blind Man's Bluff* (1977, d. Gerry O'Hara). Robert Shail suggests that *Johnny on the Run* "is one of the most striking of the CFF's early features, with a seriousness of intent that helped establish its international reputation. It shows a willingness to

[107] Trevor Johnston in *The Time Out Film Guide 2008* (London, Ebury Publishing, 2007) p. 216
[108] MacDonald *Emeric Pressburger - Life and Death of a Screenwriter* p. 393-394
[109] From *Children's Film and Television Foundation Directors Report and Accounts*, 30 June 1979
[110] From *Children's Film and Television Foundation Catalogue and Index of Films*, 1980 p. 6

engage with topical subjects not always evident in later 1950s output but that made a return in the 1970s and 1980s".[111]

The title role of Johnny (or Janek) was given to a young unknown Polish boy Eugeniusz Chylek, who was encouraged by Lewis Gilbert to give what IMDB describes as a "remarkable performance from its young lead."[112] Johnny is a refugee orphan who finds himself fostered in Edinburgh with a family who see him as a meal-ticket, with his welfare less important than the money they receive for his upkeep. He is bullied by both the son of the house and children in the street and he decides to abscond and try to find his way back to Poland. An interesting piece of social commentary penned by Pat Latham sees Johnny finding out that a ticket to Poland costs £17, cut with the next scene where he finds himself in a shop where a mother is buying a transistor radio for her son for exactly the same price. Unfortunately, the first 'samaritans' he comes across turn out to be a pair of housebreakers who see an opportunity to use the young boy in order to gain access through skylights and small windows (very much in the tradition of Bill Sykes and Oliver Twist). Eventually, Johnny is picked up by the authorities and placed in a home in a village with other war orphans (a community that actually existed, housing 640 orphans of all nations under the supervision of the local authorities). Here though, his security is threatened by the arrival of the two thieves and the errant foster mother bent on taking him back. The finale sees the village children helping Johnny by helping to capture the thieves, and, as in all CFF features of the time, the result is a happy ending. Shail, remarking on Gilbert's direction, says "the style and pace he brings to the film mark it out from the conservative approach to camera and editing evident in the Foundation's 1950s films. The real achievement, however, is in combining an exciting narrative with a sober message about tolerance and understanding between nations in the postwar era. Underlying this is a sympathy for Johnny's plight that is genuinely touching. The depiction of the village, an idyllic setting where the children operate a democratic system offers a vision of postwar progress and consensus."[113]

So, two quite different films, for quite different audiences, were directed and shot back-to-back by the remarkable Lewis Gilbert. Small wonder that he went on to direct some of the best known British films of the next thirty years, for quite diverse audiences, including the swinging 60s comedy-drama *Alfie* (1966), the James Bond adventure *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977) and the triple BAFTA winning *Educating Rita* (1983).

Television – the rise of the 'enemy'

The short films, seventeen of which were produced, were phased out from 1958, in favour of more serials, after the production committee reviewed a report from the matinee club controllers, who felt that serials would encourage the audience to revisit the cinema to see a continuation or

[111] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 49
[112] IMDB website https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0165837/ accessed 25 June 2020.
[113] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 50

conclusion of a story.[114] However, the cinema industry in Britain now began to feel the effects of television on their audience. As television reception improved throughout the 1950s, the draw of the small-screen was becoming irresistible to some, especially when the new queen, Elizabeth II, requested that her coronation in 1953 be televised live. The advent of commercial television, introduced in 1955, led to an unprecedented increase in television licenses being issued in the UK. In 1950, the average weekly cinema admission figure was 26.84 million, with 340,000 television licences issued. By the end of the decade the weekly cinema weekly average had dropped to 9.63 million, whilst the television license figure had risen to 10.46 million.[115] This meant that through the decade the adult British cinema audience had shrunk by two thirds, yet, the matinee figures, although falling to around half of their immediate postwar figures, did not necessarily follow this trend - the audience remained viable, with over 500,000 matinee-goers still attending weekly. In a committee meeting on 6th January 1959, whilst considering their 'aims and objectives' for the forthcoming decade, it was reported; "There followed a discussion on the number of clubs, the question of closures and the average matinee audience. It was felt that (through the weekly matinee controllers reports) the number of clubs averaged around 1500 and that the (weekly) audience was around the half million mark, having fallen from a figure of 1800 and an audience of one million respectively in 1952."[116]

The matinee audience admittedly had halved, lost to a television audience, but the figures were still reasonably healthy and the CFF stayed true to its remit – they steadfastly refused to submit any of their films for exhibition on British air waves. In a committee meeting in 1955 "the chairman said he was opposed to helping television to increase its competition with the cinema. The meeting decided that the televising of CFF films in their entirety could not be considered under any circumstance."[117] The committee, however, held the completely opposite view when it came to overseas broadcasts. In April 1954 it was reported in the minutes "Mr John Davis said that in French Canada there were no children's matinees as the authorities would not allow children to attend the cinemas, and the only way in which children in this area could see the foundations films was through TV. The meeting agreed to the French dubbed CFF films being televised on the Quebec and Montreal stations."[118] And further, in May 1957, in a debate about Italian distribution "the meeting agreed that TV deals should be obtained as there was no prospect of cinema distribution in Italy."[119] It seems that television did serve a purpose to the committee when there were no alternative ways to exhibit their productions, especially overseas. In Britain, the CFF films would not be broadcast on television in their entirety until the 1980s, as part of the co-production deal with the BBC.

The audience - organised chaos?

The CFF productions were made solely for exhibition at children's matinee clubs with a running time of 55 minutes, long enough to fill half of the club's allotted time, but also on the cusp of the

[114] From *Children's Film Foundation Board Minutes*, July 17th, 1958, minute no. 841 (accessed May 2019)
[115] Hanson *From Silent Screen to Multi-screen* p. 99
[116] From *Children's Film Foundation Board Minutes*, January 6th, 1959, minute no. 879 (accessed May 2019)
[117] From *Children's Film Foundation Board Minutes*, March 8th, 1955, minute no. 531a (accessed July 2019)
[118] From *Children's Film Foundation Board Minutes*, April 14th, 1954, minute no. 441 (accessed July 2019)
[119] From *Children's Film Foundation Board Minutes*, May 16th, 1957, minute no. 736 (accessed May 2019)

average child's attention span: ''CFF features are normally restricted to about one hours duration as this appears to correspond with the concentration span of the average nine year old''.[120] The Foundation's features and serials of the 1950s seem to be, as in the fashion of the time, made generally for male consumption - only one of the features produced in this decade featured a female lead (girls were usually given support roles, as part of a predominantly male gang or as a sister aiding and abetting in her siblings adventure). The exception to this norm, with the lead role played by Mandy Miller, was the Van Dyke Pictures production *Adventure in the Hopfields* (1954, d. John Guillermin). Mandy Miller was already an established child-star, who had earned fantastic reviews for her lead role in *Mandy* (1952, d. Alexander Mackendrick) where she portrayed a deaf-mute child in a film based on a true story. Perhaps this was the reason the CFF granted her the lead - the general *modus operandi* was to cast stage school finds in their films. Another factor that could have determined the lack of lead roles for females at this time could have been the constraints enforced by the Education Act of 1944 that had raised the minimum age of child actors to fifteen. It was perhaps more believable for a boy to play a younger role than a maturing female to play a twelve year old girl. The CFF, in some cases, even went to the expense of filming overseas in order to circumvent the restrictions enforced on home soil.

The presumption on examining the CFF output for Saturday matinee audiences of the 1950s would be that this audience would be mostly male. Unable to find scant written evidence or documentation of gender split and with examination of contemporary photographs of matinee audiences being inconclusive, the question of the make-up of the audience was one that I asked members of my Derby area survey if they could recollect. Ashley Franklin, a local historian who wrote *A Cinema Near You*, recalled "I would say it was predominantly male. Although I went to the ABC Saturday morning matinees with my first girlfriend and my best pal also went with his girlfriend, there would have been up to five or six other school pals in our party who were all male. Also, youngsters were encouraged to go up on stage and sing a song, and I recall it was always boys who performed."[121] Wendy, a Derby ABC Minor in the 1950s, remembered "an equal split of boys and girls. Yes, there were lots of westerns, Charlie Chaplin, The Three Stooges, etc. but I remember going to the matinee with local girlfriends – often about half a dozen of us and I can still remember most of their names. Girls tended to sit together, as did the boys"[122] (Derby ABC Minor, 1950s). Alan, another Derby audience member remembered "going along with his neighbours from a very young age – there were about 9 kids in that family – half boys and girls and that they all sat together. He also remembered sneaking in free through one of the emergency doors when one of the older girls opened it from inside"[123] (Derby ABC Minor, 1950s). Michael, a matinee-goer at the Alfreton Empire, had a different take on the make-up of the audience in the 1970s; "My sister came with us - but it was 3 boys and a girl. I wasn't paying a lot of attention but reckon the audience would have been maybe 2:1 boys to girls. I remember thinking that the Flash Gordon / Buck Rogers serials and the Flashing Blades etc. was for us boys, the inevitable BFI film was for the girls, and the Tom & Jerry plus main

[120] Henry Geddes in *Press Release by The Children's Film Foundation* (1976) p. 4
[121] Respondent from Derby and District matinee audience survey, interviewed by the author, October 2020
[122] Respondent from Derby and District matinee audience survey, interviewed by the author, October 2020
[123] Respondent from Derby and District matinee audience survey, interviewed by the author, October 2020

feature was for everyone, but may have had a slight 'boyish' bias in content." (Saturday Cinema Club member, 1970s, Alfreton Empire, interviewed by the author November 2018). Interesting to note that he regarded the BFI (CFF) film 'was for the girls', perhaps reflecting the change in gender emphasis by the productions since the 1950s.

I had an idea that maybe girls in general went shopping with their mothers whilst the boys were offloaded at the cinema, but this was disputed by Wendy; "I don't think we ever went shopping with our mums on a Saturday morning. Shopping wasn't a priority unless it was for school uniform, shoes, etc. and never a pastime as it is today – there wasn't enough money for that! Remember this was in the 1950s. I think we just enjoyed spending our pocket money at the flicks and occasionally having an ice lolly. The lads messed about more than the girls but there was always an usherette when needed ready to throw them out"[124] (Derby ABC Minor, 1950s). However, with the absence of specific data (as figures returned to the CFF were for ticket sales only) the gender split of the matinee audience throughout its history has to be assumed to be roughly that of the findings of a 1965 survey completed by the Group Marketing and Research Company, which found the gender of the audience within Greater London to be 59% male, 41% female and outside of London 53% male, 47% female.[125]

But how did the participants experience the matinees? Several hundred kids, many of them school-friends, overseen by a handful of staff, obviously had the potential for chaos as well as fostering a community spirit. Comparing a sample of my own research with existing research, there is a strong sense that cinema-goers were deeply affected by a feeling of belonging and identity, both as members of a club and as children. Moreover, their experiences often brought wonder to their imaginations. For instance, Gary Kemp, who went on to star in two CFF features, recalls that in 1960s Islington, North London:

> ''About two hundred of us, wired to the tits on Jublees, Munchies and Kia-Ora, infested the cinema with such virulence that even the toughest usherettes would scurry off to cleaning cupboards for a couple of hours and smoke themselves sick [...] in accordance with some long-forgotten lore of cinema, the cavalry coming [in a western] meant you had to lift your seat and drum your feet rapidly on its underside until the manager turned the light on, or the cavalry arrived.''[126]

Terry Staples reported that in the London suburbs ''*Zorro* caused us all to erupt into the High St with our jackets draped over our shoulders like *Zorro* capes, having imaginary sword fights and smacking our bottoms as we galloped imaginary horses''[127] (Wealdstone Grenadier). The matinee's ability to incite anarchic giddiness yet also rich imagination is immediately comparable with the memory of Richard, a Derby matinee-goer from the early 1950s: ''an older boy, 'Cowboy' Kenny Johnson, came to the matinees with us. He'd always dress in some sort of

[124] Respondent from Derby and District matinee audience survey, interviewed by the author, October 2020
[125] From *Research for the Children's Film Foundation - the children's matinee*, compiled by the Group Marketing and Research Ltd, June 1965, p. 2 (accessed May 2019)
[126] Gary Kemp in *I Know This Much* (London, Harper Collins/Fourth Estate, 2010) p. 71
[127] Staples *All Pals Together* p. 70

cowboy gear, with toy guns, and he “galloped” around afterwards, recreating the scenes from the cowboy feature”[128] (Derby ABC Minor, 1950s). The special feeling of belonging to something exclusive was also remembered by a Staples’ interviewee: ‘‘I vividly remember Flash Gordon, and they stopped each week at the most exciting moment when everybody was in danger so we could hardly wait the week out to find out how they came through. The camaraderie of discussing how the hero would escape that week’s perils occupied a lot of children and made school more bearable’’[129] (Wealdstone Grenadier). The camaraderie of the club was also recalled by interviewees in Derby, consolidated by the cinema chains, who encouraged club songs, newsletters and badges, as Richard recalled: ‘‘there was a special song we always sung before the films started – we knew all the words (even though they were on the screen every week) and we literally bawled them out. It set the scene for a rowdy couple of hours”[130] (Derby ABC Minor, 1950s).

Rowdiness is a recurring element in anecdotal research - Trevor recalled: ‘‘I just remember loads of noisy kids at the thrupenny rush. We chanted for the film to start after the intermission, during which we would queue in the aisle for an ice-cream from the usherette – if we had any money’’[131] (Allenton Broadway, Derby matinee-goer, 1960s). Furthermore, ‘‘I remember one dreary western – it was boring as hell, so we kids looked for other things to do. Even us posh kids in the balcony were throwing ice cream cartons around. So the manager stopped the film and told us we’ll all go home early if we didn’t settle down’’[132] (ABC Minor from Derby). The rowdiness seemed to be found in London as well as Derby: ‘’the front row was a good place to be for a while - because then you could try to trip up the ice-cream ladies. Among the items being thrown around, blown out or dropped inside shirts were half-eaten Zoom lollies, Kia-Ora juice cartons cornets, beakers of Coke, bits of bubble gum - girls with long hair were in particular danger from that - spit balls, peanuts, rice, dried peas, water balloons and of course, stink bombs’’[133] (Hounslow West ONCC member). However, the memory of a Derby cinema-goer seems to trump these recollections, suggesting that Derby had just as much intense rowdiness as elsewhere - as recalled by Kay; ‘‘my Mum used to scrape my hair into pig-tails and send me off to the matinee. I remember once watching the film when an auburn pig-tail arced across the scene. I joined in with the laughter until I realised it was one of mine, cut off by a boy sitting behind me’’[134] (Derby Cavendish matinee-goer, 1950s).

To pull in bigger audiences and to entertain the audience, it was obvious to the cinema managers that more imaginative promotional stunts and themed mornings were necessary, but this gave rise to issues of economy and proximity to London. The southern circuits had access to visiting stars; the more northern club managers had to be a little more practical. Singer Ralph McTell recalls seeing his heroes Laurel and Hardy visiting his matinee club; ‘‘it really shocked me to see them as lined-faced old men, all the more frightening as they were wearing their little

[128] Respondent from Derby and District matinee audience survey, interviewed by the author, October 2018
[129] Staples *All Pals Together* p. 71
[130] Respondent from Derby and District matinee audience survey, interviewed by the author, January 2020
[131] Respondent from Derby and District matinee audience survey, interviewed by the author, October 2018
[132] Franklin *A Cinema Near You* p. 129
[133] Staples *All Pals Together* p. 201
[134] Respondent from Derby and District matinee audience survey, interviewed by the author, December 2018

trademark bowler hats and smiling. We'd assumed that all our favourites were roughly contemporary.''[135] The manager of the Odeon Harlesden treated his audience to a guest appearance by Gene Autry, the singing cowboy hero of many of the club's films. One member remembers: ''it was marvellous. I can see him now riding his white horse, Champion, down the central aisle of the cinema.''[136] Away from the capital, in Derby, budgets were obviously tighter, as recalled by Richard: ''I was a member of the ABC Minors, with a membership card. Someone would get up on stage and announce the member's birthdays each week, and I remember once there was a fancy-dress competition, when I went dressed as Charlie Chaplin''[137] (Derby ABC Minor, 1950s). Wealth and class issues impacted more upon the Derbyshire children's memories: ''I made sure I was member at both the Empire and Odeon as come the end of the year, if I had enough stamps on my card, I was guaranteed a Christmas gift far better than I ever had at home''[138] (Alfreton Grenadier).

In brief, experiences nationally mirrored those experienced in Derby, but those experiences were coloured by a North-South economic divide. The mirroring of national experiences by the Derby sample confirms that cinemas providing a Saturday morning club provision as a circuit requirement utilised and promoted a local atmosphere. The 'club' atmosphere, where friends could carry on their week-day relationships with their schoolmates, seems to prevail in their memories. The celebration of birthdays, the giving of Christmas presents, fancy dress competitions and guest appearances seem to suggest that these matinee shows were seen as more than just screen entertainment, by both the management and the children attending. This appeared to foster a neighbourhood belonging to the clubs, where children began to create their own unique customs and habits, like Gary Kemp's cavalry stampede or 'Cowboy' Kenny's dressing up in his hat and six-shooters. Also, as noted by Robert Shail, ''these clubs represented a rare opportunity to escape the sphere of parental control; for many this helped to build a sense for independence and developed self-confidence.''[139] Shail also remarked to me in conversation in 2019 that the audience recalled many details of the clubs and antics of the audience, yet the details of the films they watched were less clear – a fact that also prevailed in the Derbyshire audiences. The misbehaviour in the clubs, reported in my sample, was not generally perceived as overwhelming or off-putting: even the young girl who sacrificed her plait to Saturday morning cinema was not discouraged – she continued to attend for some years after, which suggests it contributed to the sense that this was truly a children's space. As the movement began to struggle in the late 1970s, children – those that chose to still attend – were treated to a full entertainment programme for just a few pennies. Michael remembered; ''As I recall the structure was usually – one episode of an old serial (typically a 30s *Flash Gordon* or something East European with very bad dubbing), a Tom and Jerry cartoon (often the best bit), and a family-friendly main feature such as an English short film or other child friendly film. The whole programme ran for about three hours''[140] (Saturday Cinema Club member, 1970s, Alfreton

[135] Staples *All Pals Together* p. 183
[136] Staples *All Pals Together* p. 67
[137] Respondent from Derby and District matinee audience survey, interviewed by the author, October 2018
[138] Franklin *A Cinema Near You* p. 53
[139] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 145
[140] Respondent from Derby and District matinee audience survey, interviewed by the author, November 2018

Empire). This last anecdote further suggests that it was not necessarily only the films that were enjoyed there.

Capturing the zeitgeist - *Skid Kids*

Whilst most scripts submitted to or adapted by the CFF concentrated on classic children's themes (adaptations of Enid Blyton stories had become a popular theme) or animal related adventures, sometimes the texts reflected the crazes or trends capturing the zeitgeist of the time. The earliest of these was *Skid Kids*, produced by Gilbert Church Productions and directed by Don Chaffey, shot in August 1952 in Bermondsey in south-east London and released for distribution to the matinees in 1953. Filmed at three urban cycle speedway tracks, the film's production costs ran to £15,802[141] and was to prove one of the CFF's most successful films of the 1950s (though it's popularity waned as the cycle speedway craze died out towards the end of the decade). In the aftermath of World War II:

> "Groups of teenage lads with little to do took rickety old bicycles, not otherwise roadworthy, and began racing them on makeshift tracks in the rubble of the UK's war-ravaged cities. They were imitating motorcycle speedway – which rose to huge popularity between the wars…the bicycle-riding 'skid kids', as they were affectionately known, wore homemade kit, their bikes had no gears or brakes, but many of the boys soon became master mechanics and riders. By 1949, *The Daily Graphic* estimated that the number of teenage enthusiasts of this post-war craze was anything between 30,000 and 100,000."[142]

Many amateur clubs formed, and by 1950 ten thousand people watched the first cycle-speedway international at London's Earls Court. *The News of the Worlds* 'Speedway Correspondent' was moved to write in 1951:

> "Today if you go to the more devastated areas of London or any of the big towns on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon, you are likely to see a youth complete with crash helmet, coloured jersey and a specially adapted bike, making his way to a bombed-site track just around the corner. With him, probably, will be his young friend, one of the many fans who hang over the rails and cheer on the juvenile heroes of the backyard arenas."[143]

This enthusiasm was encountered during production, with *The Daily Herald's* Alfred Richman writing:

> "The children lined the track like a race crowd, the film unit was ready for action then the producer made his mistake… 'Just listen, kids' he shouted 'when the winner passes the post, a flag will be raised. I want you to run across the track and surround him while you cheer. Show him you're pleased he is the winner.' It

[141] From Children's Film Foundation Board Minutes, May 16th, 1957, minute no. 736 (accessed May 2019)
[142] Emma Ailes in BBC News website Cycle speedway: *The 'skid kids' who raced bicycles on WW2 bombsites* https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-31013387 (accessed March 2019)
[143] Dudley Smith in *News of the World Speedway* column, March 1951

> was over in seconds. Long after the cameras stopped whirring, 17 year-old Barrie MacGregor, who won the race, was running down the street with 300 yelling youngsters still chasing him. The rest of the company decided to pack up and have a meal."[144]

The synopsis of the film is fairly typical of what was to become the CFF fare – the local cycle speedway team, who have cleared their own makeshift track on a bombsite and led by their chief rider Swankey Clarke (played by Barry Mac Gregor), are accused of stealing cycles and parts from a local manufacturer. As a result they are barred from their track (on which they were training for 'the big race') so they set out to find the real culprits. Racing against time and undergoing the obligatory set-backs and adventures, they succeed in having the culprits apprehended, and as a reward the cycle manufacturers re-surface their track, on which their big race is won. The script, an original story by Jack Howells, obviously takes its cues from two recently successful films, the Italian classic neo-realist *Bicycle Thieves* (*Ladri di Biciclette*) (directed by Vittorio De Sica, 1948) and *Emil and the Detectives* (directed by Milton Rosmer, 1935), a British adaptation of the earlier German film transferring the action from Berlin to London - a fact not ignored by the reviewers, firstly from the *Manchester Guardian*:

> "The title is the least attractive thing in the picture. It owes something to two excellent models – *Bicycle Thieves* and *Emil and the Detectives.* The story is of the miniature tracks which schoolboys make so they may emulate on their pedal-cycles the exploits of professional speedway riders. School children have acted the chief parts and the film is shot against a documentary background in the Italian manner. Most unusual for a British film, its depiction of working class life seems to be authentic. The villains who are brought to book are, thank heaven, coshless, and every child will leave the cinema convinced that his best friend is the bobby on the beat."[145]

However, 'S.R.' the reviewer in *The Monthly Film Bulletin* commented:

> "There is a freshness and vitality about this little film which compensates for its faults, which are obvious enough. The narrative is confused in places, the children's acting lacks spontaneity and is not helped by the dialogue, which fails to catch the authentic back-street flavour. The film shows signs of being made in a hurry and this, perhaps, was its salvation. The wilderness of south east London offers not only a wonderfully varied and interesting background, but also, given a trick of the light, a touch of mist or a cloud of dust or a skidding wheel on a bomb-site, a beauty which the film has caught without the glamorisation usual in feature film photography of back street locations." [146]

Sports historian Simon Inglis notes "in a time of post-war austerity and rationing, the bomb sites offered a 'paradise' of freedom for urban teens. It was the birth of youth culture that hadn't

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[144] Alfred Richman in *The Daily Herald,* August 22nd, 1952
[145] Unknown reviewer in *The Manchester Guardian*, February 9th, 1953
[146] S. R. in *Monthly Film Bulletin* (Volume 20, Number 230, March 1953)

existed before, which enabled the kids to have a completely separate identity to their parents for the first time – cycle speedway was something that no adult did." [147]

My research into the making of the film and of the location of the cycle clubs of the time led me to imagine that this craze was almost London-centric. Until, that is, I met a respondent to my Derby matinee audience survey. Richard, an ABC Minor of the time, was trying to recall some of the titles of matinee films that he had seen. I mentioned a few, trying to jog his memory, including *Skid Kids*, about cycle speedway. I showed him some excerpts and although he couldn't remember seeing the film, he recalled;

> "There was a bombsite at the bottom of our street on London Road in Derby, where a Royal Infirmary building was flattened in the war. With the help of the local vicar, a group of us flattened and cleared the site of rubble and made an oval cinder track. We adapted old push bikes, with bits bought from the shop at the end of the road and held races – we called it 'clag-biking'. I remember a boy, Oggy, who didn't have his own bike and 'borrowed' one from his aunty, a district nurse. I remember her coming storming over to us one day shouting 'where's my bike?' The boys in the film seem more professional than us – wearing helmets and proper gear. Their track was much cleaner – we had to contend with rocks and brick-ends no matter how many times we cleared up. We weren't as organised as them, no teams or club games against rivals like in the film." [148]

The CFF were not only making, in their first years, films which children could relate to, they were also producing films that mirrored the youngsters own pastimes and hobbies, something that was to become a pattern throughout the Foundation's history. Rayant Pictures *Soapbox Derby* (directed by Darcy Conyers, 1957) followed a similar pattern, this time based on Kart racing with Michael Crawford starring as Peter who eventually wins the Derby, again overcoming all the odds. As Robert Shail notes, the CFF were giving children "an endorsement of playing by the rules and confidence in the triumph of virtue." [149]

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[147] Simon Inglis in BBC News website Cycle speedway: *The 'skid kids' who raced bicycles on WW2 bombsites* https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-31013387 (accessed March 2019)
[148] Respondent from Derby and District matinee audience survey, interviewed by the author, December 2019
[149] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 5

CHAPTER FOUR

DOMINATING THE MATINEE CLUBS - THE CHILDREN'S FILM FOUNDATION IN THE 1960S

Looking back on his tenure as chairman of the Children's Film Foundation in the 1960s, John Davis said "the CFF's success was built on the policy of giving the children what they enjoy, rather than what adults think they ought to enjoy."[150] He was responding to critics who questioned the wisdom of adults creating content for children. However, true to the tenets developed by Mary Field soon after the instigation of the Children's Film Foundation, they continued to foreground the needs and expectations of the child in their productions. Henry Geddes, the long-serving Executive Officer wrote "we have frequently been accused of making middle-class pictures for middle-class children. Sometimes I wish those who complain would see some of our films with their intended audiences."[151] In the period the two men oversaw, tastes amongst the audience were beginning to radically change with the advent in the early part of the decade of Free Cinema and the Realist School, who portrayed 'kitchen sink dramas' by new authors and scriptwriters in Northern working-class settings. This 'new realism' was to have a profound effect on the style of the CFF's productions.

The Foundation found that short films and magazine programmes, such as *Our Magazine* (1951-56) and *A Letter From….* (1951-54), were being usurped by the need for more features and serials, so by the 1960s there was a definite switch in the Foundation's output. They had 37 production companies to call upon to create content, including Anvil Films, Century Film Productions, Fanfare Films and Eyeline Films (who would retain their association with the CFF for twenty years and have the privilege of producing the Foundation's final feature production, *Terry on the Fence* in 1985), and a team of trusted writers and directors along with an increased grant from the industry in order to meet the rising demands. By 1967, its production peaked. That year, six features, five serials and two adaptations of films from overseas were completed - out producing Hammer films who completed six features. The matinee market had given the CFF its existence, but by this time the CFF was ensuring the matinee's continued existence.[152] With a now sizable back catalogue the Foundation dominated matinee programming, and by 1969 the CFF had invested a total of over £3million in the production of children's film.

The Foundation's finances and feature production in the Sixties

The Eady Levy was ensuring annual financial security for the CFF - the grant had remained at £125,000 per year throughout the 1950s and was raised to £137,000 in 1962. By 1966 the annual grant had risen to £192,000.[153] The audience figures remained buoyant despite a fall in regular matinee outlets - from 994 in 1961 to 742 in 1969,[154] with weekly attendance figures for each matinee averaging around 400. But the industry, especially the unions, were beginning to

[150] From *The Children's Film Foundation's Annual Report*, 1972
[151] Henry Geddes in *Press Release by The Children's Film Foundation* (1976) p. 4
[152] Agajanian *'Just for Kids?'* p.400
[153] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 24
[154] From *Press Release by The Children's Film Foundation* p. 6

question the Foundation's policies - the original agreements that the unions signed up to were to make documentaries and short films for children, and although the CFF films were non-profit making, they were beginning to show some dissent and were demanding higher rates for engagement. On 11th July 1962 a special board meeting was called to discuss "the short notice of the ACTT (Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians) Union to withdraw the concessions for children's films. The effect would be an increase of £6,000 on the £38,500 budget for *Sons of the Sahara* and approximately £2,000 on the £29,000 budget for *By Jiminy*. It was agreed that the request for First Class travel was unreasonable and that the CFF could not afford the union's demands."[155] This stand-off was resolved by October as with "legal action being undertaken against the ACTT they had undertaken to abide by the documentary and shorts agreement."[156]

Despite this, seasoned film stars were still willing to work for reduced rates to appear in the CFF productions. The sixties saw performers such as Ronald Fraser, Gordon Jackson and Norman Rossington cast in *Daylight Robbery* (d. Michael Truman, 1964), Wilfrid Brambell, Pat Coombes, Judy Cornwell, lan Hendry and Adrienne Corrie appear in *Cry Wolf* (d. John Davis, 1968), while in the same year the release of *A Ghost of a Chance* (d. Jan Darnley-Smith, 1967) featured Terry Scott, Ronnie Barker, Jimmy Edwards, Bernard Cribbens, Graham Stark and Patricia Hayes. In 1965, *Cup Fever* (see below) called on David Lodge, Bernard Cribbins, Norman Rossington and the entire Manchester United first team squad to bolster the story, and *Lionheart* (d. Michael Furlong, 1968) had roles for Joe Brown, Irene Handl, Wilfred Brambell and Jimmy Edwards.

Thirty five features were produced by independent companies for the CFF in the sixties and most of the scripts followed tried and tested formulas, but with an effort of reflecting changes in popular trends and cultures. Fanfare Films production *Go Kart Go* (1965, d. Jan Darnley-Smith) was essentially Michael Barnes' re-write of the 1957 CFF film *Soapbox Derby* (1955, d. Darcy Conyers), with the more modern go-kart superseding the old fashioned soapbox. Robert Shail writes "looking like a reworking of *Soapbox Derby* but with engines, *Go Kart Go* bears the unmistakable stamp of the Foundation's plan to imbue its films with a contemporary feel. The brisk, energetic style here, combined with elements of realism, feels less dated than it's typical 1950's work."[157] He adds "the contemporary tone is reinforced by a music score that sounds like the instrumental pop group The Shadows."[158]

Almost a quarter of the films featured animals, a favourite theme of the audience, seemingly enjoyed more by the girls. *The Last Rhino* (1961, d. Henry Geddes) was a film produced by World Safari Ltd, wherein two children resolve to save the last rhino in an East African game reserve from being destroyed, *Flash the Sheepdog* (1965, d, Laurence Henson) tells the story of an English orphan uprooted to the Scottish borders, who trains his collie, Flash, to become the

[155] From *The Children's Film Foundation Special Directors Meeting* (11th July 1962) minute no. 1106 (accessed November 2018)
[156] From *The Children's Film Foundation Board Meeting* (18th October 1962) minute no. 1121 (accessed November 2018)
[157] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 60
[158] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 61

winner of the sheepdog trials. *Calamity the Cow* (1967, d. David Eastman) was a Shepperton Studios story featuring a young Phil Collins as one of the children who protect their cow from cattle thieves and *The Great Pony Raid* (1968, d. Frederic Goode) tells a similar story of children taking on pony rustlers on Dartmoor. *Lionheart* (1968, d. Michael Forlong) was a Michael Forlong tour-de-force, with him taking on producer and director roles on his own script, and casting his son James in the lead role as a young boy who saves an escaped lion from being destroyed. *Mischief* (1969, d. Ian Shand), named after "the latest addition to a pony trekking stable, looked after by a boy called Davy during the school holidays. He discovers that mischief was once a circus pony and reacts to the sound of music - leading to incidents full of excitement and suspense."[159]

High adventure was still a staple of the productions. *The Flood,* (1963, d. Frederic Goode) is the tale of "eight youngsters who are cut off by the East Anglian floods in a farmhouse with no grown-ups to help them. The story tells how they deal with the situation until they are rescued."[160] *Davey Jones' Locker* (1965, d. Frederic Goode) featured Susan George in her second CFF role of the year (the other being *Cup Fever*, directed by David Bracknell). This film concerns "a group of children on holiday in Malta who join an aqua-lung diving class. One of them discovers a wreck and, disobeying instructions, decides to investigate on his own, with near serious consequences."[161] Perils at sea appeared to be a common theme, with *Escape from the Sea* (1968, d. Peter Seabourne) and *All at Sea* (1969, d. Ken Fairbairn) both dealing with ocean (mis)adventures and the Scottish tale *The Hunch* (1967, d. Sarah Erulka) tells a story of the child protagonists foiling unscrupulous salvage operators. In *The Big Catch* (1968, d. Laurence Henson) the narrative extends to include both a sea-going adventure alongside the story of trying to capture a wild pony - ticking two boxes on the CFF checklist.

The theme of juvenile crime solvers was still being mined by the CFF's producers. *Wings of Mystery* (1963, d. Gilbert Gunn) gave us a tale of racing pigeon fans foiling industrial espionage and *Daylight Robbery* (1964, d. Michael Truman) is the story of "three children who are accidentally locked in a supermarket for the weekend and find themselves involved with a gang of crooks who are using the basement to tunnel into the bank vaults next door."[162] *Runaway Railway* (1965, d. Jan Darnley-Smith) concerns itself with young railway enthusiasts who, whilst working on a derelict locomotive find themselves involved in a mail train robbery - timely released as the 'great train robbers' of 1963 had recently been sentenced.

But the tide was turning as the CFF Production Committee invited more mature scripts to serve their ever more sophisticated audience. Films that reflected the matinee goers' own lives, worries and experiences were now being produced. *Cup Fever,* cashing in on the growing football craze as England looked forward to hosting the World Cup Finals, will be discussed later in the chapter, but the first film to truly capture the changing attitude of the CFF productions of the 1960s was *Seventy Deadly Pills* (1963, d. Pat Jackson). Jackson directed the filming of his own script, basically the tale of the theft of a bottle of pills from a doctor's car that becomes

[159] From *Children's Film and Television Foundation Catalogue and Index of Films*, 1980 p. 21
[160] From *Children's Film and Television Foundation Catalogue and Index of Films*, 1980 p. 13
[161] From *Children's Film and Television Foundation Catalogue and Index of Films*, 1980 p. 16
[162] From *Children's Film and Television Foundation Catalogue and Index of Films*, 1980 p. 15

mixed up with a tin of sweets and becomes a chase film across London as the young gang who find them - and crucially just avoid taking them, are pursued by both the police and the villains. Pat Jackson, a former documentary maker, obviously took his inspiration from the realism of the New Wave of directors that had now become a major force in British film. Robert Shail suggests:

> "The London we see still bears the scars of World War II in its empty wasteland and derelict housing. The realities of the postwar world are alluded to in the depiction of one child whose single mum heads out to work one evening shifts when he comes home for tea. This is a different world to the one depicted by Mary Field's CFF."[163]

This was one of the first of the Foundation's films that took advantage of the relaxing of the child employment laws in 1963, leading to the casting of working-class actors rather than the middle class stage school students (with their perfect pronunciation) that they had relied on until then. Casting local kids gave this production a gritty realism until now not depicted by any CFF production. Robert Shail again notes:

> "The CFF's new production ethos of the early 1960s is typified by the naturalistic acting of it's young cast, including their authentic sounding working-class London accents, by the up-to-date nature of the dialogue exchanges between the children and through the realistically observed backdrops. Without being heavy handed, the film conveys its message about the need to beware gifts of unknown origin. The combination of this traditional sentiment with the reinvigorated film-making style indicates the new direction that the CFF was headed in."[164]

The Christmas Tree (1966*,* d. James Clark) dealt with the often thwarted but eventually successful attempts by two brothers and a sisters efforts to get a Christmas tree for a hospital Christmas party - another Michael Barnes script and again using working-class young actors. In *Cry Wolf* (1968, d. John Davis) director Davies shot his own script, mostly on location in Margate, a story of an over imaginative boy Tony (played by Anthony Kemp, who would appear as a work-house boy in the set-piece 'Food, Glorious Food' later that year in Carol Reed's *Oliver*) that is "classic CFF material, an exciting story that builds to a dramatic finish, with a simple message for its young audience. The moral might seem obvious enough: if you regularly tell fibs, no one will believe you when you're telling the truth. In reality the film's message is more subtle and typical of the child friendly attitude of the Foundation."[165] In the story, Tony tells tall tales, constantly embarrassing his father, the local mayor. When he does actually uncover a serious crime - a plot to kidnap the Prime Minister when he visits the town, he is obviously not believed and the action unfolds as the boy and his friends foil the kidnappers. The CFF were still making moralistic films for children, but now they were not condescending to their audience - they were presenting the issues on the children's own terms - foregrounding the child's experience and point of view.

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[163] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 62
[164] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 61 - 62
[165] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 68 - 69

Throughout the 1960s (and indeed for the rest of its existence) the CFF were still wary of the industry's, in particular the unions, terms of collaboration in producing films for matinees. As their share of funding from the Eady Levy rose, so did the voice of opposition to their cause, especially from others who were demanding a bigger share of the pot. This was typified by the following from a board meeting on September 19th 1968, under the heading 'Children's Matinees - A Non-Commercial Service':

> "The chairman referred to a recent trade meeting where the distribution of suitable films for children's matinees was being discussed. It had been suggested that a market research should be undertaken into the commercial possibilities of the matinees. He opposed any suggestion to commercialise the matinees or subject them to a research with this in mind. He felt strongly that the children's matinee should not be regarded as a commercial operation. Mr Camplin said if matinees were ever run on a commercial basis, then much of the support received from various organisations would not be forthcoming."[166]

Despite being on the way to being the most prolific producer of films in Britain, it was only the continued success of the non-commercial matinees that would ensure that the CFF had a future.

In context - The British film industry in the 1960s

In the introduction to *Transformation and Tradition in 1960s British Cinema,* Duncan Petrie writes "the 1960s is a decade that most scholars and critics agree represented a moment of transformation, as film was caught up in and influenced by a wider process of social and cultural change."[167] This situation, as audience tastes and expectations were repeatedly turned on their heads in a few brief years was summed up by critic Raymond Durgnat:

> "Its middle class patriotic ethos found itself challenged and shattered by successive waves: anger, satire, Swinging London, hippiedom and Hollywood-led cosmopolitanism as the 1960s progressed, while the decade's sudden changes in morality and taste so baffled film business professionals as almost to repeat the chaos of the coming of sound."[168]

Durgnat's four waves sum up the progressive changes in the British film industry in the 1960s, so it would be apt to examine them in turn, beginning with anger. The late 1950s saw a growing trend in the theatre and in literature of a new phenomenon - the 'angry young men', a group of mostly working class writers, named after a term coined in a theatre publicity notice to promote John Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger* in 1956. The writers (including an 'angry young woman, Shelagh Delany), mostly provincial, wrote left-wing radical texts characterised by a

[166] From *The Children's Film Foundation Board Meeting* (19th September 1968) minute no. 1478 (accessed November 2018)
[167] Duncan Petrie in *Transformation and Tradition in 1960s British Cinema* (Edinburgh, University Press, 2019) p. 1
[168] Petrie i*Transformation and Tradition in 1960s British Cinema* p. 2

disillusionment with traditional British society and an "impatience with the status quo, refusal to be co-opted by a bankrupt society, an instinctive solidarity with the lower classes."[169] These texts were beginning to be filmed by young directors, who had not necessarily arrived from a traditional cinematic background - Karel Reisz and Lindsay Anderson had previously been making documentaries, Tony Richardson gained his experience in the theatre and John Schlesinger was a television director. This 'New Wave' of directors, taking their cues from the French 'Nouvelle Vague' and inspired by productions in ABC television's *Armchair Theatre* (1956-1974), which had promoted much of the 'angry young men's' work, formed a movement which became known as 'Free Cinema', specialising in provincial, hard hitting 'kitchen sink dramas'. In 1963, Penelope Huston was moved to write:

> "A few years ago, if the British cinema had an immediately identifiable image, it would have been a shot of Kenneth More, jaw boldly jutting, on the bridge of a destroyer. At the moment, the national cinema would more readily be summed up in a view of a boy and girl wandering mournfully through the drizzle and mist of industrial Britain, looking for a place to live or a place to make love."[170]

The body of work from the British new wave had a profound effect on the style and texts of cinematic drama in this country. Ten groundbreaking (and now considered classic) films produced include the cinematic version of Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger* (1959, d. Tony Richardson), *Saturday Night, Sunday Morning* (1960, d. Karel Reisz), *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1962, d. Tony Richardson) and *This Sporting Life* (1963, d. Lindsay Anderson). Casting had also been revolutionised - there was no place in these working class dramas for Kenneth More's clipped southern accent, instead provincial newcomers took the leads, the 'kitchen sink dramas' launching the careers of many fine British actors, including Albert Finney, Tom Courtney, Julie Christie, Rita Tushingham and Rachel Roberts.

The satire boom was the output of a generation of British satirical writers, journalists and performers at the end of the 1950s and is often regarded as having begun with the first performance of *Beyond the Fringe* on 22 August 1960 and ending around December 1963 with the cancellation of the BBC TV show *That Was the Week That Was*. It was driven initially by Oxford and Cambridge undergraduates, who developed their university fringe and *Footlights* revue shows for the London stage, and then for television. Biting humour, especially against establishment figures and institutions became the norm, and after changing the face of British television comedy also influenced the big screen. *The Rebel* (1961, d. Robert Day) was written by Ray Galton and Alan Simpson, who went on to create the classic comedy *Steptoe and Son* (1962-1974) for BBC Television. It starred comedian Tony Hancock as a dissatisfied civil servant caught between his wannabe bohemian life and the bourgeois society he lives in. *Billy Liar* (1963, d. John Schlesinger) was a satirical observation on drab northern town life with new wave cinematic values and *Dr Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964, d. Stanley Kubrick) was a mammoth attempt, starring ex-Goon Peter Sellers in

[169] Luc Gilleman in 'From Coward and Rattigan to Osborne' in *Modern Drama* (Volume 51 Issue 1, Spring 2008) p. 104
[170] Penelope Huston in *The Contemporary Cinema* (London, Penguin Books, 1963) p. 119

multiple roles, lampooning the Cold War tensions that were dominating lives in the early sixties. Satirical movies continued as the decade progressed with notable titles such as *Bedazzled* (1967, d. Stanley Donen) and *The Magic Christian* (1969, d.Joseph McGrath).

The Beatles, probably the most satirical and mocking of all pop groups, were at the centre of what were to become described as the 'Swinging London' films. With the beat group boom of the mid-sixties, coupled with the rise of mod fashions and the dawn of pop art and op art, London led the cultural world as the centre of popular culture. A *Time* magazine article described it as "in a decade dominated by youth, London has burst into bloom. It swings; it is the scene."[171] The films foregrounded the 'groovy' people, with a huge reliance on pop music to progress the narrative. The Beatles themselves starred in *A Hard Day's Night* (1964, d. Richard Lester) and a gaggle of beat groups had their moments on screen, including The Dave Clark Five, Gerry and the Pacemakers and The Small Faces. For six years over twenty films foregrounded the 'Swinging London' theme, from *Darling* (1965, d. John Schlesinger) to the Mick Jagger vehicle *Performance* (1968, d. Donald Cammell, Nicolas Roeg). The action even swung to Rome for one of the most 'swinging' films of all, *The Italian Job* (1969, d. Peter Collinson) for which the makers of the British Mini car were wholly grateful). Also grateful was the star of the film Michael Caine, who was to become forever linked to swinging London, initially for his performance in *Alfie* (1966, d. Lewis Gilbert). *Performance*, however, was a film that defied categorisation. On the IMDB website, 'Francheval' notes;

> "Nothing about *Performance* is conventional. It takes off immediately into a hectic pace, flashy colors, haunting music, and very graphic sex and violence. The London crime world is photographed with a rare accuracy. Actually, one of the guys playing the gangsters happened to be a real life gangster. Then suddenly, by a random twist of fate, the cockney villain (no heroes here) is propelled into another completely different underground scene, where "nothing is true, everything is permitted". He meets his alter ego as a has-been pop musician living secluded in a red-walled mansion covered with mirrors, together with a duet of intriguing women. Hallucinogenic mushrooms are casually served at breakfast, notions of time and space fade away, while gender, identity and truth get blurred. The two main characters gradually merge together and though both of them seemingly get doomed by their fate in the end, you don't know by then which of them is who anymore."[172]

Performance is also perhaps the best British film example of 'hippiedom' as the alternative lifestyle of drugs and free love, prompted by the Summer of Love in 1968, became a subject for film-makers. Psychedelic colours, sharp jump-cuts and loud loud music (often by Pink Floyd or Tangerine Dream) were pre-requisites for directors including Michelangelo Antonioni (who initiated the style with the 1966 film *Blowup*) and Nicholas Roeg. The British psychedelic film canon pales into insignificance compared to that of the USA, where the counterculture films

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[171] From *"The Diamond Decades: The 1960s"* (The Daily Telegraph. 10 November 2016).
[172] 'Francheval' review on IMDB *Performance* (https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0066214/) accessed Jan 2021

were embraced by Hollywood's new generation of directors, and it was the Beatles (again) at the centre of the most popular film to be produced from the UK hippie scene. *Yellow Submarine* (1968, d. George Dunning) was a full-on psychedelic, flower power, summer of love film charting the cartoon Beatles in their battle with the music-hating Blue Meanies (aka the establishment). The Beatles had been unenthusiastic about participating in a new motion picture, not having been entirely satisfied with *Help!* and getting poor reviews for their self financed and self directed TV movie *The Magical Mystery Tour* (1967). However, they saw an animated film as a favourable way to complete their commitment to United Artists for a third film and the cartoon film became a fairytale for the hippie generation. It would be, however, five years later that a CFF production was influenced by this psychedelic turn, when Michael Powell directed *The Boy Who Turned Yellow*.

The innovations and new themes that were embraced by directors throughout the sixties changed the face of British cinema, but the mainstream movies being produced were made possible by one important factor - American money, the story behind Raymond Durgnat's final category, 'Hollywood-led cosmopolitanism'. Taking advantage of tax breaks offered by the UK government for filming in Britain with British crews, American studios (chief amongst them United Artists, Paramount, MGM and Columbia) financed all of the decades 'British' blockbusters, including *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962, d. David Lean), *Tom Jones* (1963, d. Tony Richardson), and *A Man for All Seasons* (1966, d. Fred Zinneman) The most successful US backed stand-alone film was Columbia Studios *Oliver!* (1968, d. Carol Reed) which went on to garner six Oscars. Spy movies were in vogue, with the *James Bond* franchise (1962 - present), funded by Cubby Broccoli's EON Productions and made at Pinewood Studios, being by far the most successful. The most prolific British studio, Hammer Films, had world-wide success due to distribution deals, at one time or another, with all of the major US companies.

UK distribution was dominated by the two major chains, Rank and Associated British Picture Corporation, who had an effective duopoly. British Lion serviced the remaining, mostly independent cinemas, but they lost out on first run films due to the control of the 'big two'. In contrast, the Children's Film Foundation's rota system, despite it's close links with Rank, ensured that even the smallest chain or independent had an opportunity for the first run of a release for their matinee clubs in at least one in four of the new productions. Interestingly, the British Board of Censors classified 67 films (51% of the years total) as 'U' in 1960, whilst in 1969 the total was only 26 releases (32.5%) - compared to 21 'X' certificate productions (16%) in 1960 and 31 (38.5%) in 1969,[173] a sign that the 'adult' audience was increasingly being targeted. In the British family market Disney releases dominated - the highest audiences being for *One Hundred and One Dalmatians* (1961, d. Clyde Geronimi, Hamilton Luske), *Mary Poppins* (1964, d. Robert Stevenson) and *The Jungle Book* (1967, d. Wolfgang Reitherman).

The sixties were indeed a time of enormous social change. The historian Arthur Marwick described the times as "a cultural revolution, creating a society that was more modern, vibrant, affluent, youthful, tolerant, diverse, aspirational and self-critical."[174] And the developments on the

[173] From Project Database for Duncan Petrie (Ed.) *Transformation and Tradition in 1960s British Cinema* (Edinburgh, University Press, 2019) p. 19
[174] Arthur Marwick in *The Sixties* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998) p. 16

British screen reflected these changes. The conservative board of the CFF were, quite understandably slow in adopting scripts and to favour working class provincial children over the middle class 'stage school' stars that proliferated in the 1950s productions, but by the end of the decade the changes heralded by the innovative directors of the 1960s were to become important to the feel of the Foundations output. As the 1970s dawned, the CFF productions were to look as alien to those of the 1950s as the kitchen-sink dramas looked to Penelope Huston's Kenneth More.

Spreading (and over-dubbing) the message

Although seen as secondary to the main objective of producing children's film for the home market, from the early days the CFF had been exporting its productions, and by 1956 they were exhibiting films in over 22 countries,[175] largely due to the efforts of Mary Field, who successfully began the promotion of the Foundation and its wares in India, Australia and throughout the Commonwealth. By the end of the 1960s, their films were being dubbed in over a dozen languages, while in return, the CFF were distributing dubbed films from as far afield as Japan, East Germany, Yugoslavia and Hungary to play at Britain's matinees.

As early as 1952 the CFF were making provision for overseas distribution. At a board meeting in November 1952 it was agreed that "J. Arthur Rank Overseas Distribution Ltd. would undertake overseas distribution for a 10% charge."[176] This was in fact 5% less than the agreement with Associated British Film Distributors to service the British exhibitors, made eight months previously. In January 1953 the board agreed an advance of up to £3000 to overdub their films in French, with the proviso that "it was anticipated the advance of £3000 would be recovered from revenues within a period of three years or less."[177] This was an optimistic projection, bearing in mind the most popular film distributed in 1954, *Skid Kids*, had a home revenue total of £504.00 in the twelve months from its release. However, the French dubbed films found a further market in Canada, as the minutes from April 1954 report;

> "Mr John Davis said that in French Canada there were no children's matinees as the authorities would not allow children to attend the cinemas, and the only way in which children in this area could see the Foundation's films was through TV. The meeting agreed to the CFF French dubbed films being televised on the Montreal and Quebec city stations."[178]

[175] Agajanian *'Just for Kids?'* p.406
[176] From *The Children's Film Foundation Board Meeting* (11th November 1952) minute no. 247 (accessed November 2019)
[177] From *The Children's Film Foundation Board Meeting* (10th February 1953) minute no. 285 (accessed November 2019)
[178] From *The Children's Film Foundation Board Meeting* (14th April 1954) minute no. 441 (accessed November 2019)

Despite being totally opposed to televising their productions in their entirety in the UK, the board judged each foreign territory by their capacity to screen matinees. In 1957 the minutes read “the meeting agreed that TV deals should be obtained in Italy as there was no prospect of cinema distribution in Italy.”[179]

In Malta, however, they decided to help to establish a matinee culture. The board “agreed to provide prints to Malta United Films Corps to inaugurate children’s film shows in Malta and to receive three pence per child.”[180] In 1953 it was decided that the winner of the Venice Film Festival, the Yugoslav production *Kekec* (1952, d. Joze Gale) would be adapted for home matinees, with a commentary (written by Patricia Latham and voiced by Maurice Denham), and released with a new title, *Trapped by the Giant*. The film cost £2,509 to overdub, and by 1971 had UK receipts of £5,120. This was followed by a dubbed version of the East German film *Das Gehemnisvolle Wrack* (1954, d. Herbert Ballman), which was re-christened *The Mysterious Wreck* for British audiences. The unions, however, were not happy with the CFF productions distributing to a TV audience overseas. They had raised objections to a US deal in 1960, and on 20th October it was reported that “the distribution committee was to proceed and conclude a contract with Walter Reade for USA distribution after the unions agreed that CFF productions would be restricted to children’s matinees.”[181] Theatrical distribution was still the main objective, and TV deals were only done with territories that could not guarantee exhibition in cinemas. In 1961 a television deal was concluded with West Germany, and in 1962 the CFF agreed to television rights in Japan as there was no prospect of obtaining theatrical releases in that country. In 1963, the board decreed that “in future, the overseas distributors should be given freedom of action to exploit CFF films on TV. Always bearing in mind that the Foundation would prefer cinema distribution wherever that was possible.”[182]

By 1961, the overseas revenue was far out performing home receipts. Total CFF revenue for 1960-61 was £18,332, with overseas sales contributing £13,323, the overseas figures showing a steady increase over the three previous years, whilst home revenues had stalled. Co-production with overseas producers were undertaken; *The Bungala Boys* (1962, d. Jim Jeffreys) was a surf club adventure from the Australian Jimar Pictures of Sydney, and did very well on the home circuit, but the co-production *Bara and the Young Lapp* with a Norwegian company was abandoned. Anvil Films six-part series *Treasure in Malta* (1964, d. Derek Williams) became subject of a special commercial deal with Malta United Film Corporation as the public demand on the island on which it was filmed was noted.

Half a dozen more titles were obtained from the Eastern Bloc during the 1960s, all dubbed for a home audience, with varying amounts of success. From Czechoslovakia came *Zpivajici*

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[179] From *The Children’s Film Foundation Board Meeting* (16th May 1957) minute no. 736 (3) (accessed November 2019)
[180] From *The Children’s Film Foundation Board Meeting* (22nd April 1953) minute no. 324 (accessed November 2019)
[181] From *The Children’s Film Foundation Board Meeting* (20th October 1960) minute no. 999 (accessed November 2019)
[182] From *The Children’s Film Foundation Board Meeting* (7th December 1963) minute no. 1210 (accessed November 2019)

Pudrenka (1960, d. Milan Vasnik) which became *The Camera Cops* and *Tana A Dva Pistolnici* (1967, d. Radim Cvrcek) which was re-titled *The Brno Trail.* Hungary's *Negyen Az Arban* (1961, d. Gyorgy Revesz) was released as *Danger on the Danube* and a second film from Yugoslav Joze Gale *Srenco Kekec!* (1963, d. Joze Gale), renamed *Mountain of Fear*, reprised the adventures of Kekec from the 1950s. The Russian film *Dobro Pozhalovat Ili Postoronnim Vkhod Vospreshchyon* (1964, d. Elem Klimov) became *No Holiday For Inochkin*, and following the success of *Cup Fever* in 1965, the East German film *Der Neue Fimmel* (1960, d. Walter Beck) was overdubbed and released as *Football Crazy* in 1967.

However, the quality and subject matter of these eastern European films was becoming a bone of contention for the board. In 1966, it was reported;

> "Following recent purchases of films from Hungary and Yugoslavia, Mr. John Halas asked if an exchange deal might be considered in view of the shortage of currency in some Iron Curtain countries. The Executive Producer replied they may be offered unsuitable films and having viewed many festival films none appeared to be suitable for the UK - either short films for the 5-10's or long films directed at an age range considerably older than our matinee audience."[183]

A few more titles would be overdubbed and added to the roster in the 1970s, but it was clear that the CFF was having a lot more success overseas than the imports were in the UK. And the CFF were still adamant on certain issues around the overseas television rights for its productions. In 1969, the American distributor Walter Reade submitted a proposal to CFF chairman John Davis "that after the success of the *Magnificent Six and a Half* could he have a 'crash course' of similar shows of ten minutes long. The chairman felt, however, that the CFF would not wish to be associated with 'television quickies'. However attractive some aspects of the proposition appeared, the CFF should not proceed with it as the risks involved and the effect it might have on the CFF's production programme and standards."[184] The CFF seemed still to regard TV as 'the enemy' and clearly did not wish to shorten their productions - still preferring the 55 minute format that built the story and characterisations, but still short enough to engage the audience's full attention. By the beginning of the 1970s the overseas revenue stood at £23,748 for the period from 1st July 1969 - 28th February 1970, and more deals to tie up further territories were being thrashed out. The future, at least for the overseas market, looked very rosy indeed.

From Children's Film to Junior Features - A report on the children's matinee 1965

By the turn of the 1960s the leading figures that had launched and developed the Foundation had moved on. Lord Rank had withdrawn as chairman to be replaced by John Davis, who had

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[183] From *The Children's Film Foundation Board Meeting* (21st March 1966) minute no. 1332 (accessed November 2019)

[184] John Davis in *The Children's Film Foundation Board Meeting* (25th April 1969) minute no. 1505 (accessed November 2019)

succeeded him to become the Managing Director of the Rank Organisation. Prominent industry figures were invited onto the board, including John Halas of leading British animators Halas Batchelor. The Production Committee now included actor Richard Attenborough, director Basil Wright and producer Peter Rogers. Mary Field had retired as Executive Officer at the end of 1958 to become head of children's entertainment at ATV and her place was taken by Frank Wells. Henry Geddes, an independent filmmaker who had produced several films for the CFF, amongst them *Toto and the Poachers* (1957, d. Brian Salt), *The Last Rhino* (1961, d. Henry Geddes) and the eight part serial *Ali and the Camel* (1960, d. Henry Geddes) was "effectively Frank Wells's right hand man"[185] and took over as Chief Executive Officer in 1964. One of Geddes's first tasks was to order a survey into how their productions were perceived in a time of radical changes in entertainment tastes. Robert Shail reported that:

> "There seems to have been a sense among the members of the Foundation's Board that, in an age of Beatlemania, independent commercial television and expanding youth culture, the audience was changing. In 1964 a comprehensive study of its activities was commissioned from the company Group Marketing and Research Ltd., a subsidiary of the Rank Organisation. Some 1,500 interviews with audience members were carried out across forty-two cinemas and the results published as *Progress Report: The CFF in the Sixties*. The CFF had always monitored its output by asking cinema managers to complete short questionnaires on a weekly basis, allowing the popularity of each production to be assessed, but this was by far the most systematic investigation it had undertaken."[186]

The results were a comprehensive snap-shot of the CFF in the 1960s, with many recommendations to ensure its future success, very much in the way that the survey compiled for Mary Field had as a template for production in the 1950s. The major findings and recommendations of the *Progress Report: The CFF in the Sixties* are below, in a summary of the original report:

Sex, age and size of audience -

The gender breakdown was detailed as follows: Within London boys 59%, girls 41% and outside of London boys 53%, girls 47%. The average age of attendees is 8.8 years old.[187]

Although the average size of Saturday morning audiences fell during the 1950s, it has recovered somewhat during the last three years and at Rank's boys and girls clubs the average appears now to have settled at 460 - 520 children. Weekly averages at Rank clubs were reported as 1962-63; 421, 1963-64; 417 and 1964-65; 492.[188]

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[185] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 21
[186] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 21
[187] From *Progress Report: The CFF in the Sixties* (complied by Group Marketing and Research Ltd., June 1965) p. 4 (accessed January 2019)
[188] From *Progress Report: The CFF in the Sixties* p. 4 (accessed January 2019)

Children's tastes and preferences -

There is no simple cut and dried formula for children's films. There is a wide range of themes and situations which are likely to be of equal appeal. However, in general, children's tastes are more homogenous than adults and on the basis of this research it is possible to indicate the pit-falls that can occur in making films for children and to outline the elements which are likely to contribute to success. In planning a film for children therefore the factors to which primary consideration are characterisation, plot development, action and excitement, comedy, animals, magic, fantasy, and the question of colour films versus black and white.[189]

Characterisations -

Children like to identify themselves with people having values which they are willing to accept or enjoying adventures which they themselves would like to have. This does not mean however that children prefer to identify themselves with other children; for some children the identification appears to be much stronger with adult screen heroes, such as Hercules, Lawrence of Arabia, Captain Marvel, Elvis Presley, etc. than it does with the child actors appearing for instance in the Children's Film Foundations productions.[190]

Plot development -

Children prefer films where each stage in the plot is clearly marked by action. Long sequences of dialogue with nothing happening quickly makes the audience restless and bored. It seems probable that most children like a film to consist of a series of vivid incidents linked up to form a story. Boys generally like at least some of these incidents to be violent and sensational.[191]

Boys and girls differ strongly in their reactions to kissing in films. Boys in the discussion group disapproved of love-making (sic) on the screen, especially when it occurs in an exciting adventure story, for example "first of all you see something exciting like cavalry and things like that and in the end you see the general come in and start kissing his girlfriend and it's really boring." "When they do that (kissing) it makes me want to bash them in the face." "The only time I like it is when two people are kissing and a cruel person comes in and kills the man or woman." However, girls tend to be more sympathetic to such scenes and think it only proper that the hero should have a girlfriend.[192]

Despite their predilection for violent action, children generally recognise and accept the basic premises of conventional morality when these are illustrated on the screen. They readily recognise the hero and the villain and show satisfaction when the hero is triumphant and the villain is neatly dispatched. In discussing the Children's Film Foundation films all the children seemed to agree with the conclusions and morals implied. In the case of The Adventures of *Hal 5* (1958, d. Don Sharp), comments included "well it proves what trouble you can get into if

[189] From *Progress Report: The CFF in the Sixties* p. 7 (accessed January 2019)
[190] From *Progress Report: The CFF in the Sixties* p. 7 (accessed January 2019)
[191] From *Progress Report: The CFF in the Sixties* p. 8-9 (accessed January 2019)
[192] From *Progress Report: The CFF in the Sixties* p. 9-10 (accessed January 2019)

you're too greedy." "...all he thought about was his money. I don't like people like that, who think about their money all the time." "Tells you what you mustn't do really - mustn't tell lies."[193]

Action and excitement -

All the film incidents which seem to hold children's interest the best and which they recall afterwards with most enjoyment are those involving fighting, action and physical misfortune to the characters. Whenever children criticise films it is invariably because of a lack of action. This however has different meanings for girls and boys: the majority of boys - reared on a diet of TV and cinema epics - want violent action epitomised by war films and historical spectaculars. Girls tend to dislike and are bored with prolonged violence. When they are confronted with violence on the screen they tend to be more frightened than the boys and to feel more sympathy for the victims of aggression.[194]

Comedy, animals, magic and fantasy -

Comedy is a particularly suitable constituent for a children's film because it calls forth a response which produces no anxiety and is equally popular with both sexes and with all ages.[195]

The inclusion of animals in a children's film always seems to enhance its appeal. If the animal belongs to a particular person that person seems to receive in the eyes of the children a considerable amount of reflected glory.[196]

Very young children think they can affect changes in the world simply by thinking of them and fantasies about this kind of magical control may persist throughout later childhood and may be acted out while the children are watching films. Science fiction films may also appeal to this sense of fantasy and it is again called forth by any film in which the hero displays incredible powers. In two of the Children's Film Foundations films which were examined the element of fantasy was clearly of great appeal.[197]

Colour films versus black and white -

All the children questioned said that they preferred colour films to those in black and white. There are always some boring sequences during a film and colour is an extra interest on occasions like these and is often regarded as a fillip. Colour distinguishes a film from a television programme and thus makes it something special [it was not until July 1st 1967 that the BBC first broadcast in colour]. Colour films have more information content than black and white films, thus giving them more realism and colour also adds glamour to a film.[198]

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[193] From *Progress Report: The CFF in the Sixties* p. 10 (accessed January 2019)
[194] From *Progress Report: The CFF in the Sixties* p. 11 (accessed January 2019)
[195] From *Progress Report: The CFF in the Sixties* p. 14 (accessed January 2019)
[196] From *Progress Report: The CFF in the Sixties* p. 15 (accessed January 2019)
[197] From *Progress Report: The CFF in the Sixties* p. 14 (accessed January 2019)
[198] From *Progress Report: The CFF in the Sixties* p. 15 (accessed January 2019)

Audience reactions to Children's Film Foundation films -

The vast majority of children claim to enjoy the films and few offered any criticism. The main virtue of the Children's Film Foundation films is that their plots are easy to follow, they have plenty of movement and there are no long sequences of dialogue between adults. The result is that the children are noticeably more attentive during the Foundation's films than during most commercial films.[199]

Main conclusions -

The majority of commercial films offered by renters for children's matinees are unsuitable because the characterisation is inadequate, the plots are too complex and the plots tend to develop by dialogue rather than by action. Children prefer a film to consist of a series of vivid incidents with as much excitement as possible. The major roles should be taken by characters with whom the children can identify themselves, or that the children would like to know and be with in real life.[200]

There is no doubt about the general suitability of Children's Film Foundation films. Children's reactions to them are for the most part very favourable. The main virtue of Children's Film Foundation films is that their plots are easy to follow, they have plenty of movement and there are no long sequences of dialogue between adults. The films, however, could be improved in the following respects; the films rarely attain the same level of excitement achieved in some commercial films, the films do not depict memorable characters, the films do not always contain sufficient humour and they rarely exploit the appeal that children find in magic and fantasy.[201]

When children go to a Saturday matinee they are not usually aware of what films are showing - nearly two thirds have no idea of what is on. This indicates a need for better promotion. In maintaining the level of attendance at a particular cinema, the most important influence is probably the personality and enthusiasm of the cinema manager.[202]

As with the 1950s report, this survey and it's findings were used by the board to instigate changes in production methods, textual themes and the personnel they were utilising. Noting audience tastes had developed, wanting more slapstick and 'realistic' storylines, they adapted their production methods. Now, instead of approving in-house scripts by favoured writers and then searching for a producer, "under Henry Geddes the external producers and independent writers were encouraged to to initiate the majority of ideas themselves and then approach the Foundation for support."[203] Comedy became more prevalent in the films with well known cinematic and television comedy actors taking many supporting roles. The introduction of a new Children's and Young Persons Act in 1963 relaxed the strict regulations around the employment of child actors and freed the CFF from its middle class bias and perfect annunciation of it's young leads. Robert Shail writes:

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[199] From *Progress Report: The CFF in the Sixties* p. 19 (accessed January 2019)
[200] From *Progress Report: The CFF in the Sixties* p. i (accessed January 2019)
[201] From *Progress Report: The CFF in the Sixties* p. i (accessed January 2019)
[202] From *Progress Report: The CFF in the Sixties* p. ii (accessed January 2019)
[203] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 25

> "This made it easier to use performers whose lives were more governed by the need of their parents to earn a daily living. The result was that the Foundation's films started to feature performers from companies like the Anna Scher Children's Theatre whose young actors were often drawn from working-class homes and who attended state schools."[204]

Anna Scher Children's Theatre School, based in Islington, introduced many players via the CFF who would go on to become household names in British entertainment, including Pauline Quirk, Linda Robson, Gary Kemp, Phil Daniels and Dexter Fletcher. Anna Scher, along with other inner-city stage schools, now became the chief suppliers of young talent for the CFF. There were still strict rules regarding working hours, tutoring and chaperones during location filming, but now local accents and unknown junior leads were becoming the norm. Some of the previous production companies fell by the wayside as the new working practice of demanding ideas and completed scripts from outside of the CFF began to be implemented. Another new innovation - to pair a new director with an experienced producer, became the preferred method. Production companies Gaumont-British and Merton Park Studios were amongst the casualties, with new outfits Fanfare, Anvil, Century and Eyeline Films becoming the CFF's preferred collaborators.

Black and white productions were becoming rarer as colour film was now cheaper and swiftly becoming the norm. Some older films still on the CFF roster were still in black and white and proved, as the survey suggested, less popular with the audience with the opinion that now anything not in colour was old-fashioned and increasingly irrelevant to the pre-teen audience. The point about promotion of the Foundation's products was a valid one. The CFF maintained that apart from monies for administration, all income was to be ploughed back into film production. As the films and serials were stand-alone adventures, no promotional spin-offs were produced and as the distribution rota system was still in place, it was too complicated to produce trailers for four specific lead films at any one time. However, from the end of the sixties the Foundation did produce over a dozen compilations for promotional use at the matinees (and for trade shows in order to promote the CFF to the industry, both at home and overseas). These often ran to around 20 minutes, featured clips from five or six films, and were presented by industry figures known to the audience - Bernard Cribbins and David Lodge (CFF stalwarts), Richard Attenborough, *Blue Peter's* Valerie Singleton, *Screen Test's* Michael Rodd, BBC *Junior Choic*e DJ Ed Stewart and in 1978, CFF child-star favourite Keith Chegwin, shortly after his appearance in the lead as *Robin Hood Junior* (1975, d. Matt McCarthy and John Black). The first two, produced in 1970, were themed (*Don't Make Me Laugh* and *Crime Doesn't Pay*), the next four foregrounding the day of the matinee (*Saturday, Lovely Saturday, Always on a Saturday*, *Saturday Special* and *Super Saturday*), and the rest featured the presenter's name (i.e. *Valerie Singleton Introduces*…). The final compilation was titled I*n the Projection Box with Rod Hull and Emu* hosted by the popular comedian alongside his unpredictable puppet. The CFF did send out some promotional material when they distributed copies to the circuits, but these were general advertisements for the Foundation rather than for individual films. The only valid spin-off from the matinee shows were the varied (and nowadays increasingly collectable) badges produced by the chains for their own Saturday kids clubs.

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[204] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 26

The CFF chairman, John Davis, summed up the up-dating of the production agenda in a 1969 publication to celebrate 25 years of the Foundation, and its predecessor the CEF, producing film for children. Under the heading 'Living with Change' his article contained a rejection of "scripts so full of moralising or so out-dated in approach that they would never hold a critical audience of children."[205] His words offered a promising vision of the future - one where the CFF tackled grown-up themes, no patronising of children, and to become "fully contemporary in its outlook, recognising the greater social and cultural awareness of its audience. It even conceded that the 1950s films were dated."[206] But the most telling statement, that the Foundation were now not making 'children's film' but were involved in producing 'junior features', proved the board had recognised a growing sophistication of its audience and had decided to meet it.

The CFF master the serial - *The Magnificent Six and a Half*

Serials had become more and more popular with the matinee audience as the sixties progressed: a typical one would feature a gang of friends solving mysteries or righting wrongs with a cliff-hanger ending every week to keep the audience coming back. The first one produced, in 1956, was *Raiders of the River*, directed by John Haggarty, and starred future TV sitcom favourite Richard O'Sullivan, star of *Man About the House* (Thames Television, 1973 - 1976) and *Robin's Nest* (Thames Television, 1977 - 1981). The series consisted of eight 18 minute episodes and was produced by Merton Park Studios. It set a template for future CFF serials, with the Foundation's catalogue describing it as "three Covent Garden children trail bank robbers who use a river launch as their headquarters and finally bring about their capture."[207] Adaptations of Enid Blyton's *Famous Five* stories were a favourite with matinee audiences in the late 1950s and early 1960s, with two series produced - *Five On A Treasure Island* (1957, d. Gerald Landau) and *Five Have a Mystery to Solve* (1964, d. Ernest Morris). The *Famous Five* stories have since become to be recognised and unfortunately derided as typical of the Foundation's fare, especially since *The Comic Strip* ran the parody *Five Go Mad in Dorset* (1982, d. Bob Spiers) on Channel 4's launch night. Robert Shail writes "if the attitudes are chauvinistic and snobby, then the CFF was reflecting values held by parts of British society at this time. In this respect *Five on a Treasure Island* is indicative of a backward-looking conservatism that dominated CFF work in the 1950s and lingered into the next decade."[208] Fifteen series, mostly adventure crime solving stories with the odd space adventure and animal based story, were produced throughout the sixties including *The Young Jacobites* (d. John Reeve, 1960), which featured a young Francesca Annis and Frazer Hines, *Masters of Venus* (d. Ernest Morris, 1963), *The Young Detectives* (d. Gilbert Gunn, 1964) and *Danny the Dragon* (d. Pennington Richards, 1967), which featured Jack Wild and Sally Thomsett as junior leads. Wild would play the Artful Dodger in the Oscar winning *Oliver* (d. Carol Reed, 1968) the following year, while Thomsett would star in a BAFTA nominated role as Phyllis in *The Railway Children* (d. Lionel Jeffries, 1970) two years later.

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[205] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 27
[206] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 27
[207] From *Children's Film and Television Foundation Catalogue and Index of Films*, 1980 p. 40
[208] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 54

But the change of direction for the CFF was notable when they decided to cut back on adventure serials and released an updated and more contemporary offering, the slap-stick and comedy based *The Magnificent Six and a Half,* and ran to three six-part series from 1968 to 1971. Directed by Harry Booth, it featured the collected adventures of an inner-city gang - totally unrelated to today's understanding of such a thing; "the word 'gang' has acquired an altogether more threatening meaning since the sixties - the worst mischief these 'gangs' get up to is some light sabotage: no-one gets shot. Most heartbreakingly of all, there is a casual assumption that all the children live with both parents."[209] Based on Hal Roach's *Our Gang* (also known as *The Little Rascals*), an American series from the 1930's, *The Magnificent Six and a Half* featured a multi-cultural group that again had adventures and mysteries to solve, but this time as stand alone episodes. Although the gender mix of the gang still favoured the male, it was refreshing that one of the major characters was of Guyanese parentage.

The decision was taken by Booth to make each episode of the series a stand alone 15 minute adventure, rather than the episodic continuing story that was used in previous CFF serials. The 'gang', an inner-city bunch based in a scrap yard in their headquarters, an old van. Five boys (the leader, a dopey overweight one, a greedy sweet-guzzler, the joker - played by future reggae superstar Brinsley Forde, and the geeky problem solver and bastion of common sense and obviously bespectacled) and two girls (one a tomboy and the other younger and undersized - the half of the title) have colourful comedic adventures - and in true CFF style always prevail by the time the credits roll. Manic musical accompaniment and speeded up sequences gave the series a true slap-stick feel - "the plot is minimal and the film's tone is that of a *Keystone Kops* silent comedy with lots of visual gags."[210] The second series, commissioned in 1969, brought in new personnel as writers, amongst them the almost ever present Michael Barnes, and replaced the leader, Steve, previously played by Len Jones, with a new actor Robin Davies. So successful was the premise, Century Films and America's 20th Century Fox persuaded Booth and his writer Roy Simpson to produce it for BBC television, broadcast from 1970 as *Here Come the Double Deckers*, with Brinsley Forde and Michael Audreson reprising their roles, albeit with character name changes (from Toby to Spring and from Whizz to Brains). Their headquarters had now become a scrap yard inhabiting London double decker bus (hence the new title) and the slapstick was ramped up - it even featured some musical numbers, perhaps aping musical theatre more than a comedy show. It was a bizarre twist that *Here Come the Double Deckers* was to become one of the series that BBC TV producers used when they decided to try and crack the Saturday morning market later in the 1970s. The CFF persevered with a third series, released in 1972, but by now the genie was out of the bottle, and this series proved less popular with audiences. Pat Latham was responsible for the scripts and Lion Pacesetter Productions gave directing duties to Peter Graham Scott. Crucially, all the young leads had been replaced too and this inevitably led to the failure of this last series. However, the feel and comedy of *The Magnificent Six and a Half* acted as a template for CFF serials as the 1970s dawned.

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[209] James Oliver 'Seen But Not Heard Of' in Julian Upton (Ed) *Offbeat - British Cinema's Curiosities, Obscurities and Forgotten Gems* (London, Headpress, 2012) p. 331
[210] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 69

Capturing the zeitgeist - *Cup Fever*

Buoyed by a renaissance of British filmmaking in the early sixties, in particular Free Cinema and the Realist School who portrayed 'kitchen sink dramas' by new authors and scriptwriters in Northern working class settings such as Manchester - *A Taste of Honey* (d. Tony Richardson, 1961), Yorkshire - *Billy Liar* (d. John Schlesinger, 1963) and Nottingham - *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (d. Tony Richardson, 1962) and *Saturday Night, Sunday Morning* (d. Karel Reisz, 1960). Inevitably, some of the Foundation's output started to reflect this new style. Although obviously shorn of the adult themes and language of *A Taste of Honey*, the CFF films began to adapt to the naturalistic working class style, a drastic change from their previous productions. While rising regional stars like Rita Tushingham, Albert Finney, James Bolam and Tom Courtney were encouraged by Tony Richardson and his fellow directors to keep or even exaggerate their northern accents, the stage school stars of the CFF's features of the 1950s and early 1960s had been famous for their perfect 'Received Pronunciation'. James Oliver commented 'they were crafting films where the heroes demonstrated good posture and pronounced "tomato" properly'."[211]

However, in *Cup Fever* (1965), director David Bracknell really heralded the changes when he set the action in inner city Manchester, a world away from the usual London and Home Counties based adventures. The scenery is straight from the world of *A Taste of Honey*, a decaying Victorian Manchester with still undeveloped bomb-sites, derelict warehouses and factories and rows of terraced housing that had become familiar with audiences via the long-running Granada television soap opera *Coronation Street*, where the only absence of realism could be said to be the stage school accent of Susan George, one of which would never be heard in that social setting and is at odds with the local actors cast in the film. It is no coincidence that Susan George was cast, along with Olivia Hussey, in a film about a boy's football team; the girls in the audience had to identify with someone. The change was being noted - reporting on the findings of his matinee audience survey, Robert Shail stated ''the early CFF films were criticised for their middle-class metropolitan bias and stiff acting but the later films were often appreciated for their increasingly gritty realism and relevance.''[212] Bracknell also pushed the envelope with his casting; the matinee audiences were already used to seeing familiar faces among the adult casting, and *Cup Fever* boasted seasoned comedy actors Bernard Cribbins and David Lodge. Bracknell's big coup was having the narrative – on the pretext of the team losing their training ground – swing to that cathedral of football Old Trafford and involved the rising stars of Manchester United, including George Best and Bobby Charlton alongside their legendary manager Sir Matt Busby. With the glory days still ahead of them, these real-life *'Boy's Own'* heroes would guarantee this feature a ready audience for years to come. In 2004, the film placed sixth in the all-time top 10 footballing films in a poll for the UCI cinema chain, proving more popular than films with far higher budgets including the Vinnie Jones vehicle *Mean Machine* (d. Barry Skolnick, 2001) and the film that cemented Danny Dyer's film career *The Football Factory* (d. Nick Love, 2004).

[211] Oliver *'Seen But Not Heard Of'* p. 329
[212] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 145

The film was produced by Roy Simpson for Century Film Productions and was shot mostly on location in Manchester and Altrincham - “a rare trip outside of London and the Home Counties for the Foundation.”[213] Its production cost was reported at £25,070 and by June 1979 had recouped £15,306 in revenue,[214] a surprisingly small sum in view of it’s performance in the 2004 UCI poll. Perhaps a film about English football did not travel too well and was not as popular overseas, where more money was being made in distribution and exhibition for the CFF than on the home circuit. However, as World Cup fever swept the nation as England hosted and eventually won the 1966 World Cup, this film certainly captured the imagination of the matinee audiences of the time. Steven Glynn was moved to write the following in his work on the British football film:

> “Underpinning the popularity of both the professional and amateur game lies children’s, aka, junior football. It is posited that its adoption in British state schools was ‘a determining factor in making football the national game’ (Walvin, 1994), and the proclivity of children (predominantly young boys) for idolising football heroes and/or kicking a ball themselves, as an educational structure or an escape from adult supervision, has been the game’s lifeblood, breeding future generations of players and supporters.” [215]

Glynn then cited *Cup Fever* as the film in which “these childhood dreams first came to the cinema.”[216] The sporting film, with its good/bad, rich/poor divisions and the preferred idea that the good willed underdog will prosper was already a popular CFF theme, but football, at that time, was rarely, if ever, a sport that lent itself to the cinema. The only film of any note to feature the sport in British cinema was *The Arsenal Stadium Mystery* (d. Thorold Dickinson, 1939) a thriller that was set within the football business as opposed to featuring the team as protagonists. So, *Cup Fever* was not only perfectly timed, with football about to become a national obsession, but also ground-breaking, bringing football stars themselves centre stage as key to the text, with the sporting contest itself foregrounding the action. Interestingly, the training session at Manchester United is shot in front of a half completed cantilever stand, built in preparation for the ground hosting matches for the up-coming World Cup.

The film itself tells of the efforts of Barton United, a Manchester Junior Football League side, to succeed in the League Cup competition. Their efforts are put in jeopardy when the wasteland that they train on is ear-marked for a car park. The closure of their training ground is instigated by Councillor Bates (played by David Lodge) who just happens to be the manager Tooley Green Wanderers (and also father of the Tooley Green captain) - Wanderers being the Barton team’s major rivals and favourites for the cup. Forced to train in side streets, the team’s saviour turns out to be PC386 (Bernard Cribbins) who reveals himself as a big football fan. He tells them that he once had a trial for Manchester United, and, calling in some favours, arranges for them the

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[213] Shail *The Children’s Film Foundation* p. 64
[214] From *The Children’s Film Foundation Directors Report and Accounts* June 1979 (accessed February 2020)
[215] Steven Glynn in *The British Football Film* (London, Palgave MacMillan, 2018) p. 107
[216] Glynn *The British Football Film* p. 107

big set piece of the film - a training session at United's Old Trafford stadium with manager Sir Matt Busby and the first team squad, including Denis Law, Bobby Charlton and the closest thing to a soccer superstar at the time, George Best. Despite Tooley Green's best (or worst) efforts at sabotage - Barton have to travel to the final in a fleet of milk floats after their rendezvous is undermined by their rivals, the underdogs prevail (of course) beating the Wanderers 3-0 in the final to win the cup and the right to displace their rivals at the plush Park Ground - a world away from their original waste ground patch.

Of course the big draw of the film is the presence of Manchester United, and they gave the film an extended life when the same team became the first English team to win the European Cup. However, they do not come over as naturals before the camera. "Personnel are, perhaps, less malleable. After they are shown into the trophy room ny United's legendary chief scout Joe Armstrong, the Barton boys have a (stilted) meet-and-greet with manager Matt Busby and, during the film's training session centre-piece, (more relaxed) interactions with the current United team, who are all seen - but not heard."[217] Robert Shail commented on the gender background of the film - remember it was to be at least another 30 years before the female was accepted as a vital part of the football world and 37 years until *Bend It Like Beckham* (d. Gurinder Chadha, 2002), the seminal girls football film, was released. He writes:

> "The film's dominant realism is bolstered by its location shooting, right from the opening shot of a muddy football field fronting a block of flats. If the realism is indicative of the Foundation's revised style of the early 1960's, the attitudes to gender haven't shifted. This is very much a boy's film, with the girls (played by future stars Susan George and Olivia Hussey) reduced to the secondary role of washing the club's shirts or heating water for their improvised showers. The nadir comes when the girls are excluded from the Old Trafford excursion and volunteer to spend their time sewing new shirts for the boys."[218]

A telling sign of those times comes in the dialogue before the Old Trafford trip. Vicki Davis (played by Susan George) asks "but why can't the girls go?" The reply, from a member of the team - "you can't have girls at a proper football club, stupid!" Shail also notes other changes to the CFF's revised style - "another indicator that the Foundation was attempting to change with the times is the fact that the film features a black character and some Mancunian accents actually feature among the familiar London and Home Counties ones."[219] In fact, the Barton team features two players from ethnic minorities - an afro-caribbean boy (Raymond Davis, who was cast as Dennis Fletcher) and a boy who appears to be of Asian heritage, Jefferey Sirr, who played 'Twinkle' Taylor.

Obviously, an authentic football cup final needs a crowd, and some of the local school children were enlisted to 'spectate' at the final, staged at Altrincham FC's Moss Lane stadium. A press release from the time for the CFF read "many excited youngsters made their debuts before the

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[217] Glynn *The British Football Film* p. 108-109
[218] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 65
[219] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 65

cameras earlier this year when the film *Cup Fever* was in full swing during one months location in the Manchester city centre and the surrounding districts of Eccles, Barton, Altrincham, Chorlton-cum-Hardy and Old Trafford Stadium." [220] It continued:

> "Any youngster over the age of ten was requested to attend the final shooting at Altrincham FC by the film company. They were introduced to some of the mysteries of film-making when they learnt that the award scene - in which the prized silver cup is presented to the skipper of the winning side by top international star Bert Trautman, was to be shot before the game had even been played. If you think this sounds crazy - then just try to explain it to several thousand impatient young soccer fans."[221]

The calibre and origin of the young leads was also discussed - "a team of young actors had to be found who were capable of enacting their speaking roles as well as playing a useful game of football. Two leading members of the cast, 15 year old Jimmy Morgan and 16 year old Allan Harrison were located through the famous Stretford Children's Theatre."[222] The producer, Roy Simpson, commented in the same press release;

> "Children's films have recently been variations of the cops and robbers theme - supposedly stories that will interest youngsters. The Children's Film Foundation are now promoting a more varied approach to script ideas and in keeping with this *Cup Fever* is designed to appeal to boys with the whole Manchester United team actively involved. Nevertheless, the girls play an active part in the film as supporters in the real sense of the word."[223]

The film was released to the matinee circuit in the autumn of 1965 and proved to be the success the CFF expected it to be, at least in British cinemas. It also garnered a positive response from the critics, who did not always appreciate the offerings proffered by the Foundation:

> "Filmed on location in Manchester, this is a genial, lively and quite inventively scripted comedy, put over with considerable verve. David Lodge is appropriately dastardly as the town councillor, and the young players are a spirited lot."[224]

However, the the issue of regional accents increasingly being utilised by the CFF was causing consternation amongst some of the directors - a board meeting minute from June 1966 shows that not everybody was enamoured with the trend:

> "Mr Peter King raised the question of speaking voices as he was most disturbed at what appeared to be the convention in CFF films for children

[220] From *The CFF press release for Cup Fever,* June 1965 (accessed May 2018)
[221] From *The CFF press release for Cup Fever,* June 1965 (accessed May 2018)
[222] From *The CFF press release for Cup Fever,* June 1965 (accessed May 2018)
[223] From *The CFF press release for Cup Fever,* June 1965 (accessed May 2018)
[224] Anonymous review in *The Monthly Film Bulletin* (Number 381, Volume 32, October 1965)

> to speak most deplorably and some in cockney accents, and was informed it was a swing from the opposite direction. Mr Camplain felt he was justified and 'perhaps we had swung too far from the genteel speech of the earlier films'. The secretary also mentioned the importance to overseas sales of clarity in speech. Mr King suggested the rule should be literacy at all times and accent only when necessary."[225]

Maybe here we have another reason that the returns for one of the most popular CFF movies in the home market failed to recoup its budget - perhaps the rest of the world were not yet ready for British regional accents.

The BBC launches competition for the audience

The late sixties and early seventies were seen as the Foundation's heyday; Mothers were still keen to offload their offspring at the local cinema whilst they attended to the weekly shopping needs on the High Street, and for (still) a handful of pennies (in 1969 the CFF Distribution Committee noted that the major circuits now charged between 1/- and 1/6 for admission),[226] the matinee-goers had two to three hours of entertainment and social time totally adult free (aside from a handful of attendants and Lyons Maid ice-cream vendors). The CFF were keen for the admission price to remain as low as possible, but some independents did attempt to raise their prices in order to try to break even. However, the audience did not always respond favourably - as one Long Eaton matinee goer remembers from the early 1960s: "one Saturday the Empire put the admission price up from twopence to threepence. Many couldn't afford it so the film was shown to a small audience. The following Saturday the price had dropped back down again. It just showed what a bit of customer resistance can do."[227]

The matinees had no real competition on a Saturday morning throughout the sixties - children's TV shows were restricted by both the BBC and ITV to an afternoon window, resulting in lone competition from BBC Radio's *Children's Favourites*, which became *Junior Choice* with Leslie Crowther, who was later replaced by Ed 'Stewpot' Stewart when BBC Radio One launched in 1967. The show was broadcast simultaneously on both BBC Radio One and Radio Two from 9.00 to 10.00 am and went on to attract over 17 million listeners. However, a music radio programme could never compete with the cinematic gems now being served up by the CFF.

Throughout the 1960's, television companies, both the BBC and independent stations, were happy to produce programmes for the accepted children's viewing hours of 4-6pm each weekday afternoon, the slot just before the news. The BBC also had a long-running weekday lunchtime slot called *Watch with Mother*, running for 15 minutes from 1.30 pm, catering for pre-school children with animated or puppet stories such as *Andy Pandy* (1950 - 1957, Westerham Arts Films for the BBC) and *Camberwick Green* (1966, Gordon Murray Puppets

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[225] From *The Children's Film Foundation's Directors Report*, June 21, 1966, minute no. 1342 (accessed May 2019)
[226] From *The Children's Film Foundation's Distribution Committee Meeting,* June 7th, 1969, minute no. 1516 (accessed May 2019)
[227] Matinee goer interviewed in *Remembering Long Eaton, Beeston and Chilwell - Recollections from folk living hereabouts in times past* (Derby, Moorleys Publishing, 2017)

Productions for the BBC). Some programmes, usually black and white adventure shows from the USA, such as *Casey Jones* (1957 - 1958, Briskin Productions for KTTV) and *Champion the Wonder Horse* (1955 - 1956, Flying A Productions) or *Bugs Bunny and Merrie Melodies* cartoon shows (1944 - 1963, Warner Brothers Productions) broadcast in the week-day mornings during half-term and summer holidays. It is interesting to note that 25 of these Warner Brothers cartoon shorts were also licensed by the CFF to be included in the programmes leased to the matinee clubs.[228] In the late 1960s the BBC decided to run these shows on a Saturday morning, then in 1969 they filled the void that followed these - a blank screen until the sports magazine and highlights programme *Grandstand* (1958 - 2007, BBC TV) started at noon, with a show called *Zokko!* – a format uncannily similar to the Saturday matinee shows.

Molly Cox, a veteran children's radio producer, started in television at the BBC as part of the magazine programme *Blue Peter* (1958 - 2020, BBC TV). She created the pre-school TV show *Play School* (1964 - 1988, BBC TV) and in 1965 she was involved in the creation of *Jackanory* (1965 - 1996, BBC TV) with Anna Home, where actors would read a serial story supported by illustrations (Anna Home, coincidentally, would become the last chief executive of the Children's Film and Television Foundation in the late 1980s). In 1968, along with a newcomer to the BBC, Paul Ciani, she devised a 'children's television comic' called *Zokko!* It was to run for 26 episodes from 1968 to 1970, with each episode lasting 22 minutes, and featured a mixture of cartoons, including *Felix the Cat* (1958-1961, Paramount Cartoon Studios) and sequences from Walt Disney's *Fantasia* (1940, d. James Algar and Samuel Armstrong) along with animated jokes, which were suggested by their young viewers. These were supplemented by studio variety acts, animated model sequences, magic acts (featuring children's favourite Ali Bongo as the 'Shriek of Araby') and an early version of the music video, called 'Soundbox' which made films of pop songs by artists such as Randy Newman, Georgie Fame and Alan Price. They also included clips of imported movies, especially stunts and chases. The whole thing was overseen by a talking pinball machine called Mr. Zokko, who introduced the clips and then scored them out of ten in a sad and slow mechanical voice - with lines such as "Zok-ko scores eight", preceding Marvin the paranoid android from *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (1981, BBC TV) by some years. *Zokko!* was shot in black and white, with the pinball machine omitted from series two - replaced by the fashionable pop-art style captions but retaining the electronic voice over.

The theme tune, created by Brian Fahey, was even released as a single by Colombia in 1968 as 'Zokko' by the Zokko Band. By the end of the decade the BBC had obviously seen the scope for children's provision on Saturday mornings and in February 1970 they were to launch an imported comedy/magazine programme from the USA, *The Banana Splits* (1968 - 1970, Hanna Barbera Productions for NBC) which the *Radio Times* described as "comedy... adventure... cartoons. They are all packed into this new all-action entertainment series starring Fleegle, Drooper, Bingo, and Snorky of the Banana Splits Club plus an exciting serial."[229]

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[228] From *Children's Film and Television Foundation Catalogue and Index of Films*, 1980 p. 57
[229] From *The Radio Times, Issue no. 2416, 26th February 1970, p. 43*

Coming towards the end of their most productive decade, with a relatively strong and maintained audience base, the CFF viewed the 1970s as an opportunity to continue to provide quality cinematic offerings for the under fourteen's. However, the writing was on the wall for the traditional Saturday matinee clubs. As Robert Shail noted:

> "A major challenge for organisers of the children's screenings from the late 1960s onwards arose from the fact that much of the imported television material used in their programmes now started to be shown on TV on a regular basis, by both the BBC and ITV. In addition, television ownership increased substantially. This meant that much loved series that were film club staples were now more easily watched at home."[230]

Colour television broadcasts were becoming the norm by the end of the sixties, and precipitated a rise in TV ownership. And the 1970s were to prove to be a watershed for the CFF. The Foundation were to produce some of their best work, and were to be recognised by BAFTA for their outstanding contribution to children's film, yet by the end of the decade they were to be involved in a protracted battle for their very existence. Television had challenged the British cinema industry when it was launched in the 1950s - a challenge the majority of matinee clubs managed to withstand. But the challenge from the TV channels in the 1970s was to prove very different as they directly targeted the Saturday morning children's audience.

[230] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 125

CHAPTER FIVE

1970S - THE BATTLE FOR SURVIVAL

The 1970s began for the CFF with an optimistic outlook for the future. The annual award from the Eady Levy fund was (just) enabling the budget for production to counter the huge rises in inflation and demands for the technicians in the industry for higher wages via their powerful unions. This was the decade in which the Foundation found itself as the number one film producer in the UK, outpacing Hammer Films in completed productions, and made some of the most memorable and enduring films in the films specifically for children genre. And the overseas distribution continued to grow and provide some return to be re-invested in new films and serials. But by the end of the decade, with audiences dwindling and UK cinema in crisis, the CFF's very future was in peril. Despite being lauded by the industry, with the British Academy of Film and Television Arts awarding them the prestigious 'Michael Balcon Award' for 'Outstanding British Contribution to Cinema' in 1979, the CFF's board had to find alternative funding, and fast, or face becoming a footnote in British cinema history.

Budgeting in a time of rampant inflation

The annual award from the Eady Levy was still the majority of the funding that the CFF depended on. Some financial returns were being made from overseas rentals, but profits from rentals to UK cinema clubs were negligible, due to an agreement between the CFF and the exhibitors to minimise the price of admission to the audience. "The Foundation's revenue from Saturday matinees has never shown a profit and was never intended that it should - the industry's aim has always been to keep admission prices to a figure which children could afford. Exhibitors have always argued that increased admission prices would result in lower attendances."[231] The following table tracks the annual Eady grant, the cost of productions, the number of exhibitors and the annual returns from overseas rentals[232]:

Year	Eady Grant	Average Cost of Production	Outlets Renting CFF Films	Overseas Revenue
1971	£235,000	£33,000	712	£37,000
1972	£235,000	£36,000	719	£58,000
1973	£310,000	£34,000	658	£66,000
1974	£352,000	£38,000	544	£102,000
1975	£352,000	£42,000	480	£125,000

[231] Henry Geddes in *Children's Film Foundation presents Young Cinema* (London, CFF brochure, June 1972) p. 3
[232] From *Children's Film Foundation: Summary of Changes In Situation from 1971 to 1980* (London, CFF Board Report, April 1980)

1976	£454,000	£54,000	464	£77,000
1977	£500,000	£61,000	399	£125,000
1978	£500,000	£70,000	299	£146,000
1979	£575,000	£82,000	260	£132,000

There are some obvious trends to be noted - despite increasingly difficult negotiations the funding from the BFI via the Eady Levy was consistently increased, recognising the increasing costs of film-making throughout the decade as the trade's unions demanded increased salaries and bonuses for their participation. This results in an average cost per production rising from £33,000 in 1971 to £82,000 in 1979, an increase of 248% in nine years. The overseas revenue continued to rise, with the Foundation supplying content to 85 territories, but the situation in the UK was becoming increasingly precarious, as the number of matinee outlets decreased to 260 in 1979, 36.5% of the number in operation reported in 1971. In comparison to 1961, ABC reported that their matinee outlets had fallen from 236 to 86, Rank outlets had fallen from 261 to 68 and independents had now only 123 operating compared to 497. In short, by the end of the decade the CFF was producing increasingly expensive productions for a significantly shrinking audience.

Negotiations with the BFI over the share of income from the Eady Levy had become increasingly fraught as the decade progressed, with many other areas of the industry enviously eyeing the grants being awarded to the CFF. In 1978 in an article titled 'The case for a top UK export' in *Screen International*, Quentin Falk was moved to write:

> "The Foundation, which this year will make at least five hour-long films and operate on a tightly run production and distribution organisation, for the price of one medium budgeted British feature, has friends and enemies in high places. The friends include the Writers Guild who, in an application to the Interim Action Committee, pleaded that the CFF should be 'encouraged to expand rather than to dwindle and die as some sections of the industry would prefer.' The enemies, probably the greatest of which is apathy, would appear to be the cinema circuits - they would point to plummeting attendances at CFF matinees and the difficulties in getting staff to man theatres the morning after late night film shows. Hard commercial reasons. There are those who believe that the Foundation's subvention should go to what they believe are more deserving sections of a contracted British Film Industry. Originally, only the CFF had a grant from Eady, now Eady cash goes to the BFI, the National Film School and the Script Development Fund too. The CFF would point out a very healthy case for the retention of a body that does for peanuts what, for example, East Germany does with one third of all its film-making resources."[233]

[233] Quentin Falk from *The Case For a Top UK Export* in *Screen International* (No. 132, April 1st, 1978)

However, Falk's gushing endorsement was preempted a year earlier by Nigel Andrews of the *Financial Times* who, in his review of *The Glitterball* (d. Harley Cokeliss), chose to open with:

> "This organisation receives an annual grant from the state of £500,000 - which members of Adults-Lib might care to know is roughly four times the yearly grant to the BFI Production Board, the country's main independent film-making outlet for grown-ups - and it has, understandably a somewhat nervous relationship with the press."[234]

In a British film industry that was now suffering from the absence of American money, it was becoming obvious that the CFF would have to fight courageously to ring-fence their share of the Eady Levy in the future. The increase in costs - inflation in the UK had reached an annual peacetime high of 25% in 1975, meant a lowering of annual production targets. With its 1972 grant the CFF managed to produce seven features, a short animation film and two serials, but by 1979 their production budget had reduced their output to just four features. They had now become the most prolific producers of film in the UK, topping Hammer's total of films for the 1970s, and despite receiving the Michael Balcon award from BAFTA in 1979, were to fall foul of a new prime minister's policies as Margeret Thatcher's Conservative government swept into power on 4th May 1979.

In context - A decade of decay in British film

By 1968, the British film industry was effectively being bankrolled by the big American studios. Many had set up offices in London, "hoping to back the next big British film."[235] Warner Brothers, Paramount, MGM, Twentieth Century Fox, Universal, Disney Columbia and United Artists were all operating production companies in Britain, utilising "the quality and availability of British studios and the relatively cheap labour."[236] The amount of annual subsidies from the USA peaked in 1968 when £31.3 million financed US and British 'co-productions'[237] - a year when a total of 85% of all British film production had been "fuelled by American capital."[238] However, by 1974, this finance had dropped to £2.9 million[239] as UK inflation, union domination and increasing production costs in the industry deemed such productions unworkable. The result - by 1981 the number of films registered annually in the UK had dropped to 36, compared to 98 registered in 1971.[240] And crucially, the home cinema audience slumped - 193 million admissions recorded in 1970 down to a mere 110 million seats sold in 1980.[241]

Colour television had become widespread throughout the nation, further decimating the domestic cinema audience, and in an effort to capitalise on smaller audiences and to offer more

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[234] Nigel Andrews from the review of *The Glitterball* in *The Financial Times* April 22nd, 1977)
[235] Paul Newland in *Don't Look Now: British Cinema in the 1970s* (Bristol, Intellect Ltd, 2010) p. 13
[236] Newland *Don't Look Now* p. 13
[237] Margaret Dickinson in Dickinson & Street (Eds.) *Cinema and State: The Film Industry and the Government 1927-84 (*London, BFI Publications, 1985) p. 240
[238] Sue Harper in *Don't Look Now* p. 24
[239] Dickinson *Cinema and State* p. 240
[240] Linda Wood in *British Films 1971 - 1981* (London, BFI Publications, 1983) p. 143
[241] Michael Brooke in BFIscreenonline http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/1237381/index.html (accessed Jan 2021)

choice for the cinema-goer, many chains began to convert their old ‘picture palaces’ with their thousand-plus seats into multi-screen venues offering two or three smaller screens and auditoriums now seating a couple of hundred at most. The James Bond franchise was still on its upward trajectory, but old favourites such as the Carry On series began to suffer, with its aging cast and formulaic narrative and the producers were forced to lower their sights and embrace the now fashionable ‘sexploitation’ movies, with its nadir being the 1978 offering *Carry On Emmanuelle* (again directed by Gerald Thomas). Indeed, the *Carry Ons* had been superseded by the *Confessions* series, offering nearer the knuckle humour and a lot more nudity. The first, *Confessions of a Window Cleaner* (1974, d. Val Guest) made an unlikely star of Robin Askwith, who had featured in the CFF production *Scramble* (1970, d. David Eady) a few years earlier. The film was the biggest home success in 1974, helping to keep producers EMI in business.[242]

However, commenting on the decline of the British film industry and acting in sex comedies and horror movies in the early to mid-1970s, Diana Dors noted:

> “The trouble is that there are so many good actors in this country and they are obliged to work in films like that because there is nothing else for them to do. This is why I get so sad. There is no film industry here anymore and the only types of films being made are either horror or sex films. I think it's very sad because we do have some marvelous actors and actresses in this country.” [243]

Diana Dors had been a film and TV star since 1949, and was initially enrolled in the Rank Organisation’s ‘charm school’ and subsequently became touted as the ‘British Marilyn Monroe’, being promoted to a leading lady by Rank at the end of the 1940s. Despite having critical success as Mrs Wickens in *The Amazing Mr Blunden* (1972, d. Lionel Jefferies) she was now being asked to play the ‘sexy aging vamp’ in sexploitation comedies like *The Amorous Milkman* (1975, d. Derren Nesbit), and *The Adventures of a Taxi Driver* (1976, d. Stanley Long). Unfortunately Ms. Dors wasn’t the only actor forced to turn to this work. CFF favourites Liz Fraser, Bill Maynard, Richard Wattis, Bob Todd, and Irene Handl all found they had to ply their trade in these sleazy romps.

This state of affairs typified the mainstream British film industry of the 1970s. Sex films and a new craze for gory horror also led to an new trend, with cinemas utilising their smaller split screens to host ‘late-night’ shows, usually on a Friday night. But this came at a cost to the dwindling Saturday morning clubs - working staff until the early hours of a Saturday morning led to issues manning the now dwindling matinee shows. The answer? Many circuits abandoned the matinee clubs. Hammer Film Productions Ltd, the most successful UK film producer in the 1960s principally with its classic horror films roster, was now in a quandary. Efforts to include more gore to keep up with the American imports and include more sex scenes to ape the European productions proved unsuccessful, not only with critics and with audiences, but also

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[242] Michael Brooke in BFIscreenonline http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/1237381/index.html (accessed Jan 2021)
[243] Diana Dors on IMDB website https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0002047/bio?ref_=nm_dyk_qt_sm#quotes (accessed Jan 2021)

with the actor so readily associated with them - Christopher Lee. In 1973, at a press conference to promote *Dracula is Dead...and Well and Living in London* (d. Alan Gibson) he stated "I'm doing it under protest... I think it is fatuous. I can think of twenty adjectives - fatuous, pointless, absurd. It's not a comedy, but it's got a comic title. I don't see the point."[244] Even a new title, *The Satanic Rites of Dracula*, failed to save the film. Christopher Lee never appeared in a Hammer production again.

The only way for Hammer to make money was by re-visiting a trend they last tried in thirty years ago, before they adopted the horror format, when they adapted radio and TV shows for the cinema, including *The Adventures of PC49* (1949, d. Godfrey Grayson) and *Dick Barton*, whose first adventure was *Dick Barton Strikes Back* (1949, d. Godfrey Grayson). This time it was to be spin-offs from ITV situation comedies. The first, and most successful, was a film version of London Weekend Television's series *On The Buses* (1971, d. Harry Booth), followed by two sequels *Mutiny on the Buses* (1972, directed again by Harry Booth) and *Holiday on the Buses* (1973, d. Bryan Izzard). Other adaptations that showed decent returns were *Nearest and Dearest* (1972, d. John Robins), *Love Thy Neighbour* (1973, d. John Robins) and *Man About the House* (1974, d. John Robins). All brought a measure of success as audiences already had an affinity with the characters, although most were re-hashed versions of the TV scripts. Hammer Films tried to brave the choppy waters of the seventies, but by 1979 the best known British film producer had gone into liquidation, with their final film being a remake of Alfred Hitchcock's 1938 classic *The Lady Vanishes* (1979, d. Anthony Page), *The Encyclopedia of British Film*, describing it as "about as witless and charmless as could be conceived."[245] A sad footnote for a great British film company. Trying to satisfy customer trends, producers also embraced pop music, eyeing the lucrative spin-off album market. America had shown the way, with *The Graduate* (1967, d. Mike Nichols) and E*asy Rider* (1969, d. Dennis Hopper) having hit soundtrack albums, and British companies saw the advantages of having a tie-in with the music charts. *That'll be the Day* (1973, d. Claude Whatham), *Stardust* (1974, d. Michael Apted) and *Slade in Flame* (1975, d. Richard Loncraine) all had best-selling albums released alongside the movies, but these were not the zany, comedic movies from the sixties. They had darker undertones, with *That'll be the Day* documenting child abandonment and underage sex, *Stardust* examining the dark side of superstardom and drug addiction, and *Slade in Flame* charting the abuses of rock'n'roll management, with the band being reduced to a commodity.

Despite US productions dominating the home box office, the 1970s did have some rare British successes. *The Railway Children* (1970) was by far the most popular home produced family film, with E. Nesbitt's novel lovingly recreated by director Lionel Jefferies. Described by Noel Brown as;

> "For all it's purported innocence, *The Railway Children* is also a reaction against modern society. Soberly and responsibly (though not without good

[244] Peter Haining in *The Dracula Scrapbook*. (London, Chancellor Press, 1992) p. 117
[245] Brian McFarlane in *The Encyclopedia of British Film*. (Manchester & New York City, Manchester University Press, 2013) p. 578

> humour), it promotes values of family unity, social cohesion and friendship, tolerance and sincerity."[246]

It was also, according to Noel Brown, the first British mainstream film since Carol Reed's *A Kid For Two Farthings* (1955) to "represent the world through the eyes of children...previously having been largely confined to CFF productions,"[247] though I suspect the producers of *Whistle Down the Wind* (1961, d. Bryan Forbes) would dispute this. Interestingly, while the CFF were casting age-specific children in their roles, Sally Thomsett, a former CFF lead, was cast as 11 year old Phyllis despite having just celebrated her 20th birthday, and was under strict orders not to be seen smoking or drinking off-screen. However, Disney still dominated the children's and family film market in Britain. *The Railway Children* was the most successful family film produced in Britain in the seventies and although Jeffries tried to reproduce the magic with three further films, only *The Amazing Mr Blunden* (1972) came anywhere near box office success. A few home produced movies did, however, have some success with critics and audiences. Two equine based films, *Run Wild Run Free* (1970, d. Richard C. Sarafian) and an adaptation of Anna Sewell's novel *Black Beauty* (1971, d. James Hill) were minor successes, and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1972, d. William Sterling), a big budget production with an all-star cast, was not the hit it was expected to be. A rare UK/US production, shot at Pinewood Studios, was a minor hit in 1976, though through reruns on television it is now viewed as a classic. Director and writer Alan Parker's *Bugsy Malone* (1976) was a parody of the classic gangster movie, but with a cast of children, including Jodie Foster as Talullah, but the children were playing typical adult roles;

> "They talk and act like grown-ups; some even have pencil moustaches drawn on their top lip. They fight and kill using adult machines, they run adult businesses, they live by adult socio-behavioural codes and they are motivated by adult desires, such as the pursuit of money, romance and power. These are pygmy simulacra of adults, rather than children ruling the world by their own rules."[248]

Good fun for the kids, but the references within the film are all aimed at adults, including the boxer "who could've been a contender", clearly mimicking *On The Waterfront* (1954, d. Elia Kazan). *Watership Down* (1978, d. Martin Rosen) was an animated adaptation of Richard Adam's novel about a community of rabbits. Awarded a 'U' certificate by the BBFC, the production faithfully reproduced some of the more violent and darker scenes of the book, and in 2012, the BBFC admitted that "while the film has a happy ending and contains many positive messages for young audiences about bravery, friendship and the environment, younger or more sensitive viewers have found some scenes upsetting or worrying. The BBFC has received complaints about the suitability of *Watership Down* at 'U' almost every year since its classification."[249] The film was a box office success, driven by its chart-topping theme tune

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[246] Brown *British Children's Cinema* p. 184
[247] Brown *British Children's Cinema* p. 182
[248] Brown *British Children's Cinema* p. 187
[249] Catherine Anderson in BBFC.co.uk
http://www.bbfc.co.uk/_featured/2012/04/from-the-archive-viewing-a-repressive-rabbit-regime (accessed Feb 2021)

‘Bright Eyes’ by Art Garfunkel, and a host of spin-off merchandise, including a children’s picture book.

Violent thrillers *Get Carter* (1971, d. Mike Hodges) and *Straw Dogs* (1971, d. Sam Peckinpah) had some home success and the now classic *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) would have fared better had director Stanley Kubrick not asked Warner Brothers to withdraw it from British screens after two court cases cited the film as responsible for ‘copycat violence’. Kubrick stated;

> “To try and fasten any responsibility on art as the cause of life seems to me to put the case the wrong way around. Art consists of reshaping life, but it does not create life, nor cause life. Furthermore, to attribute powerful suggestive qualities to a film is at odds with the scientifically accepted view that, even after deep hypnosis in a posthypnotic state, people cannot be made to do things which are at odds with their natures.”[250]

The horror film *The Wicker Man* (1973, d. Robin Hardy) is now seen as a cult classic, but again failed to significantly impress the British audience. The Who’s rock opera *Tommy* (1975) was given the over the top treatment by director Ken Russell, who followed up his previous successful films *Women in Love* (1969) and *The Devils* (1971), but it was another television spin-off that proved most popular with British cinema audiences.

Monty Python’s Flying Circus was a surreal BBC comedy series that ran from 1969 to 1974 and created a cult following that is still strong today over 50 years later and added a new word to the lexicon for surreal humour - ‘Pythonesque.’ The first movie spin-off was a compilation of sketches reshot on a low budget, designed for the international market, called *And Now For Something Completely Different* (1971, d. Ian MacNaughton). The troupe were not completely happy with the results and resolved to make more ambitious movies and both *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975) and *Monty Python's Life of Brian* (1979) “remain the most enduring British comedies of their era.”[251]

The absence of American dollars in the British film industry saw a rise in lower budget independent films. Although not able to compete at the box office against Hollywood’s increasingly more expensive and opulent productions, even at a low point in British cinema, some important names were cutting their teeth.

> “Talents supported by the BFI Production Board included Bill Douglas, Terence Davies and Peter Greenaway. The first two made uniquely personal trilogies inspired by their harsh upbringing, while Greenaway produced a series of idiosyncratic film-essays. Mike Leigh, Ken Loach and Alan Clarke made most of their best work for television, though Loach's *Kes* (1969) was belatedly released in 1970, Mike Leigh's first cinema feature *Bleak Moments* (1971) followed shortly afterwards, and Clarke's *Scum* (1979) caused a stir

[250] Paul Duncan in *Stanley Kubrick: The Complete Films*. (London, Taschen, 2003) p. 136
[251] Michael Brooke in BFIscreenonline http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/1237381/index.html (accessed Jan 2021)

> when he remade it for the cinema after the BBC refused to broadcast the original version. Barney Platts-Mills followed his debut *Bronco Bullfrog* (1969) with *Private Road* (1971) but then fell silent for the rest of the decade." [252]

American money had appeared again by the end of the 1970s, but solely for shooting Hollywood movies at British studios, taking advantage of under-used British technicians - blockbusters that utilised the studios included *Star Wars* (1977, d. George Lucas) and the sequels, which effectively guaranteed the survival of Elstree studios, with Shepperton and Pinewood benefiting from the patronage of Columbia - Warner for *Superman* (1978, d. Richard Donner). The Hollywood blockbuster may have saved the British studios, but their success at the UK box office had a detrimental effect on home film production as they dominated exhibition. The blockbuster was also key in the rise of a home device that would again further decimate British cinema audiences - the Video Cassette Recorder. These factors, along with the arrival of a new Conservative government led by Margaret Thatcher, whose policies included a threat to severely cut state funding to the British film industry, led to cinema admissions falling from 193 million in 1970 to only 110 million in 1980.[253] Now popularly being referred to as being "the decade that taste forgot", the 1970s was probably the decade that mainstream British cinema would want to forget.

Cheaper at home - the rise of the video cassette recorder

The video cassette recorder had its origins in the 1950s, when Dr. Norikazu Sawazaki developed a prototype helical scan video tape recorder. In 1963, Michael Turner and Norman Rutherford of the Nottingham Electronic Valve Company developed 'the telecan' (television in a can), the first home video recorder. Although it was innovative, it had several drawbacks. It was expensive, costing £60 (the equivalent of over £1,000 today), difficult to assemble and could only record for 20 minutes at a time in black and white.[254] The first commercially available recorder was marketed by Phillips who introduced the VCR (Video Cassette Recorder) in 1972. Several companies launched their own versions in the mid seventies, but the market became dominated by two players - Sony, who introduced the Betamax system, and JVC, who launched the system that was to win the 'battle of the formats', the VHS (Video Home System).

With cassettes lasting up to 4 hours, it was perfect for recording movies and sports straight from the TV, and from 1979 through the to the end of the 1980s, it was a distinct rival to live cinema and a major factor in further reducing cinema admissions, especially when distributors started to release movies for rental. Rentals were initially by catalogue and posted to the viewer, but as more titles became available rental stores became a fixture on the High Street. Although most movies were not released on video for up to a year after their premiere in the cinema, the video rental market slashed the price of viewing relatively new releases for a family. Instead of travelling to a cinema and shelling out for tickets for all the family members, a film could be

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[252] Michael Brooke in BFIscreenonline http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/1237381/index.html (accessed Jan 2021)
[253] Michael Brooke in BFIscreenonline http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/1237381/index.html (accessed Jan 2021)
[254] From http://www.terramedia.co.uk/media/video/telcan.htm (accessed March 2021)

rented for as little as 99p per night. At the same time supermarkets began selling buckets of popcorn and two litre bottles of soft drinks, further reducing the cost of a cheap night of family entertainment.

The rise of the video recorder also impacted the Saturday matinee audience. By 1982, 10% of UK households were reported to have a VCR, a figure that would rise to over 50% by the end of the decade. Programmes or family films could be recorded from the television and played for hours on end while mothers did the housework. More child - oriented products were launched - cartoons, classic movies and TV series were available to rent or to buy, and Disney, who had initially launched a lawsuit with Universal in 1975 to challenge the legality of selling VCRs and the renting of movies, embraced the new format and now began releasing their back catalogue on video cassette. It was yet another challenge to the Children's Film Foundation as its core audience were given ever increasing alternatives to the matinee clubs.

An Irish monster, a super t-shirt, a boy with two heads and an electric eskimo - the 1970s CFF productions

In 1972 the CFF produced a trade brochure titled *The Children's Film Foundation presents Young Cinema* and turned to one of their champions, the film critic Margaret Hinxman, to provide the leading article 'Only The Best is Good Enough for Kids'. She commented:

> "I've described the CFF before in print as probably the most far-sighted and selfless venture in an industry popularly taken to task for being myopic and ruthless and I doubt whether many of the critics of British cinema even pause to take its achievements into account. The CFF has always tended to tread a nerve-wracking tightrope, between too much freedom of subject matter, method and treatment and of too little. It is a sophisticated problem indicative of the growing reputation of the Foundation which now demands and certainly deserves that much searching attention. Under such pressure it is amazing that it has maintained a robust faith in its own principles."[255]

She continued to assess the Foundation's films in the current era, and with some foresight, commented on the continuing state of the British film industry in general:

> "The Foundation draws the line, particularly in this progressive age, at being too prim. A funny copper or headmaster is not only permissible, they are almost obligatory. But a 'bent' cop or a sadistic headmaster are not. The reason is not, as some critics would have it, to increase children's awe of authority; it is to ensure that their trust is not undermined. In conclusion, I would like to put on my critic's hat. In this country we are creating through the CFF the most receptive and intelligent of young film-goers - but what kind of British cinema is waiting for them as teenagers? Mainly sex comedies and horror movies. What a pity that the industry's altruism which has made the CFF possible cannot be transferred into the adult area of film-making. I hope

[255] Margaret Hinxman in *Children's Film Foundation presents Young Cinema* (London, CFF brochure, June 1972) p. 5

> the CFF will go on indefinitely providing a consumer society for the British cinema."[256]

Hinxman precisely summed up the differences between the industry in general and the CFF operation. The Foundation was set up in the 1950s with Lord Rank's wish to school youngsters in cinema, to get children used to devouring film - it was a shame now that the British film industry was no longer making films worthy of their continued patronage.

The 1970s had begun well for the Foundation. The 1970 award from the Eady Levy gave them enough budget for five features, *Junket 89*, *The Hoverbug, Mr Horatio Knibbles, Scramble!* and *Egghead's Robot. Junket 89* (d. Peter Plummer) was one of the CFF's first forays into the science fiction genre, with Richard Wilson as an absent-minded science teacher with an experimental instant transportation machine, featuring a young Linda Robson as one of his pupils, and *The Hoverbug* (d. Jan Darnley-Smith) ploughed a familiar path of the underdogs winning a race and averting sabotage, this time with a homemade hovercraft. *Mr Horatio Knibbles* (d. Robert Hird) was a fantasy featuring a six foot rabbit while *Scramble!* (d. David Eady) was basically a remake of the 1950s feature *Skid Kids*, this time featuring real motorbikes. *Egghead's Robot* (d. Milo Lewis) introduced an actor who was to become famously linked with the CFF, Keith Chegwin, cast here in his first role as Egghead Wentworth, alongside his twin brother Jeffery, who played the robot!

In 1971, the CFF completed five features and the third series of *The Magnificent Six and a Half* (d. Peter Graham). The popularity of the series unfortunately suffered from comparisons of the BBC adaptation of the original series, titled *Here Come the Double Deckers!* which was proving popular with young viewers. The stand-out CFF film of this year was *The Johnstown Monster* (d. Olaf Pooley), with its production differing quite substantially from that of the CFF norm. Firstly, it was shot on location in the Republic of Ireland, around Lough Derg in County Tipperary - the Foundation's films, with very few exceptions, were usually filmed in the Home Counties. It was also shot during the winter, a departure from the usual routine of completing filming during the summer - the CFF productions traditionally took advantage not only of the weather but of saving money on tutors for its young stars. In 1975 Henry Geddes stated:

> "It has been my experience that the only practical period for shooting the CFF films in the UK was in the spring or summer when part of the period coincided with the school holidays, as these were the only times when children were readily available for crowd work - shooting in the school holidays saved money as only the chaperon was required, opposed to a tutor and chaperon in the term time and also the necessity to cover educational periods during the day for all children was avoided."[257]

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[256] Margaret Hinxman in *Children's Film Foundation presents Young Cinema* (London, CFF brochure, June 1972) p. 6-9

[257] Henry Geddes in *Joint Sub-Committee of the CFF Production, Finance and General Purposes Committee*, June 1975, p. 2

The second item of note was that this was a 'one man band' production by the actor and artist Olaf Pooley - his script and direction was approved by the CFF production committee but was to prove his only directional role. The story, highly motivated by the recent newspaper craze for reports of Scoland's Loch Ness monster, tells of two boys who fake photographs of a monster in the lough and their comeuppance when their fake monster is exposed (or in true CFF style, is it?), is described by Robert Shail as:

> "A film with a jolly swagger...the eccentricities are reminiscent of the Ealing comedies and typical of the Foundation's films of the early 1970s. However, the attitudes to gender on display are archaic even by CFF standards, with the girls relegated to acting as lookouts or nursemaids to the boys and Jock's sister referred to as good wife potential because she can cook. The Irish cliches, topped by the characters performing a song they have collectively written, nearly sink proceedings to the bottom of the lough. When on its travels the CFF was prone to casually replicating national stereotypes." [258]

Interestingly, Shail compared the film to the Ealing comedies, the last of which was produced in 1958. The CFF were often slow to keep up with the current trends of the mainstream film industry - *Cup Fever* (1965) was the first to be influenced by the new realism of British cinema that had come to the fore as early as 1959. The 'psychedelic' films of the 1960s were to show their first influence on the CFF productions in 1972, when Micheal Powell's *The Boy Who Turned Yellow* was released (more on this film in the next section). Shail commented that this period saw "a marked return to broad slapstick comedy shorts, a style that had previously been abandoned in the 1950s"[259] but 1972, working with a grant of £235,000, the CFF produced seven adventure features, with only *Kadoyng* (d. Ian Shand) and the six-part series *The Trouble With 2B* (d. Peter K. Smith) the only productions that could be loosely described as 'slapstick comedy'.

Alongside Powell's *The Boy Who Turned Yellow,* the pick of the 1972 features were *Mauro the Gypsy* (d. Laurence Henson), *Kadoyng* and *Hide and Seek* (d. David Eady. *Mauro The Gypsy* was a Pat Latham penned tale of a gypsy family who face prejudice and unfair criticism from the local population. The film was entered into the Moscow Film Festival of 1973, where it won a special award for 'Contribution to Racial Tolerance'.[260] *Kadoyng* was a science fiction fantasy that set the tone for the 1977 CFF production *The Glitterball* (d. Harley Cokeliss) and told a familiar tale - an alien who turns up in pastoral England and helps the local children to foil the local bully, this time a developer (played by future *Last of the Summer Wine* (BBC, 1973 - 2010) star Bill Owen) in his attempt to construct a new motorway through their village - aptly called Byway. In Robert Shail's view, again in comparison with the Ealing comedies;

> "The film's environmental message and celebration of 'small is beautiful' place it in the Ealing vein within the Foundation's work. In typical CFF style the simple special effects involve jump-cuts, which act to transport people through space,

[258] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 73
[259] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 27
[260] From *Children's Film and Television Foundation Catalogue and Index of Films*, 1980 p. 29

> and speeded up motion. There are surprisingly satirical scenes as when Kadoyng makes the minister talk literal gibberish to a public meeting, alongside the usual slapstick. Slow and ambling as it is, *Kadoyng* is a curiosity with more than a whiff of 1960s bedsit radicalism about it." [261]

Hide and Seek was filmed in Deptford and was another of the Foundation's films to fall under the belated 'gritty realism' banner. Shail describes location shooting "that shows a capital in obvious economic decline - graffiti for the BNP (the far-right British National Party) is clearly visible at one point. The film's rough edged quality extends to the use of a form of juvenile swearing with the 'f' word translated into 'flamin'. *Hide and Seek* was, in its own way, a groundbreaking film from the CFF."[262] Future Spandau Ballet popstar Gary Kemp was cast as Chris, who along with his sister helped to conceal Keith, an absconder from a local Approved School, from the authorities. Kemp wrote a revealing insight into the life of a CFF child actor in his autobiography, *I Know This Much* (London, Fourth Estate, 2009). Kemp, at the time lived in an Islington terrace and was a member of the Anna Scher Theatre School, already with one CFF role under his belt in *Junket 89* (1970, d. Peter Plummer). He recalls:

> "The screaming engine of the silver Lotus Elan pinned me back into the leather seat and shot me down the empty backstreet. What made it sublime was the woman with a kid glove on the vibrating gear stick was the pulchritudinous star of the *Carry On* movies, Liz Fraser. I was making another 'Saturday Morning' picture, but this time I was starring in it, and Liz, who was playing the lead villain's moll, was taking me for a spin in her new toy. Catapulted from my black and white telly to full glorious colour in the driving seat next to me, I'm sure she knew to what wonderful places she was also driving this twelve-year-old's imagination."[263]

His recollections were not only of sports car rides with the buxom Miss Fraser - he also offered up this synopsis:

> "*Hide and Seek* followed the rules of most Children's Film Foundation's movies: kids rise above the bumbling inadequacies of the authorities to help capture a bunch of no-gooders; on the way, they have a bit of slapstick at the adults' expense and learn some lessons about themselves. I played a policeman's son who finds an absconded borstal boy hiding in a basement under the house of Roy Dotrice's grubby Mr Grimes. We stumble on a heist that, with the license of cinematic coincidence, involves Keith's father. The denouement is played out over classic CFF territory - the bombsite, and it had a cast equal to any of the major British comedy productions of the time."[264]

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[261] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 77
[262] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 77
[263] Kemp *I Know This Much* p. 51
[264] Kemp *I Know This Much* p. 51-52

Kemp also had a word or two to say about the problems for a north London boy location filming in the less than salubrious neighbourhood of Deptford:

> "Deptford was not in my comfort zone - the local lads gave us as much trouble as they could without gaining the attention of the police. It was common for me to have to dodge the odd flying milk bottle during filming, and a bunch of fey film types are never great at standing up to that sort of thing. It was usually left to one of the female chaperones to defuse the wrath that our presence instilled in the local gangs. A few cakes off the buffet would also help."[265]

Following a bumper year for productions, the CFF share of the Eady Levy rose to £310,000 in 1973. However, this resulted in only three completed features for the year - *Paganini Strikes Again* (d. Gerry O'Hara), *The Sea Children*, a forty minute feature directed by David Andrews, and a longer film, *The Zoo Robbery* (written, produced and directed by John Black and Matt McCarthy) which ran to 64 minutes. *The Sea Children* was a co-production with Pan Productions and the Malta Film Commission. The Foundation's production budget, which now averaged £34,000 per film, was diminished in this year, as, with a view to providing a complete programme for matinee club exhibitors, the board decided to buy the licenses for a host of animated cartoons to bolster their 'one-stop' supply offer to the chains and independents. Deals with Columbia, Warner, Fox, Rank and C.I.C., the distribution company formed by Paramount and Universal (all restricted to UK distribution only), would add to 30 dubbed cartoon shorts from Bulgaria and Hungary to amass, by the end of the decade, a substantial library of 164 cartoon titles for distribution to provide a greater choice and to lessen the risk of repetition for what remained of the cinema club audience.

1974 saw the CFF grant increase to £352,000 with average production costs rising to £38,000, with annual production increasing to six features and two series, the six-part *Professor Popper's Problems* (d. Gerry O'Hara), which featured popular comedian Charlie Drake in the title role and future *Grange Hill* and *Eastenders* regular Todd Carty as the juvenile lead, and the seven episode *The Boy With Two Heads* (d. Jonathan Ingrams). Made by long-time CFF collaborators Eyeline Films, it was co-written and produced by Frank Godwin, who would go on to produce the final CFTF film *Terry on the Fence* in 1985. Robert Shail describes it as "a late example of a CFF cliff-hanger adventure serial, albeit one with strong elements of slapstick and fantasy that place it in its 1970s output."[266] A brother and sister discover a shrunken head (named Chico) who comes to life and each episode is built around a stand alone adventure as the children, one of whom is played by Leslie Ash, who would go one to build a fine career in British film and television, attempt to reunite Chico with his South American tribe whilst trying to keep him from the grasp of a crooked antiques dealer (Lance Percival) and his less than intelligent heavies. It proved popular in the British matinees, due in part to its catchy theme tune (which is reprised at the end of each episode along with singalong lyrics on screen - harking back to the 1950s tradition of matinee singalongs), and was a surprising success in the USA - where it was retitled for broadcast on CBS as *Chico the Rainmaker*. In a review, titled 'A festive grab-bag for kids', for

[265] Kemp *I Know This Much* p. 52
[266] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 78

the *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner,* the President of the Center of Films for Children, Shari Lewis, described the reaction to a test screening:

> "This serial is made by the Children's Film Foundation, a twenty five year old production unit in the United Kingdom which provides features solely for children. We test screened it for elementary school children and they were wild about it - one teacher said it was the first time she had seen hyper-kinetic children sit still. Shari explains how films designed for children differ from those created for the whole family; children's films do not require an adult to be present to explain anything. There should be no major love scenes - tenderness and love, yes, but not romance. The films should evoke active reaction, children should scream with delight, boo with anger. Children should be permitted, indeed encouraged, to respond in this way. There should be clearly delineated characters and a child or child-like character should be the star. A prime element is physicality with talk reduced to a minimum. This means films can be international - children respond just as well to foriegn films if these elements are present."[267]

Shari's checklist for films for children could have been taken from the 1960s *Progress Report: The CFF in the Sixties,* which was basically the blueprint for the Foundation's Production Committee, which was discussed in the previous chapter. She continued, with a very critical viewpoint, to discuss the fare that was served up to a child audience by the US TV stations:

> "There is nothing wrong with films like *Billy Jack* and *Jaws* but they are not films for children - children should not be put through that kind of rigor. It's a lot of hogwash that violence on screen gets violence out of the human system. In fact, the opposite is true. Too much product, especially TV productions made for children, contains a great deal of thinly concealed violence. Many of these films are also full of fake excitement, the quality of the writing and comedy is poor and the production values miserable. Unfortunately, the attitude of many of those making films for children is akin to the radio host, thinking he was off-air, who said 'that'll hold the little you-know-whats for now.'"[268]

The series obviously had Shari Lewis's approval, but Robert Shail had misgivings about the appearance of the lead character, Chico. "The film's most bizarre aspect, and the reason for it's small cult following, is Chico himself. The puppet head with its moving eyes and mouth is decidedly creepy, as evidenced by the reaction of my own twelve-year-old daughter."[269] In 2005, the series reminded a reviewer on the IMDB message boards that "this show totally freaked me out! I probably saw a ten-minute portion of a single episode, and that's all it took to scar me for life. That very night (I was probably 7 or 8 years old) I couldn't sleep. I told my mommy that I just

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[267] Bridget Byrne in *A Festive Grab-bag for Kids*, a film review in the *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner* (February 1st, 1979)
[268] Byrne *A Festive Grab-bag for Kids*
[269] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 78

couldn't get that hideous head out of mine."[270] Perhaps proving the point, that in spite of all the tight controls and stringent policing by the production committee, the CFF could score 'own goals' with their films.

By 1975, the grant to the CFF had been maintained at £352,000, with costs per production again sharply rising due to inflation and industry costs. This resulted in only four productions, all feature length, being completed. Three were adventure story's - *Avalanche* (d. Frederic Goode), the nautical thriller *Hijack!* (written and directed by Michael Furlong) and *The Hostages* (d. David Eady) with the fourth being another Keith Chegwin vehicle, *Robin Hood Junior*. Like their previous film for the CFF *The Zoo Robbery*, this film was again written, produced and directed by John Black and Matt McCarthy for Brocket Productions. Keith Chegwin fails to disguise his scouse accent as a juvenile incarnation of the famous Sherwood Forester, whose nemesis here is the Black Baron. Despite being popular at the matinee clubs, Robert Shail felt that this film, despite its beautiful costumes and location filming at Allington Castle in Kent, fell a little short of the CFF usual standards:

> "Despite the typically restricted budget, *Robin Hood Junior* looks impressive, but the same cannot always be said about the fight sequences and stunts. The film suffers from the anachronisms that frequently beset this kind of period adventure, so that the dialogue veers between contemporary speech and a form of pseudo Middle English. The adults tend to overact, lending the piece the tone of a good natured pantomime romp. A similar strain is evident in the switch between humour and action. Nonetheless, *Robin Hood Junior* is an ambitious piece and a rarity for the CFF at this point. With its focus on direct audience identification, the Foundation only occasionally stepped away from contemporary settings."[271]

The film travelled surprisingly well; *The Los Angeles Times* Arts Editor Charles Champlin watched a preview with an audience of children and declared:

> "*Robin Hood Junior* is an inventive and significant piece of movie crafting, embodying as it does everything the CFF and its chief executive, Henry Geddes, have learned over a quarter of a century about young audiences. The principal ingenuity is that while the action is robust and almost non-stop, it is not violent, in the sense that not one drop of blood is shed and obviously no-one will come away with anything worse than a minor black-and-blue mark and perhaps a bruised ego. The fascination for a watching adult is to guess how the writers will resolve the plot without violence. They do, with nets, traps, smoke, wit, a herd of sheep and sheer tumbling numbers of humanity. The other lessons are that the protagonists must be children. The adults are supernumeraries and, no matter whether they are kindly or evil, they have almost nothing to say. Scenes

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[270] 'Jokono' in IMDB *The Boy With Two Heads* message board titled *Creepy abomination from the pit of all that is perverse. Really.* (Posted September 2005) https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0348899/?ref_=nv_sr_srsg_0 (accessed February 2021)

[271] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 78-79

> had to advance pell-mell and you can hear the rising restlessness and murmurations in the young crowd after no more than three lines of dialogue."[272]

It was obvious that adults and children had very different ideas on what entertainment was. The popularity of the film led to a sequel, the CFF serial *The Unbroken Arrow* (1976, d. Matt McCarthy and John Black) which suffered with the replacement of the popular Keith Chegwin by Peter Demin, and that of comedy legend Andrew Sachs, who was replaced in his role as the comedic friar. Sachs had gone on to greater success as the hapless Spanish waiter Manuel in *Fawlty Towers* (BBC TV, 1975-78, d. John Howard-Davies and Bob Spiers) whilst Chegwin had been seduced by the BBC's Saturday morning slot, co-hosting as a roving reporter in their assault on the Saturday morning cinema audience, *The Multi-Coloured Swap Shop*.

In 1976, the Eady grant rose to £454,000 for the year and the CFF provided a bumper year of productions - nine features and four serials. Alongside *The Unbroken Arrow*, two series of *Chimpmates* (directed and produced by Harold Orton), which were the collected adventures of Alice the chimpanzee and was notable for introducing Dexter Fletcher to the matinee audience, and the first in the popular series *The Chiffy Kids* (d. David Bracknell). *The Chiffy Kids* featured the comic adventures of a group of children and had a stellar cast of supporting adults, amongst them Harry H Corbett, Sam Kydd, Alfie Bass, Irene Handl, Kenny Lynch,Roy Barrowclough and even enlisted the popular BBC *Blue Peter* presenter Valerie Singleton as a commentator on a snail race! David Bracknell directed the Anvil Films production, and a follow-up series was made in 1978. *The Chiffy Kids* title was inspired by the CFF annual awards that were launched in the early 1970s in conjunction with Reg Helley, the EMI/ABC Minors supremo. "Helley conceived them as the minor's equivalent of the Oscars - the idea was that every year Minors all over Britain would vote to determine their three favourite features and one serial that they had seen in the past twelve months."[273] The title 'Chiffy' derived from the telegraphic address for the CFF -CHIFI. However, the series was subject to a scathing review by John Pym of the *Monthly Film Bulletin*:

> "Although the 'Chiffy Kids' retain individual character traits throughout this series, the adventures they get up to are so blandly inconsequential that their mischief fails to engage the viewer's complicity (the series is simply a collection of self-contained stories). The gang operate in a limbo of irresponsibility strangely unaffected by any of the real difficulties of childhood, strict parents or the constraints of school. Their main concern is to 'do good', which they invariably succeed - rather prissily - in doing."[274]

Bearing in mind that Pym's six other reviews for this month were either for X or AA certificate films, maybe the children's film genre was a little too tame for his personal tastes, and maybe he missed the point - that these episodes were meant to be viewed weekly and individually - by a child audience.

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[272] Charles Champlin review of *Robin Hood Junior* in *The Los Angeles Times 'View'* titled *Critic at Large: Action Aplenty Sans Violence* (Friday 20 February 1976)
[273] Staples *All Pals Together* p. 226
[274] John Pym review of *The Chiffy Kids* in *The Monthly Film Bulletin* (April 1977, Volume 44, No. 519) p. 66

By this time the CFF were supplying over 80% of all content shown at the matinees, as the productions available to be leased from the USA began to dry up. The pick of this year's films were *The Battle of Billy's Pond*, which will be discussed in detail in the next section, *The Man From Nowhere* (d. James Hill) and *Night Ferry* (d. David Eady). *The Man From Nowhere*, produced by Jean Wadlow for Charles Barker Films, was directed by James Hill, best known for his 1966 film *Born Free*. This ghost story was played straight - no slapstick here! Indeed, Robert Shail notes "the opening might qualify for a children's version of a Hammer film - Victorian Britain is skillfully suggested with a few well chosen locations and costumes, despite the customary low budget."[275] It was a familiar story, of an orphan whose inheritance puts her in mortal danger and who is warned and aided by a mysterious spectre, before enlisting the local gang of urchins to foil the villains, and the popular film was judged by Robert Shail to be "with its neat execution and chilling atmosphere, it remains a fine example of how the Foundation could step outside of its formulaic remit and produce something to challenge the audience's expectations."[276]

In 1977, the grant had risen to £500,000, and with this the CFF managed to follow their previous record breaking year with just three feature productions - *Blind Man's Bluff*, *Seal Island* and *The Glitterball. Blind Man's Bluff* (directed and produced by Ronnie Spencer) was a Pat Latham story of young newspaper boys foiling a kidnapping, while The Glitterball (d. Harley Cokeliss) will be covered in more detail in the next section. *Seal Island* (produced and directed by Ronnie Spencer) was another Pat Latham script this time based on CFF chairman Henry Geddes's original story of a pair of young naturalists's protection of a seal sanctuary on behalf of their father, the island's warden. A familiar CFF tale, this film was again given short shrift by the *Monthly Film Bulletin,* this time by Peter Markham:

> "Children and adults alike intone their barely adequate lines with considerable embarrassment in this earnest slice of conservation propaganda. Here and there the humorous touches in the treatment of arch-villain Harrison attain an almost *Monty Python*-esque intensity. Such fleeting minutiae, however, are insufficient compensation for the unerringly tedious and contrived string of complications the narrative has to offer. Had the film-makers credited their audience with the intelligence that warden Murray attributes to his moppet cohorts, the result might have been less condescending in tone and more engaging in content."[277]

Another grant of £500,000 in 1978 enabled six features and the final episodes of *The Chiffy Kids (Series 2)* and *Chimpmates (Series 3)* to be completed. The most notable features of this year were *A Hitch in Time* and *Sammy's Super T-Shirt*. *A Hitch in Time* was an Eyeline Films production by Harold Orton, directed by Jan Darnley-Smith, told of a professor with a malfunctioning time-travelling machine. Obviously hugely influenced by the popular long running BBC series *Dr Who* (even featuring the second Doctor, Patrick Troughton as the time travelling

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[275] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 82
[276] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 83
[277] Peter Markham review of *Seal Island* in *The Monthly Film Bulletin* (May 1977, Volume 44, No. 520) p. 106

Professor Wagstaff), the film was again popular on the matinee circuits whilst receiving none too complimentary reviews from the critics. Richard Combs of *The Monthly Film Bulletin* wrote:

> "An aggressively whimsical children's feature, into which veteran Ealing scriptwriter T. E. B. Clarke has packed rather more incident than the hour-long format (or the almost non-existent plot-line) can contain. The flurry of time switches provide altogether too many variations on the same joke, and children are as likely as adults to find the lack of development tedious (notwithstanding respectable special effects and production values)."[278]

More recent reviews bewail the special effects and production values that in 1979 Richard Combs found to be the film's saving grace. Robert Shail notes:

> "The film reveals just how repetitive the Foundation's work had become by this stage. The special effects, hampered by budget constraints, consist of a few jump cuts, some basic superimposition and a few coloured lights. The set for the Professor's laboratory has the solidity of hastily assembled cardboard and the explosions are small puffs of smoke. The prehistoric sequence takes place in a papier mache cave as the children are pursued by a bear that is all too obviously a man in a costume. Many sequences possess a pantomime quality as the actors run around the ruined castle and its surrounding field in various period costumes."[279]

Alistair McGown of the BFI seemed to agree with both parties when he wrote on BFI screenonline that:

> "While a lot of fun, it's all rather directionless as a story - the plot consists of little more than lots of flitting around various 'times', represented by men running around a field dressed up in a selection of outfits from theatrical costumiers. Time-travel fiction often deals in paradoxes, but here the interference of Paul and Fiona in their ancestors' timelines seems not to matter a jot. Probably more worrying for the CFF in 1978 is that *A Hitch in Time* seems a rather cheap production, suggesting that after the inflationary '70s, the annual budget was being stretched too thin - the director of such mid-60s CFF classics as *Go Kart Go* (1963) and *Runaway Railway* (1965) seems stymied here by cheap 16mm colour film stock, rudimentary lighting and a general lack of budget. Although its possible that only badly worn copies are left to view today, the technical standards seem poor when viewed beside examples from the CFF's monochrome heyday."[280]

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[278] Richard Combs review of *A Hitch In Time* in *The Monthly Film Bulletin* (June 1979, Volume 46, No. 545) p. 123
[279] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 85
[280] Alistair McGown in review of *A Hitch In Time* on BFI screenonline http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/1128638/index.html (accessed May 2018)

Harold Orton and Eyeline Films would be re-engaged in the future by the CFF, with much better critically received films, including *Breakout* (1983) and the final Foundation production *Terry on the Fence* (1985). *Sammy's Super T-Shirt* saw a return to knockabout comedy by the CFF and proved to be one of it's most popular features, and the most readily recalled film of the members of the respondents of my own audience survey. Produced and written by Frank Godwin for Monument Films Ltd and directed by Jeremy Summers, it's inspiration lay in the superhuman adventures of the American TV hero *The Six Million Dollar Man* (Universal Television, 1974-1978). Sammie, a geek who aspires to athletic prowess, has his t-shirt thrown through a window by his bullies. By the time he has retrieved it, it has been mistakenly 'zapped' by scientists, giving the wearer superhuman powers. The scientists want it back, and although kidnapped, Sammie and his friend Marvin (a rare casting of a leading role to a black actor in Lawrie Mark) escape using the t-shirts power, and it becomes a chase film, "all depicted with a mixture of slow motion and speeded-up shots accompanied by sound effects that directly parody *The Six Million Dollar Man.* Surprisingly in a film full of fantasy, David Robinson's review in *The Times* extolled the CFF's realistic portrayal of suburban life. He said of the film:

> "Perhaps it is because children are themselves realists that a special if incidental attraction of the productions of the CFF is that they show, as no other British films of the period do, the physical reality of the lives of the majority of people in this country. No other film so clearly or so often or so cheerfully depicts the lives of suburbs and provincial housing estates, of semis with plastic topped tables in their 10x12 living rooms, of neighbourhood shops and playing fields and factory estates."[281]

Alistair McGown of the BFI noted the influence of television on the film, the morality of the ending and of the groundbreaking casting of Lawrie Mark:

> "*Sammy's Super T-Shirt* is a comic treatment of bullying that sees a little boy find the confidence to stand up to his tormentors via the device of a magical T-shirt. Sammy initially believes that the magic T-shirt is what will give him the ability to win the challenge race, but what really leads him to victory is confidence in his own training and skills and the moral reminder that cheating of any kind is no way to win. The film is a clear example of the growing influence of successful television series of the day on Children's Film Foundation (CFF) output in the 1970s. The central premise of Sammy's super strength - the ability to leap high walls, run super fast and lift heavy objects - is a steal from the American TV drama *The Six Million Dollar Man*, hugely popular with UK children since 1975, and the scenes in which Sammy displays his powers are nothing more or less than pastiche of its hero Steve Austin's bionic antics. A poster of Austin is prominently displayed on Sammy's bedroom wall. Teenage West Indian actor Lawrie Mark, then a very well-known face on television as Benjamin in *The Fosters* (ITV, 1976-77), was cast as Sammy's best friend Marvin, the result of a conscious decision by producer Frank Godwin to employ racially mixed casts

[281] David Robinson in review of *Sammy's Super T-Shirt* in *The Times Film Reviews* (August 4th, 1978)

> that would reflect the changing CFF audience - in inner city cinema clubs up to 50 per cent of audiences were of an ethnic make-up. To Godwin's surprise this earned his "amusing little picture" an award from the Strasbourg Film Festival for 'The Promotion of Understanding Between Ethnic Groups'. Popular in the latter days of CFF filmgoing, *Sammy's Super T-Shirt* found renewed popularity with a new generation when shown on BBC1 in 1987 and once again in 1988, and is one of the best remembered of all the CFF films."[282]

Sammy's Super T-Shirt was indeed well remembered. It was one of only a few titles recalled by the members of my own audience survey - many recalled the atmosphere, who they attended with and the antics of some members of the audience, but not many actually remembered the content of what they viewed. *Sammy's Super T-Shirt* was remembered fondly by Stuart, who attended the Saturday morning shows in Leicester:

> "I attended matinees at Leicester Odeon, from around 1984 and 1987, with my brother. The two films I can still recall are *Professor Popple's Potion* [actually a 1983 90 minute re-edit of the six part serial called *The Trouble with 2B,* called *Professor Potter's Magic Potions*] and *Sammy's Super T-Shirt*. I can recall the content of both films, but particularly related to Sammy, as he was a boy of my own age with the same interests and he actually succeeded on his own without his t-shirt, which was a huge influence at the time."[283]

Despite increased pressure on the BFI from industry figures, the final grant of the 1970s saw the CFF receive a generous £575,000, the figure they had requested. With production costs now averaging over £80,000 per film, the final year of the decade saw just four features produced - the production and personnel costs had now prohibited any more serials to be made. Cost cutting, already a necessity for producers working on a CFF production was now crucial - the tradition initiated by Mary Field of using original music for each production was now becoming impossible, as highlighted by director Matt McCarthy:

> "In practice the restrictions on budget meant that the size of the orchestra was always limited to about five or six musicians, whereas I wanted a big old-fashioned orchestral score (for *The Unbroken Arrow*) with lots of french horns. I persuaded the Foundation to accept stock music, for which we paid a flat fee which covered the whole world, making it cheaper than if we had used an original score."[284]

Saving money on actors fees was, however, another matter, due to the actor's union, Equity, having a decisive hold on the money paid to its members. McCarthy added:

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[282] Alistair McGown in review of *Sammy's Super T-Shirt* on BFI screenonline http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/1131498/index.html (accessed May 2018)
[283] Leicester Odeon matinee-goer, 1980s, interviewed by the author November 2018
[284] Matt McCarthy in Staples *All Pals Together* p. 232

> "One thing it was impossible to save money on was rates of pay. They were already rock bottom. The adults got £35 a day, which was the minimum Equity rate, a special dispensation for the Foundation only. The children were paid between £5 and £7.50 a day, depending on whether they spoke or not. On top of that there was either £5 or £10 for a chaperone, one each being allowed to look after up to five children. Most of the crew and actors, when working on a CFF film, did not press for a lot of money - they knew that there was none to press for."[285]

The four features produced in 1979 were all adventure films - *A Horse Called Jester* (d.Ken Fairburn), *Electric Eskimo* and *The Boy Who Never Was* (both directed and produced by long-term collaborator Frank Godwin) and *Big Wheels and Sailor* (d. Doug Aitken). *Electric Eskimo* had a the advantage of "the deployment of a number cheaply produced but charming trick shots"[286] in a story of an Inuit child accidentally affected by magnetic fields who is pursued by villains intent on kidnapping and using his 'powers' for their own ill-gain. Renamed *Superkids* for its American release, the film was presented the Best Film award by the International Center for Children's Films in Los Angeles and Frank Godwin picked up the Pravda Award at the Moscow Film Festival for his direction of 'the most popular children's film'. *Big Wheels and Sailor* cashed in on the popular CB radio craze of the few previous years, when children became shortwave radio hams, aping American truckers popularised by C W McCall's top-selling *Convoy* single of 1976 and the poor but well received big screen movie also called *Convoy* (1978, d. Sam Peckinpah). It has a common theme - the children of a lorry driver foil hi-jackers and eventually round up the villains by putting out a call on their CB radio, but *Big Wheels and Sailor* was not to the tastes of Tim Pulleine of *The Monthly Film Bulletin*:

> "Although it capitalises on the attractions of its giant vehicles, and the attendant lorry-speak jargon, this children's feature fatally wavers in tone between demi-realism and outright fantasy. More basically, the staging of the action sequences, such as the hijackers' decoy on the motorway or their pursuit of Simon and Polly around the quarry workings, fails to convince."[287]

However, a re-appraisal of the film appeared in the *Time Out Film Guide of 2008*, where John Pym described it as:

> "A lively, innocent and highly characteristic CFF offering in which the 'Big Wheels' of a decidedly well-spoken truck driver (plus two kids) is hijacked by 'Mother', the cigar smoking owner of a cab company (Sheila Reid), slit eyed and hissingly dismissive of her incompetent 'children'. Plenty of wheezing hydraulic brakes, junior motorbike rough riding and chasing over teetering industrial

[285] Matt McCarthy in Staples *All Pals Together* p. 232
[286] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 88
[287] Tim Pulliene review of *Big Wheels and Sailor* in *The Monthly Film Bulletin* (April 1980, Volume 47, No. 555) p. 65

> structures. No less implausible than *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, but from another age."[288]

After over a quarter of a century of making films for children, the CFF had finally cast a female junior lead (who was on a par, both physically and mentally, with her male counterparts. It may have had a lot to do with the female producer, Jeni Cole, but a clear message was being broadcast to the child audience that girls were now being seen as the equal, if not better than, the boys. It was a pity that this message on gender roles was being seen by fewer and fewer children as the decade drew to a close.

Riding the zeitgeist - *The Boy Who Turned Yellow, The Battle of Billy's Pond* and *The Glitterball*

In the 1970s, evening TV viewing became dominated by tough and macho cop shows such as *The Sweeney* (ITV Thames Television, 1975-78)*, Starsky and Hutch* (ABC, BBC TV, 1975-79) and *The Professionals* (ITV London Weekend Television, 1977-83). Children may have been acting out their versions of these programmes at playtime, but the consensus seemed to be they were equally happy to see adventures involving their own age group, especially when watching with their peers at a matinee show. The success of one particular film from this period proves this point: the former 'Archers' production team of Powell and Pressburger with their 1972 production for the CFF *The Boy Who Turned Yellow*.

Emeric Pressburger had retired and Michael Powell, although serving on the board of the CFF, had still not been forgiven by the industry for his controversial 1962 psychological thriller *Peeping Tom*. Tastes in the 1970s had seen Powell's subject matter, namely excessive sexual and violent images, become commonplace on the cinema screen, but he was considered "still the pariah of the British film industry - his last meagre foot in the door was a seat once a month on the board of the Children's Film Foundation."[289] Unhappy with the quality of scripts for children's films that were being submitted, Powell asked Pressburger to write one, on the condition that he himself could direct it, resulting in the "joint swan-song of the once glorious 'Archers'… a cheap and cheerful children's fantasy with a budget of slightly over £40,000."[290] One of Pressberger's first film scripts was for UFA (Universum Film Studios) in Berlin, a children's film called *Dann Schon Lieber Lebertran* - translated as *I'd Rather Have Cod Liver Oil* (1931, d. Max Ophuls), so he was not unused to writing for the genre. For Powell "it was a return to the scales of the 'quota quickie', where he had learned his trade 40 years before."[291] Initially titled *A Wife for Father Christmas* (Father Christmas being one of the pet mice) by Pressburger, the duo called in some of their respected old colleagues from The Archers to help in the production, including photographic editor Chris Challis and the whole project was overseen by Roger Cherrill, who was a production runner on their classic *The Life And Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943, d. Michael Powell).

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[288] John Pym review of *Big Wheels and Sailor* in *The Time Out Film Guide of 2008* (London, Ebury Publishing, 2007) p. 101
[289] MacDonald *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death of a Screenwriter* p. 393-4
[290] MacDonald *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death of a Screenwriter* p. 394
[291] MacDonald *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death of a Screenwrite*r p. 394

The film is the story of John Saunders (played by the flamboyant Mark Dightam), a youngster with a "penchant for extreme fashions - he dresses as though newly returned from a blissed out weekend at Glastonbury Fayre"[292], who loses one of his pet mice whilst on a school trip to the Tower of London. He turns yellow with worry, and is saved by Nick (as in 'electro-Nick', played by Robert Eddison, dressed in yellow overalls, a crash helmet bedecked with a flashing light, and travelling on yellow skis), an extra-terrestrial who feeds off electricity and who transports him via the rays of the television, back to the Tower to rescue his mouse. He wakes up, the right colour, back in his bed, and it transpires it could all have been a dream, recalling The Archers' earlier *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946, d. Michael Powell). James Oliver wrote "it is far from Powell and Pressburgers finest work, but it's never condescending. Indeed, contemporary viewers liked it well enough to award it the 'Best CFF Film' for two years running at 'The Chiffy Awards.'"[293] Interestingly, in the film, Powell and Pressburger chose television as the medium to be Nick's futuristic mode of transportation, skiing the TV rays into John's bedroom: maybe they had an inkling that television was beginning to supersede cinema as a cultural preference for the young. Graeme Clark on the website *The Spinning Image* notes:

> "That TV element is important because Pressburger sneaked an educational aspect into the plot where the children would be told about the possibilities, facts and dangers of electricity. We are informed about such things by John's friend Munro (played by future screenwriter Lem Dobbs - Powell was a friend of his family) and by Nick himself, who underlines the issues inherent in sticking your fingers in plug sockets which he can do for replenishment but you cannot because it will kill you. There follows a raid on the Tower to rescue Alice which sees, after an interlude at a football pitch which features the line "Hey ref, there's a mouse in me pants!", John arrested by the Beefeaters, who really do eat beef and nothing but, and taken to be executed for trespassing. There was a lot of charm to this with its deliberately dreamlike plotting and matter of fact performances, so if you regret that Powell and Pressburger never got another chance to make films for grownups again, you could at least appreciate their efforts to make a strange, sparkling movie for the kids."[294]

Pressburger was so intrigued with the film's reception that he braved a Saturday morning matinee at the Ipswich Odeon to judge for himself - he was very impressed. Inspired, he wrote another screenplay for the CFF, *The Rain-Makers* "about rival gangs of kids and a magic umbrella which makes it rain. For whatever reason, the board turned the script down as unsuitable for children"[295] so *The Boy Who Turned Yellow* was the final cinematic offering of the exceptional men behind The Archers production company. Alistair McGown, for the BFI, summed up the film as:

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[292] James Oliver *Seen But Not Heard Of: The Children's Film Foundation* in *Offbeat: British Cinema's Curiosities, Obscurities and Forgotten Gems* (ed. Julian Upton) (London, Headpress, 2012) p. 331
[293] Oliver *Seen But Not Heard Of* p. 332
[294] Graeme Clark in a review at The Spinning Image website https://www.thespinningimage.co.uk/cultfilms/displaycultfilm.asp?reviewid=7993 (accessed January 2021)
[295] MacDonald *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death of a Screenwriter* p. 395

> "More directly educational than perhaps any other CFF film, it's also one of the most entertaining, eschewing dialogue and plot for visuals. This probably accounts for its popularity with the wide age range of CFF audiences who voted it a 'Chiffy' winner several times. Apparent disagreements with the CFF board, however, would mean that Powell and Pressburger produced no further CFF films. Shown on television over Christmas 1984, as the first CFF feature to be presented by the BBC, *The Boy Who Turned Yellow* remains a well remembered entry that also helped launch a new generation of armchair-bound CFF enthusiasts."[296]

Harley Cokeliss (born Harley Cokliss) was a Californian from San Diego who came to study at the London Film School in the 1960s. He began to direct television documentaries and in 1976 wrote and directed *The Battle of Billy's Pond* for the CFF. First, Cokeliss found he was "daunted by all those committees, but discovered that every intervention, criticism and suggestion they made was for the good of the film."[297] He was also convinced that "unless the director took the film seriously, no one else would"[298] so the story and characters were made as convincing as possible. Made by the Mark Forstater Production Company and shot entirely on location around leafy Hertfordshire (just a short hop from the production studios), *The Battle of Billy's Pond* was released as communities around the world were recognising that pollution was seriously affecting the natural world. Several major ecological disasters, including the dumping of toxic waste and the poisoning of natural water sources had raised the problem of industrial pollution, and this story from Cokeliss gave the CFF a convincing ecological battle from the child's point of view. The child protagonist Billy (played by twelve year old Ben Buckton) takes home a fish he found floating in his favourite fishing haunt. Stolen and eaten by his cat, the fish poisons the feline and Billy enlists the help of his friend (the clumsily named 'Gobby' played by Andrew Ashby) to investigate what is killing the fish. They stumble on men dumping industrial waste into a quarry that feeds one of the pond's watercourses and the adventure is afoot as they begin to record evidence to use against the detergent company behind the pollution. Robert Shail found that "the direction has flair with fluent camerawork and cross-cutting. In more familiar CFF style, Gobby is an amateur inventor and his gadgets, including homemade cameras and sound gear, are used in the film's finale as the villains are caught red-handed dumping the poisonous waste."[299] He added " the fact that the film delivered a message indicates that the Foundation was a place where young directors with something to say could make their mark and demonstrate their technical skills."[300] Jonathan Rosenbaum of *The Monthly Film Bulletin* wrote:

> "On the evidence of this tight featurette and numerous testimonials, it would seem that the Children's Film Foundation maintains a level of workaday efficiency exceeding most of the rest of British commercial film-making. While there is nothing particularly inspiring about this thriller of boy detective ecology

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[296] Alistair McGown in review of *The Boy Who Turned Yellow* on BFI screenonline http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/1131498/index.html (accessed January 2021)
[297] Harley Cokeliss in *Films and Filming Magazine* (volume 22, August 1976) p. 23
[298] Cokeliss *Films and Filming Magazine* p. 23
[299] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 80
[300] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 80

> heroes using their parents' expensive equipment to flush out villainous working class lorry drivers, director Harley Cokeliss manages to breeze through the closely scripted narrative with the minimum of fuss. Especially effective are menacing sequences involving the tanker as it charges down country roads like a brutal beast, threatening everything in its path, and an appealing cat who offers an unusually expressive performance before chemical wastes remove him from the plot."[301]

The film featured a cameo from Miriam Margolyes providing light relief as a guide for visitors at the chemical plant and former CFF child star Linda Robson, at eighteen now too old for a junior lead, was given a small role as a supermarket checkout girl. Cokeliss explained that his recent background in television gave him a good grounding in working with limited funds:

> "Coping with a low budget was not a problem. Having been at film school and having made documentaries for both the BBC and ITV, I was used to a tight schedule. Henry Geddes gave me some good advice - he told me that with an audience of children you had to convey narrative information visually, not through dialogue. I went to see a Saturday morning film club screening and found that the kids get rowdy if they weren't interested in what was happening on the screen. It taught me that you have to grab their attention from the start and hold it. The pace needs to be fast and there has to be plenty of excitement. I kept the film on schedule and within budget - I had control over the edit and we had very positive feedback from the production board. There was never much contact with the Foundation, other than at the start with greenlighting the film and at the end with approving the final cut."[302]

The Battle of Billy's Pond was a prize-winner at Children's Film Festivals in both Moscow and Belgrade and Cokeliss was approached by the CFF to make another film almost immediately. The following year he co-wrote and directed another film that caught the imagination of the Saturday morning audience, *The Glitterball* (1977), again produced by Mark Forstater Productions and with a working budget of £56,000, once more starred Ben Buckton as Max, who, with his friend Pete (Keith Jayne) discover a tiny spaceship (the Glitterball) and endeavour to help it to leave earth. The boys have to evade the Royal Air Force and a villain by the name of Filthy, played by Ron Pember, who "makes the noxious 'Filthy' one of the most effective CFF villains, striking a perfect balance between buffoonery and genuine menace"[303] before they successfully help the U.F.O. on its way. In spite of the traditional matinee audience beginning to shrink, *The Glitterball* has the reputation as one of the better productions. *Time Out Film Guide* later declared it:

> "an enterprising little feature from the Children's Film Foundation which told - but five years earlier - precisely the same story as Spielberg's *E.T.* The

[301] Jonathon Rosenbaum review of *The Battle of Billy's Pond* in *The Monthly Film Bulletin* (April 1976, Volume 43, No. 507) p. 75
[302] Shail interview with Harley Cokeliss in *The Children's Film Foundation*) p. 108
[303] Oliver *Seen But Not Heard Of* p. 332

> extraterrestrial (a metal sphere) is insufficiently characterised and the adults are a drag, but it's neat and pacy with (on a limited budget) some excellent special effects."[304]

Nigel Andrews of *The Financial Times* decided to voice his opinion of CFF funding as the prelude to his review:

> "This organisation receives an annual grant from the state for £500,000 - which members of Adults Lib might care to know is roughly four times the yearly grant to the BFI Production Board, the country's main independent film-making outlet for grown-ups - and it has, understandably, a rather nervous relationship with the press. From *The Glitterball* the CFF just about emerges with honour intact; a wittily scripted Sci-Fi fantasy in which dialogue, characterisation and special effects are all of a high standard."[305]

The budget restraints challenged the makers of a science fiction tale - and Cokeliss and his special effects team used various tricks from the past and called in a few favours:

> "A considerable challenge was how to produce all the special effects on a very low budget; the whole film only cost £56k, so problems were overcome by thinking around them in inventive ways with many effects achieved in-camera using techniques from early cinema such as reversing the film, or speeding it up, or placing the camera upside down. The action of the Glitterball itself was created by using a variety of different balls, including a ping-pong ball, a wooden ball and a metal one, depending on the scene. For the outer space effects we went to Brian Johnson, who had worked for Stanley Kubrick on *2001: A Space Odyssey*. He was working on the television series *Space 1999* (1975-7) for Gerry Anderson while we were filming *The Glitterball* and Gerry very graciously allowed us to borrow him after hours."[306]

Made at the same time as the massive *Star Wars*, but "on a budget less than that movies' catering bill,"[307] *The Glitterball* is, according to BFI's Alistair McGown, "usually recalled as some sort of precursor to Steven Speilberg's ultimate friendly alien tale *E. T. The Extra-Terrestrial*, although it's unlikely Speilberg had ever seen or even heard of it, given the low-key distribution and promotion of CFF output."[308] McGown suggests "the film's timing was fortuitous - the release of *Star Wars* in the UK in 1978 ushered in a wave of popularity for anything in the genre."[309] The film premiered in April 1977, launched alongside *Fern, the Red Deer* (written and directed by Jan Darnley-Smith). The press pack from the premiere included the following:

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[304] Tom Milne review of *The Glitterball* in *The Time Out Film Guide of 2008* (London, Ebury Publishing, 2007) p. 410
[305] Nigel Andrews review of *The Glitterball* in *The Financial Times* (April 22, 1977)
[306] Shail interview with Harley Cokeliss in *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 107-108
[307] Oliver *Seen But Not Heard Of* p. 332
[308] Alistair McGown in review of *The Glitterball* on BFI screenonline http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/1147530/index.html (accessed May 2018)
[309] Alistair McGown in review of *The Glitterball* on BFI screenonline http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/1147530/index.html (accessed May 2018)

> "The remarkable Children's Film Foundation - kids stuff at it's best. One of the most admirable products of the otherwise moribund British film industry - infinitely more enjoyable than a great many films that make up my adult viewing. Sure fire entertainment!" (Felix Barber, The Evening News).
>
> "The Children's Film Foundation is doing us a great service, not only in producing film of this calibre, but in awakening the discriminatory taste buds of tomorrow's audiences." (David Cassell, The Sunday Telegraph).
>
> "In our ailing British film industry one section flourishes and commands the respect of the world. Sponsored by the film industry, the Children's Film Foundation understands exactly the audience for which the films are intended." (Margaret Hinxman, The Daily Mail).[310]

Harley Cokeliss, however, had made his mark - when the second *Star Wars* film, *The Empire Strikes Back* was made in 1980, he was invited by George Lucas to work as second unit director on the production.

> "*The Glitterball* has had a long life. There was a time in the 1980s when, for three consecutive years, the two films that the BBC showed on Christmas Day were *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) and *The Glitterball*. And in the mid-1990s, at a special celebratory screening at the Leicester Square Odeon in honour of the CFF (then called the Children's Film and Television Foundation), *The Glitterball* was chosen from their entire output to be the film shown".[311]

The Glitterball was also chosen for the 2010 Edinburgh Film Festival as part of a British retrospective of sixteen "rarely seen" films made in the 1970s. Unfortunately, *The Glitterball* was to be one of the last of the truly great CFF productions. Storm clouds were gathering for the Foundation as Saturday morning television and the Hollywood blockbuster began to take over from the matinee as the major source of children's weekend entertainment.

Tiswas! TV captures Saturday Mornings

By the mid-1970s, there were still around 500,000 children a week attending around 800 cinema matinees - remarkable considering that the overall decline in UK cinema attendance was reaching a critical level. But the writing was on the wall. A 1972 poll by Group Market Research of 1500 children revealed that "25% of them usually spent Saturday mornings watching television, while another 7% of them knew about matinees and could have gone to one, but positively preferred to stay in."[312] Remarkably, 38% said they still preferred a trip to the cinema. The TV audience was maintained despite no uniformed programming by either the BBC or ITV for the under sixteens at the weekend. The Gerry Anderson action puppet series repeats *Thunderbirds* (ITV, 1965-66) and *Stingray* (ITV, 1964-65) dominated ITV's output, with an

[310] All three reviews from the Press pack for *The Glitterball* (Children's Film Foundation Publications) April 1977
[311] Harley Cokeliss interviewed on BFI screenonline https://www2.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/news-bfi/features/making-cult-childrens-sci-fi-glitterball (accessed May 2018)
[312] Staples *All Pals Together* p. 229

equestrian adventure series *Follyfoot* (ITV, Yorkshire Television, 1971-73) being shown in the autumn. The BBC was showing old films or cartoons. It was not until 1974 that a channel decided to actually target the 10am to noon spot with a programme especially for children - the loud and zany ATV show *Tiswas!*

The chaos and rowdiness is a recurring element in anecdotal research of some of the Saturday matinee clubs, and if a TV programme could tap into this then surely it would capture a sizeable audience. Some Derby matinee-goers recalled; 'I just remember loads of noisy kids at the thrupenny rush. We chanted for the film to start after the intermission, during which we would queue in the aisle for an ice-cream from the usherette – if we had any money' (Allenton Broadway matinee-goer, 1960s, interviewed by the author November 2018)[313]. Furthermore, 'I remember one dreary western – it was boring as hell, so we kids looked for other things to do. Even us posh kids in the balcony were throwing ice cream cartons around. So the manager stopped the film and told us we'll all go home early if we didn't settle down' (ABC Minor from Derby reported by Ashley Franklin)[314]. The rowdiness seemed to be found in London as well as Derby: 'the front row was a good place to be for a while - because then you could try to trip up the ice-cream ladies. Among the items being thrown around, blown out or dropped inside shirts were half-eaten Zoom lollies, Kia-Ora juice cartons cornets, beakers of Coke, bits of bubble gum - girls with long hair were in particular danger from that - spit balls, peanuts, rice, dried peas, water balloons and of course, stink bombs' (Hounslow West ONCC member reported by Terry Staples)[315].

Tiswas! or *Today Is Saturday, Watch and Smile!* started as a continuity link between children's Saturday morning programmes on ATV Midlands in 1974. The first series, which began on Saturday 5th January, featured two presenters, Chris Tarrant and John Asher, sitting behind a desk reading out jokes and letters sent in by the young viewers between cartoons and serial episodes. The series, and the set expanded, and began to be taken by other ITV regions. By the time of its final series in 1982, it was being shown live by every region, with the exception of only the tiny Channel TV franchise. Presenter Chris Tarrant recalls:

> "In those early days of 1974 there was no real television audience on any of the stations on Saturday morning. Several of them didn't open at all until midday, some just ran wall to wall cartoons or very old black and white films...but once Tiswas came on the scene that was the end of all that. It was also the end of Saturday morning pictures. Parents no longer needed to slog into town with their kids watching ancient Hop-Along Cassidy films when they could carry on doing the housework with the kids at home in front of the telly."[316]

Tiswas! made stars of its expanding cast of hosts - Lenny Henry, Sally James, Sylvester McCoy and Bob Carolgees (of *Spit the Dog* fame) all became household names through their

[313] Allenton Broadway, Derby matinee-goer, 1960s, interviewed by the author November 2018
[314] ABC Minor from Derby reported in Ashley Franklin in *A Cinema Near You: 100 Years of Going to the Pictures in Derbyshire*, (Derby, Breedon Books, 1996) p. 129
[315] Hounslow West ONCC member reported in Terry Staples in *All Pals Together - The Story of Children's Cinema* (Edinburgh, University Press, 1997), 1997, p. 201
[316] Gary Vaux in *Legends of Kids TV.* (Bramley, Ridgeway Press Ltd., 2009) p. 119

association with the show, and main presenter Chris Tarrant rose from an ATV local news reporter to host the national favourite quiz show *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?* (Celador Television) from 1998. Instead of stink-bombs and flying ice cream cartons, *Tiswas!* made use of buckets of water, litres of gunge and custard pies, thrown by the 'Phantom Flan Flinger', in the direction of parents, kids and unsuspecting guest stars alike. Not only did it prove very popular for its target audience, the under sixteens, the show, running from 10am to 12.30pm, became cult viewing for their older siblings and parents, perfect 'hangover TV' for a Saturday morning. *Empire Magazine* suggested "nascent sociologists loved the deconstructive reflection of social disorder in the post-punk years"[317] and that "the sheer 'bollocks to it all' joie de vivre was maintained from start to finish. Tarrant's adult-terrifying signature roar of 'this is what they want' was bang on the money."[318] Despite numerous complaints received by the Independent Broadcasting Authority, its popularity was legion, and the series with its gaudy logo, spawned magazines, annuals, t-shirts and even a top thirty pop hit for its presenters, 'The Bucket of Water Song', performed by the Four Bucketeers, in 1980. After a franchise change, *Tiswas!* was dropped in favour of the TVS series *No. 73*, with Tarrant hosting a late-night version called *O.T. T.* which was less successful.

For the CFF, however, the damage was done. The almost competition free Saturday mornings they had enjoyed until the mid 1970s were now history, and from 2nd October 1976, the BBC entered the fray with its own, cleaner and more upmarket offering, *The Multi-Coloured Swap Shop*. The premise of the programme was that children could swap unwanted toys or gifts, using the phone-in format extensively for the first time on TV. Empire Magazine called it "the first of the all-morning kids TV kaleidoscopes, built around the supposed grass roots junior currency of barter"[319] and that "apart from it being a bona fide seismic TV revolution, *Swap Shop* (and *Tiswas!)* became under-sixteen lifestyle signifiers, the former very much the genteel option, although smart kids would channel-hop while parents were out food shopping. To flick over to Swap Shop, however, was to visit your Nan's and leave your skateboard at home."[320] Special guests, cartoons and serials, quizzes and competitions filled out the 2 hours 45 minutes runtime, and special swap events (*Swaparamas*) were hosted throughout the country, hosted by Keith Chegwin, already well known to matinee fans as a child star of a number of CFF films. These events were located close to sporting events that would be covered by BBC Sport for their *Grandstand* programme, utilising equipment and crew already 'in situ'. Radio One DJ Noel Edmonds helmed the show, with BBC *Newsround's* John Craven giving topical news items for the youngsters. Originally planned for a trial run of just six weeks, *Swap Shop* ran for six annual seasons of 26 episodes until 1982, when Edmonds left to become the face of BBC Saturday Night television, with the show being succeeded by *Saturday Superstore*. Again, merchandising was important in promoting and maintaining the *Swap Shop* brand, with toys and annuals being released. They even outdid *Tiswas!* in the pop charts, with the presenters (as 'Brown Sauce') taking their single 'I Wanna Be A Winner' to number 15 in December 1981.

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[317] Anon in *Unforgettable Saturday Morning Kids Telly* in *Empire Magazine* (Issue 100, October 1997) p. 219
[318] Anon in *Unforgettable Saturday Morning Kids Telly* p. 219
[319] Anon in *Unforgettable Saturday Morning Kids Telly* p. 219
[320] Anon in *Unforgettable Saturday Morning Kids Telly* p. 219

In May 1977 the Distribution sub-committee of the Children's Film Foundation conceded that "the predominant factor confronting matinees was the provision of high quality television programmes for children on Saturday mornings."[321] In September 1977 the '*Paper on the Future Of the Children's Film Foundation'* was published and gave the following comparisons:

> "The earliest year for which the CFF has reliable statistics is 1954, when there were 4000 cinemas, of which the CFF was servicing approximately 1350 matinees. At the present time there are 1571 screens, 477 which are used for regular CFF matinees. It will be seen that the closure of regular matinees is proportional to the closure of cinemas. On the other hand, today 1571 screens represent 1057 sites and the Foundation also services 104 occasional outlets. Comparatively speaking, therefore, the trend has been more favourable to children's matinees. Recent losses of outlets reported to the CFF are due to the following causes: Approximately 60% are due to the closure of cinema or conversion to bingo, approximately 40% are due to finding children's matinees uneconomic to run."[322]

Even though the CFF were bullish in the report, it was an inescapable fact that the CFF at the beginning of the decade was providing content to 742 matinees[323]. The 1977 figure of 477 was down by over 55%. Henry Geddes, in 1978, was moved to write in a letter to Lady Alice Paton of the Australian Council for Children's Films that:

> "Saturday television has proved a formidable rival to the traditional Saturday morning matinee and in my opinion cinemas have not reacted sufficiently strongly either by the use of political pressure or by rearranging their matinees to times that do not conflict with what is now becoming 'children's television' prime viewing time."[324]

In 1979, Reg Dowdeswell was moved to write "television seemed determined to kill children's matinees and presented the type of programme which was serious competition to our junior clubs, the result being that matinees showed a very serious decline in both numbers and attendances."[325] A number of factors were conspiring against the traditional CFF audience - the assault by the television companies had come as major industry figures were actively questioning the funding of the Foundation, and as the site of the traditional matinee club, the urban High Street, was undergoing massive changes.

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[321] From minutes of the Distribution sub-committee of the Children's Film Foundation, dated May12th, 1977
[322] From the *Paper on the Future Of the Children's Film Foundation,* Published by the Children's Film Foundation, dated September 6th, 1977
[323] From the Cinema Exhibitors' Association (CEA) Newsletter. (London, Cinema Exhibitors' Association Publications, 1979)
[324] Henry Geddes in letter to The Australian Council for Children's Films, dated January 12th, 1978
[325] Reg Dowdeswell in Cinema Exhibitors' Association (CEA) Newsletter. (London, Cinema Exhibitors' Association Publications, 1979) p 13

Suburban sprawl and the decline of the traditional High Street

The initial decline in cinema attendances, when the TV audience grew after the 1953 coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, left the matinee audience relatively intact. In the 1960s, again the arc of decline of the child matinee audience remained above that of adult audiences. The CFF began the 1970s full of confidence that their audience, as in the previous twenty years, would renew with every new generation. However, with the advent of colour television and the targeting of the Saturday morning audience by both the BBC and ITV giving a very real alternative to the cinema, things were to become critical as the decade progressed as changes in the urban landscape of Britain began to affect the traditional home of cinema, the High Street picture house.

The first real challenge to the High Street cinema was caused by strikes and union action in the early months of 1972. The Heath government was in dispute with the unions, especially the miners. The 'winter of discontent' led to a winter of shortages, power cuts, where the electricity supply was cut off for up to four hours at a time, and the 'three day week', where firms were encouraged to cut the working week from 5 to 3 days. Cinemas were ordered to reduce the number of performances to save electricity, many cutting out their least profitable shows – the Saturday morning matinees. Later in the decade, the rise of the late night Friday film shows, the new craze for horror and 18+ adult movies, gave a much needed financial boost for the theatres, although opening longer hours, especially for the projectionists, caused staffing problems for the weekend. Again, many cinemas found no alternative than to disband their now loss-making children's shows. Another problem for the matinee clubs arose when the exhibitors began 'twinning' or 'tripling' their screens. Splitting the massive High Street auditoriums, many of which had over a thousand seats, into two or three smaller screens made perfect sense for the exhibitors - they could increase the number and variety of films for their audience and vary screening times throughout the evenings and weekends. The problem, for the matinee audience, was that these new venues were just too small to host a junior cinema club that could provide anything like a profitable return. In May 1977 the Distribution sub-committee of the CFF reported:

> "Members were confronted with figures from one circuit which showed the average weekly paid admissions per matinee on the basis of 137 situations amounted to less than 150. The average box office return amounted to less than £15, from which £9.10 was payable to the CFF for film hire, and further expenditure for costs, including salaries and other overhead items had to be met."[326]

Nationally, the number of screens increased, but the matinee clubs continued to reduce in number. Henry Geddes again expressed his fears to the president of the Australian Council for Children's Films and Television, Pat Braithwaite, in a letter asking for the ACCFT to support the Foundation by writing to *Screen International*; "we are going through a very difficult time partly due to a general shortage of finance coupled with inflation, increased competition from

[326] From minutes of the Distribution sub-committee of the Children's Film Foundation (dated May12th, 1977)

television, but mainly due to the fact that so many cinemas have closed recently or have been converted to twins or triples."[327] Braithwaite, in response, wrote to the editor of *Screen International* that:

> "The ACCFT is the chief distributor of CFF films in Australia and the largest outside of the UK with estimated child audiences in 1977 of around 510,000. Australians have always regarded British culture as a model for the English-speaking world, but this image will be seriously damaged if the CFF is forced to curtail its splendid productions. Our members are shocked and incredulous at such a dismal prospect."[328]

The situation on the High Street was summed up by Reg Dowdsewell of the CEA, who reported to the CFF board in September 1979 that:

> "The manager employed on the basis of a 40 hour week had to contend with late night shows on a Thursday and Friday and an all-night show on a Saturday. The pressure on managers and staff was very considerable and this was an important factor in the lack of interest shown by some managers of children's matinees. But on a recent visit to a cinema in Loughborough I saw a large foyer where a disco was available at the same time as the cinema performance for children who preferred this form of entertainment and provided an alternative to the film."[329]

At the same meeting a Mr McRae noted that he was:

> "Convinced that the stage of the cinema was the prime asset for matinees and that once they were removed with the conversion of cinemas, fifty per-cent of the interest also disappeared. Moreover, supermarkets and other shopping facilities were now often located on the periphery of towns, so that parents were no longer obliged to go into town to do the week's shopping and drop the kids off at the cinema. Where formerly working class children had lived in the centre of towns they were now dispersed on the outskirts in housing estates and tower blocks and many were not able to afford the bus fares for the cinema trip. This had the result that many matinees now catered for middle class children who were brought into the cinemas in motorcars in many areas."[330]

The traditional High Street had remained virtually unchanged since the end of World War II. Every town or suburb had a host of butchers, bakers, greengrocers, haberdashers, hardware shops and confectioners - the centre of every mother's weekend shop. The local cinema, as ubiquitous as the tobacconists and sweet shops on the High Street, had become the 'baby-sitter' of the nation's parents with the matinees ideally located to allow the mothers and

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[327] Henry Geddes in letter to The Australian Council for Children's Films and Television (dated February 2nd, 1978)
[328] Pat Braithwaite in a letter to Editor of *Screen International* (dated 14th April, 1978)
[329] Reg Dowdeswell (CEA) From the *Board minutes of the Children's Film Foundation* (dated September 6th, 1979)
[330] Mr McRae (CEA) From the *Board minutes of the Children's Film Foundation* (dated September 6th, 1979)

fathers a few hours child-free shopping time. However, with pre-war urban housing rapidly decaying and with the rise of motor car ownership, planners were turning to green or brown field sites, outside of their urban boundaries, to build new, self-contained housing estates. These estates had everything a young family could desire. They were generally built around a shopping precinct - with the new superstores the focal point. A one-stop shopping experience, the housewife no longer had to trawl the High Street and carry the shopping home - these precincts had car parking to spare. Schools, doctors surgeries and pharmacies, along with custom built pubs, all had their place in these new suburbs. But there was one thing missing; there was no provision for any new cinemas. More and more High Street cinemas closed - and were converted into bingo halls, nightclubs, cut-price supermarkets or bowling alleys. Those that stayed open more often than not started to cater for the Asian market, as Bollywood films were becoming popular within the diaspora, as the cheaper urban housing stock was being bought up by immigrants and rented to their countrymen. A good example can be found in my home town, Derby. In the mid-1970s two massive suburban housing estates were built, in Oakwood to the north of the city, and Stenson Fields to the south. Schools, doctors surgeries, public houses, sports centres and the city's first superstores were planned and built - but no cinemas. Both suburbs were just off the city's outer ring roads, so it would be no surprise they both became the location for Derby's two new multiplex cinemas. But this was to be in the late eighties - in the ten years in between Derby would find itself a city with just one cinema as the older theatres closed one by one. A far cry from the beginning of the 1970s when Derby's main shopping street boasted four fine cinemas.

As the seventies drew to a close, the CFF were stealing themselves for a fight for their very survival. Attempts to win the support of the Labour prime minister Harold Wilson seemed to be going well, with ministers being furnished with reports (in particular *The Future of the Foundation*, published in December 1977) to encourage funding for the future. In March 1988, the board announced that Sir Harold Wilson "did not doubt that funds would continue to be available to the CFF but at a level dependent upon the extent of the money accruing to the Eady Levy."[331] However, two years of lobbying the Labour government came to naught, as the Tories, under Margaret Thatcher, gained a landslide victory in the election of May 4th, 1979. The Eady Levy, which had sustained the Foundation since its inception in 1952, was now under threat of abolition as Mrs Thatcher reviewed the official Film policy. In order to survive, the CFF had to streamline and find alternative funding. The 1980s were going to prove a monumental challenge.

[331] From the *Board minutes* of the Children's Film Foundation dated March 8th, 1978 (minute no. 1946)

CHAPTER SIX

1980-1982 - DECLINE, DESPERATION AND DEALS

On December 11th, 1979 the Cinematograph Films Council (CFC), who advised the government's Board of Trade on its film policy, recommended that the payments from the Eady Levy to the Children's Film Foundation be reduced to half that which the Foundation had applied for - instead of the £660,000 they had hoped for, the CFF received £330,000. The CFC also warned that this could be the last payment that the Foundation would receive - citing the calamitous decline in the attendances of matinees as it's main reason. The Eady Levy was returning ever decreasing funds due to the substantial decline in the mainstream cinema audience, and with the British Film Institute, the National Film School and the Script Development Fund all fighting for a share of a diminishing pot of money, the CFF was seen as the least favourable option for funding as its audience collapsed. The new Tory government, under a Prime Minister who openly showed her distaste of film, was "bent on a policy of cutting taxation and spending, thereby reducing the size of the public sector."[332]

Unfortunately, the move to cut the award was supported by some of the Foundation's closest allies. The Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians (ACTT), the largest film industry union, with huge influence in the cinema industry, recommended the CFF "needed to restructure or risk closure."[333] Robert Shail wrote:

> "The whole film industry was feeling the pinch and the Foundation was a relatively easy sacrificial lamb to offer up when government funds were under threat. Rather disingenuously, the ACTT and the other trade associations continued to voice their support in principle for the CFF but seemed to expect them to find its funding elsewhere. This was a difficult ask for an institution whose entire ethos had been based on the premise that only a subsidised body could produce the kind of work in which it specialised."[334]

The Cinematograph Exhibitors Association (CEA), whose members included cinema owners and managers and were a significant part of the Foundation's management, were concerned with the increasing closure of Saturday clubs and matinees (by 1980 national weekly attendances had fallen from 350,000 to 50,000 in just three years) and in it's newsletter of February 1980 the CEA stated:

> "It is of course a very sad matter that the CFF will, if the CEA view prevails, cease to produce children's films. But every other source of revenue open to them has been explored and there is nothing that will produce anything like the

[332] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p.33
[333] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p.33
[334] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p.33

> amount of money required to finance film production, unless they sold their back catalogue to television, which the CEA would certainly not countenance." [335]

The CEA certainly appear to have already written off the CFF as a viable option, and suggestions that the Foundation support the existing clubs with their back catalogue until their inevitable demise were coming from all sides of the industry. To remain a vital children's film production unit, the CFF had to act swiftly and to explore the possibilities of co-production with their traditional enemies - the television companies.

1980 - Exploring the options

The award of £330,000 in 1980 meant that, with some streamlining, the CFF had the budget for three features - *Danger on Dartmoor, High Rise Donkey* and *The Mine and the Minotaur.* The Eady Levy funds were buoyed slightly by a still very healthy overseas distribution business, with deals being struck with both cinema and television companies in new and existing territories. Overseas television broadcasts were not included in the contracts that had been offered to actors and crew when shooting the CFF productions, so the Foundation was free to offer their fare to TV stations abroad with no redress for payment for the participants.

Whilst the production committee busied itself with the three features (which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter), the CFF board went into overdrive to try to secure its future. The reduced offer from the CFC prompted an extraordinary board meeting, with representatives of the associations of the industry affected, held on January 22nd 1980, to discuss three alternatives for the future of the CFF:

A) For the Foundation to continue in production by accepting the grant and try to add substantially to that sum from other sources, including television and all media.
B) For the Foundation to confine itself to distribution.
C) To wind up the Foundation.[336]

The Cinematograph Exhibitors Association representative stated:

> "We are totally opposed to any proposal to open the possibility of sale of Children's Film Foundation productions to UK television which would have the consequence of almost eliminating matinees within a short time. Even if sales to UK television are banned, exhibitors estimated that the matinees would disappear almost completely within three years (or at least within five years)."[337]

However, reluctantly they agreed with alternative A, prompting the committee to comment that:

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[335] From *The Cinematograph Exhibitors Association Newsletter* (Volume 173, February 1980)
[336] From the minutes of *The Extraordinary Board meeting of the CFF and Industry Representatives* (January 22nd, 1980)
[337] From the minutes of *The Extraordinary Board meeting of the CFF and Industry Representatives* (January 22nd, 1980)

> "A consensus grew for the creation of further revenue by sales which had so far been denied to the Children's Film Foundation - broadcasts on UK television, world-wide video cassette distribution, increased television exposure overseas, supply of Foundation features as second features for mainstream audiences and production and supply of films to the proposed fourth TV channel."[338]

Sir John Davis, the former chairman of the Rank Organisation who had chaired the meeting, summed up the proceedings with a barely concealed anger towards some sections of the cinema industry:

> "At the time of the initial funding the Rank Organisation were not making a profit from matinees and never envisaged that they would. However, the exhibitors were totally dedicated to the matinee movement at that time, but unfortunately there was now a complete change of attitude on their part."[339]

This attitude had been preempted in a letter dated November 20th, 1979, from S E Pound, Booking Manager for the Services Kinema Corporation, who had been provided with 16mm prints of CFF productions for exhibition to children of servicemen in military bases for years:

> "I would have thought it would be in the interests of the industry generally to continue the provision of films through the Children's Film Foundation as, as far as the army are concerned, the films obtained are always very welcome and children's matinee performances are considered by us a very necessary service. I would have thought the same thing would apply to major circuits, but obviously they do not hold the same views."[340]

The board delegated committee members to pursue the various options, but the initial results were discouraging. In the board meeting of March 18th 1980, it was reported by the Distribution Committee that:

> "An approach had been made to the Federation of Film Unions for a pilot scheme of video-cassettes for the overseas market. However, a delay in pursuing this opportunity greatly reduced the potential for CFF products as major companies were increasingly supplying their films for this market. The opportunity had been lost and there was now growing competition from other companies."[341]

It was also reported at this meeting, in a message from the chairman, that any alternative income, especially if it was generated via television broadcasts, would adversely affect the Eady

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[338] From the minutes of *The Extraordinary Board meeting of the CFF and Industry Representatives* (January 22nd, 1980)
[339] Sir John Davis from the minutes of *The Extraordinary Board meeting of the CFF and Industry Representatives* (January 22nd, 1980)
[340] From a letter to Jack Woodwin (CFF distribution committee) from S E Pound (Booking Manager for The Services Kinema Corporation) dated 20th November 1979
[341] From the minutes of *The CFF Distribution Committee meeting* (March 18th, 1980) Minute No. 2050

Levy funding, the statement reading “further funds would not be forthcoming unless the Foundation could show that the level of attendance at matinees justified it. If the CFF should enter into a deal for television the Department of Trade would not be prepared to provide funds for that purpose.”[342]

An interim board meeting met to compile ‘A Report on the Future of the Children’s Film Foundation’ on 20th May 1980, where it was stated, with regular matinee outlets now as low as 200, that “revenue from Children’s Saturday Matinees may shortly decrease to a level which will not even be sufficient to cover print, dispatch and basic distribution department operating expenses.”[343] The idea of sponsorship was dismissed as “the Association of Business Sponsorship indicates that any considerable degree of sponsorship is highly unlikely in view of the limited exposure.”[344] The timing of the crises was also brought into focus, with the chair reporting that:

> “The BBC is at present going through a period of retrenchment and in the words of the Independent Broadcasting Authority ‘franchises are up for grabs’ and Channel 4 will not get going until such time as the appropriate act gets through the House and the board and programme controller are appointed. It would appear, therefore, that there is little or no possibility of any of this potential TV finance becoming available before 1981 or 1982.”[345]

But in a letter dated 17th June 1980, Edward Barnes, the Head of Children’s Programmes for the BBC, reached out to CFF and wrote to Henry Geddes informing him:

> “We hope that sometime in the future we might be able to get together as co-production partners. As I said at lunch here with Anna Home (BBC executive producer of children's drama) we have the same ambitions to serve the same audience - all we want is a bit more money to make something really distinguished. It would be a tragedy, not only for the film industry, but for the audience you are educating to be the active and selective cinema-goers of the next generation, if the CFF was unable to continue it’s valuable work. There may be a time when no-one will be able to afford to go it alone in the field of quality children’s drama, but the intelligent co-producers will survive the longest.”[346]

Barnes went on to suggest a co-production between the CFF and the BBC of Gerald Durrell’s *Rosie is my Relative*, to be first shown in cinemas and then broadcast on the BBC as a serial. Geddes, with an eye on a possible co-production deal with the proposed new fourth channel,

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[342] From the minutes of *The CFF Distribution Committee meeting* (March 18th, 1980)

[343] From the minutes of *The CFF Interim Board Meeting - A Report on the Future of the Children’s Film Foundation* (May 20th 1980)

[344] From the minutes of *The CFF Interim Board Meeting - A Report on the Future of the Children’s Film Foundation* (May 20th 1980)

[345] From the minutes of *The CFF Interim Board Meeting - A Report on the Future of the Children’s Film Foundation* (May 20th 1980)

[346] From a letter to Henry Geddes (CFF production committee) from Edward Barnes (Head of Children’s Programmes for the BBC) dated 17th June 1980

and a projected morning slot for the broadcasting of the Foundation's productions, declined the offer. A further offer from Thames Television, for leasing and distributing the CFF back catalogue and a co-production deal with its subsidiary Euston Films was also declined, with the board seemingly focussed on a 'fourth channel' deal.[347]

On September 30th 1980 the CFF launched the 'Special Committee of Investigation - The Future of the Children's Film Foundation', with the still bullish belief in the continuation of the matinee market - "The total number of matinees will probably be around 150 at the end of this year, and in addition more than 100 other cinemas run matinees on an occasional basis or book CFF films for special performances."[348] Appeals for funding to the British Council and the Ministry For Arts had been made but both bodies "regretted their inability to make any contribution towards the Foundation's programme."[349] It was clear to the CFF that no further government money was going to come their way. In a sub-section titled 'Television and the Matinee Market', it was noted that:

> "The BBC and the various Independent Television contractors who have expressed interest in the CFF all believe it would be advantageous if any new product was screened in cinemas prior to telecasting. Furthermore, the controlled leasing to UK television part of the CFF library would appear to be the only possible source of a major increase in revenue."[350]

Lord Birkett, in summing up the findings of the committee, agreed with the suggestion that the Foundation's salvation would be it's back catalogue:

> "The CFF's library of films is it's only tangible asset. In conclusion, the Committee of Investigation did not feel the Foundation would be justified in embarking on an additional production programme if films were solely for screening in the contracting matinee markets. In my view without the proposed link with television the Foundation would not be in a position to continue in its present form."[351]

The board meeting of December 16th 1980, under the subheading 'The Special Committee of Investigation - The Future of the Foundation' noted that the representative from the CEA stated "whilst there is no objection to leasing the CFF's library to television it would oppose any wholesale disposal of it to the media."[352] But before any deals for the screening of the back catalogue could be secured, the CFF needed the specific agreement of the various unions

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[347] From a letter to Henry Geddes (CFF production committee) from Muir Sutherland (Thames TV Head of Children's Productions) dated 1st September 1980

[348] From the minutes of *The Special Committee of Investigation - The Future of the Children's Film Foundation* (dated 30th September 1980)

[349] From the minutes of *The Special Committee of Investigation - The Future of the Children's Film Foundation* (dated 30th September 1980)

[350] From the minutes of *The Special Committee of Investigation - The Future of the Children's Film Foundation* (dated 30th September 1980)

[351] Lord Birkett in the minutes of The *Special Committee of Investigation - The Future of the Children's Film Foundation* dated 30th September 1980 (minute no. 2077)

[352] From the minutes of *The Children's Film Foundation Board Meeting* dated December 16th 1980 (minute no. 2092)

whose members were involved in the productions, from the actors and technicians through to the composers and writers. The same board meeting recorded that:

> "Mr Geddes expressed his deep concern with regard to the current situation relative to the unions (re) possible UK television screenings and emphasised the essential requirement of clearance from the unions before meaningful negotiations could be entered into with the television companies."[353]

Platitudes from the government were also recorded, with the Minister for the Department of Trade, Norman Tebbitt, who in a letter to the board wrote "it was hoped that the Foundation would soon be able to find its way clear to operate on a broader base than at present."[354] That day would not be sometime soon, as the CFF had some very difficult negotiations with the industry unions to navigate. Sir John Davis, the CFF chairman, had written of his fears in a letter to Lord Lever in March 1980:

> "The possibility of the Foundation participating in some form of 'breakfast television' to me is an exciting and interesting idea with potential benefit to all concerned. I do, however, have a high hurdle to get over before I can continue our talks - namely to persuade the five trade associations and the federated unions to agree that children's films can be made available for showing on television. I think it most improbable that I shall be able to secure a decision in time for you to include preference to the Foundation in your application for a franchise for 'breakfast television'."[355]

In April of 1980, a specially convened Board meeting discussed the report 'The Future of the Foundation - Reaction of the Trade Associations'. The questions put to the trades associations asked their opinions on UK TV breakfast time broadcasts, exposure on UK TV, co-production with UK or world-wide TV stations, content on cassettes and video discs, a deal with the fourth channel and possible links with cable television in the UK. It reported that no objections were raised from any of the exhibitors, distributors and producers and from any of the Federation of Film Unions and Technicians. The Association of Cinematic Television and Allied Technicians had already pledged support for the Foundation - in a letter from Alan Sapper, the unions representative on the board of the CFF and a valuable ally to them, to Henry Geddes, he wrote:

> "The following resolution was passed unanimously at the ACTT's Annual Conference last weekend: 'This conference views with alarm the threat to the existence of the Children's Film Foundation. In view of the employment the CFF gives, its reputation internationally and most importantly as one of the organisations that directly finances British films, this conference demands a restructuring of the CFF charter to enable it to sell its films more profitably, both

[353] From the minutes of *The Children's Film Foundation Board Meeting* dated December 16th 1980 (minute no. 2093)
[354] From the minutes of *The Children's Film Foundation Board Meeting* dated December 16th 1980 (minute no. 2094)
[355] From a letter from Sir John Davis (CFF chairman) to Lord Lever (Franchise Head of ITV Breakfast Project) dated 19th March 1980

> for cinema exhibition and to television, especially to participating in supplying programmes to the new fourth channel."[356]

The dissenting voices came from Equity, the British actors union, the Writers Guild and the Musicians Union. Equity demanded further talks with the CFF, while The Writers Guild agreed subject to 'residuals for the past and appropriate rights for the future'. They stated:

> "If the CFF is considering making some or all of its excellent library stock available for TV we are concerned that, in the early days, writers were encouraged to part with all rights. Since this was at a time when TV outlets were an impossibility, we would expect some consideration to be given to passing on to the scriptwriters a share of the financial rewards from sales to television. If writers were to continue contributing scripts at less than the market rate not only would they take a cut in earnings but by reducing the real overall cost of productions the films may be seen to be competing unfairly with other material written specifically for television."[357]

The Musicians decreed "The CFF incorporating recorded performances of their members are cleared for theatrical use only. Any extensions of the use, either on television or most particularly into videogram form would require careful union consideration and specific and detailed agreements between us."[358] It was becoming clear to the CFF that it would be a momentous task just to get their back catalogue cleared for broadcast anywhere other than the cinema screen. The irony was that whilst all these battles were being fought by the CFF board, the industry recognised their unique contribution to British cinema by awarding them a BAFTA. In a letter to the chairman, K L Maidment of the British Film Producers Association was moved to comment:

> "We wish to see films made for children in whatever form they may be exploited. The very high regard in which people world-wide hold for British children's films was emphasised by Mr Norman St. John Stevas last night when he proudly presented the British Academy award to the Children's Film Foundation. From the things he said, I hope he can find from the government's coffers or those of the Arts Council some more practical support for the Foundation."[359]

But as the end of the year dawned, the CFF was still no clearer on their future. Nothing was forthcoming from the government and alternative funding had to be secured, and fast.

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[356] From a letter to Henry Geddes (CFF CEO) from Alan Sapper (The Association of Cinematic Television and Allied Technicians) dated 2nd April 1980

[357] From the minutes of *The Children's Film Foundation Board Meeting - The Future of the Foundation - Reaction of the Trade Associations* (dated April 29th, 1980)

[358] From the minutes of *The Children's Film Foundation Board Meeting - The Future of the Foundation - Reaction of the Trade Associations* (dated April 29th, 1980)

[359] From a letter to Sir John Davis (CFF Chairman) from K L Maidment (British Film Producers Association) dated 21st March 1980

The 1980 productions - Danger on the moor, an unexpected minotaur and a donkey in a lift

With the average 55 minute feature for the CFF now costing close to £100,000, the reduced funding from the Eady Levy would only stretch to the production of three films. The first of these was *Danger on Dartmoor*, another Eady-Barnes production, directed by David Eady (who had previously directed the CFF film *Scramble!* in 1970, *Anoop and the Elephant* in 1972 and *Deep Waters* in 1978). With a cast featuring Barry Foster, Sam Kydd, Patricia Hayes and Michael Ripper, the film features the Chudleigh brothers, Jonathan and Robin, played by Marcus Evans and Simon Henderson, and their cousin Louise (played by Debby Slater). While investigating a huge dog who is suspected of killing sheep on Dartmoor they get embroiled with an escaped convict from the prison and his mysterious mother (Patricia Hayes). The script by Dudley Leslie adapted from an Audrey Erskine Lindop story, borrows heavily from the plots of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1959, d. Terence Fisher) and *Whistle Down the Wind* (1961, d. Bryan Forbes), and shot in the glorious wilderness of Dartmoor in central Devon, the film concludes in a typical CFF way - despite initially imprisoning the children the convict (Barry Foster) is persuaded by the kids to give himself up and he saves the dog's life by proving the hound was not the sheep killer, the alsatian being adopted by the brothers (to be named Baskerville, obviously). Gilbert Adair in *The Monthly Film Bulletin* reported:

> "Although the basic situation may prove a trifle over familiar to all but the smallest children, a script remarkably free of cliches (eg Patricia Hayes never once saying of her convict son "he's a good boy"), an intelligent use of locations, and even the occasional idea that would serve in a higher-powered thriller (eg Louise converting Green to the straight and narrow with statistics from her pocket calculator) make for fifty seven minutes without a single longueur. Nice performances all round, with a special mention for Demon the dog."[360]

Danger on Dartmoor was to prove not only David Eady and Michael Barnes final collaboration with the CFF, it was the last feature made by the company. Eady ended his career with two shorts, one for BT communications featuring Bernard Cribbins, and a short documentary about the Brent oilfield. A sad finale for the man who began his career as an assistant editor on *The Third Man* in 1949.

Both *Danger on Dartmoor* and *High Rise Donkey* are typical of their day, with the Dartmoor movie highlighting problems in rural areas and the latter setting a typical 'gang' centred adventure in a familiar urban setting. *The Mine and the Minotaur,* though, is a throwback to the *Famous Five* films that typified the Foundation's output in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Produced by Sailorman Films and directed by David Gowing, the action is set on the Cornish coast then is relocated back to London for the mystery that is uncovered to be solved. No stars, either adult or juvenile, are cast, and if the CFF were hoping that their 1980 productions would showcase them as a vital institution, this film did them no favours. The Christopher Penfold script features two young holidaymakers, Sandra and Gary Barnett, who befriend two boys, and

[360] Gilbert Adair in a review of *Danger on Dartmoor* in *The Monthly Film Bulletin* (Volume 47, No. 557, June 1980) p. 110

inspired by the legends of smuggling in the area, start exploring the local caves. In a disused tin mine they stumble upon a hidden mineshaft disturbing two local pot-holers who appear to be trying to hide a golden statue. The mystery is left unresolved but on their return to their home in London, the Barnett siblings identify the statue as a golden minotaur through research at the library. The finale is of course a chase, on bicycles, in cars and finally on the ocean, but typically, the police apprehend the crooks and the children are hailed as heroes. Paul Taylor in *The Monthly Film Bulletin* found it:

> "Pure CFF formula material: a proficient executed and mildly diverting but doggedly uninspired children's adventure yarn. The sense of life as an eternal school holiday and of kids as uniquely resourceful adjuncts to a harassed police force soon begins to pall, and ready comparisons can be made with the greater imagination and flair of much of the current programming for children on TV."[361]

And here lay the major problem for the CFF. The TV companies, especially the BBC, had usurped them in the genre of children's adventure, especially in a series that was dominating tea-time television viewing for school-children, *Grange Hill* (BBC TV, 1978-2008). Grittier and much more true to life than anything the Foundation had yet offered, *Grange Hill* would go on to tackle issues that the board of the CFF would never have considered. It became essential viewing for the under sixteens, and will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter.

Riding the zeitgeist - *High Rise Donkey*

Following the Second World War, Britain had a massive housing problem. The Luftwaffe had demolished thousands of houses during the blitz, so re-building was key. Council and municipal town-planners, frustrated at the lack of building space, decided to copy ideas from abroad - if you cannot build out, build up. The age of high-rise housing had dawned. Fast forward thirty years, and these gleaming towers that had promised 'streets in the sky' were now virtual prisons for their occupants - the lifts usually vandalised, the stairwells used as toilets, the playgrounds and 'greenspaces' spray painted and home to urban gangs and the once state of the art shopping precincts had become rotten and soulless.

If nothing else, students of film could view the CFF films as social documents, their almost exclusive location filming gives rise to a unique snapshot to the way we once lived. As we saw in the previous chapter, David Robinson's review in *The Times* of *Sammy's Super T-Shirt* extolled the CFF's realistic portrayal of suburban life. He noted:

> "A special if incidental attraction of the productions of the CFF is that they show, as no other British films of the period do, the physical reality of the lives of the majority of people in this country. No other film so clearly or so often or so cheerfully depicts the lives of suburbs and provincial housing estates."[362]

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[361] David Gowing in a review of *The Mine and the Minotaur* in The Monthly Film Bulletin (Volume 47, No. 557, June 1980) p. 113

[362] David Robinson in review of *Sammy's Super T-Shirt* in *The Times Film Reviews* (August 4th, 1978)

And if *Sammy Super T-Shirt* gives an insight into the suburbs of the 1970s, then *High Rise Donkey* does exactly the same for the urban tower blocks. But this is no tale of urban depravity - if Phil Redmond , the writer of *Grange Hill* had been involved, the story would have been set on one of the gruesome estates in inner city London. *High Rise Donkey* was filmed in Sawyers Close in Windsor, the five tower blocks are still there, and typical of the CFF's middle class bias, they chose an estate where playgrounds and surroundings are intact, there is no graffitti (and the lifts in the tower blocks still work). Unfortunately, social comment was still rare in the Foundation's productions. The film is a knock about slapstick comedy with a host of adult comedy stars helping it along. Wilfred Brambell, Alfie Bass, Harry Fowler, Pat Coombes and Roy Kinnear put shifts in, and even Keith Chegwin, a former CFF child lead, took time off from *Swap-Shop* and his musical quiz show *Cheggers Plays Pop* (BBC, 1978-1986) to appear as himself as the action switches to a Donkey Derby at a local fete. Director Michael Furlong had previously produced and directed *Lionheart* (1968), *Raising the Roof* (1972), *Rangi's Catch* (1973) and *Hijack!* (1975) for the Foundation, and the production company, Anvil Films, called in the veteran Ealing Films writer T. E. B. Clarke (who had scripted *A Hitch in Time* in 1978) to adapt the original Peter Buchanan story for the screen.

In the film, the Everitt siblings (surprisingly two girls and a boy) are forced to give up their adopted stray dog by the over zealous caretaker of their tower block, Mr Garnett (played with relish by Roy Kinnear), prompting a search by him for more forbidden pets on the estate. A local rag and bone man, Ben Foxcroft (Wilfred Brambell) takes the ousted dog in until its owner, a local horse trader, reclaims it. Foxcroft, who has a donkey that pulls his cart, is taken ill and the children decide to look after the beast. Overhearing two crooks who plan to steal the donkey and sell him for horse meat, the children decide to hide him in an empty flat - obviously not a good idea as the donkey runs amok. Garnett calls the police, but Ron Brewer, the horse trader, comes to the rescue and helps the children enter the donkey (Barney) into a local Donkey Derby. Proving a cantankerous failure, Barney befriends Brewer's highly strung showjumper Bright Star. Later, as Bright Star performs poorly in an international horse show at Hickstead, the children race home to fetch Barney, just in time to foil the crooks who have returned to steal him. The police (as in all CFF films the children's saviours) rush them and the donkey to Hickstead where Barney spurs on Bright Star to victory. And again (as in all CFF films) the outcome satisfies all (except for the grumpy Garnett) as Brewer takes in Barney as Bright Star's stablemate.

In the review in *The Monthly Film Bulletin,* Geoff Brown noted:

> "Veteran talent from the British film industry continues to take shelter in the Children's Film Foundation: here we find T. E. B. Clarke, Hugh Stewart (a producer for Norman Wisdom), along with the usual gallery of familiar supporting players. But anyone looking for a reprise of the Ealing spirit in Clarke's script will be sadly disappointed, unless one counts a faint whiff of *Whisky Galore* (1949, d. Alexander MacKendrick) when all the flats' assorted frogs, tortoises, goldfish and mice are hurried away or hidden from the caretaker's prying eyes.The bulk of the material is definitely ordinary, the dialogue offering little more than a simple verbal commentary on the action, sprinkled with a few choice sermons

> (always put your dog's name and address on its collar) and morsels of slang so old-fashioned that they backfire ("that would be *groovy*!" says the youngest of the Everitt trio. By CFF standards, this is distinctly average entertainment."[363]

In a period where the Foundation was fighting for its very existence, the three 1980 productions were beginning to look dated, moralistic and old fashioned to the audience now getting used to high budget American blockbusters dominating the cinema screens and vital, up to date dramas being served up on BBC children's television. And with only an aging back catalogue as collateral in any co-production deal, the CFF board had some way to go in securing any kind of future.

1981 - Doldrums and Desperation

In 1980, of the top twenty grossing films in the UK, only one was home produced, or rather co-produced with the USA - *The Elephant Man* (d. David Lynch). And it was hardly better in 1981, with only *Chariots of Fire* (d. Hugh Hudson) and the latest James Bond thriller *For Your Eyes Only* (d. John Glen), which was essentially American funded and distributed, in the top twenty. The child audience had very few offerings to view, with only Disney offering a few releases, 'family films' - *Herbie Goes Bananas* (d. Vincent McEveety), the live action *Popeye* (d. Robert Altman) - essentially a vehicle for Robin Williams, and the animated *The Fox and the Hound* (d. Ted Berman, Richard Rich and Art Stevens) being the most successful. The British film industry was truly in the doldrums, and cinemas were closing with alarming regularity. In ten years the UK cinema-going audience had dropped by 47% from an annual figure of 175,981,000 to just 83,585,000 and annual film production from 78 completed productions to 39 in 1981.[364] The matinee audience, already seen as critically low in 1980 had plummeted - the CFF board estimated in June 1981 there were as few as 150 regular matinees. In the autumn of that year, both EMI and Rank (the company that had helped launch the CFF) closed their remaining clubs. The matinee circuit was now restricted to the independent cinemas, around 100 clubs with an average total audience of 10,000 each week. Terry Staples wrote:

> "The departure of the two major circuits left the CFF with a base of not many more than 100 independent cinemas - most of them Classics - still wishing to be serviced. This might have been a viable figure if the attendance in each had been high, but on average it was less than 100 per cinema per week, which roughly meant that, over the thirty years of the CFF's life, child attendance had declined from a million every week to a million every two years."[365]

The CFF, however, guaranteed to supply a matinee programme to the independents for the next three years. The back catalogue was still being seen as crucial as the key to further funding. In February the Foundation convened a Special Committee of Investigation and amongst the issues discussed the valuation of the film library took precedence:

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[363] Geoff Brown in a review of *High Rise Donkey* in The Monthly Film Bulletin (Volume 47, No. 557, June 1980) p. 111
[364] Wood *British Films 1971 -1981* p. 119
[365] Staples *All Pals Together* p. 238

> "It was obvious that the potential value of the library was considerably in excess of £1 millon. Mr Geddes had impressed on all enquirers that the CFF was not in a position to sell its library wholesale and was only interested in the possibility of leasing a percentage of its product, in return for a reasonable rental, plus a contribution towards new production."[366]

Production partners were still being sounded out. Henry Geddes met with the Hamburg based Polyphon International to discuss a co-production deal for two films the CFF were planning, *Friend Or Foe* and *Tightrope To Terror*. Geddes reported:

> "Polyphon would be prepared to guarantee approximately one third of production costs in return for which Polyphon has suggested that they should be given 'European rights'. It is my opinion that these should be limited to German and French speaking territories. Of the two subjects submitted for consideration, very considerable interest had been shown in *Friend Or Foe*, especially if the two German pilots were played by named German actors. *Tightrope To Terror* could well have an appeal for all age groups and that might be advisable if one of the characters trapped in the broken cable car was an adult."[367]

The deal did not go through, due to the CFF refusing to give up any foreign rights, and the two German pilots in *Friend or Foe* were eventually played by British actors Jasper Jacob and Robin Hayter.

In April 1981, Chief Executive Henry Geddes compiled a special report 'The Future of The Children's Film Foundation'. Alongside a chronological history of the CFF and a detailed review of the demise of its audience, he noted that in the last twelve months:

- The heart has gone out of the matinee movement and in general cinemas no longer feel that they have a responsibility to provide programmes for children.
- The fact that children still wanted to go to the cinema is surely demonstrated by cinemas such as The Classic in Keighley, which only started children's shows a few months ago and now attracts between 600 and 700 paying customers to each performance.
- During 1980 there were numerous official and unofficial meetings with the unions, and great credit must be paid to Mr Alan Sapper, secretary of the FFU, for his efforts to resolve the impasse.
- The Foundation's revenue from Saturday morning matinees has never shown a profit and it was never intended that it should, as the industry's aim has always been to keep admission prices down to a figure which children could afford. Exhibitors have always argued that increased admission prices would result in lower audiences.
- W H Smith (Video), Transworld Communications, Colombia-EMI-Warner, and others have approached the CFF with regard to possible videodisc and cassette distribution. In

[366] From the minutes of *The Children's Film Foundation Board Meeting - Special Committee of Investigation* (dated February 9th, 1981)
[367] Notes from the meeting between Henry Geddes (CEO CFF) with Polyphon International (Hamburg) Dated February 5th 1981

addition, RFD (Rank Film Distribution) has received numerous enquiries from overseas. The Foundation has, however, not been able to enter into formal discussions due to the union situation.

- In 1980 the Independent Broadcasting Authority made it clear the CFF could not expect any direct aid from the Authority.
- On 15th October, 1980, ATV announced 'it was unlikely that ATV would be in a position to enter into an agreement for at least one year due to the current financial situation.
- Thames TV would be very interested in an association with the CFF. It appears, however, that the suggested ratio of new production to existing product would not be sufficiently high to satisfy either the CEA or the unions.
- The British film industry should be congratulated for maintaining the CFF for so long - if the CFF goes under it will leave a gap no western nation can fill.
- Overseas - the greatest state aid for children's films is undoubtedly in Eastern Europe: USSR produces some 17 features for children each year and the GDR and Czechoslovakia make several films a year, screened in cinemas and on TV.
- After discussions with Lord Carrington (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Norman St. John Stevas (Minister for Arts) I find it ironic that the UK, having belatedly decided to join the EEC, no longer sees any need to support the CFF whereas the rest of Europe is now obtaining governmental aid for children's films![368]

Geddes ended his report with a plea (presumably to anyone who had the inclination to listen, and of course the money to help):

> "To sum up - the CFF has a library worth considerably more than £1 million, potential revenue from overseas sales, 16mm, video and cable TV, co-production opportunities and a potential £500,000 in grants. The present situation, therefore, can be likened to a jigsaw puzzle in a safe: all the pieces are there - if only somebody can find a key."[369]

The CFF board were becoming increasingly frustrated as each potential deal was scuppered because the acting, writing and musicians unions could not find a compromise on broadcast fees and rights. It was clear that time was running out - with the Foundation caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place.

The CFF were still keen to promote their back catalogue abroad, and this year submitted 25 films for exhibition at the 1981 Satori International Children's Film Festival in New York. All the films were shown in their entirety, the only changes by the sponsors, Satori Productions Inc., were to the titles of sixteen of them (obviously they thought the titles were just too British, or perhaps not punchy enough for American children). The films that were renamed were; *Nosey Dobson* (to *The Little Detective*) *Deep Waters* (to *The Secret of the Cove*) *Echo of the Badlands* (to *African Adventure*) *One Hour To Zero* (to *The Last Kids On Earth*) *Sea Children* (to *The Land of the Undersea Children*) *A Hitch in Time* (to *The Professors Time Machine*) *4D Special Agents*

[368] From *The Future of The Children's Film Foundation* - a report by Henry Geddes (CFF CEO) dated 15th April 1981
[369] From *The Future of The Children's Film Foundation* - a report by Henry Geddes (CFF CEO) dated 15th April 1981

(to *Josey and the Secret Agents*) *Mr Selkie* (to *Selkie The Seal*) *High Rise Donkey* (to *Hey! There's a Donkey in the House*) *Danger on Dartmoor* (to *Mystery on the Moor*) *Rangi's Catch* (to *Treasure of the Cave*) *The Trouble with 2B* (to *Professor Potter's Magic Potions*) *Unbroken Arrow* (to *The Adventures of Young Robin Hood*) *River Rivals* (to *Secret of the Golden Dragon*) *Chiffy Kids* (to *The Chiffy Kids Gang*) *Chimpmates* (to *Alice The Chimp*) and *Big Wheels and Sailor* (to *CB Heroes*).[370] The festival was a success (a very rare one) for the CFF, securing new exhibition deals with local cable television companies, and attracted the interest of Disney Cable, who started negotiations to screen the Harley Cokeliss productions *The Glitterball* and the *Battle of Billy's Pond,* and even expressed interest in a possible sequel to *The Glitterball*. Although nothing came of the tie up with Disney, overseas distribution reached a total of 79 territories served by the CFF.

The sole 1981 release - Jewels and car chases on the Isle of Dogs

With the scant resources the CFF were now operating with (the government having announced that the Eady Levy was to be abolished), there were only two projects in production during 1981. *Friend or Foe*, which would be released the following year, and *4D Special Agents*. Eyeline Films were the production company, bringing in the film at a cost of £106,214,[371] with Harold Orton and Caroline Neame co-producing. Orton directed the feature and also wrote the script aided by Peter Frances-Browne. Orton was an old collaborator with the CFF - he produced and directed *The Wreck-Raisers* in 1972 and three series of *Chimpmates* in 1976 and 1978. The script had a curious genesis - the South Yorkshire Police Force had recently launched a scheme to encourage children to help the police and to encourage safety and crime prevention, designating the youngsters '4D Special Agents' (the 4 D's being 'don't talk to strangers, don't accept lifts from strangers, etc). Orton and Frances-Brown ran with the idea and created a convincing drama involving a group of East End kids and a gang of violent jewel thieves.

Shot on the Isle of Dogs, with its unused wharves and derelict warehouses, the location could not be more different today. The skyscraping office block Canada One now stands over the multi-million pound developments that line the River Thames, and Poplar's West India dock, the major location for the film, now houses Canary Wharf tube station and the Museum of London Docklands. Before it turned into a developers paradise, the Isle of Dogs was essentially a wasteland, and the gang of kids in the film use it as a playground. Anyone viewing these kids today will find their faces very familiar - Steve Fraser is played by Dexter Fletcher, who would go on to be one of the most recognisable faces both on the large and small screen, before launching into directorial superstardom with *Eddie the Eagle* (2015) and the Elton John biopic *Rocketman* (2019). The part of Danny went to the black actor Paul J Medford, to become popular with soap opera viewers as Kelvin Carpenter in *Eastenders* (BBC, 1985-1987) and Linda East, who went on to star as Christine Everson in *Grange Hill* (BBC, 1982-1984), was cast as Jane Bowman. Describing the film's protagonists, Robert Shail wrote:

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[370] From the programme for the *1981 Satori International Children's Film Festival*

[371] Phil Wickham and Erinna Mettler in *Back to the Future: The Fall and Rise of The British Film Industry in the 1980s - An Information Briefing* (London, BFI Publications, 2005) p. 19

> "Our heroes are the usual gang of assorted kids, designed to show that anyone can help the police, be they a clean-cut girl with a policeman father or someone living with a grandfather who has previously been in trouble with the law."[372]

The children discover the criminals secreting a hoard of jewelry (to be collected later and smuggled out of the country in a boat via one of the wharves). Steve (Dexter Fletcher) decides to take one of the jewels for himself, prompting the kidnapping of Jane by the crooks. The action swings back and forth, culminating in a river boat chase on the Thames as Steve's grandad pursues the criminals. Robert Shail noted "although conventional in many ways, the film is almost an updated *Famous Five* adventure -it's streetwise energy is indicative of the changed approach that had taken root at the CFF."[373] Finally, it seemed, the Foundation had recognised that to compete and integrate with potential co-production companies, the scripts and the action had to 'toughen up' and modernise. *4D Special Agents* dispensed with the slapstick and noticeably, no veteran comedians were cast. Shail, again, commented:

> "The film benefits from the rough edge of later CFF productions with naturalistic acting from the children, working class accents in abundance and a slangy humour to the dialogue between the children. The villains generate a sense of menace far removed from the comic capers of earlier Foundation films, with Jane threatened with a beating and Steve thrown into the river to drown. The action is tough, with a convincing car crash that might have been taken from an episode of *The Sweeney*. The film also shows development in the depiction of gender roles with Jane matching Steve for bravery and resourcefulness; it is Jane who saves Steve from drowning at the end of the film."[374]

The Sweeney (Euston Films for Thames TV, 1974-1978) was an uncompromising police drama about London's Flying Squad and had climatic car-chases that were familiar to every viewer - usually set, like this film's location, in the disused warehouses and service roads along the River Thames. The finale is dealt with in an unexpected way - the temptation that Steve felt to commit his crime is depicted not in the moralising way of the past, but in a non-judgemental way as the audience and Steve realise the impact of his actions, with himself and his dear friend put in physical danger by his own greed. *4D Special Agents* continued the tradition of international prize-winning by the CFF - it was awarded the Diploma of Honour at the 1982 Gijon Film Festival in Spain.

1982 - Downsizing and a new name

Throughout the early part of 1982, the to-ings and fro-ings between the CFF and their potential suitors, chiefly the new fourth channel and the BBC, were beginning to frustrate some board members who saw time rapidly running out for the chance to save the Foundation. On 8th March Muir Sutherland on behalf of Channel Four hit the CFF with a knockout blow from the company which had been many members preferred collaborator:

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[372] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 88
[373] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 88
[374] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 89

> "I have been advised by Channel Four that the CFF material is considered as 'acquired material' and that if it did not exist their schedule would be filled with equally attractive 'acquired material' at a lower cost than which Channel Four is prepared to invest in CFF programming."[375]

The BBC, smarting over press reports that Rank had bought the back catalogue from the CFF, expressed their concerns, with Edward Barnes commenting to Lord Birkett that:

> "I was very surprised to read in the Daily Telegraph of the Board's decision to sell the library to Rank Film Distributors. As you know, the BBC has for many years not only been interested in purchasing the library but in going into co-production with the CFF. It is, however, very difficult to get the full story from a newspaper. I note that the films are to be shown particularly on Channel Four - does this mean that there is still some of the library on offer? I would be glad if you could tell me how far your commitment to the fourth channel extends not only because I would still like to see an active collaboration between the CFF and the BBC, but it could also affect my position as a potential member of your board, which I would be very sorry about."[376]

Confusion reigned, and the wrangling with the actors union Equity over TV exhibition rights was still on-going, with Lord Birkett personally writing to every actor who had a credit in any CFF production, to establish their views in favour or not of a potential agreement. The letter was prompted by an Equity member's complaint that he had seen himself on TV in an American broadcast of a CFF production and had received no recompense for the appearance, just his flat fee on completing the film. In explaining and appealing to Equity members, Lord Birkett wrote in a heart-felt letter that:

> "The film concerned was made by the Children's Film Foundation and was intended for children's matinees, every Saturday at 10am, no parents admitted. On this understanding we often asked people in the film industry to work on our films for less than their normal fees or wages. Not less than the legal union minimum but sometimes less than the going market rate. This was because the budget's were always tiny - even our tiny budgets had to be subsidised by substantial grants from the Eady Fund. We shall never earn enough from children's films, however new and exciting, to be self-sufficient, so we must exploit our old or older films such as the one you appeared in. In case anyone asks 'why must the CFF continue anyway, especially now the matinee movement has declined so dramatically?' The answer is quite simple: Nobody else makes films for children. The feature film (or featurette) is a self-contained self-sufficient story, the equivalent of the short story in literature and these are the children of the novel - the greatest blend of narrative, portraiture and

[375] From a letter to Lord Birkett (CFF Chairman) from Muir Sutherland (on behalf of Channel Four) dated 8th March 1982

[376] From a letter to Lord Birkett (CFF Chairman) from Edward Barnes (Head of Children's Programmes for the BBC) dated 21st April 1982

> philosophy yet devised. Story-telling at its best should be set before children of all ages and its best now means not just books, but film, television and video."[377]

Rank Film Distributors had indeed bought the CFF library, and were beginning the process of setting up a deal for the exhibition of thirteen CFF films and a three year co-production deal - with the BBC! In June 1982 the Extraordinary Meeting of the Board decreed that "the company change its name to 'The Children's Film and Television Foundation'"[378] in the hope that a deal would soon be done. Rank had brought the two parties together - if the Equity members played ball then a future could just be guaranteed.

The immediate impact of the new The Children's Film and Television Foundation was a down-sizing operation. Any excess expenditure was pulled back and the Foundation moved from its existing offices on Great Portland Street to much smaller premises at Elstree Film Studios. Pamela Poll, who joined the Foundation as Secretary at this time recalls:

> "A board member of the CFF, the Managing Director of Elstree Studios, had been able to arrange for us to have office accommodation there at a 'peppercorn' rent. The move to Elstree had been accompanied by down-sizing, which had included a substantial reduction in staff - we had become a very small operation. I had heard stories of what Great Portland Street had been like in the 1960s and 1970s when it had been a happy place and there had been a real buzz to the offices. The operation had become really modest. My first job was to prepare for posting a letter written and individually signed by Lord Birkett to all Equity members who had appeared in the CFF's films to seek permission to release part of the back-catalogue for screening on television - something previously forbidden."[379]

Lord Birkett had been elected as the new chairman, with the Executive Officer post (vacant due to the retirement of Henry Geddes after many years of loyal service) went to a former Health Service Administrator Stanley Taylor, recruited as "the view seems to be it was time for non-film industry personnel to take a more dispassionate view of the Foundation's management and finances."[380] Ian Shand, who had previously directed *Mischief* (1969) and *Kadoyng* (1972) for the CFF, became Chair of the Production Committee, assisted by Bob Kellett. These moves helped bring down the Foundation's central staffing to just three, from a previous number of fourteen.

The sole 1982 release - A wartime adventure

Friend or Foe was a script by John Krish who adapted Michael Morpugo's original story for the screen (Morpugo would go on to find huge success with his novel *War Horse*). The idea of film was originated by the CFF production committee, and as reported earlier, the German

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[377] From a letter from Lord Birkett (CFF Chairman) to members of the Equity Union (dated September 2nd, 1982)
[378] From the minutes of *The Children's Film Foundation Board Meeting* (dated June 29th 1982)
[379] Pamela Poll in Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 115
[380] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 35

production company Polyphon International were keen on a co-production, the deal falling through due to disagreements over overseas rights. The last of the Foundation's existing production budget was used to fund the film. Krish was approached by Bob Kellett, who was acting as a go-between between the CFF and producers and directors. Kellett had previously directed 'saucy comedies,'[381] among them Frankie Howerd's *Up Pompeii* (1971) and *Up the Chastity Belt* and *Up the Front* (both 1972) and had recently directed the cinema version of BBC TV's comedy *Are You Being Served?* (1977). Krish, who had previously been involved as a director of CFF movies, the first being *The Salvage Gang* back in 1958, agreed to write and direct the project for Elstree Productions under Gordon Scott. He found him to be a petty penny pincher, and wrote:

> "Scott's main aim was to reduce costs. The Foundation offered producers a bonus if films could be brought in under budget, so Scott made everyone's life a misery in his attempts to secure this. I regarded the budget as something that had already been costed as low as possible anyway. Everyone was working on minimum as a gesture of goodwill towards the Foundation as it was. Despite this, Scott tried to cut costs even further all the time. On location he refused to pay for the cast and crew to have their clothing washed. Everyone was angry and the prop department threatened to walk out - I was able to persuade them not to."[382]

Krish had no hesitation in taking on the project because:

> "I felt a strong personal connection with the subject as I had been an evacuee myself during World War II and the experience had a deep effect on me. I wrote the screenplay myself, and made some quite radical changes to the narrative structure to make it more linear. I think the audience really need to be led by the nose. I removed the original ending, which included a flash-forward which I felt over complicated the narrative."[383]

Friend or Foe is a set in the wartime West Country (though it was filmed near to Elstree's Beaconsfield studios in Rickmansworth and Denham), where two boys Simon Tucker, or Tucky (played by Mark Luxford) and David (John Holmes) are both evacuated from Blitz-ridden London. Both actors were again from the Anna Scher Theatre School in Islington, and again both gave convincing performances - Krish noting that "the school saw drama as a kind of therapy, instilling loving values as well as developing acting talent. (The children) were perfect for the film."[384] Finding the locals less than friendly and unwelcoming and suffering teasing and abuse from their new schoolmates, the boys find a happy and friendly home with farmer Jerry (John Bardon) and his French wife Anne (Stacey Tendeter), after suffering the ignominy of being the last pair chosen to be billeted, with Jerry refusing to choose between them. Bardon was a jobbing actor who had roles in many TV comedy and drama episodes, but he would go on to

[381] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 101
[382] John Krish in Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 102
[383] John Krish in Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 102
[384] John Krish in Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 103

win a major role in *Eastenders* (BBC, 1996-2011) as Jim Branning. One day, Tucky and David see a German plane crash land nearby, and reporting it to the army they were dismissed as hoaxers. With typical CFF curiosity, they set out to find the wreckage and prove their tormentors wrong. While searching David slips and falls into a dangerous river, and is only saved from drowning when one of two of the German airmen, who had been hiding with his injured compatriot, dives in to rescue him. The boys now face a major ethical dilemma - to report the fugitives to the authorities or to protect them and help them hide, repaying their debt in saving David's life. Wrestling with the decision - the locals unfriendly attitude to them and feeling indebted to the airmen, the boys decide to help the Germans. Robert Shail comments:

> "The film poses a moral dilemma for its young audience, which needs careful weighing up. The ambiguities of the situation are intensified by the fact that David's father had been killed by the German's earlier in the war. In addition, the patriotism of the villagers seems little more than bigotry, while the German airmen veer between appearing brutal in their dedication to their own cause and sympathetic in the loyalty they show to the two boys who have protected them. John Krish was convinced that children were capable of appreciating these complexities and did not shirk from depicting the difficulties of the situation."[385]

At the film's conclusion, the boys, in mirroring the audience's uncertainty, are unconvinced whether or not that they did the right thing. The film's message, delivered at the very end, is uttered by Tucky - "I think that war is stupid!" Shail again, summed up the production:

> "The serious themes of the film are conveyed by convincing performances, dialogue and settings. We are a long way from the familiar knockabout humour and formulaic plots that had become the Foundation's standby. This is a complex and thought provoking film that ranks among its finest achievements."[386]

Krish was to write in the background notes for the screening at the Los Angeles Film Festival that:

> "*Friend or Foe* does not set out to deal with the emotional impact of separation. However, the truth of what an ordeal evacuation had been for so many children came to light during the shooting of the scenes of the arrival at the village hall. Many of the older extras playing villagers had been evacuees and their memories were still sharp and painful. Right from the first rehearsal some of them were in tears as they watched the children troop in with their suitcases, parcels and wearing those wretched labels - during the entire shooting in the hall the atmosphere was heavy and subdued. For many years psychologists and sociologists have stressed the importance of security on a child's personality and that insight came soon enough once the evacuees returned to their own homes. Obviously, separation had not been a bad experience for every child -

[385] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* pp. 89-90
[386] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 90

> being in the country for the first time had such a profound effect on some that returning to the towns and cities was the hardship."[387]

Derek Malcolm wrote in *The Guardian* on April 1st that:

> "Children of all ages might also like John Krish's *Friend or Foe*, the new Children's Film Foundation production, if only they could see it. But the collapse of the children's matinee circuit has made the task of release doubly difficult, as has the withdrawal of the CFF grant. I have not previously been a supporter of the CFF, but if this is the sort of project its new and better leadership is determined upon, then some sort of future, even via the agency of the dreaded gogglebox and certainly through foreign sales, ought to be assured. Next week comes a vital board meeting to decide the issue. I hope the courage will be found to continue, after all, faint hearts would never had made *Chariots of Fire*."[388]

Commenting on the differences between Morpurgo's book and his screenplay, John Krish recalled a meeting with the author:

> "Some years later I found myself sitting next to Michael Morpurgo at a public screening of the film. I was rather nervous as to his reaction but I'm pleased to say that after the screening he told me 'It's a bloody sight better than the book'. I am particularly proud of the last line of the film - 'I think war is stupid' - which conveys my own views. I feel strongly that it isn't necessary to soften a subject like this for a young audience, they are perfectly capable of responding to it and understanding it."[389]

When the film was marketed for rental by the BFI via it's website, an anonymous review read:

> "WWII evacuee David hates the Germans, but now his life has been saved by one. What is the right thing to do, tell the Army or offer his help? Director John Krish, himself a child evacuee, makes the dilemma a double one as the Germans decide to put their trust in the boys' silence to avoid getting caught. Thanks perhaps to Krish's background in documentary filmmaking, this is one of the rare Children's Film Foundation stories with added grit. He makes great use of a shoestring budget to produce a credible period film which tackles a delicate subject with sensitivity."[390]

Another anonymous review, this time found on the IMDB website for the film, praised the authenticity of the movie:

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[387] John Krish in background notes for *Friend or Foe* at the Los Angeles Film Festival (dated 20th January 1982)
[388] Derek Malcolm in review of *Friend or Foe* in *The Guardian* (1st April 1982)
[389] John Krish in Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 102
[390] Anonymous review of *Friend or Foe* on BFI website (accessed 15th March 2021)
https://player.bfi.org.uk/rentals/film/watch-friend-or-foe-1981-online

> "Wonderful! A delightful little film that realistically portrays life as it really was for us London evacuees. I was 4 years old when war was declared and between then and February 1945, evacuated 5 times. On the 3rd evacuation, we travelled by bus from Kilburn to the main line station, then by train to Harringworth. There, just like the boys in the film, we were marched crocodile style along the village high street and my brother and I were the last evacuees to be billeted (with Mr and Mrs Lock). The film is absolutely true to the events that we Londoner's experienced .. country life, farms, a single-room village school and the Home Guard. A super film."[391]

On completion, Bob Kellett announced to the board that *Friend or Foe* had "come in on budget at £132,000"[392] and following the critical success of this production, Krish was to be invited to direct another film for the Foundation, *Out of the Darkness* (1985). *Friend 0r Foe* was awarded the Ruby Slipper at the 1982 Los Angeles Film Festival, the Special Jury Award at the Third International Neo-Youth Film Festival in 1983, and a Special Jury Prize at the Laon Festival in France, in 1984. Krish's screenplay was also awarded a prize from *The Evening Standard* in London. David Hughes, of the *Sunday Times*, appealed to broadcasters to give it a further showing in October 1983, stating:

> "*Friend or Foe*, made over two years ago, is a prize-winner: *The Evening Standard's* award for the best screenplay of 1982, and judged in L.A. the world's best children's feature. It has been shown once here - in August on a Saturday morning, in Plymouth. The film is quite English, jerkingly moving, universal: civilised to the fingertips, yet as imaginative as a bright child. Won't someone please show it?"[393]

Drama and adventure was now the touchstone for the new CFTF - the slapstick and comedy becoming a thing of the past as they realised that their new audience would not be restricted to the under fourteens. The new dawn as possible co-producers with the BBC gave the board of directors hope that the future, after so many frustrating years, would be a bright one.

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[391] Anonymous review of *Friend or Foe* on IMDB website (accessed 11th July 2021) https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0082420/?ref_=nv_sr_srsg_0

[392] Bob Kellett from the minutes of *The Children's Film Foundation Board Meeting* dated October 6th 1981 (minute no. 2012)

[393] David Hughes in review of *Friend or Foe* in *The Sunday Times* (2nd October, 1983)

CHAPTER SEVEN

1983-1989 THE FINAL CHAPTER

The newly launched and streamlined Children's Film and Television Foundation faced a new and difficult challenge, to remain a valid and potent film producer without the backing of the industry or with government backing. It began 1983 by tying up the loose ends - the casts of the thirteen titles cleared as part of the BBC deal had unanimously given their consent for broadcast on television, agreement had been reached with the technicians and other unions and on February 2nd 1983 the Foundation formally announced their new partnership. A deal still had to be reached with Equity over new production rates and rights, but the CFTF now had a co-production deal and more importantly, the funds to continue making films for children.

1983 - Rank and the BBC ride to the rescue

Equity, still embroiled in talks with the Foundation, were bullish in trying to protect their members interests. On December 1st 1982 Rank Distribution wrote that the union had contacted the BBC to state their position:

> "Equity requested a letter from the BBC, in which the BBC would confirm that the money that they will spend on acquiring the CFTF product will not come out of the British Film Production budget."[394]

The impasse with the union threatened to derail the agreement - Rank, who were acting as brokers between the CFTF and the BBC, were getting frustrated and Chris Towle wrote to the Foundation on 17th January 1983 that;

> "In many ways I was sorry to hear that the CFTF board did not find it possible to agree that Rank Film Distributors should immediately be entitled to commence licensing both *Friend Or Foe* and *Tightrope To Terror* for theatrical, non-theatrical and television distribution, which continued delay is causing our clients very serious concern."[395]

Arguments over what form the television broadcasts would be given, with the BBC preferring to serialise the films, were still ongoing even as a deal was being signed, as this minuted note from the February CFTF board meeting shows;

> "Mr Barnes commented that BBC Television, Children's Programmes, had a very real interest in serials as opposed to feature films on the basis that serials could be screened on Saturday mornings in children's time 52 weeks of the year, whereas feature films, due to their length, were screened in the early evening as

[394] From a letter to Stanley Taylor (CFTF Executive Officer) from F Turner (Rank Film Distributors) dated 1st December 1982
[395] From a letter to Stanley Taylor (CFTF Executive Officer) from Chris Towle(Rank Film Distributors) dated 17th January 1983

> family entertainment. He asked if under the RFD agreement some of the films could be serialised."[396]

That particular issue would rumble on through the year. Agreement with Equity was finally reached at the end of January - the Foundation agreeing to pay a lump sum of £10,000 per year into the union's charity fund (for retired actors) in return for waived rights on existing productions and normal Equity fees for exploitation for new films. The Foundation, on February 2nd 1983, released the following press release;

> "On the 8th February 1983 Lord Birkett, chairman of the Children's Film and Television Foundation, will sign an agreement with Rank Film Distributors. This will ensure the continuance of the Foundation as producers of children's feature films for the following three years and, it is confidently expected, well beyond that. The dramatic decline in UK cinema admissions has disastrously affected the Eady Levy, on which the CFF has depended for annual grants to enable its yearly output of six or so feature films, since its inception in 1951. Two years ago, the CFF was informed that the already severely depleted level of its grants would cease. Faced with the alternatives of extinction or seeking revenue from other sources, which inevitably pointed to UK television, the board entered into protracted negotiations with the unions concerned to seek their agreement to a proposal made to the Foundation by their distributors of many years standing - Rank Film Distributors - that in return for the release of ten CFF library films together with three feature films per year (to be made under the terms of the deal) which would be subsequently screened on BBC television, guaranteed income would be available to the Foundation to enable this production commitment to be met for the three year term of the deal."[397]

The statement continued, giving praise to the unions, particularly Equity, in their role in approving the deal;

> "Agreement with the unions has finally been achieved subject to the concurrence of the artists appearing in the selected library films and Lord Birkett wrote to these actors and actresses detailing the crisis facing the Foundation and the background to the negotiations on which the future of its future survival depended - their response has been overwhelming and enthusiastically in favour and next Tuesday sees the culmination of the long and anxious haul to the dawn of the Foundations renaissance."[398]

The ten titles cleared for release for broadcast by the BBC were; *The Battle of Billy's Pond* (1976), *The Boy Who Turned Yellow* (1972), *Fern, The Red Deer* (1976), *Sammy's Super T-Shirt* (1978), *Cry Wolf* (1968), *Electric Eskimo* (1979), *4D Special Agents* (1981), *The Glitterball* (1977), *The Sky Bike* (1967) and *Sky Pirates* (1976). They were all colour films, the

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[396] From the minutes of the CFTF Board Meeting, minute no. 2149 (dated 8th February 1983)
[397] From press release by The Children's Film and Television Foundation (dated February 2nd 1983)
[398] From press release by The Children's Film and Television Foundation (dated February 2nd 1983)

BBC not being interested in black and white productions. *Friend Or Foe*, *Tightrope To Terror*, and *Break Out* were to be released initially in theatres then were free to be broadcast by the Corporation. The deal gave the CFTF production funding of £400,000, enough for three feature film productions, and in a bizarre twist, evidence of this new financial stability prompted the Films Minister, Sally Oppenheim, to grant a final payment of almost £500,000 from the Eady Levy[399]. After three years of staring extinction in the face, the Children's Film and Television Foundation finally had a future to look forward to.

Equity members rally around the Foundation

The co-production deal was, of course, only possible with the co-operation of Equity and its members. Eventually settling for an annual donation of £10,000, in lieu of members rights, to the union's charity fund, was the final stumbling block to be cleared. Lord Birkett's letter to all cast members of CFF productions (see page 113) had a huge response - mostly positive, though the reactions from actors generally depended on how far their star had risen. Positive responses were received from Patricia Hayes, Miriam Margoyles, Liz Fraser, Terry Scott, Ronnie Barker and Bill Owen. Below is a selection of positive responses from some of the other actors;[400]

Roy Dotrice (*Hide and Seek*) - "This is an excellent idea - I totally agree with it."

Cardew Robinson (*Go Kart Go* and *The Magnificent Six and a Half*) - "I have often wished that these excellent little films, in which I have been proud to work on [sic], could get another showing on the small screen."

Jeremy Bulloch (*Caught In The Net* and *The Young Jacobites*) - "As I started my career through the CFF way back in 1956 I am only too pleased to plough back any money into the CFF to help."

David Lodge (*Cup Fever* and *The Sky Bike* among many others) - "As I write to you my study has on show two awards plus a certificate for my work with the CFF, so you know where my heart lies."

Adrienne Corri (*Cry Wolf*) - "I am terribly sorry to hear that the Foundation is so hit by cuts. I remember that little film and enjoyed making it very much. As far as I am concerned, please go ahead and show it where and when you please; I have no objections nor do I wish for any kind of remuneration."

Mike Savage (*Black Island*) - "The long and indeed high standards of the CFF is part of British film folklore - and long may it remain to be so! My own contribution to this film was small but knowing my fellow artists as I do, I'm quite sure that your request will be greeted with an overall sense of professional responsibility by one and all."

Others were astounded that Equity were demanding any recompense for their members;

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[399] Nicholas Pole (AIP) from the *30th London Film Festival* press release (dated 20th July 1986)

[400] From the archive collection of responses to Lord Birkett's letter held at the CFF Special Collection, BFI (dated March 1983)

Esmond Knight (*The Boy Who Turned Yellow*) - “I would have thought that most actors would be prepared to act in such films for nothing anyway. Perhaps now that there seems to be a falling off in television viewers children will be more inclined to watch films.”

Bernard Horsfall (*Mr Horatio Knibbles*) - “You have my unqualified support - the only thing that surprises me is that Equity are receiving money from the CFF.”

Colin Jeavons (*The Chiffy Kids*) - “I was upset to learn that Equity has agreed to accept £10,000 per annum from you when the point of the agreement is to raise money for your continued survival.”

George Baker (*The Firefighters*) - “My only quibble in the whole thing is why doesn’t Equity nominate the CFF as the charity - this would allow you to keep the £10,000 per annum for re-investment in children’s films.”

Robin Askwith (*Scramble! Hide and Seek* and *The Hostages*) - “I think it should be used to encourage our future commercial film technicians and artists - giving £10,000 to a charity of Equity’s choice to me is nothing but bribery and corruption. Charity might have to begin at home in this case.”

Of course there were a few dissenting voices - interestingly, the reactions seem to be dependent on whether the actors star was still rising, or whether their career was on the decline;

John Forbes-Robertson (*The Man From Nowhere*) - “I still feel that this contractual problem should have been discussed in the first instance with the individual actors concerned and should not have been pre-judged. I wait for you to make a substantial financial offer directly to myself before I can accede to your request that the film should be shown to a wider audience.”

David Webb (*Night Ferry*) - “I regret that I do not agree to the showing on television, or in cinemas or in any medium throughout the world of the film *Night Ferry* without appropriate payment of the artists involved.”

Derek Bond (*Hijack*) - “Actors reluctantly accepted these low artistic standards and the negligible salaries in the charitable hope that they were giving succour to the ailing film industry. They were also assured that the films would only be seen by very limited audiences at children’s Saturday matinees. To release such films on worldwide television and video would be deeply damaging to the artists concerned.”

John Hollis (*On The Run*) - “A reluctant yes - I am quite happy to help the CFF in any way I can. Reluctant because *On The Run* is in my opinion a very bad film. It will certainly not enhance the reputation of anyone who took part in it and for that reason would be better for the actors concerned if it was quietly burned.”

The whole debate had been started with a letter from Robert LaBassiere to the Foundation in reference to his non-payment of requested fees for a broadcast on US cable television. His response to Lord Birkett’s letter was perhaps the expected one;

> "I signed a contract for *The Boy Who Never Was,* understanding it was for home consumption (i.e. for children's matinees on Saturday mornings). Since I've been in Los Angeles I have seen the film on prime time cable television and I feel that I and the other actors have already been cheated of some of the residuals. I respectfully decline to sign over any dues to you until I receive an explanation for past contract aberrations."[401]

Lord Birkett replied, in a measured response, that "Children's Film Foundation films have always been exploited abroad in any known medium with the revenue deriving being ploughed back into UK production: it will be noted that this is done in the knowledge and blessing of all the unions concerned."[402] Altogether 53 Equity members' views were sought, and a hand-written note on the cover page of the archive sums up the general feeling; "most asked when the films would be aired as they had never seen them."[403] Far from being an embarrassment, on the whole the films, for the majority of the participants, were seen as a worthy and a positive addition to their CV's.

In context - television and cinema in 1983

Although the UK box-office was once again dominated by Hollywood blockbusters, the lean years for home productions seemed to be turning back towards a more positive position. Home produced successes this year included *Educating Rita* (d. Lewis Gilbert), *Local Hero* (d. Bill Forsyth), *Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence* (d. Nagisa Oshima) and the multi-award winning *Gandhi* (d. Richard Attenborough). But again only one film, *Gandhi,* made an appearance in the top twenty highest grossing films in home cinemas. The only major release from the UK that could be described as a children's film was an animated version of the Kenneth Grahame story *Wind In The Willows* (d. Mark Hall), whilst only *Daffy Duck's Fantastic Island* (d. Chuck Jones, Friz Freleng and Robert McKimson) from the American Warner Brothers studio backed up two minor Disney releases to tempt pre-teen audiences into the cinemas. *The Plague Dogs* (d. Martin Rosen), another Richard Adams story, was less successful than *Watership Down*, and again suffered from criticisms of graphic violence and trauma deemed too extreme for younger viewers - in the USA the censors demanded cuts to achieve a PG-13 certificate. An interesting development was coming from Japan, where Anime films (stylised animation) were being developed. The first western release was *Unico In The Island of Magic* (1979, d. Toshio Hirata) in 1983, and the genre would gain first a cult and then mainstream following in the West.

The matinee movement was struggling on, but as Terry Staples wrote, the BBC deal was another nail in the coffin for them:

> "This television tie-up was not, however, good for the surviving matinees. In fact, it virtually killed them. The Foundation continued to service them up to the

[401] From the archive collection of responses to Lord Birkett's letter held at the CFF Special Collection, BFI (dated March 1983)
[402] From the archive collection of responses to Lord Birkett's letter held at the CFF Special Collection, BFI (dated March 1983)
[403] From the archive collection of responses to Lord Birkett's letter held at the CFF Special Collection, BFI (dated March 1983)

> promised date and beyond, but most managers found that the restricted menu made it impossible to retain their audience. Effectively, the pool of available films was shallower than it had been before, because the most attractive features had been cherry-picked by television and were for practical purposes out of circulation for a while. Neither was there much compensation to be found in the new productions, since films made with television money likewise had to go to television first and were only available to cinemas after their juice had been squeezed out. Indeed, some of them never reached matinees at all because they were shot on 16mm, which was fine for television, but no use for cinemas. The independents found themselves looking at a downward spiral, with the same jaded units being endlessly recycled."[404]

With the Saturday cinema clubs now numbering as few as 67 regular outlets,[405] BBC and ITV secured their position as weekend king-pins - the ITV network replaced *Tiswas* with the TVS produced *No. 73* (1983 -1988) whilst the BBC had opened *Saturday Superstore* (1982-1987), succeeding *Swap Shop,* but retaining former CFF favourite Keith Chegwin to aid presenters Mike Read and Sarah Greene. Long form drama, now the preferred medium of the Foundation, had several real competitors for their market. On the BBC *Grange Hill* continued to be essential viewing for school-children of all ages (whilst enraging more straight-laced parents) and in 1983 a spin-off *Tucker's Luck* (BBC TV, 1983-1985) was produced. Featuring Todd Carty (later of *Eastenders* fame) as Tucker Jenkins, three series followed the (mis)adventures of Tucker and his friends Tommy and Alan as they leave school and find their way in the 'real world'. 1983 also saw the corporation launch *Seaview* (BBC TV, 1983-1985), a drama starring Yvette Fielding (who would go on to present the BBC's flagship magazine programme *Blue Peter*) as a teenager whose home is a Blackpool boarding house. ITV began a new afternoon block of programming for kids, *Children's ITV*, and within this new format launched several new series, among them *Behind The Bike Sheds* (Yorkshire TV, 1983-1985), a school based musical sit-com, but most were animation or imported shows. ITV astonishingly set a record for an audience for a children's programme in November when the animated *Danger Mouse* peaked at an audience of 21.59 million - figures to water the eyes of the board of the CFTF.

Channel Four had launched, but their only real contribution to children's viewing came at Christmas-time, when David Bowie introduced a re-showing of Raymond Briggs' *The Snowman* (TVC London, 1982, d. Dianne Jackson) on December 29th. Breakfast TV, the medium so desired by the CFF in their dealings over the last few years, became a reality this year, but both the independent TVAM's *Good Morning Britain* and the BBC's *Breakfast Time* had sticky starts. The surprising saviour of the hour was Roland Rat, a puppet created by David Claridge and introduced as a host to entertain younger viewers in the Easter holidays by TVAM's children's editor Anne Wood. He was to be described by Matt Westcott of the *Northern Echo* as "the only rat to join a sinking ship."[406] And on the 16th October, in a move that will revolutionise viewing habits of the future, satellite TV was first broadcast into British homes.

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[404] Staples *All Pals Together* p. 239
[405] From the minutes of the CFTF Executive Committee, minute no. 44/83 (dated 24th March 1983)
[406] Matt Westcott in *Car Torque with Roland Rat* in *The Northern Echo* (dated 12th January 2015)

The Foundations overseas market was also beginning to contract, particularly in the USA - and the traditional market for 35mm hire was being hugely impacted by the glut of video-cassettes on the market;

> "Mr Towle mentioned the popularity of animated films in the United States which inevitably affected the market for the CFTF's product. A substantial drop in returns for the quarter ended 9th July had also been caused by the impact of video, coupled with the illegal use of home video facilities for schools, clubs, etc. For example, last year there had been 460 bookings for holiday camps - but this year none."[407]

Under the terms of the new deal drawn up by Rank, the BBC were supposed to begin broadcasting CFF films from 1984, but in a surprise move in December 1983 the CFTF, independent of RFD, struck a further deal with the BBC, in order to give them access to two of the serials that Edward Barnes had been coveting;

> "*The Glitterball* is to be screened on BBC television at 1pm on Christmas Day. As a result, it was hoped to obtain the permission of Equity to the screening of two serials on BBC television - *Professor Popper's Problems* and *Treasure In Malta* - outside of the agreement with Rank Film Distributors."[408]

The Glitterball had a confirmed Christmas Day audience of 3.5 million, but the broadcast came to have a detrimental effect on video sales of the film. In *Video Business* on the 19th December, Barry Lazell wrote;

> "*The Glitterball,* one of the first batch of Rank/CFTF video releases, has shown particularly well in the ship-out chart this week, on which strength it would normally be safe to predict a good Yuletide rental for this. Unfortunately, the movie is now scheduled to be shown on BBC1 sometime over the holiday, and unless it clashes with a blockbuster audience grabber on the box, this would seem to come down heavily on the chances of the video."[409]

Six months later, in June 1984, the CFTF board were moved to note that;

> "Mr Warren highlighted the fact that the release of certain CFTF titles in video form had not matched expectations and Rank Video contributed part of the blame for this to BBC Television having shown *The Glitterball* on Christmas Day. The board also noted that the two CFTF serials *Professor Popper's Problems* and *Treasure in Malta* had now been screened by BBC Children's Television and

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[407] From the minutes of the CFTF Executive Committee (overseas distribution) minute no. 68/83 (dated 6th September 1983)

[408] From the minutes of the CFTF Board Meeting, minute no. 2156 (dated 16th December 1983)

[409] Barry Lazell in *The Video Charter - A Weekly Commentary on What's Happening in the UK Video Charts* in *Video Business* (dated 19th December 1983)

> that the viewing figures had apparently been 16% for child viewers aged between 4 and 14, whereas the opposition achieved only 11%."[410]

In trying to get two bites at the same pie, the Foundation found that the ramifications of the TV deal were far reaching. As the overseas market continued to deteriorate, and with the matinee market all but finished, they could only content themselves with the fact that at least they were still a valid, if hugely diminished, film and television production company although losing autonomy in the control of the productions would have a huge impact, as the BBC would seek to force their own agendas and sometimes contradictory censorship onto the co-productions.

The sole 1983 release - *Tightrope To Terror*

By the time of the co-production deal with the BBC, the CFTF had one completed film - *Tightrope to Terror*, and another one planned, *Breakout*. *Tightrope to Terror* was shot entirely on location in the Italian Aps and was directed by Bob Kellett (as Robert Kellett), this his first cinematic work for the Foundation. After turning down the offer of co-production with Polyphon International of Hamburg, the film was labelled a 'Children's Film Foundation production' and again they invited Gordon Scott to produce the project. It eventually cost £116,500[411] to produce and Kellett directed his own script, a tale of "danger and excitement when four children are trapped aboard a damaged cable car dangling 150 feet above a glacier."[412] The story is that of two holidaying sisters, the plucky Susan (Rebecca Lacey, who would go on to enjoy a successful television career) and Lisa (Eloise Ritchie), who decide to cross a mountain using the overhead cable cars, arranging to meet their father who decides to drive through the road tunnel and meet them on the other side. The girls enjoy the spectacular alpine views, befriending two German boys Christian (Mark Jefferis) and Mark (Stuart Wilde), who turn out to be adventurous and experienced climbers. Disaster strikes when a low flying aeroplane brushes the cable car the children are in, forcing the car off the main cable, dangling dangerously in mid air. Cue thrills and adventures as the quartet scramble down a rope and return to the boys camp. Mark had been injured in a fall so he and Susan remained in the tent while Lisa and Christian set off for help. Christian slips into a crevice, leaving Lisa to struggle on alone, through a terrifying snowstorm, to finally reach her father and bring rescue to her sister and friends. Robert Shail hailed the changes, commenting that;

> "The film is one of an exceptional breed of Foundation films where girls take the central roles. Here they are every bit the equal of their male friends. The tension is well managed by writing writer-director Bob Kellett, along a long from the sitcom spin-offs and saucy comedies with which he was more usually associated. The film makes a gentle point about cooperation between nations but is more likely to be remembered by its young audience for some of the most convincing stunt work in the history of the Foundation, as well as for a straightforward but gripping narrative. Just as well that a little title card informs

[410] From the minutes of the CFTF Board Meeting, minute no. 2172 (dated 22nd June 1984)
[411] Wickham and Mettler *Back to the Future* p. 30
[412] From *The Children's Film and Television Foundation Catalogue and Index of Films Supplementary List* (dated December 1986)

> us that similar accidents can no longer happen thanks to changes in cable car technology."[413]

The disclaimer actually reads "This screenplay is based on a true incident, which because of precautions subsequently taken by the authorities concerned, could never occur again."[414] A warning maybe, but one designed to ramp up the drama before the action starts.

In October the new Chair of the Production Committee, Ian Shand, wrote in *Screen International* to remind the film community that "the CTFT was still alive and kicking and would welcome project ideas from independent writers and producers - the initial roster of nine films was just a starting point."[415] In March the Executive Committee considered a proposed script called *The Mercury Cup*, but decided "it was not thought to be sufficiently substantial or different to warrant proceeding further, particularly when related to certain problems for the period setting, e.g. the above average cost for period wardrobe, etc. It was agreed that this subject should not be proceeded with."[416] Similarly, in July Michael Morpugo's *War Horse* was turned down as it was "not considered a suitable subject for the CFTF and certainly would not be achievable on a CFTF budget."[417] In 2011, Steven Spielberg was to win six Oscar nominations for his version of the film. The committee also dismissed *Five Children and It* as "this would not be a suitable project for several reasons, not least being the special effects."[418] Again, *Five Children and It* would go on to be a very successful and popular film when finally made in 2004. But the most interesting project submitted in 1983 was *Number One*, a film to feature the young reggae group Musical Youth, who had been at number one in the charts all over the world in 1982 with 'Pass the Dutchie'. MTV and VH1 music channels had launched to great success and the Birmingham based reggae boys had proved likeable and characterful in their videos, and the CFTF were keen on the idea of having them star in a production. In September the Executive Committee stated; "*Number One*, featuring Musical Youth, will have an estimated budget of £250,000, of which we expect Virgin Records (their record label) to contribute £100,000. Edward Barnes (Head of Children's Programmes for the BBC, now serving also as a CFTF Board member) expressed the view that such a film would be very good if a director such as Dick Lester was involved."[419] But by December *Number One* had been dropped, they were having problems tying down Musical Youth due to their busy schedule - and the committee deciding that as "the likely budget had risen to £350,000 and members had expressed their concerns with various aspects of this project e.g. the shooting of the spaghetti junction sequence and the type of police involvement that was needed. These factors, together with the high cost, led them to agree that the subject should not be proceeded with."[420]

The CFTF, however, were still keen on a pop related movie and scheduled *Pop Pirates*, which had been held in reserve should *Number One* not materialise, for shooting in 1984. But however

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[413] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 90
[414] Taken from the CFF film *Tightrope To Terror* (1983)
[415] Ian Shand letter to the editor in Screen International (Volume 414, 4th October 1983) p. 4
[416] From the minutes of the CFTF Executive Committee, minute no. 9/83 (dated 15th March 1983)
[417] From the minutes of the CFTF Executive Committee, minute no. 44/83 (dated 22nd July 1983)
[418] From the minutes of the CFTF Executive Committee, minute no. 68/83 (dated 6th September 1983)
[419] From the minutes of the CFTF Executive Committee, minute no. 68/83 (dated 6th September1983)
[420] From the minutes of the Special CFTF Executive Committee meeting (dated 16th December 1983)

stringent the Executive Committee were with choosing their projects and vetting the scripts, being a partner with the BBC was going to prove a lot more difficult than they first imagined.

1984 - a new reality

The Board of the CFTF entered 1984 in a bullish mood, buoyed by encouraging press reports and media coverage. In *Video Business*, Chris Moore wrote;

> "'The green light for an exciting new chapter to begin' says Ian Shand, who took up his new post at the CFTF headquarters at Elstree Studios recently after a long career as an actor, screenwriter, producer and director. 'We shall, perhaps, be making movies of a slightly more sophisticated nature. When dealing with young people it is necessary to move with the times. In the past, thirteen years was considered the top limit for the Saturday morning audience. Now we will aim at fifteen as the upper age limit.' Another part of the sophistication process is the name change. The very words 'children's' and 'foundation' have sometimes given the unfortunate impression that the movies come from some message-spreading charitable body, with more than a hint of religious interest, perhaps. So now it's simply the CFTF and this set of initials will become well known to video-dealers and customers as an indication of high quality entertainment for young people."[421]

It was clear that the Foundation were trying to 'move with the times', recognising that their audience had considerably become more sophisticated and mature in their outlook over the last ten years. Unfortunately, the first executive committee meeting of 1984 noted that "the secretary reported that at the end of December 1983 there were now only 52 regular and 67 'occasional' outlets, about two thirds of the numbers of the previous December"[422] but in brighter news, they reported that a draft of *Glitterball II* had been received - "treatment had been submitted by Harley Cokeliss and would be passed to Daphne Jones for assessment."[423] However, as the year progressed, three significant events would have huge implications for the Foundation. The first was that the three year deal with the BBC was, not as the CFTF believed, a contract for 36 months, but a deal for twelve months, with two further yearly options and they expected a further eight films to be released to them from the catalogue.[424] The second was the abolition of the Eady Levy. Although it was expected, it firmly shut the door on any future funding from the government's coffers. In July K L Maidment of the British Film and TV Producers Association was moved to write to Stanley Taylor after a discussion about seeking further funding, that:

> "I can see no purpose in approaching the government to extract more money from them in connection with the CFTF. The fact is legislation is being prepared at this moment which will effectively wipe out the levy and I expect that cinemas

[421] Chris Moore in *An Exciting Children's Film Venture Leads Chris Moore's Look Ahead Into 1984* in *Video Business* (dated 9th January 1984)
[422] From the minutes of the Special CFTF Executive Committee meeting, minute no. 1/84 (dated 17th January 1983)
[423] From the minutes of the Special CFTF Executive Committee meeting, minute no. 3/84 (dated 17th January 1983)
[424] From the minutes of the CFTF Board meeting, minute no. 2175 (dated 12th October 1984)

> will cease to pay it between the middle and autumn of next year. I would not wish to preclude the board from making an approach to the Department of Trade, but I honestly don't feel there is the slightest hope of any further sum coming from this source."[425]

The third event was that Rank Film Distributors announced that they would cease to distribute the 16mm library. Video had virtually killed off the need for the 16mm market, but as Rank retreated, a deal was struck with Harris Films on October 12th, the board reporting that "a contract with Harris Films of Surbiton of the 16mm library has been agreed following the decision to of Rank Film Distributors to cease distribution on 31st October 1984.[426]" The board also noted that "Mr Warren underlined our great concern that the RFD/BBC deal did not, as previously thought, cover three years, but was only binding for the first year, with an option for the second and third years."[427] Another item discussed was the further decline in matinee outlets - now just 44 regular outlets remained, a loss of over 200 since the end of the last decade.

Video may have been the new craze, with many older classic titles being released on the format, and some films by-passing the cinema altogether, becoming 'video only releases' - a new phrase entered the cinema lexicography - a poor film now being referred to as 'straight to video'. The disappointment in the performance of *The Glitterball* on it's release on video was exacerbated in the overall sales of the CFTF video catalogue, as reported in the board meeting of October 12th;

> "Rank Audio-Visual had expressed considerable disappointment with the sales since the launch of the CFTF product in video format. It resulted in them being unwilling to take a further batch of titles on the same terms."[428]

The executive committee decided on June 15th to finally reject *The Glitterball's* sequel, as they envisaged the production to be beyond their budgets (the Sci-Fi genre was by now producing more and more expensive blockbusters), and at the same meeting rejected a working of Roald Dahl's *Danny The Champion of the World* (which would become a hit when eventually made by Thames TV and Portobello Pictures in 1989, with the CFTF's role relegated to script approval). A year of mixed emotions then, for the CTFT, who ended the year in some confusion with their standing with the BBC. In the negotiations for the next batch of leased films for exhibition the BBC had rejected the recently completed *Gabrielle and the Doodleman,* and by the end of the year had broadcast only one CFF film on television, Michael Powell's *The Boy Who Turned Yellow* on Friday 28th December 1984. But with four films in the can by the turn of the new year, the directors felt that surely 1985 would be a better year for the Foundation?

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[425] From a letter to Stanley Taylor (CFTF Executive Officer) from K L Maidment (President of the British Film and TV Producers Association) dated 30th July 1984

[426] From the minutes of the CFTF Board meeting (dated 12th October 1984)

[427] From the minutes of the CFTF Board meeting (dated 12th October 1984)

[428] From the minutes of the CFTF Board meeting, minute no. 2175 (dated 12th October 1984)

The 1984 releases - *Breakout*, a case study

Breakout was the first film released in the joint production deal with the BBC. Eyeline Productions helmed the project, with Frank Godwin taking directing duties and production control. Eyeline had been long term collaborators with the Foundation, producing many films and serials for them, amongst them *The Sky Bike* (1967), *The Boy With Two Heads* (1974), and more recently *4D Special Agents* (1982). Frank Godwin too, had a longstanding relationship with the Foundation, producing many films and directing *Electric Eskimo* (1979) and *The Boy Who Never Was* (1980). Harold Orton, another CFF stalwart was later brought in as co-producer. The Children's Film Foundation production team had long been used to having the power of veto and narrative direction, but working with the BBC, with their own directives and guidelines, the CFTF soon found that the boot was on the other foot.

Genesis and scripting

The film was based on the book *A Place To Hide* (1983) by Bill Gillham and was adapted for the screen by Ranald Graham. The story is of two brothers who, whilst bird watching in the local woods, find an abandoned car. They find spare clothes in the car boot but are caught by the owners - two escaped convicts. They are kidnapped and used as cover, as a family outing, to evade police roadblocks. After his life was saved during an accident, one of the boys forms an uneasy alliance with one of the kidnappers, Donny, and has mixed feelings when the man is finally killed by the police.

As early as the 25th January 1983 the CFTF wrote to Gillham's solicitors asking for the rights to his book;

> "We are of the opinion that this book offers possibilities as a future production subject but, as you are aware, because of our background and financial circumstances we are only able to contemplate low budget films and fees for acquisition of book rights together with story development have to reflect this. It is very much our hope and belief that our pending deal with Rank Film Distributors will greatly improve our revenue which will, in turn, enable more productions to be undertaken and also give real meaning to the prospect of profit sharing."[429]

The acquisition of the rights from Gillham was confirmed on 15th July, for £1250 plus two and a half percent of profits from the film. The Foundation had already sounded out Monument Films for a possible production, and in February Monument had responded that;

> "We anticipate a production cost in the region of £150,000 [from monies already in the production fund] and we believe that this subject has all the elements necessary to attract the wider television audience and that its action-packed narrative and strong characterisation will have international appeal."[430]

[429] From a letter from CFTF production committee to Bill Gillham's solicitors (dated 25th January 1983)
[430] From a letter from Monument Films Ltd to CFTF (dated 16th February 1983)

Frank Godwin, already installed as head of the projected production, approached Ranald Graham (previously known for scripting *The Sweeney* and *The Professionals*) for his opinion of the possible treatment of the story and received the following reply;

> "I am convinced that a terrific film can be made from the raw material of *A Place To Hide* and agree with you that the relationship between the kids and their captors would be central to the story and the possibilities in this version of the 'Stockholm Syndrome' are totally fascinating. Obviously the showdown should be handled very carefully - with only as much depicted violence as is necessary to endorse and complement the real relationships that by that time come to exist between the protagonists themselves and between them and the audience. As long as sentimentality is kept out of it the film could be acceptable as an adult one and also worthy of a place out there with the best of them and somewhere between *The Black Stallion* and *Bonnie and Clyde*, so I strongly feel you should persist with the project."[431]

The first script was submitted on August 23rd 1983, and included the final scene from the book, in which Donny, the kidnapper that the captured boys had strangely bonded with, is armed with a pistol and shot dead by police marksmen. Frank Godwin returned the script, asking for a drastic re-write, to which Graham replied in great detail;

> "I am eager to make any alterations to the script which will help this message across - that the villains <u>are</u> villains, even the 'nice one', and that the police are only acting to the good of the kids and the society - and that should be clear to the age level of audience it is aimed at. Any items in the script that counteract this must therefore be dealt with, whether or not they are intrinsically good cinema. The fundamental thing that cannot be altered, is that the villains <u>must</u> be villains, and not cosy comic characters, otherwise the 'Stockholm Syndrome' becomes meaningless. I have gone through the first draft carefully, taking into consideration all the objections raised, and sincerely believe that they can be dealt with and the original force be maintained."[432]

Graham then went on to list four main areas for re-interpretation;

Removal of guns - The villains don't have a gun. Donny's wounding can easily be achieved in the physical struggle over the stolen loot.

No police marksmen at the end - The dramatic fulcrum focussed more intensely on the wish for Donny to get away, rather than he gets violently prevented from this by the police. He could slip on the rocks or nearly drown, instead, while invading capture.

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[431] From a letter from Ranald Graham to Frank Godwin (dated 13th April1983)
[432] From a letter from Ranald Graham to Frank Godwin (dated 11th September 1983)

Additional comic scenes - To ramp up the children's involvement in the action we could add the scene we discussed, of the police car spotting the kid driving the campervan, with a non-violent pursuit over bumpy lanes by the cop-car.

Additional sympathy for Donny - The boy finds the campervan too heavy to control and it overturns in the lane, trapping him underneath. The boy is not otherwise hurt - but in peril, wounded Donny performs an almost superhuman effort in lifting the campervan so the kid can scramble free. As far as Donny's character is concerned, I have perhaps gone overboard in trying to create a Dickensian creature and made him more violent in description than is necessary. This too can be easily corrected. There are a lot of smaller ways in which the script can be improved and I am confident that a gripping, exciting film can still be made out of it, without getting into territories too sensitive for certain sensibilities.[433]

An amended screenplay was submitted on the 7th November, and presented to Edward Barnes at the BBC with the following note;

> "Final scene (90) Guns are removed from action - now Donny flails an anchor at the police and slips, falling over the edge of the jetty after policemen yanked the fishing net he was standing on. Donny lands with a heavy thump on the slimy seaweed covered rocks below."[434]

But the reply from the BBC on November 28th had this very condescending message from Edward Barnes;

> "I still consider *A Place To Hide* to be old fashioned - rooted in the 1930s but with an unacceptable level of violence to force it into the 1980s. I enclose a dozen copies of our guidelines in *The Portrayal of Violence in Television Programmes* which I hope may be of some assistance to the board, particularly the piece on children's programming."[435]

On the 16th December, a special meeting of the Executive Committee was held and reported that;

> "Mr Barnes expressed concern with certain sequences which he felt were still too violent. He stressed that these must be taken care of if the film is to be screened by BBC TV in children's or family time and mentioned the booklet *The Portrayal of Violence in Television Programmes - An Update Note of Guidance,* which has recently been circulated to members of the committee for information. The chairman recommended that a copy of the booklet be passed to Frank Godwin and that he be made aware of the implications."[436]

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[433] From a letter from Ranald Graham to Frank Godwin (dated 11th September 1983)
[434] From the amended screenplay of *A Place To Hide* (dated 7th November 1983)
[435] From a letter from Edward Barnes (Head of Children's Programmes, BBC Television) to Stanley Taylor (Executive Officer CFTF) dated 28th November 1983
[436] From the minutes of the Special CFTF Executive Committee meeting minute no. 84/83 (dated 16th December 1983)

It was also reported at this meeting that the casting of 'Donny The Bull' was taking precedence, with Timothy West, Don Henderson and Alun Armstrong thought to be possible choices. It was clear, though, that Barnes still had mis-givings with the script, but by January 1984 Ian Shand had drafted in Harold Orton to help co-produce the project, prompting Frank Godwin to write "I have a great respect for Harold Orton's views, and, as you know, he has a great flair for getting the most milk out of the coconut."[437] He added, in a discussion about a press statement on the first CFTF production, now re-named *Breakout,* an announcement be made on the lines of:

> "The first will be award-winning director Frank Godwin's *Break Out!* [sic]. A powerful action/suspense drama of two small boys who are captured (kidnapped?) by convicts and are used as a cover for their escape. Screenplay is by Ranald Graham of *The Sweeney* and *The Professionals* fame. A Frank Godwin/Eyeline Production, it will be co-produced by Harold Orton."[438]

Production and post-production

On 27th January 1984 a contract was signed between Eyeline Films and the CFTF for production and delivery of *Breakout* for £152,162, broken down as initial payment of 25%, 20% payable on the second and fourth weeks of shooting, 15% payable on completion of the rough cut and 20% on completion of music recording, final mixed track and delivery of the negative.[439] In March Ranald Graham received £1750 for his script, and in April Eyeline Films officially contracted Frank Godwin as director "for the sum of £5,000, payable as to £1,500 on the signature hereof, £2,000 on the first day of principal photography of the film and £1,500 on the final answer print of the film."[440]

By the beginning of May the part of Donny had been cast, going to David Jackson for a guaranteed fee of £2,500 and the boys parts had been given to John Hasler and Simon Nash - "child contracts of 3 hours per day, with a number of breaks and education periods between; that is, no work period is to continue for more than 30 minutes at a time."[441] An obvious extra expense would be for a chaperone, in this case June Parkhurst of Finsbury Park. She was employed for four weeks at a rate of £200 per week plus £40 per week travelling expenses, chaperoning the children "for four weeks from home in Essex to Uxbridge, Middlesex with return home at weekends."[442] Eyeline Films listed the unit crew at 26 personnel, with weekly salaries for the cameraman of £520.36, the camera operator of £300.00, the assistant editor of £213.80, the sound mixer of £329.24, the first assistant director of £291.42, the same salary for the art director and the make-up artist £400.00 per week.[443] It is also interesting that Eyeline guaranteed at least 10 hours overtime for the crew per week during the five week shoot.

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[437] From a letter from Frank Godwin to Ian Shand (CFTF Head of Production) (dated 6th January 1984)
[438] From a letter from Frank Godwin to Ian Shand (CFTF Head of Production) (dated 6th January 1984)
[439] From the contract between CFTF and Eyeline Films for production of *Break Out* (dated 27th January 1984)
[440] From the contract between Frank Godwin and Eyeline Films for direction of *Break Out* (dated 6th April 1984)
[441] From a memo from Anne Henderson Casting (dated 16th May 1984)
[442] From the contract between June Parkhurst and Eyeline Films for chaperone duties on *Break Out* (dated 10th May 1984)
[443] From the Eyeline Films *Break Out* production budget (dated 14th May 1984)

From the 14th May to 10th June filming commenced, all on location, around Middlesex. On the 11th June the cast and crew relocated to Kimmeridge Bay in Swanage, Dorset, for three days of shooting around the boathouse (hired for £345.00),[444] completing filming in a total of 90 locations - the film was shot entirely on location with no studio filming whatsoever. Ian Shand, obviously mindful of the concerns of Edward Barnes, was in constant touch with the production team, but his first concern was to verify that the film was being shot in the correct ratio:

> "I have checked the aspect ratio following Denis Johnson's memo of 26th April where he stated the film will still be sold for cinema so therefore assume we should shoot as per normal cinema requirements of 26/4 as we can frame for television on this ratio. I advise that we should shoot full-frame as our main outlet is now television."[445]

There were still tweaks being made to the script, and on May 9th Shand wrote to Orton and Godwin to emphasis his concerns:

> "Bearing in mind the BBC objection to people being hit on the head, I think your reworking of the spade incident works very well. Be careful on page 64 when Keith hits the tree that we do not see the top of his head striking the trunk, and on page 65 when Donny hits Phil. I know you are aware of Edward Barnes' worries and that you will bear them in mind when you shoot these sequences."[446]

Shand was obviously keeping Edward Barnes concerns at the top of his agenda, and during shooting, Shand again emphasised his views on the portrayal of on-screen safety, stating on June 7th after viewing the day's rushes; "as you know I am very worried that on the rushes to Tuesday nobody in the campervan was wearing a seat-belt. Please make sure that from now on seatbelts are worn."[447] And even in post-production, Shand continued to voice his concerns - on the 18th of June he had more worries over the film's ending:

> "I am worried about the ending which appears to have been re-written and reconstructed without reference to us. As you know, the two areas in which I had to use the most persuasion were Donny being laid out with a shovel and the ending. We are going to have to keep Donny swinging the anchor down to an absolute minimum anyway but we now have the youngest boy picking up the money to escape with Donny. Before assembling this final sequence I must have a meeting with you both and the editor to discuss this."[448]

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[444] From the Eyeline Films *Break Out* production schedule (dated 1st May 1984)
[445] From a memo from Ian Shand (CFTF Head of Production) to Frank Godwin and Harold Orton (dated 8th May 1984)
[446] From a memo from Ian Shand (CFTF Head of Production) to Frank Godwin and Harold Orton (dated 9th May 1984)
[447] From a memo from Ian Shand (CFTF Head of Production) to Frank Godwin and Harold Orton (dated 7th June 1984)
[448] From a memo from Ian Shand (CFTF Head of Production) to Frank Godwin and Harold Orton (dated 18th June 1984)

Eyeline Films delivered the film to the CFTF in August, the production costing £152,216.00, including £11,770.00 for the cast, £9,634.00 for the editing staff, £6,214.00 for the camera crew, £12,689.00 for hotel and living costs and £9,840.00 for travel and transport.[449] Coming in a shade over £2,000 over budget, the first film under the BBC deal had been a difficult experience for all - and the CFTF desperately needed *Breakout* to be a critical success.

Critical response

Breakout was entered into the 1984 London Film Festival (Capital Radio Children's Film Festival) and received some very positive reviews. Robin Buss wrote in *The Times Educational Supplement* that;

> "The fate of the Children's Film and Television Foundation depends on the willingness of audiences to recognise that 'children's film' is not a device for torturing parents in a dark room, to the accompaniment of hoots and whistles and the endless consumption of crisps - but a challenge to the imagination of film-makers to recapture a certain vision of the world and to satisfy the least indulgent in it. The audience has not been made any more indulgent by its exposure to television. *Breakout* falls within what may now be the most demanding category of all, since it competes with the supposedly adult adventure films which pour out of the box. Nothing is unusual about the plot; what is different is the perspective and the characterisations as the film explores the developing relationship between the children and their captors, especially 'Donny the Bull'. For an adult audience he may be a caricature, but he embodies a truth about the way in which the children can recognise and bring out the best in adults and the film avoids any simple division into goodies and baddies."[450]

Peter Watson of *The Sunday Express* wrote, under the heading of 'Who Needs Children's Movies?';

> "When half the audience for movies like *Indiana Jones, Ghostbusters* or *Star Wars* appeared to be children, talking and cheering and eating throughout the proceeding, is there any need for the Children's Film Festival? Surely most of the big-money special effects movies these days are aimed at children anyway, as much as adults? Isn't the very idea of the children's film an anachronism? "No", says Derek Malcolm, director of the London Film Festival. "Its true that many films appeal to teenagers - but it is mainly the older children, twelve and above, who go to *Indiana Jones* or *Ghostbusters*. Our films are aimed at the under-twelves and what we have been able to find are five movies for young people that are neither wet, nor fairytales, nor do they make adults cringe.We think the old idea of Saturday morning cinema could come round again if film-makers realised the world has changed, even for the very young. They are tougher than they used to be and yes, in some ways more adult". Ironically,

[449] From the Eyeline Films *Break Out* production accounts (dated 24th July 1984)
[450] Robin Buss in a review of *Breakout* in *The Times Educational Supplement* (dated 19th November 1984)

> Malcolm and his colleagues looked all over the world for the films, then found four brand new ones were ready right in their own backyard - Britain. A good idea of what Malcolm means by 'tougher' and 'non-wet' storylines can be seen from *Breakout*, a story about escaped convicts and the children they take as hostages. It is clearly a topical theme, made in such a way that children can identify with the youngsters on screen. *Breakout* doesn't have an entirely happy ending but Malcolm has no worries that parents might be disturbed about the theme - he believes that with more good films like this, aimed at the under twelves, parents will feel safe letting their children go off on their own, that the experience of movie-going for children is more worthwhile."[451]

It is interesting that the author feels the film is aimed at the under twelves, contradicting Ian shand's view that the market aimed at was the more sophisticated market of the under fifteens. It is also a sign of the times that 'parents will feel safe letting their children go off on their own' - imagine today's parents giving the under twelves such freedom! Derek Malcolm himself wrote that "Frank Godwin's film for the CFTF has an edge to it that renders it quite different from some of the cautious, rather conservative CFF productions of yore."[452] And similarly *Time Out* noted that "Frank Godwin's new film for the Children's Film and Television Foundation promises a sharper edge to it than most of the generally bland CFF productions"[453] and Tim Pulleine of *The Movie Guardian* wrote "speaking of the economy, I was struck by the modest efficiency of two British children's films, *Breakout* and *Haunters of the Deep*, which pack eventful narratives into an hour."[454] *Variety* from New York gave another very positive review;

> "Simon Nash and John Hasler are standouts as the young boys and the handsome photography of Ray Orton provides some glorious scenery of the English countryside. A very tight running time is another plus. This seems an ideal children's film which doesn't talk down to its young audience, but will give them a genuinely exciting hour."[455]

Tim Pulliene wrote a later review for the January edition of *The Monthly Film Review*, in which he described the film as;

> "By and large a movie that enters effectively into the spirit of juvenile fiction. Although the initial situation is obviously artificial, one is hardly allowed to notice, given the compactly organised narrative and its unstressed incorporation of a child's-eye view of the crooks, especially the ox-like Donny. Appropriate touches of the macabre are brought in (the supposedly dead Donny rising vengefully from his grave after being buried by his false comrades), as well as of comic fantasy (David driving the campervan).Familiar devices - as in the roadblock

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[451] Peter Watson in *Who Needs Children's Movies* in *The Sunday Express* (dated 19th November 1984)
[452] Derek Malcolm in programme notes for the 28th London Film Festival (Capital Radio Children's Film Festival) (dated 6th December 1984)
[453] Anonymous review of *Breakout* in *Time Out* (dated 22nd November 1984)
[454] Tim Pulleine in a review of *Breakout* in *The Movie Guardian* (dated 22nd November 1984)
[455] Anonymous review in *Variety's Film Reviews 1983-1984* (New York, R R Bowker, 1986) dated 5th December 1984

> scene where the getaway car is called back by the police, but only for the occupants to be told to fasten their seat-belts - are invigorated by neat timing. Although the climax is a little perfunctory, at least it steers clear of sentimental moralising."[456]

In the press notes for the 28th London Film Festival, Frank Godwin wrote;

> "*Breakout* is the first of the new programme of films made for the revitalised CFTF. The fact that films are no longer limited to Saturday Morning cinema but will now be available to a large family television audience, enables us to broaden the scope and style of film-making in order to appeal to a much wider age group and hopefully this is reflected in our choice of subject. Within the remit of the Foundation's policy, which has always been to make good entertainment films for children, we are endeavouring with our current productions to reflect the more sophisticated tastes of present day audiences. *Breakout* has all the exciting elements of a kidnap/road movie in which the disparate group of characters are locked together in a 'quest'. But its fascination lies in its underlying theme (based on the 'Stockholm Syndrome') in which captives become enmeshed, however reluctantly, with their captors - to the extent that they eventually aid and abet them. It may be a matter of regret to some that the simplistic black and white values of earlier children's films have become blurred at the edges, but perhaps this more accurately reflects the real world in which the young people of today are growing up - a world in which they have to make their own moral decisions."[457]

This is interesting, the way the CFTF are trying to remain faithful to traditions but also speak to changes in not only the demographic but in audience sophistication is a notable progression. After taking the film to the *35th Internationale Film Fest Spiele* in Berlin in February 1985, Godwin wrote to Stanley Taylor to say;

> "The film was tremendously well received at the Berlin Film Festival, and was screened to packed houses at three different theatres and there is no doubt that our film made a considerable impression at this important festival. I enclose copies of two sample questionnaires completed by the children, (from a six year old) 'the story is so thrilling, but not so dangerous to be frightening - I liked the kids very much' and (from an eleven year old) 'I liked that neither the villains nor the police were bad'."[458]

Breakout never actually made it to the commercial cinema screens - on January 7th 1985 Eyeline Films wrote, in a letter to Carol O'Callaghan that "the distribution for the film *Breakout*

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[456] Tim Pulleine in a review of *Breakout* in *The Monthly Film Review* (Volume 52, No. 612) January 1985
[457] Frank Godwin in *Press Notes for Breakout* at the 28th London Film Festival (Capital Radio Children's Film Festival) (dated 6th December 1984)
[458] From a letter to Stanley Taylor (CFTF Executive Officer) from Frank Godwin (dated 11th March 1985)

will be UK children's television transmission only."[459] The CTFT were now no longer film producers - television was now their only outlet for their more sophisticated movies.

1984 - *Gabrielle and the Doodleman, Haunters of the Deep* and *Pop Pirates*

The three other films completed in 1984 were a mixed bunch - *Gabrielle and the Doodleman* was the story of an eleven year old disabled girl finds a saviour in a character from a computer game, *Haunters of the Deep* was a ghost story set around a Cornish tin mine, and *Pop Pirates* was the pop music vehicle that replaced the aborted Musical Youth film, with a subplot involving video piracy thrown in.

Gabrielle and the Doodleman was made by the Elstree (Production) Company, with Greg Smith in overall control and was written and directed by Francis Essex. Essex had been a director and producer of light entertainment shows twenty years previously and had recently written the screenplay for the TV movie *The Shillingbury Blowers* (1980) and two spin-off series for ITV. It was surprising, maybe, that his script was chosen over those by Harley Cokeliss and Roald Dahl by the executive committee. It was fantasy, where a despairing paraplegic girl (played by Prudence Oliver) finds comfort in the form of the 'Doodleman' from her computer game, who comes to life from her TV screen and helps bring to life all sorts of characters to help her through her problems. An interesting sign of the times is that Gabrielle is obsessed with video games, and in the first scene she is seen playing 'Space Invaders'. The adult cast harks back to the productions of the 1970s, as entertainers Matthew Kelly (the Doodleman), Eric Sykes (the genie), Windsor Davies (the ringmaster), Bob Todd (Merlin) and singer Lynsey de Paul, who took the roles of Miss Moneyfairy and Dandini, all have fun dressing (and acting) up. The production came in at a total £202,097[460] but this whimsical film did not prove popular with the BBC, who refused to accept it for broadcast. *Gabrielle and the Doodleman* seemed old fashioned and a throwback to the days of the 1970s, where fantasy and comedy took precedence over the new realities in films like *Breakout*. The film, unfortunately sunk without a trace, revived only later as part of a broadcast deal with Granada TV.

Haunters of the Deep was made by the Longbow Film Company and was produced by Gordon Scott, following his involvement in *Friend Or Foe* and *Tightrope To Terror*. The directing duties went to Andrew Bogle (his first, and only feature) and the film came in at £162,192,[461] well under the approved budget, which was "approved for an upper limit of £178,000 plus a 5% contingency."[462] Set on the rugged Cornish coast, filmed around the Portloe area (the underground cave sequences were filmed at Elstree), the film features Gary Simmons as local boy Josh Holman, and Amy Taylor, as American girl Becky Roche, who is in Cornwall with her father (who is reopening the local tin mine). Amy Taylor was from the American School in London, and had the honour of being the first US female lead for the Foundation. Terry Staples wrote in the programme notes for the London Film Festival that:

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[459] From a letter from Eyeline Films to Carol O'Callaghan (dated 7th January 1985)
[460] Wickham and Mettler *Back to the Future* p. 23
[461] Wickham and Mettler *Back to the Future* p. 23
[462] From a letter from Stanley Taylor (CFTF Executive Officer) to members of the CFTF executive committee (dated 16th May 1984)

> "One of the notable aspects of its script and casting is the part of Becky (Amy Taylor). Becky is one of the two main characters, and she is a girl! This should not be remarkable, but it is. In the part, Children's Film Foundation films have contained very few lead roles for girls. Two boys, as in The Glitterball and Friend Or Foe and Breakout have usually been at the centre of CFF films. Perhaps the CFTF is going to break with this aspect of the CFF tradition."[463]

Andrew Bogle, commenting on the opportunity of his first feature film, wrote in the same programme that;

> "This was a welcome return to directing after some years' absence. It was my first film of any length, having previously only directed short films with a maximum of one weeks shooting schedule. Though only modestly budgeted, it gave me the opportunity to work with a feature crew numbering many excellent and experienced technicians who gave their services for the minimum rates. As it turned out, I feel we have been able to continue the Foundation's tradition of putting the maximum production value onto the screen for the minimum of cost. Both in my contribution to the script and in it's casting and execution, I have endeavoured to broaden the appeal of the film to all ages and not exclusively to children. I feel this is a section of film-making too often ignored by mainstream cinema."[464]

Bogle's efforts at working within a relatively tiny budget for a feature film, in an era where a Ken Loach production was costing between £750,000 and £1 million to produce, were admirable. He also contributed to the screenplay, alongside Tony Attard and the project's originator, Terry Barbour. The story is of an old tin mine, reopened by Becky's father, that caves in soon after reworkings begin, trapping amongst others, Josh's older brother and Becky's dad. An old miner, Captain Tregellis (played by Andrew Keir) had explained the history of the mine to Josh, along with stories of a ghostly apparition leading miners to safety. This ghost, of a boy miner called Billy who died in the pit, appears and leads Josh to an alternative entrance to the mine to save the trapped men - just in time, as the waves come crashing in to flood the cavern. The final shot is of Billy's gravestone, with his ghostly smiling face superimposed. Robert Shail writes:

> "The story feels more contemporary, with Becky's parents divorced and her father often absent.; he has combined a holiday for the two of them with a business trip to the mine. The regional accents have a convincing twang and the initial friction between Becky and Josh eventually leads to friendship."[465]

The story skillfully weaves a modern adventure story with a social history lesson for the audience, entertaining but also instructing the audience of the dangers to all, especially to

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[463] Terry Staples in *Programme Notes for Haunters of the Deep* at the 28th London Film Festival (Capital Radio Children's Film Festival) (dated November 1984)
[464] Andrew Bogle in *Programme Notes for Haunters of the Deep* at the 28th London Film Festival (Capital Radio Children's Film Festival) (dated November 1984)
[465] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 91

child-workers, in traditional mining communities. Clare Kitson, in the programme notes for the London Film Festival, suggested the film was a;

> "Fine holiday adventure in the best tradition. There are ravishing land- and sea-scapes, the ghost scenes are suitably spooky and there is an edge-of-the-seat ending which should satisfy all ages."[466]

Again, in 1985, Terry Staples commented on the ground-breaking casting of a female lead and the cinematography of the film; "unusually for a CFTF film, this features a girl in the lead role. The effective use of location, combined with skilful weaving together of plot strands produces mystery and excitement."[467] Robert Shail summed up the film's moral message as "nature, in the form of the sea, is to be respected, with human greed revealed as the true cause of the catastrophe as the pit has been overmined for too long. Becky's father is quick to learn his lesson and to appreciate his own daughter."[468] The film's message could also be read as the more complex tension between tradition and renewal, reflecting the attitudes that the CFTF were striving to come to terms with as their audience changed.

Pop Pirates was made by Welbeck Films Ltd and produced by Ralph Thomas, a veteran who had been the director of many of the *Carry On..* movies. Jack Grossman, who had previously penned the screenplay for the CFF's *Mischief* in 1969, was given directing duties for his own script. It cost £181,208[469] to produce and included roles for The Who's lead singer Roger Daltrey, soul singer PP Arnold, Bill Treacher (soon to be cast as the downcast Arthur Fowler in BBC TV's *Eastenders*) and Simon Rouse (later to find national fame as DCI Meadows in Thames TV's *The Bill*). A letter from the CFTF to Equity, the actors' union, confirmed that; "for *Pop Pirates* Roger Daltrey, PP Arnold, Simon Rouse, Bill Treacher and six more to be paid £17391.00 per week, aggregate (with an exploitation fee for US theatrical use, of £500.00 per week)."[470]

Pop Pirates was a hasty replacement for a planned film featuring teenage reggae band Musical Youth, and the musical stars in this production are two adults, Roger Daltery and PP Arnold - the featured band, The Pirates, are fictional (created for this film). It was to be PP Arnold's only acting role, but Daltrey (here playing an harassed talent show producer) was a seasoned actor, playing the lead in the rock opera *Tommy* (1975, d. Ken Russell) and *McVicar* (1980, d. Tom Clegg), and would go on to play the ex-teddyboy father of a budding teenage rock star in the TV series *Buddy* (BBC TV, 1986) and the cinema offshoot *Buddy's Song* (1991, d. Claude Whatham).

The projected film, again, fell foul of the BBC's script approval, this time from Edgar Anstey, who wrote to Stanley Taylor in May 1984 that:

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[466] Clare Kitson in *Programme Notes for Haunters of the Deep* at the 28th London Film Festival (Capital Radio Children's Film Festival) (dated November 1984)
[467] Terry Staples in *Junior NFT* in *National Film Theatre Magazine* (July 1985) p. 14
[468] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 91
[469] Wickham and Mettler *Back to the Future* p. 27
[470] From a letter from Stanley Taylor (CFTF Executive Officer) to Equity, The Actors Union (dated 1st March 1985)

> "It is still unclear whether we are making a musical with attractive numbers held together with the minimum story thread, or a rather old-fashioned 'cops and robbers' film with one number and a few sntaches of music for continuity links. Lf we were desperate to get a film into production - as we were at the time of *Breakout* - then we might consider the old hope of 'being alright on the night', but that is not the situation now and I feel sure we need a rewrite."[471]

The film, with some rewriting by Jack Grossman, was eventually approved by all and on the 16th May Stanley Taylor wrote to the members of the executive committee that "the *Pop Pirates* budget has been approved for an upper limit of £175,000 and a 5% contingency."[472] The rewriting mostly concerned some seemingly 'adult' language in the script, with notes from the BBC advising such items as "Michael, first speech - Change "Jeez!" to "Crumbs!" and Stewart, first speech - Cut and replace "What are you poncing about here for?"[473] Surely the same people at the BBC were not reading CFTF scripts alongside those of their own tea-time hit *Grange Hill,* where Benny Green, a black character, was subject to offensive casual racial abuse by his classmates.

The story was of a wannabe teenage pop band, the multi-racial Pirates, who are on the verge of success with a recording contract and in stiff competition to win a high profile 'Battle of the Bands'. The complication, and the jeopardy of the narrative is that one of the boys, lead singer Paul 'Winegum' Wine (played by Spencer Chandler) has an uncle (wonderfully played by character actor George Sweeney) who is involved in video piracy (as seen previously, a bone of contention for CFTF board members) and Paul is being dragged into the business. Cue lots of chasing around Brighton intercut with musical numbers by The Pirates, an abduction and timely rescue, culminating in a speedboat chase in front of the Palace Pier, apprehension of the crooks, and of course redemption (of sorts) for Paul and success for the band in the contest. The feel is of a swinging sixties pop romp with a light reggae soundtrack, but with added jeopardy and topicality with the video piracy theme. Anne Billson in her *Monthly Film Bulletin* review noted;

> "This topical adventure manages to denounce the evils of video piracy while hinging its plot on the bacon-saving capacities of the personal stereo system. But *Pop Pirates* is rather weakened in that three quarters of its racially mixed quartet of schoolboy heroes act as virtual stooges, apparently unaware of the actual drama raging elsewhere in the film. Law and order is restored, not through any effort of the boys themselves, but through the *deus ex machina* intervention of the police. The contrast between the well adjusted Michael (seen taking leave of his scatty but happy family) and Paul, the fledgling law-breaker from a one parent household, is also a little facile. But George Sweeney's

[471] From a letter to Stanley Taylor (CFTF Executive Officer) from Edgar Anstey (dated 10th May 1984)
[472] From a letter from Stanley Taylor (CFTF Executive Officer) to members of the CFTF executive committee (dated 16th May 1984)
[473] From the script of *Pop Pirates* held at the Special CFF Archive, BFI London (dated 12th June 1985)

> lip-curling performance lends Uncle Stewart an entertainingly seedy dimension."[474]

The gender balance here is back in the pre-*Haunters of the Deep* territory with an almost exclusively male cast, with only PP Arnold's glamorous assistant being the only female role of note, with one-line parts for the female characters of Michaels' family being the only others. Because of its content, *Pop Pirates* would date quickly, but was at the time considered as one of the best of the films accepted by the BBC as one of the eight for broadcast in the 1985 deal. It could be argued that had the film been the proposed vehicle for Musical Youth, who already had an on-screen presence with the young audience through their music videos and Saturday morning TV appearances, it would have become a very successful project - just the kind that the Foundation really needed at this time.

1985 - The writing's on the wall

The Boy Who Turned Yellow was broadcast on BBC1 on Friday 28th December 1984. It was the first Foundation film to be broadcast under the RDF brokered deal, and had a reported audience of over 8 million viewers. The corporation had been a slow start to broadcasts - the CFTF had expected all of their productions to be shown in the first year. And it was a bitter blow when the BBC turned down one of their latest productions, *Gabrielle and the Doodleman,* as unsuitable - the Foundation was again expecting all their new productions to be aired by the BBC. The negotiations for the terms of the second year were underway, but the CFTF had a problem. The back catalogue, which they rated so highly as their prize asset and bargaining tool was beginning to lose its appeal. The majority of available films were from the 1970s (the BBC insisted on only having colour productions) and to the kids of 1985 some of them would look like they were shot in the last century. Children were now becoming fashionable and chic - they had nothing in common with kids in tank-tops and bell bottoms, with mullets and flowery wide collared shirts. The class of 1985 were used to pulsating soundtracks and special effects - the CFF films had rapidly dated and become frankly old-fashioned.

At the end of January the board reported;

> "Viewing figures were in excess of 8 million for the screening of *The Boy Who Turned Yellow.* Based on this, Mr Turner felt that the time was now appropriate to broach the subject of a new deal with BBC television based on the higher fees required to meet the Foundation's future production costs."[475]

The board were apprehensive of the BBC's stance in the negotiations, and approached ITV to try to table a deal. However, in a letter to the chairman in April, F. Turner wrote;

> "I have had a meeting with Leslie Halliwell of ITV and suggested they may like to purchase the next batch of children's films, and when I quoted £700,000 for

[474] Anne Billson in a review of *Pop Pirates* in *The Monthly Film Bulletin* (Volume 52, No. 614) March 1985
[475] From the minutes of the Special CFTF Executive Committee meeting (dated 30th January 1985)

> thirteen titles (including the three latest new titles) he told me that it was far too much and lost interest in the deal."[476]

The CFTF and the BBC finally thrashed out a deal, the BBC accepting three new productions in a total of eight licensed films, for less money than the Foundation were hoping, £400,000 (which was the same as the initial agreement for 1984. The films the CFTF agreed to lease were *A Hitch in Time* (1978), *One Hour To Zero* (1976), *Paganinni Strikes Again* (1973), *Robin Hood Junior* (1975) and *The Zoo Robbery* (1973), and the three new productions, *Terry On The Fence, Haunters of the Deep* and *Pop Pirates.* The productions, though, were hardly at the top of the BBC's essential viewing list. Just three films were to be shown in 1985, as part of a tea-time slot called *Friday Film Special*.

In the UK cinema, an independent revolution was under way, with Working Title Films and Film4 Productions funding new works such as *My Beautiful Launderette* (d. Stephen Frears) and *Letter To Breshnev* (d. Chris Bernard) as well as a renaissance of sorts with James Ivory and Ismail Merchant launching the 'country house' movie with *A Room With A View*. Audiences, though, were still critically low. There was an increase from 54 million in 1984 to 72 million, but 1984 had seen the lowest total audience figures since the war. Again the child audience was poorly served, with only *The CareBears Movie* (d. Arna Selznick) breaching the UK top twenty.

1985 saw the disbanding of the executive committee, when Monica Sims took over as Head of Production in place of Neil Shand. Sims had been Head of Children's Programmes for the BBC from 1967 to 1978, then took over as Controller of BBC Radio Four. She became Vice President of the British Board of Film Classification, and served as a director of the CFTF before joining them full time. In an interview with Robert Shail, she said;

> "Our funding from the Eady Levy was cut and then went altogether, so we had very little money to operate with. We only made a small number of films during the late 1980s with the finance we got from the deal with Rank but it was much reduced from the Foundation's heyday. My job was mainly to try to find books to adapt or original scripts which we could develop into films. I was expected to find these subjects and bring them through to the development stage but it was a difficult task without any money. We never had any funds from which to pay for the book rights so we couldn't really compete for the best titles or necessarily commission the very best writers."[477]

She went on to add, in summarising the difficulties she experienced as costs in the industry continued to rise "there is a myth that children's films are cheap to make but this isn't necessarily the case and it became really hard as the 1980s went on to get films off the ground as the cost of production soared. We were really up against it."[478] The latest RDF brokered deal with the BBC for 1985 gave the Foundation just about enough funds to finance three more films. These would be *Exploits at West Poley, Out of the Darkness* and *Terry On The Fence.*

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[476] From a letter to Stanley Taylor (CFTF Executive Officer) from F. Turner (dated 2nd April 1985)
[477] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 111
[478] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 111-112

1985 - *Exploits at West Poley and Out of the Darkness*

Exploits at West Poley was a Thomas Hardy novel (*Our Exploits at West Poley*) adapted for the screen by James Andrew Hall. The production was an in-house project by the CFTF, with Ian Shand taking overall control, aided by Pamela Lonsdale, with filming starting on 7th October 1985, with outdoor scenes filmed in the Chilterns, MapleDurham Estate (near Reading), Woodstock and Iver Heath.[479] The film was directed by Diarmuid Lawrence, who had previously only worked in television to this point, most notably as the director of three episodes of *Grange Hill* for the BBC in 1982. The adult cast features two actors who would go on to have long and illustrious careers - Sean Bean (as 'the scarred man') and Brenda Fricker (as Aunt Draycott). Bean has become one of Britain's most recognisable leading men, whose roles have included Bernard Cornwell's eponymous hero in *Sharpe* (ITV Central Productions, 1993 -2008) and Brenda Fricker's credits have included *My Left Foot* (1989, d. Jim Sheridan) and a long-term role in the hospital drama series *Casualty* (BBC TV, 1986 - 2010).

The story is of a young boy Leonard (Charlie Condou in his first role), who along with his friend, discover an underwater river whilst exploring the local caves. They unwittingly divert the river's natural course, with devastating results as the water supply for two villages nearby dries up. Arguments between the villagers ensue, the boys try diverting the river back without success, until when they finally succeed, they are trapped by rising water. They are rescued, the water has settled back into its natural course, and as this is a CFTF film, everyone settles back into normality.

In *Sight and Sound* magazine, Executive Producer Ian Shand wrote in 'A note from the producer', that:

> "I first read the book in 1977 and was immediately attracted to the story. I was delighted when Monica Sims, director of production of the CFTF, commissioned the film. Thomas Hardy's only novel for children. Production started in September 1985, and our main problem was to recreate the underground caves with a fast flowing river which had to flood the cavern. This problem was resolved when Andrew Mitchell, managing director of Elstree Film Studios, allowed us to film in the tank in Studio Two. Our production designer, Keith Wilson, and his team designed and built a vast cavern - not unlike the caves at Wookey Hole, Somerset. The three young actors who were in all the cavern scenes didn't have to act cold and wet - they were!"[480]

The film was shown at the 30th London Film Festival in the NFT programme in 1986, with Clare Kitson noting:

> "*Exploits at West Poley* is based on a novel by Thomas Hardy, but is as full of action and adventure as any modern adventure. This is a fine new addition to

[479] From the website https://www.compleatseanbean.com/exploits.html (accessed June 2021)
[480] Ian Shand in *A Note from the Producer* in *Children's Corner in Sight & Sound Magazine* (Summer 1986 - Vol 55 No 3) p. 68

> the Children's Film and Television production catalogue, rejoicing in some of the loveliest countryside ever seen on film and a precise evocation of mid-nineteenth century life."[481]

Exploits at West Poley was entered at the Portugal Film Festival, where it was awarded first prize, and won second prize at the Chicago Film Festival in 1986 (the Foundation were still keen to exhibit their films at foreign festivals with an eye on the potential overseas distribution market). The film was one of nine titles cleared for broadcast in a deal with Granada TV, and eventually aired on 31st August, 1990.[482]

Out of the Darkness was another John Krish film, the director writing the script from an idea put forward by the son of documentary film maker Edgar Anstey. Krish, in an interview with Robert Shail remembered;

> "The original story about the plague was lumpy with no clear narrative line. The idea of using a ghost was not in the initial story; I added this. What interested me was to convey a sense of what it was actually like to live, and die, in a Derbyshire village in the seventeenth century. In Eyam I found a specific account regarding the local vicar who wanted to contain the plague by keeping all of the local villagers together and how one local family tried to smuggle a child out. I used this in the final script."[483]

Gordon Scott was again the producer, and as in *Friend or Foe*, his penny-pinching methods fell foul of Krish, who again had to act as the peace-maker on set; "While on location, he caused dissent amongst the crew - he wanted the children to work night and day, which was not normally permitted. The budget was tight but I felt it was possible to handle this."[484] The film eventually cost £280,860,[485] the most amount of money that the Foundation had ever spent on a production.

Out of the Darkness is based on the tragic historical events that occured in the Derbyshire Peak District village of Eyam in the late summer of 1665. The film starts with a familiar theme - the children of a holidaying family, the Reids, (in Eyam, to this day still known as the 'plague village', to view an old cottage the family have just bought) who begin seeing spooky visions of a young boy with a bell around his neck. Local historian Julian (played by Michael Carter) reveals the history of the local area and of the story that the village sealed itself off from the outside world when the plague struck - condemning over half of the village to a slow, agonising death. An orphan boy from a neighbouring village was taken in by a family (who used to live in the cottage now owned by the Reids) and when all the family died from the plague, the boy was chased into the hills, trapped in a cave and left to starve by the mob. The finale, as Robert Shail wrote "brings past and present together as Tom sees a vision of what happened to the boy and is

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[481] Clare Kitson in *Programme Notes for Exploits at West Poley* at the 30th London Film Festival (NFT Children's Film Festival) (dated November 1986)
[482] From the website https://www.compleatseanbean.com/exploits.html (accessed June 2021)
[483] John Krish interview in Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 103
[484] John Krish interview in Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 104
[485] Wickham and Mettler *Back to the Future* p. 27

himself rescued from an isolated mountainside by the combined action of the villagers, whose actions lay the ghosts to rest for good."[486]

Shail, in analysing the production's portrayal of cruelty and violence noted that for a children's film the results are unsettling:

> "The film is alarming at several points. The children's visions of the past are introduced by an unnerving effect in which the screen seems to fog in and out of focus; present day descendants of the original mob are seen at the village shop or garage; Penny seeing men carrying a child's coffin out of her own front door; and all of this is topped by the ending when, wandering into the woods, Tom makes his way through the fog only to find himself back on the night the boy was pursued to his death."[487]

Robert Shail praised John Krish's use of the location, and his treatment of the film, writing "this complex, dark and decidedly adult film remains one of the Foundation's most singular achievements." He added; "If the film tells a story of persecution, its biblical qualities are also evident at its conclusion, as the modern-day villagers achieve forgiveness by uniting to rescue Tom from the mountain. In an act of atonement, they effectively reverse the selfishness of their ancestors and set the ghost boy free."[488]

Reviews were generally positive - most praised the cinematography and special effects. Verina Glaessner, in her review in *The Monthly Film Bulletin* in May 1986, found that;

> "On the whole the film mobilises its resources to fairly persuasive effect. Perhaps a larger budget would have permitted more of those peripheral but important moments that give a sense of village life, for example -"what would you do if you saw a ghost?" one child asks another. "Same as you, wet me knickers" comes the reply. Another approach would have been to centre events more on the character of Tom and give the film the narrative drive of the adventure story. But *Out Of The Darkness* is well shot, giving full play to the impressive sweep of the Derbyshire landscape and the particular topography of the 'haunted village' where the quaint streets, a la Chabrol, are stalked by guilt and fear. The effects are convincingly spooky and have some of the romantic charge inherent in children's historical fiction."[489]

*Variety'*s film reviewer JAPA agreed, and wrote in December 1985 that:

> "This atmospheric kid's film is based on the story of an English village afflicted by the plague during the seventeenth century. With a spirited cast of children, writer-director John Krish creates a convincing narrative of a group alternatively

[486] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 92
[487] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 92
[488] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 92-93
[489] Verina Glaessner in a review of *Out of The Darkness* in *The Monthly Film Bulletin* (Volume 53, No. 628) May 1986

> intrigued and frightened of what they see, but also inclined to bicker about the proper course of action. Thanks also to skillful lensing and scoring credits, *Out of The Darkness* is a powerful story of ghosts and guilt. There's a thrilling denouement."[490]

The film premiered at the London Film Festival (National Film Theatre Children's Film Festival) in November 1985 where John Krish took a question and answer session. In his programme notes for the event, in his appraisal of the Foundations changing audience base, Krish wrote;

> "CfTF films have differed from CFF films in that the writers and directors have been conscious of their prospective fairly large and mixed television audience, rather than thinking of their films as being made for a children only weekend matinee audience. This has resulted in films which have tackled interesting ideas, as well as having an exciting narrative. *Out of The Darkness* is a good example of this new type of film - *Terry on The Fence* is another."[491]

In reply to questions on the making and location of the film, he replied "It was filmed in Derbyshire, mainly in August, but we encountered the worst weather. As a result it took us six weeks and two days to film, which was longer than had been planned. It might have been cheaper to shoot it somewhere else, but I wanted it to be a northern film."[492] On finding the child actors - Gary Halliday, Emma Ingham and Michael Flowers, Krish revealed "having a free hand in casting I went to dozens of schools and I talked ro and tested over 200 kids. I finally decided on these three (from a school in Manchester) and decided they would be okay. And I think that they were."[493] On the high cost of the production, he admitted that "it finally cost a quarter of a million pounds, which is more than any previous Foundation film had cost."[494]

Krish remained grateful to the CFTF for the opportunity to make the film, especially with its underlying theme of mob violence;

> "I think the film was liberal in its attitudes for the Foundation. A lot of this is down to the underlying influence of Monica Sims. Her attitude was progressive, and she even came to the set to reprimand the producer for his behaviour. As with *Friend Or Foe* I don't think that it would have been made at the CFF. Monica Sims wanted the film to be strong, not to water it down. The only change she asked for was to have four seconds trimmed out of the chase scene as she felt it was too frightening for the children. In *Out Of The Darkness* the acting is strong and the art direction striking; the forest was a piece of magic from the

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[490] Anonymous review in *Variety's Film Reviews 1985-1986* (New York, R R Bowker, 1988) dated 11th December 1986

[491] John Krish in programme notes for *Out Of The Darkness* at The London Film Festival (National Film Theatre Children's Film Festival) Dated November 1985

[492] John Krish in Q&A session for *Out Of The Darkness* at The London Film Festival (National Film Theatre Children's Film Festival) Dated November 1985

[493] John Krish in Q&A session for *Out Of The Darkness* at The London Film Festival (National Film Theatre Children's Film Festival) Dated November 1985

[494] John Krish in Q&A session for *Out Of The Darkness* at The London Film Festival (National Film Theatre Children's Film Festival) Dated November 1985

> production designer (Keith Wilson), who constructed it in a large empty warehouse that was near. It is important to get some kind of message across within an entertainment format, to convey moral values, and I think I was able to achieve this with my films for the Foundation in an accessible way."[495]

The Foundation had shown it was still able to source and produce material that was pertinent to children's experiences, in a more mature and rounded way than in the past, in keeping with its new more sophisticated market. Moral values, although perhaps less 'preachy' than in the previous productions, were still an important factor in the minds of both directors and writers. It was a shame that these films would be the last productions that they would make, as their battle for financial backing finally came to its sad conclusion.

Grange Hill - Setting the standard

The standard that the directors of the final batch of Foundation films tried to attain had been set by a BBC drama series set in a North London Comprehensive School - *Grange Hill*. Indeed, the director of *Exploits at West Poley*, Diarmuid Lawrence, had previously worked as a director on the series in 1982. *Grange Hill* was an idea developed by Phil Redmond, a comedy writer with a burning social conscience (after *Grange Hill* Redmond was to develop the hard-hitting Merseyside soap opera *Brookside* for Channel 4), but it had a difficult genesis. Alistair D McGown wrote, in *The Hill And Beyond*, that:

> "The story began in 1975 when ATV comedy writer Phil Redmond first developed the idea of a series set in a modern mixed-background mixed-ability comprehensive school. Initially turned down by ITV companies, at the BBC in 1976 Children's Drama Executive Anna Home already had a folder of aborted outlines marked 'School?' among her files."[496]

Anna Home, in her book *Into The Box of Delights*, remembered:

> "In 1976 I was in charge of the BBC's children's drama output and looking for a series that would reflect contemporary school-life, rather than the traditional worlds of *Jennings* and *Bunter*. Phil Redmond was a young writer working mainly in comedy who came to talk about that and went away to create *Grange Hill*. It was not originally intended to be a long runner, but it became obvious that it was filling a great need and could be constantly renewed."[497]

The first series director was Colin Cant, but "didn't think the scripts were that strong and also voiced doubts that children would want to come home from a day at school to watch more of the same on TV. How wrong he was!"[498] Anna Home credits Cant with setting the style of the series;

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[495] John Krish interview in Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 104
[496] Alistair D McGown & Mark J Docherty in *The Hill and Beyond* (London, BFI Publishing, 2003) p. 18
[497] Anna Home in *Into The Box of Delights* (London, BBC Books, 1993) p. 102
[498] McGown & Docherty *The Hill and Beyond* p. 18

> "The programme's aim was always to be entertainment first, butentertainmnet with a hard core. Over the years it has dealt with drugs, bullying, dyslexia, child abuse and teenage pregnancy. It has always been controversial because it showed a school and teachers warts and all. But it has always maintained that it takes a clear moral stance and explains the consequences of action."[499]

The first series concentrated on the new intake of first years, who "learn to come together, whatever their background, to turn over the bullies at the school."[500] The first major issue to be tackled was racism - with Benny Green being freely called a 'golly' and other casual racist slurs. Trisha Yates (played by Michelle Herbert, who along with Tucker would go on to become one of the show's most loved characters) says, in trying to calm Benny down "You can't help being a nig-nog." Benny shouts in reply "You can't help being a honky!"

Imagine the board of the CFTF trying to get the BBC to accept storylines of drug-taking, teenage pregnancy and peppered with racist comments - it showed that there was a set of double standards where in-house and co-produced projects were concerned. McGown commented that;

> "What set Grange Hill apart, its 'gritty reality', was in fact a heightened one, events being slightly larger than life. The beauty of the deal was the viewers got vicarious pleasure from watching the on-screen antics but didn't have to take the rap at the end of it. The official line from the BBC chiefs was always to point out that the stories constituted a moral lesson."[501]

Whenever Home replied to complaints from parents she would make the point that "children were aware that this was a fiction and just a little larger than life."[502] A host of outraged adults regularly wrote in to the BBC to complain about the antics and behaviour of *Grange Hill* pupils, one mother writing after the airing of an unsupervised swimming lesson;

> "Until now I have greatly admired the BBC's drama representations, but I am disgusted with *Grange Hill* - this is no entertainment, but a glamourisation of of hooliganism and the abominable attitude of children toward their teachers."[503]

But there were also those who thought that the atmosphere was too watered down. A Ben Elton sketch in the irreverent and anarchic *The Young Ones* (BBC TV, 1982 -1984) saw Elton and Perry Benson, as pupils, berated by teacher 'Mr Liberal'; "the way you act is influencing millions of children to talk cockney and be insubordinate" to be answered by Elton's schoolboy "oh come on Sir, don't be silly, we're the only the only kids in Britain that never say f***!"[504] Interestingly, Benson's screen debut had been in for the CFF in *Where's Johnny?* (1974, d. David Eady) and in 1978 he had a small part in *Grange Hill*.

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[499] Home *Into The Box of Delights* p. 102
[500] McGown & Docherty in *The Hill and Beyond* p. 18
[501] McGown & Docherty in *The Hill and Beyond* p. 33
[502] McGown & Docherty in *The Hill and Beyond* p. 33
[503] McGown & Docherty in *The Hill and Beyond* p. 40
[504] From *The Young Ones* episode *Sick* (BBC TV, broadcast 12th June 1984)

The most controversial storyline was aired between 7th January and 1st April 1986 in season nine - Zammo's heroin addiction. Zammo MacGuire (played by Lee MacDonald) was a popular character with the audience and McGown writes;

> "The choice was deliberate - the favourite cheeky chappie of the school had to be shown to be almost destroyed by the drug. The plain adoption of the issue is not enough - put across the wrong way, the series could end up looking patronising, didactic and worst of all, not make for very good drama. While it was amongst the most controversial issues tackled, the strong warning it represented was universally praised, even commended in the House of Commons. With a hit single 'Just Say No' (by the Grange Hill Street cast, which reached the UK top twenty in 1986) it was now a campaigner and with this status came a responsibility, transformed from 'enfant terrible' to a mature and responsible force for social change and education."[505]

In *Into The Box of Delights* Anna Home noted that "in Bernard Ashley's *Running Scared,* transmitted by the BBC in 1986, there was a violent robbery which set up the whole plot and it was necessary to make the sequence convincing and frightening."[506] Compare this attitude (alongside the content of *Grange Hill*) with that of the BBC in censoring scenes in *Breakout*, *Pop Pirates* and *Terry on the Fence*, alongside the corporation's seeming reluctance to broadcast the Foundations productions, and you can understand the feeling at the CFTF that the co-production deal with the BBC was not working quite as they had expected.

1985 - *Terry on the Fence*

Terry on the Fence was Bernard Ashley's second novel for children, written in 1975. The CFTF acquired the rights to the book in 1985, and approached Eyeline Film and Video Ltd to produce the project, under Harold Orton, with Frank Godwin given directorial duties. Ashley had a reputation for being a 'gritty' writer, and in an interview with Robert Shail noted:

> "I felt that the very choice of this book showed a certain attitude at the CFTF, perhaps a changed one. I would put a good deal of this down to the approach of Monica Sims, the Head at the Foundation. I think the toughness of the book was retained. I also feel that the Foundation had a strong sense of the importance of moral messages for children, which is something that I share. This is still there in the film but is reflected via a feeling of social concern, so that one of the characters who has gone off the rails is still given a second chance. The message is that unavoidable circumstances can shape youngsters' lives and that everyone deserves a second chance. The values here are more proletarian than middle class, but they are still very clear."[507]

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[505] McGown & Docherty *The Hill and Beyond* p. 40
[506] Home *Into The Box of Delights* p. 161
[507] Bernard Ashley interview in Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 99

The film stars Jack MacNicholl as Terry Harmer, who after being slapped in a row with his mother, runs away and falls in with a gang of rougher boys, whose leader Les (Neville Watson), intimidates Terry and threatens to leaves him locked up in a dockyard warehouse 'to starve' unless he leads them to his school in order to steal the radios that Terry had unfortunately mentioned. They drag Terry along to commit the burglary, but the next day suspicion at the school falls on him and he confesses to the head, but does not give up any more names to him. Les is tracked down by Terry to his home, where he witnesses the violent and brutal treatment dished out by Les's mother. Now bonding, the two boys set off to retrieve one of the radios that Les had sold to a fence, but are caught and both end up in juvenile court. Justice is done, Terry is acquitted but not before he speaks up on behalf of Les. The scene that gives the film its name occurs when Terry is caught trying to retrieve the stolen radio - the police catch Terry literally on the fence, and his moral dilemma is whether to do the right thing by the law, or to protect his new friend Les, who is hiding nearby. Robert Shail wrote "unlike the Foundation's early work, there is nothing reassuring or easy here. Moral decisions can be hard."[508]

Shot in south London, in Southwark and Greenwich, *Terry on the Fence* is another Foundation film that gives a glimpse of the capital in the 1970s, Neville Watson commenting in 2014 in a BFI booklet for a DVD collection, that "many of the locations are no longer there having been swallowed up by redevelopment - in some ways it's a snapshot of a London that no longer exists."[509] Director Frank Godwin adapted Ashley's book for the screen, and in a letter from Ashley in July 1985, he got this praise from the author:

> "Given such a long story I had some misgivings about a sixty minute screenplay, but these have swiftly vanished - you really do seem to have captured the book. It is very faithful, as anyone using film and book will be bound to find. If you'll permit me I'll suggest a couple of small dialogue alterations - phrases have changed since 1974 - but these are nothing really. I think it's an exciting and moving piece of storytelling and I'm most grateful." [510]

Godwin, in the director's notes in the programme for the film's 1985 London Film Festival showing, wrote of his desire to follow up *Breakout* for the Foundation, in view of the widening and expectations of the new TV audience:

> "The broadening of the audience for CFTF films, which following the virtual demise of the Saturday morning cinema clubs, are now being widely shown on TV, has opened the door for much stronger material than was considered suitable for the matinee audience. This breakthrough coincided with my own desire, after a successful series of adventure/fantasy films, to direct a more hard-nosed subject. Following the enthusiastic reception given to *Breakout* at both the London and Berlin Film Festivals, I was encouraged to search for another story in the same vein. I remembered Bernard Ashley's *Terry on the*

[508] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 94
[509] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 94
[510] Bernard Ashley in a letter to Frank Godwin (dated 3rd July 1985)

> *Fence*, an enormously popular book which I had tried, without success, to promote some years earlier."[511]

Godwin continued, to expand on the central themes of the film and the problems of depicting some of the scenes for children's' television:

> "The theme was immensely appealing, with the classic central situation of the misunderstood and surely tried hero, and Ashley's characterisation of Terry and his opponent Les was brilliant, delving into those grey areas and ambivalent relationships which often develop between captors and their victims - a theme which I had begun to explore in *Breakout*. All went smoothly until the preparation of the film was well advanced when we discovered that the central situation of Terry being threatened with a flick-knife was unacceptable and would prevent screening on television. The offending scenes were cut but, with Bernard Ashley's help, created a new sequence of greater dramatic power."[512]

The knife scene was replaced. Ashley commented "bizarrely this was altered to have Terry threatened with being imprisoned and left to starve! The BBFC would not grant a 'U' certificate with the knife in the film."[513] When the film was screened on BBC television, further editing to remove the use of the word 'bloody' was deemed necessary. Interestingly, a scene where Les dramatically reveals his scarred chest (from one of his mother's beatings) was left uncut.

The film cost £180,747[514] to complete, but by now the CFTF had used up their production budget. Unfortunately, the film in which the Foundation had finally perfected the more mature and sophisticated film for children, was to be its last. The film found mixed reviews from the critics - Derek Malcolm described it as "one of those young people's films which in no way plays down to its audience but treats them as intelligent and perceptive film-goers."[515] Nigel Floyd wrote in the *Monthly Film Bulletin* that:

> "This adaptation of Bernard Ashley's novel was intended to get away from the 'black and white of goodies and baddies'. With the virtual collapse of the Saturday morning matinee audience, the CFTF saw the need to aim their features at a wider film and television audience, comprised of both children and adults. In *Terry on the Fence,* this proves to be a distinct advantage, allowing the strong, clear narrative to delve into greyer areas of moral ambiguity. This centres on Terry and Les, victim and victimiser, and the bond which develops out of something more than fear. In its attention to social detail, though, the film tends to lapse into a schematic and stereotypical portrayal of the boy's home

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[511] Frank Godwin in programme notes for *Terry On The Fence* at The London Film Festival (National Film Theatre Children's Film Festival) Dated November 1985

[512] Frank Godwin in programme notes for *Terry On The Fence* at The London Film Festival (National Film Theatre Children's Film Festival) Dated November 1985

[513] Bernard Ashley interview in Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 99

[514] Wickham and Mettler *Back to the Future* p. 29

[515] Derek Malcolm in *Programme Notes for Terry On The Fence* at the 29th National Film Theatre London Film Festival (dated November 1985) p. 63

> environments. The Harmers are nice lower-middle class people who reward the errant Terry with a stiff word or two, and a hot bath. Les's mum, on the other hand, is a brassy, bingo-playing blonde who whacks him about the head for getting a little mud on the carpet. Similarly, the disparity between the punishment meted out to Terry and Les tends to suggest that the criminal episode was only a temporary aberration and that nice middle-class boys don't get into trouble unless forced into it by undesirable working-class lads."[516]

Of course, the film was not to everybody's tastes - JAPA from *Variety Magazine* suggested that:

> "This uneven drama supposedly represents a move to more ambitious storylines for the sponsoring CFTF. Although the picture touches on contemporary themes of youth criminality, domestic cruelty and gang violence, it remains a somewhat old-fashioned kids film. The film has some moments of stirring comedy and pathos, but the effect is diminished by uneven lighting."[517]

This view is significant: a sign of the CFTF trying to rethink its production for new times and a different audience but not necessarily being entirely successful. There does seem to be a recurrent pattern across the different films here as the critics feel that most just didn't work in the new TV afternoon settings. In another Nigel Floyd review, for *The Timeout Film Guide*, the critic compares the film unfavourably with *Grange Hill*, describing it as "distinctly tame and old-fashioned" in comparison. Perhaps the Foundation's productions, although now tackling contemporary and harder hitting themes, just could not reach the stellar standard set by the BBC's teatime drama. Despite the advances under Monica Sims, no-one could really imagine a CFTF film tackling teenage pregnancy or heroin addiction. Indeed, at the premiere screening of Jason Gurr's documentary *The CFF Story* in 2018, Anna Home remarked to me that "if the BBC had made *Terry on the Fence* for TV, it would have been a very different film."[518] It seemed, as 1986 dawned, instead of coming together, the CFTF and the BBC were drawing further apart.

1986 to 1989 - The final countdown

The BBC failed to come to an agreement with the Foundation for the final year of their co-production deal, the back catalogue holding no temptation for them now. They did pay the CFTF some money to retain the films already released for another year, but the CFTF were now effectively a production company with no production funds - their last two films had cost almost half a million pounds to complete - and they now had no idea of how to raise that sort of money. A deal with Granada Television was ground out, but it was for broadcasting nine films from the back catalogue, but with no co-production agreement. The films that were agreed for broadcast were *Mr Horatio Knibbles* (1970), *The Johnstown Monster* (1971), *Exploits At West Foley* (1985), *Out Of The Darkness* (1985), *The Hi-Jack!* (1975), *The Hoverbug* (1970), *The Hostages* (1975), *On The Run* (1969) and the film the BBC turned down, *Gabrielle and the Doodleman*

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[516] Nigel Floyd in a review of *Terry On The Fence* in *The Monthly Film Bulletin* (Volume 53, No. 629) June 1986

[517] JAPA review of *Terry On The Fence* in Variety's Film Reviews 1985-1986 (New York, R R Bowker, 1988) dated 1st January 1986

[518] Anna Home in conversation with the author (1st October 2018)

(1984). Again, the money raised on this deal would not cover production costs for another feature. Rank, who had been trying to broker deals for the Foundation, withdrew from this role in 1986, due to their own financial crisis. The CFTF now only had a minimal income - from an increasingly dwindling home market (that would collapse completely within 18 months) and from overseas distribution, which was also shrinking as the new co-productions were mainly kept for home TV broadcast. Monica Sims continued to pursue projects in script development to hopefully entice a production company into making a film, but as the industry was still in the doldrums in the UK there were few opportunities to grasp. Indeed, as a script developer for outside projects, the next three years would see the CFTF collaborate in just two cinematic projects - *Just Ask For Diamond* and *Danny, The Champion of the World*. The film *My Friend Walter* followed in 1992 but had little success.

The Last Picture Shows - *Just Ask For Diamond*, *Danny, The Champion of the World* and *My Friend Walter*

Just Ask For Diamond was adapted by Michael Horowitz from his own popular children's novel *The Falcon's Malteser*. British Screen Productions subsidised the project, alongside Coverstop Films, and it was directed by Stephen Bayley. Released in September 1988, the comedy crime story featured a strong cast, including Saeed Jaffrey, Patricia Hodge, Jimmy Nail, Roy Kinnear (a veteran of three CFF movies) and Susannah York. The plot, where a private detective is aided by his younger (smarter?) brother to solve a mystery, reads like a sub-film noir, and is filmed a la CFF mostly on location - in and around Camden Lock in London. The critics, and ultimately the public disliked it - Nigel Floyd, in *The Monthly Film Bulletin*, wrote:

> "The most inexplicable thing about this spoof film noir is the distributor's decision to drop the evocative title of scriptwriter Anthony Horowitz's source novel *The Falcon's Malteser*. But it proves just one of a series of absurd misjudgements - the awful and inappropriate rap track played over the garish animated credits is another - which mars this potentially entertaining children's film. The splitting of the twin lead roles between inept private eye Tim and his quick thinking kid brother Nick introduces an immediate structural problem. Horowitz's answer to the question 'which brother is the Sam Spade character?' is revealing. "Tim would like to be, Nick could be, together they are." When it becomes necessary constantly to imprison Tim, while Nick pursues the investigation, an air of contrivance creeps in. The sharp but innocent Nick is clearly intended as an identification figure for young audiences with only a superficial knowledge of noir conventions, and is not himself a noir character. Rather, he is a modern kid dropped into a movie-derived world of crime and corruption. But generic names such as The Fatman, The Professor or Gott and Himmell emphasise the two-dimensional quality of the supporting roles. Had this world of dark shadows been more convincingly visualised, and Nick's involvement in it given a more nightmarish edge, the humour too might have been sharper."[519]

[519] Nigel Floyd review of *Just Ask For Diamond* in *The Monthly Film Bulletin* (December 1988, Volume 55, No. 659)

Twenty years later, in *The Time Out Film Guide 2008*, Floyd's views had hardly mellowed;

> "This junior private eye spoof on *The Maltese Falcon*, scripted by Anthony Horowitz from his novel, soon degenerates into superficial pastiche and becomes more increasingly tiresome. Handed a box of Maltesers by a South American dwarf, teenage Shamus Tim Diamond (Dursley McLinden) is soon out of his depth and forced to rely on his younger, smarter brother Nick (Colin Dale). The Fatman demands an audience, Inspector Snape (Bill Paterson) and his sadistic assistant (Jimmy Nail) apply the pressure and comically inept heavies Gott and Himmell fall over each other to get their hands on the chocs. Sadly, only Susannah York as the drink-sodden romantic Laura Bacardi, and Patricia Hodge as the enigmatic baroness leave a lasting impression."[520]

Some of the narration and violence of the original was edited for the US release (as *Diamond's Edge*) but it failed to set the box office alight. Surprisingly, the film garnered a TV sequel, *The Diamond Brothers*, broadcast on ITV in 1991, with McLinden and Dale reprising their roles, but the movie was hardly an auspicious start for the first CFTF script development project.

However, redemption was soon to hand with *Danny, The Champion of the World.* This was a John Goldsmith adaptation of a 1975 Roald Dahl novel, directed by Gavin Millar, and produced by Thames Television and Portobello Pictures, with funding from Walt Disney Television. Released in 1989, the film's most endearing attraction was the casting of real-life father and son Jeremy and Samuel Irons as the major protagonists. Supported by a strong cast including Robbie Coltrane, Lionel Jefferies, Michael Horden, Cyril Cusack, Jean Marsh and again, Jimmy Nail, the film was shot mainly in Stonor Park in Henley-on-Thames. The story is traditional CFF fare - a bullying rich landowner wants to destroy a garage, on land owned by a widower and his son, in order to build a vast housing estate. Of course, the underdogs prevail, due to an outlandish plan by Danny, and the development is stopped, the village saved and father and son live happily ever after in rural bliss. This time the critics approved, with a Geoff Brown of *Sight And Sound* review, titled 'Family Plot', noting, on the setting and characterisations:

> "'Somewhere in England. Autumn, 1955' reads an opening title as the eye takes in a delectable slice of England's green and pleasant land. Right from the start (the film) knows precisely what it is about: tradition, nostalgia, innocence, past certainties. The material derives from one of Roald Dahl's best known books, but *Danny,* published in 1975, is no gruesome, tricksy tale of the unexpected. Fantasy takes second place here to the central loving relationship between young Danny and his widowed father - country garage owner by day, skilful poacher by night. The characters and images in Gavin Millar's film draw sustenance from a well of shared, idealised national memories. A million school days down the years come crowding back as corridors ring to chanted multiplication tables and Danny faces the withering gaze of Captain Lancaster, the school's new martinet teacher, dishing out lines for the slightest breach of

[520] Nigel Floyd review of *Just Ask For Diamond* in *The Time Out Film Guide 2008* (London, Ebury Publishing, 2007)

> discipline and manners. The local copper trundles by on his trusty bike, alongside a country bus, an ambulance and other vehicles with a Dinky toy charm. Even the film's genre consciously turns the clock back: Though the Children's Film and Television Foundation has maintained a stream of modest productions, it is hard to recall many pedigree attempts at a British family film since *The Railway Children* in 1972. (That film's director, Lionel Jefferies, pops up agreeably as the school's gin-toting headmaster)."[521]

Of the actual production, Brown continued to praise the scriptwriter and director:

> "John Goldsmith's script and Millar's direction mostly maintain a level head, delicately handling intimate moments between father and son but stirring up sufficient drama for scenes like Danny's night-time search for his Dad (huddled in one of Hazell's man-traps with a broken ankle). There are a few false notes in the acting: Jean Marsh's tight lipped accent as a visiting council worker gets in the way, and Robbie Coltrane is too slick and shallow to make Victor Hazell one of the really tasty villains. But all in all, *Danny, The Champion of the World* resurrects a lost world of English life and entertainment with winning charm and aplomb."[522]

Later, Colette Maud of *The Time Out Film Guide 2008*, wrote:

> "Roald Dahl takes on Green politics in this adaptation of his children's book: screenwriter John Goldsmith introduces the theme of rural conservation and injects topicality into a tale of post-war village life. But the basic conflict is more personal between loveable poacher William (Irons) and crass, nouveau riche Lord of the Manor Hazell (Coltrane). Widower Willaim runs a garage and lives in a caravan with his nine year-old son Danny (Samuel Irons). One day their peace is shattered when Hazell decides that all he surveys should become a housing estate, but his plans are thwarted by the fact that William's patch of land is stuck in the middle. In the ensuing battle of wills, we can thrill to the dangers of poaching, and hiss at Hazell's dastardly schemes. Gavin Millar directs with authority and loving attention to period detail. There's also a pleasing ring of truth about the relationship built up between real-life father and son Jeremy and Samuel Irons. Family entertainment: cosy, intimate, a touch cloying."[523]

When the film debuted on ITV it was an outstanding success and enjoyed a long cinematic run on its release, and has performed well in subsequent video and DVD releases. Trying to replicate its success, Portobello and Thames took on another CFTF approved script in 1992, *My Friend Walter*, again directed by Gavin Millar and produced by Vanessa Lees. The story of the ghost of Sir Walter Raleigh, who turns up to befriend a distant relative, Bess, and causes her all

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[521] Geoff Brown review of *Danny, the Champion of the World* in *Sight and Sound Magazine* (BFI, July 1989) p. 211
[522] Geoff Brown review of *Danny, the Champion of the World* in *Sight and Sound Magazine* (BFI, July 1989) p. 211
[523] Colette Maud review of *Danny, Champion of the World* in *The Time Out Film Guide 2008* (London, Ebury Publishing, 2007)

sorts of problems, was adapted for the screen by Michael Morpurgo from his own novel. When asked by Portobello films to adapt his book for the screen, Michael Morpurgo said he'd "give it (a) go." Michael concluded, however, that after coaching from the director and producer, he "got it right in the end."[524] Despite a cast list that included Ronald Pickup, Prunella Scales and Don Henderson, the film flopped, and the CFTF withdrew from film script development, licking their wounds.

The Last Rites

The Foundation was reduced to finding projects solely for television, among the more successful productions being *The Torch* (BBC TV, 1992), *The Borrowers* (BBC TV, 1992) and *The Queen's Nose* (BBC TV, 1992). In 1998 Monica Sims retired, and Anna Home, the BBC executive who launched *Grange Hill* and an even more socially aware drama series *Byker Grove* (1989 - 2006), took over as Chief Executive Officer, and despite having very little funding, she managed to persuade a consortium of six companies to produce the final project to bear the name of the CFTF, the Harley Cokeliss directed *An Angel for May* (2002), starring Tom Wilkinson, Geraldine James and Hugo Speer. Home's role was now reduced to campaigning and canvassing the film industry and members of the government to revive the British children's film, but with very little success. In 2003 £500,000 of National Lottery funding was gifted and spent on developing five scripts - unfortunately none of these came to fruition. Anna Home remembers;

> "When I became CEO of the CFTF it had ceased to directly produce or commission films or television programmes for children but was hoping to continue in the role of script development. A scheme was launched along these lines with the support of the Film Council and the BBC but nothing concrete came of this. Effectively my remit became one of winding up the operations of the CFTF. The Foundation no longer drew any statutory funds. It really existed only in name only and in terms of its heritage."[525]

In 2012, the Foundation finally gave up active involvement in any aspect of production or script development. Joining with the campaign group 'Save Kids TV', Anna Home became chair of The Children's Media Foundation (CMF), essentially a lobbying group for continued children's productions. Summing up the role of the CMF, Robert Shail wrote "the need for British children to see work on screen that reflects their own lives is central to the organisation's aims. This links back perfectly to the abiding concerns of the original Foundation. The CFF may be gone but its spirit lives on."[526] The CFF story ended with the collapse of the matinee audience, and as a footnote, a story from my hometown sums up the demise. In December 1988, the last High Street cinema within the city boundaries of Derby, the former Gaumont Palace on London Road, now trading under the Cannon franchise, suffered its own collapse. "It's demise came about as a result of a large plaster section, the length of the auditorium, collapsing ten minutes before the admission of children to a morning show, and not as often supposed by competition from the

[524] From website https://www.michaelmorpurgo.com/my-friend-walter-film/ (accessed July 2021)
[525] Anna Home in Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 147
[526] Shail *The Children's Film Foundation* p. 41

then recently opened Derby multi screens."[527] The doldrums were over for the British cinema industry, with Derby overnight going from being served by one remaining cinema to twenty screens, as both Showcase and UCI opened multiplexes on the Outer Ring Road. But it was too late for the Foundation, as the desire for creating content specifically for children was abandoned by the industry. The story of the only movie making operation specifically for children in the Western world was over - consigned to history with the Saturday morning clubs, as the 'family' film, led by American giants Disney and Dreamworks, totally dominated British children's cinematic (and television) productions.

[527] Winfield *Dream Palaces of Derby* p. 133

CONCLUSION

When I first researched the demise of the CFF in my undergraduate thesis, I was convinced I would find a definitive reason for its collapse - a particular culprit to take the blame. As we have seen, though, the reasons were many and varied. Obviously, the collapse of their market, the Saturday morning matinee clubs, undermined by a determined attack by TV broadcasters in the 1970s, made their position increasingly untenable in the eyes of the British film industry as their goodwill towards the Foundation diminished as quickly as the audience. The withdrawal of public funding with the Tories abolishment of the cinema seat tax, the Eady Levy, was key. So was the timing - the British film industry was trying to keep its head above water as audiences plummeted to an all time low, at the same time that the High Street was under crisis and the inner city population was largely relocated to the suburbs (new estates with their new shopping malls and sports centres, but no new cinemas) and rampant inflation increased film-making costs to unsustainable levels. These were further nails in the coffin. Timing was against the CFF from the start. They were trying to work out a funding deal with the Labour government as they lost power to the Tories in the 1979 election.

Timing, too, was to cost the Foundation a chance at a profitable and sustained co-production deal with the TV companies. If they had reacted earlier, before their chief bargaining chip, the back catalogue, became outdated, maybe the story would have been different. Personally, I feel (with the obvious advantage of hindsight) that the Foundation was forced into a deal with the BBC, hoping for a partnership that would ensure their future as a production company. Unfortunately, this deal was decidedly one-sided, as shown in the research, with the BBC co-producing a minimal number of titles, and seeming not to regard the broadcasting of these, and the back catalogue films they acquired, with any sense of urgency or priority. The story could have been so much different if the board’s efforts to woo the new channel, to become Channel 4, had been successful. They could have come under the umbrella of the now renowned Film 4, which during the channel’s infancy was desperate for content to broadcast, and a more productive partnership could have maintained the Foundation’s overseas market, which was still buoyant despite the collapse of the matinee audience at home.

My research on the CFF has revealed an interesting revelation, that the Foundation had a distinctly different arc of decline to that of the mainstream British cinema industry. The first industry crisis, after the boom years during and immediately following the Second World War, was the increase in television broadcasts, as TV set ownership and rentals substantially increased during the coronation of the queen in 1953 and the launch of a second independent channel (ITV) in the late 1950s. Although the matinee audience shrunk, in comparison to the rest of the industry, the matinee audience remained buoyant and the number of clubs stood at a sustainable level for the CFF to continue to service. The audience figures remained constant throughout the 1960s, with the audience renewing with every generation. Even the introduction of colour TV did little to affect the Saturday clubs. The first significant drop in clubs and audience came in the early 1970s, when the political crisis - the three day week, power cuts and strikes, led to rapid and far reaching economy drives by most cinemas, and the axing of their least

profitable ventures. Unfortunately, this included the matinees, and this was the beginning of the real decline.

As the decade progressed, cinemas were converted into twin or triple screen complexes - increasing the numbers of screens in the UK, but shrinking the auditoriums. Matinees were now housed in venues that held significantly less than the break even figure, and added to increased exhibition hours as the cinemas offered late night horror and sexploitation films to the public, the chains found manning the matinees a huge and loss making challenge. The launch of Saturday morning TV shows proved a final blow, and with High Street cinemas closing regularly, the matinee clubs became a rare and endangered beast. The UK film industry dusted itself down, and with the introduction of American owned multiplexes, found its feet again. Too late, however, for the Foundation - the invitation to this industry re-launch party never came. Unfortunately, after a period as script development agency for children's productions, in the late 1980s the CFTF wound up, seemingly unmourned by the media industry.

In 1988 Pamela Poll boxed up the archived material from the previous 35 years and placed it in storage in an Elstree studios anteroom. In June 2012, some 120 bankers boxes of material were handed over to the BFI, to be held for the next six years as an inaccessible Special Collection. The BFI Reubens Library team are currently cataloguing and digitising the collection, and I am immensely grateful to them for allowing me unlimited access to the archive for my research. Some of the filmstocks, that were scattered around cinemas and production companies in the capital, have again been acquired by the BFI, with plans for release via DVD collections underway. They also have a dedicated Youtube channel, where some complete films and many episodic clips can be viewed. In 2019, the nostalgic freeview channel Talking Pictures TV, run by the heroic Cronin family, gained access to prints of some of the CFF films and began broadcasting them every Saturday morning as part of their own Saturday morning picture shows - alongside episodes of *Dick Tracy, Phantom Creeps* and *Hawkeye and The Last of The Mohicans*. This remains the most complete and consistent broadcast package of CFF productions of all time, the shows still running and dwarfing the film packages of the BBC and Granada TV in the 1980s.

The films of the CFF obviously have a huge nostalgia value, but they are more than this - with their trademark location filming the productions provide a unique record of the changing landscape of both urban and rural Britain. Changes in fashions, attitudes and social trends can be assessed through the films in a way that only documentaries shot at the time can challenge. Bombsites, terraced streets, new high-rise blocks, suburban streets with hardly a car to be seen, under-twelves with the freedom to roam wherever - the films are evocative of a long lost era. Too often today they are remembered for the 1950s productions of Famous Five adventures, but the CFF proved it could change with the times as the industry as a whole developed - introducing more realism in the 1960s, embracing the football craze around the time of the 1966 World Cup, toying with psychedelia after the late 1960s, ecology concerns in the 1970s and tackling social issues and peer pressure as the 1980s dawned. With Robert Shail's comprehensive book *The Children's Film Foundation - History and Legacy* (which has been an invaluable reference to this project) and Jason Gurr's documentary *The CFF Story* (2018),

which was included in a BFI collection of films in a DVD set called *The Children's Film Foundation Bumper Box*, the history of the Foundation has been revived after so many years of neglect from scholars of British film. I am hopeful that this thesis can add to the canon and continue interest in a unique and special chapter of British film history.

Children's matinees are still with us, though are no longer the (sometimes) anarchic and chaotic adult-free zones of the past. Now the multi-screen giants screen the current Hollywood family films at a lower price, but most insist on children being accompanied by an adult. The family film dominates today, with children treated to the latest Disney or Dreamworks blockbuster - that unfortunately reference American culture over the British variant. British made family films remain a rarity - even that most British *Harry Potter* franchise, made in Britain with our fantastic technicians creating their own wizardry, was helmed by American directors and production crew (and of course funding) - giving the young British audience a strange trans-Atlantic view of their own culture. The closest we come to a CFF production today would be the television films of the books of David Walliams, including *The Boy in the Dress* (2014, d. Matt Lipsey) and *Ratburger* (2017, d. Matt Lipsey) which contain all of the reference points of a good Foundation production - heroic underdog child lead, sound (but mostly dysfunctional) family backgrounds, ridiculous slapstick, evil but inept adult villains, and of course, the triumph of good over evil (and of the children over adults). Most of all, they are for and are about children. I'm sure that Lord Rank, Mary Field, Henry Geddes and Monica Sims would have approved.

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A Clockwork Orange (1971, d. Stanley Kubrick) UK
A Kid For Two Farthings (1955, d. Carol Reed) UK
A Man for All Seasons (1966, d. Fred Zinneman) UK
A Matter of Life and Death (1946, d. Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger) UK
A Room With A View (1985, d. James Ivory) UK
A Taste of Honey (1961, d. Tony Richardson) UK
The Adventures of PC49 (1949, d. Godfrey Grayson) UK
The Adventures of a Taxi Driver (1976, d. Stanley Long) UK
Alfie (1966, d. Lewis Gilbert) UK
Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1972, d. William Sterling) UK
The Amazing Mr Blunden (1972, d. Lionel Jefferies) UK
The Amorous Milkman (1975, d. Derren Nesbit) UK
And Now For Something Completely Different (1971, d. Ian MacNaughton) UK
The Arsenal Stadium Mystery (1939, d. Thorold Dickinson) UK
The Batman [film series] (1943, d. Lambert Hillyer) USA
Bedazzled (1967, d. Stanley Donen) UK
Bend It Like Beckham (2002, d. Gurinder Chadha) UK
Bicycle Thieves (*Ladri di Biciclette*) (1948, d. Vittorio De Sica) Italy
Billy Liar (1963, d. John Schlesinger) UK
Black Beauty (1971, d. James Hill) UK
Blowup (1966, d. Michelangelo Antonioni) UK
Bohemian Rhapsody (2019, d. Dexter Fletcher. UK/USA
Bugs Bunny and Merrie Melodies [cartoon series] (1942-64, Various Directors) USA
Buddy's Song (1991, d. Claude Whatham) UK
Bugsy Malone (1976, d. Alan Parker) UK
Buster (1988, d. David Green) UK
The CareBears Movie (1984, d. Arna Selznick) USA
Carry-On... [film series] (1958-78, d. Gerald Thomas) UK
The CFF Story (2018, d. Jason Gurr) UK

Chariots of Fire (1980, d. Hugh Hudson) UK
The Clutching Hand [film series] (1936, d. Albert Herman) USA
Confessions of a Window Cleaner (1974, d. Val Guest) UK
Convoy (1978, d. Sam Peckinpah) USA
Cosh Boy (1953, d. Lewis Gilbert) UK
Daffy Duck's Fantastic Island (1983, d. Chuck Jones, Friz Freleng and Robert McKimson) USA
Danny, The Champion of the World (1989, d. Gavin Millar) UK
Darling (1965, d. John Schlesinger) UK
The Devils (1971, d. Ken Russell) UK
Dick Barton Strikes Back (1949, d. Godfrey Grayson) UK
Dick Tracy (1937, d. Alan James and Ray Taylor) USA
Dr Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (1964, d. Stanley Kubrick) USA
E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial (1982, d. Steven Spielberg) USA
E*asy Rider* (1969, d. Dennis Hopper) USA
Eddie the Eagle (2015, d. Dexter Fletcher) UK
Educating Rita (1983, d. Lewis Gilbert) UK
The Elephant Man (1980, d. David Lynch) UK
Emil and the Detectives (1935, d. Milton Rosmer) UK
Fantasia (1940, d. James Algar and Samuel Armstrong) USA
Flash Gordon [film series] (1936, d. Frederick Stephani) USA
The Football Factory (d. Nick Love, 2004) UK
The 400 Blows - Les Quatre Cents Coups (1959, d. François Truffaut) France
The Fox and the Hound (1980, d. Ted Berman, Richard Rich and Art Stevens) USA
Frozen (2013, d. Jennifer Lee and Chris Buck) USA
Get Carter (1971, d. Mike Hodges) UK
Gandhi (1983, d. Richard Attenborough) UK
The Graduate (1967, d. Mike Nichols) USA
Harry Potter and the... [film series] (2001–11, various directors) USA
Herbie Goes Bananas (1980, d. Vincent McEveety) USA
Holiday on the Buses (1973, d. Bryan Izzard) UK
Hop-Along Cassidy [film series] (1935-48, various directors) USA
The Hound of the Baskervilles (1959, d. Terence Fisher) UK
Hue and Cry (1947, d. Charles Crichton) UK

I'd Rather Have Cod Liver Oil (1931, d. Max Ophuls) Germany

It (directed by Andy Muschetti, 2017).

The Italian Job (1969, d. Peter Collinson) UK

James Bond [film series] (1962 - present, various directors) USA/UK

Jason and the Argonauts. (1963, d. Don Chaffey) UK

The Jungle Book (1967, d. Wolfgang Reitherman) USA

Just Ask For Diamond (1988, d. Stephen Bayley) UK

The Krays (1990, d. Peter Medak) UK

The Lady Vanishes (1979, d. Anthony Page) UK

Lawrence of Arabia (1962, d. David Lean) UK

Lieutenant Rose RN [film series] (1910-15, d. Percy Stow) UK

The Life And Death of Colonel Blimp (1943, d. Michael Powell) UK

The Little Ballerina (1947, d. Lewis Gilbert) UK

Look Back in Anger (1959, d. Tony Richardson) UK

The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner (1962, d. Tony Richardson) UK

Lord of the Flies (1962, d. Peter Brook) UK

Love Thy Neighbour (1973, d. John Robins) UK

The Magic Christian (1969, d. Joseph McGrath) UK

Man About the House (1974, d. John Robins) UK

Mary Poppins (1964, d. Robert Stevenson) USA

McVicar (1980, d. Tom Clegg) UK

Mean Machine (2001, d. Barry Skolnick) UK

Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence (1983, d. Nagisa Oshima) UK

Mickey Mouse [cartoon series] (1935-53, various directors) USA

Monty Python and the Holy Grail (1975, d. Terry Gilliam and Terry Jones) UK

Monty Python's Life of Brian (1979, d. Terry Jones) UK

Mutiny on the Buses (1972, d. Harry Booth) UK

My Beautiful Launderette (1984, d. Stephen Frears) UK

My Friend Walter (1992, d. Gavin Millar) UK

My Left Foot (1989, d. Jim Sheridan) Ireland/UK

Nearest and Dearest (1972, d. John Robins) UK

Oliver! (1968, d. Carol Reed) UK

On The Waterfront (1954, d. Elia Kazan) USA

Our Gang (also known as *The Little Rascals*) [film series] (1922-44, various directors) USA

On the Buses (1971, d. Harry Booth) UK
One Hundred and One Dalmatians (1961, d. Clyde Geronimi, Hamilton Luske) USA
One Million Years BC (1966, d. Don Chaffey) UK
Peeping Tom (1960, d. Michael Powell) UK
Performance (1968, d. Donald Cammell, Nicolas Roeg) UK
The Perils of Pauline [film series] (1914, d. Louis J. Gasnier, Donald MacKenzie) UK
The Phantom Creeps [film series] (1939, d. Ford Beebe and Saul Goodkind) USA
The Plague Dogs (1983, d. Martin Rosen) UK
Popeye [cartoon series] (1933-42, various directors) USA
Popeye (1980, d. Robert Altman) USA
The Railway Children (1970, d. Lionel Jeffries) UK
The Rebel (1961, d. Robert day) UK
Rocketman (2019, Dexter Fletcher) USA
Roy Rogers [film series] (1938-51, various directors) USA
Run Wild Run Free (1970, d. Richard C. Sarafian) UK
The Satanic Rites of Dracula (1973, d. Alan Gibson) UK
Saturday Night, Sunday Morning (1960, d. Karel Reisz) UK
Slade in Flame (1975, d. Richard Loncraine) UK
Sports Day (also known as The Colonel's Cup) (1945, d. Francis Searle) UK
Stardust (1974, d. Michael Apted) UK
Star Wars [film series] (1977-present, various directors) USA
Straw Dogs (1971, d. Sam Peckinpah) UK
Superman (1978, d. Richard Donner) USA
Tarzan the Fearless [film series] (1933, d. Robert F. Hill) USA
That'll be the Day (1973, d. Claude Whatham) UK
That's Your Funeral (1973, d. John Robins) UK
The Third Man (1949, d. Carol Reed) UK
This Sporting Life (1963, d. Lindsay Anderson) UK
Tilly the Tomboy [film series] (1910-15, d. Lewin Fitzhamon) UK
Tom Jones (1963, d. Tony Richardson) UK
Tommy (1975, d. Ken Russell) UK
Tom's Ride (1944, d. Darrell Catling) UK
Unico In The Island of Magic (1979, d. Toshio Hirata) Japan
Up Pompeii (1971, d. Bob Kellett) UK

Up the Chastity Belt (1972, d. Bob Kellett) UK
Up the Front (1972, d. Bob Kellett) UK
Watership Down (1978, d. Martin Rosen) UK
Whisky Galore (1949, d. Alexander MacKendrick) UK
Whistle Down the Wind (1961, d. Bryan Forbes) UK
The Wicker Man (1973, d. Robin Hardy) UK
Wind In The Willows (1983, d. Mark Hall) UK
The Wizard of Oz (1939, d. Victor Fleming) USA
Women in Love (1969, d. Ken Russell) UK
Yellow Submarine (1968, d. George Dunning) UK

TELEVISION PRODUCTIONS

An Angel for May (2002, ITV) UK
Andy Pandy (1950-57, Westerham Arts Films for BBC TV) UK
Are You Being Served? (1972-85 BBC TV) UK
Armchair Theatre (1956-1974 ABC Television for ITV) UK
The Banana Splits (1968-1970, Hanna Barbera Productions for NBC) USA
Behind The Bike Sheds (1983-85 Yorkshire Television for ITV) UK
Beyond the Fringe (1964 BBC TV) UK
The Bill (1984-2010 ITV) UK
Blue Peter (1958-2020, BBC TV) UK
The Borrowers (1992, BBC TV) UK
The Boy in the Dress (2014 BBC TV) UK
Brookside (1982-2003 Channel 4) UK
Buddy (1986 BBC TV) UK
Byker Grove (1989-2006 BBC TV) UK
Camberwick Green (1966, Gordon Murray Puppets Productions for BBC TV) UK
Casey Jones (1957-1958, Briskin Productions for KTTV) USA
Casualty (1986-present BBC TV) UK
Champion the Wonder Horse (1955-1956 Flying A Productions for CBS) USA
Charlie's Angels (1976-81 ABC TV) USA
Cheggers Plays Pop (1978-1986 BBC TV) UK
Coronation Street. (1960-present Granada TV for ITV) UK
Danger Mouse (1981-92 ITV) UK
The Diamond Brothers (1991 ITV) UK
Eastenders (1985-present BBC TV) UK
Fawlty Towers (1975-78 BBC TV) UK
Felix the Cat (1958-61 Syndication TV) USA
Five Go Mad in Dorset (Comic Strip Presents..) (1982 Channel 4) UK
Follyfoot (1971-73 Yorkshire Television for ITV) UK
The Fosters (1976-77 ITV) UK
Grange Hill (1978-2008 BBC TV) UK
Hawkeye and The Last of The Mohicans (1957 ITC for CBS TV) Canada
Here Come the Double Deckers (1970-71 BBC TV) UK

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy (1981, BBC TV)

Jackanory (1965 - 1996, BBC TV) UK

The Magical Mystery Tour (1967 Apple Corps for BBC TV) UK

Man About the House (1973-76 Thames Television for ITV) UK

Monty Python's Flying Circus (1969-74 BBC TV) UK

The Multi-Coloured Swap (1976-1982 BBC TV) UK

Newsround (1972-present BBC TV) UK

On The Buses (1969-73 LWT for ITV) UK

Play School (1964-1988 BBC TV) UK

The Prisoner (1966-68 ITC for ITV) UK

The Professionals (1977-83 ITV) UK

The Queen's Nose (1992 BBC TV) UK

Ratburger (2017 Sky TV) UK

Robin's Nest (1977-1981 Thames Television for ITV) UK

Saturday Superstore (1982-1987 BBC TV) UK

Screen Test (1970-84 BBC TV) UK

Seaview (1983-85 BBC TV) UK

Sharpe (1993-2008 Central Productions for ITV) UK

The Shillingbury Blowers (1980 ITV) UK

The Six Million Dollar Man (1974-78 Universal Television) USA

The Snowman (1982 TVC London for Channel 4) UK

Space 1999 (1975-77 ITC for ITV) UK

Starsky and Hutch. (1975-79 ABC TV) USA

Steptoe and Son (1962-74 BBC TV) UK

Stingray (1964-65 ITV) UK

The Sweeney (1975-78 ITV) UK

That Was the Week That Was (1962-63 BBC TV) UK

Thunderbirds (1965-66 ITV) UK

Tiswas! (1974-82 ITV) UK

The Torch (1992 BBC TV) UK

Tucker's Luck (1983-85 BBC TV) UK

Who Wants To Be A Millionaire? (1998-present Celador Television for ITV) UK

The Young Ones (1982-84 BBC TV) UK

Zokko! (1968-70 BBC TV) UK

Zorro (1957-59 Walt Disney for ABC TV) USA

COMPLETE INDEX OF CHILDREN'S FILM FOUNDATION PRODUCTIONS

This list also includes titles produced by the CFTF, short films, serials and foreign productions dubbed into English and distributed by the Foundation.

FEATURE FILMS AND SHORTS

4D Special Agents. (1981). Film. Directed by Harold Orton. UK : Eyeline Productions.

Adventure in the Hop Fields. (1958). Film. Directed by John Guillermin. UK : Van Dyke Pictures Corporation.

The Adventures of HAL 5(1958). Film. Directed by Don Sharp. UK : Bushey Film Studios

All at Sea. (1970). Film. Directed by Kenneth Fairbairn. UK : Anvil Film Group.

Animal Afternoon. (1960). Short. Directed by Henry Geddes : World Safari Ltd.

Anoop and the Elephant. (1972). Film. Directed by Hugh Stewart. UK : Anvil Film and Recording Group.

Avalanche. (1974). Film. Directed by Frederic Goode. UK : Telstar (Specialities) Productions.

Band Fever. (1978). Short. Directed by Gerard Bryant. UK : National Coal Board Film Unit.

The Battle of Billy's Pond (1976). Film. Directed by Harley Cokliss. UK : Mandarin Films Ltd.

Betcher! (1971). Short. Directed by David Eady. World Wide Pictures.

The Big Catch (1968). Film. Directed by Laurence Henson. UK : International Film Associates (Scotland).

The Big Fish (Original title: *velká ryba*). (1967). Film. Directed by Brestislav Pazourek. Czechoslovakia : Gotwaldov Films / Cine-Lingual Ltd.

Big Wheels and Sailor. (1979). Film. Directed by Doug Aitken. UK : Jeni Cole and Associates Ltd.

Black in the Face. (1955). Short. Directed by John Irwin. UK : Grendon Films Ltd.

Black Island. (1979). Film. Directed by Ben Bolt. UK : Kingsgate Film (London) Ltd.

Blind Man's Bluff. (1978). Film. Directed by Gerry O'Hara. UK: Willis Worldwide Productions Ltd.

Blinker's Spy Spotter. (1972). Film. Directed by Jack Stephens. UK : Eyeline Productions.

Blow Your Own Trumpet. (1958). Film. Directed by Cecil Musk. UK : Cecil Musk Productions.

Bouncer Breaks Up. (1953). Short. Directed by Don Chaffey. UK: SADFAS/Children's Film Foundation.

The Boy Who Never Was (1980). Directed by Frank Godwin. UK : Monument Productions.

*The Boy Who Turned Yellow (*1972). Film. Directed by Michael Powell. UK : Roger Cherrill Ltd.

The Brno Trail (Original title: *Tana a Dva Pistolnici)* (1967). Film. Directed by Radim Cvrcek. Czechoslovakia : Gotwaldov Films / Cine-Lingual Ltd.

Breakout. (1983). Film. Directed by Frank Godwin. UK : Eyeline Film and Video Ltd.

The Bungala Boys (1961). Film. Directed by Jim Jeffreys. UK/Australia : Jimar Pictures (Sydney) Ltd.

Bush Christmas (1947). Film. Directed by Ralph Smart. UK/Australia : Ralph Smart Productions / GB Instructional Films.

Calamity the Cow. (1967). Film. Directed by David Eastman. UK : Shepperton Studios Ltd.

The Camera Cops (Original title: *Zpívající pudrenka*) (1960). Film. Directed by Milan Pavlik. Czechoslovakia : Filmové studio Barrandov.

The Camerons (1974). Film. Directed by Freddie Wilson. UK : Roger Cherrill Ltd.

The Cat Gang (1958). Film. Directed by Darrel Catling. UK : Realist Film Unit Ltd.

Caught in the Net. (1960). Film. Directed by John Haggarty. UK : Wallace Productions Ltd.

The Christmas Tree (1966). Film. Directed by James Clark. UK : Augusta Productions Ltd.

Circus Friends. (1957). Film. Directed by Gerald Thomas. UK : London Independent Producers Ltd.

The Clue of the Missing Ape (1953). Film. Directed by James Hill. UK : Gaumont-British Films Corporation Ltd.

The ‘Copter Kids (1976). Film. Directed by Ronald Spencer. UK : Pacestter Productions Ltd.

Countdown to Danger. (1967). Film. Directed by Peter Seabourne. UK : Wallace Productions Ltd.

Crime Doesn’t Pay. (1970). Film. Directed by Gordon L. Shadrick. UK : Anvil Film and Recording Group.

Cry Wolf. (1968). Film. Directed by John Davis. UK : Damor Learderfilm Ltd.

Cup Fever. (1965). Film. Directed by David Bracknell. UK : Century Film Productions Ltd.

Danger on Dartmoor. (1980). Film. Directed by Mike Gorrell Barnes. UK : Eady-Barnes Productions Ltd.

Danger on The Danube (Original title: *Négyen az árban*) (1961). Film. Directed by Gyorgy Revesz. Hungary : Hunnia Filmstudio.

Danger Point! (1971). Film. Directed by John Davis. UK : Damor Productions Ltd.

Davey Jones Locker. (1965). Film. Directed by Frederic Goode. UK : Associated British-Pathe Ltd.

Daylight Robbery. (1964). Film. Directed by Michael Truman. UK : Viewfinder Films Ltd.

Deep Waters. (1978). Film. Directed by David Eady. UK : Eyeline Films Ltd.

The Dog and the Diamonds (1953) Film. Directed by Peter Rogers. UK : London Independent Producers Ltd.

The Dragon of Pendragon Castle (1953). Film. Directed by John Baxter. UK : Anvil Films / Elstree Independent Films.

Eagle Rock. (1964). Film. Directed by Henry Geddes. UK : World Safari Ltd.

Echo of the Badlands. (1976). Film. Directed by David Eady and Tim King. UK : EadK : Eady-Barnes Productions Ltd.

Egghead's Robot. (1970). Film. Directed by Milo Lewis. UK : Interfilm (London) Ltd.

Electric Eskimo. (1979). Film. Directed by Frank Godwin. UK : Monument Productions.

Escape From the Sea. (1968). Film. Directed by Peter Seabourne. UK : Wallace Productions Ltd.

Exploits at West Poley. (1985). Film. Directed by Diarmuid Lawrence. UK : Children's Film and Television Foundation (CFTF)

Fern the Red Deer. (1976). Film. Directed by Jan Darnley-Smith. UK : De Lane Lea Ltd.

Film for Maria, A (1961). Short. Directed by Jack Smith. UK : Fred Murray Productions Ltd.

The Firefighters (1975). Film. Directed by Jonathan Ingrams. UK : Frank Godwin / Eyeline Films.

Five O'Clock Finish. (1954). Short. Directed by John Irwin. UK : Grendon Films Ltd.

Five Survive. (1971). Film. Directed by Peter Graham Scott. UK : Lion Pacesetter Ltd.

Flash the SheepDog. (1966). Film. Directed by Laurence Henson. UK : International Film Association (Scotland) Ltd.

The Flood (1963). Film. Directed by Frederic Goode. UK : Associated British-Pathe Ltd.

The Flying Eye (1955). Film. Directed by William Hammond. UK : British Films Ltd.

The Flying Sorcerer (1973). Film. Directed by Harry Booth. UK : Anvil Films Ltd.

Flying Without Wings. (Original title: *Peter en de vliegende autobus*) (1976). Film. Directed by Karst van der Meulen. Netherlands : Castor Films.

Football Crazy. (Original title: Der Neue Fimmel) (1960). Film. Directed by Walter Beck. East Germany : Deutsche Film (DEFA)

The Forest Pony (1972). Film. Directed by Philip Leacock. UK : Gaumont-British International.

Friend or Foe? (1982). Film. Directed by John Krish. UK : Children's Film Foundation Productions.

Gabrielle and the Doodleman. (1984). Film. Directed by Francis Essex. UK: Elstree (Productions) Company.

Ghost of a Chance, A (1968). Film. Directed by Jan Darnley-Smith. UK: Fanfare Films Ltd.

The Glitterball (1977). Film. Directed by Harley Cokliss. UK: Mark Forstater Productions.

Go Kart Go (1964). Film. Directed by Jan Darnley-Smith. UK: Fanfare Films Ltd.

The Goldfish (1972). Short. Directed by Rhonda Small. UK: Anvil Films Ltd.

A Good Pull Up (1953). Short. Directed by Don Chaffey. UK: Grendon Films Ltd.

The Great Pony Raid (1968). Film. Directed by Frederic Goode. UK : Associated British-Pathe Ltd.

The Great White Heron (Original title: *Ptitzi dolitat*) (1971). Film. Directed by Zahari Zhadov. Bulgaria : Boyana Film / Cine-Lingual Ltd.

Haunters of the Deep. (1984). Film. Directed by Andrew Bogle. UK: Longbow Fil Company.

Headline Hunters. (1968). Film. Directed by Jonathan Ingrams. UK: Ansus Films Ltd.

Heights of Danger. (1953). Film. Directed by Peter Bradford. UK: Associated British-Pathe Ltd.

Hide and Seek. (1972). Film. Directed by David Eady. UK: Eady-Barnes Productions Ltd.

High Rise Donkey. (1980). Film. Directed by Michael Forlong. UK: Anvil Films Ltd.

Hijack. (1975). Film. Directed by Michael Forlong. UK: Michael Forlong Productions Ltd.

A Hitch in Time (1978). Film. Directed by Jan Darnley-Smith. UK : Eyeline Films Ltd.

A Horse Called Jester (1979). Film. Directed by Ken Fairbairn. UK: Eyeline Films Ltd.

The Hostages (1976) Film. Directed by David Eady. UK: Eady-Barnes Productions Ltd.

The Hoverbug (1969). Film. Directed by Jan Darnley-Smith. UK: Fanfare Films Ltd.

The Hunch (1967). Film. Directed by Sarah Erulkar. UK: Anvil Films (Scotland) Ltd.

Hunted in Holland. (1960). Film. Directed by Derek Williams. UK: Wessex Film Productions.

I Had a Hippopotamus. (1972). Film. Directed by Dennis Hunt. UK: Dennis Hunt Productions.

The Intruders (1969). Film. Directed by Lee Robinson. Australia : Woomera Productions / Anvil Films.

John of the Fair. (1952). Film. Directed by Michael McCarthy. UK: Merton Park Studios.

Johnny on the Run. (1953). Film. Directed by Lewis Gilbert. UK: International Realist Ltd.

Johnstown Monster, The (1971). Film. Directed by Olaf Pooley. UK: Sebastian Productions Ltd.

Junket 89. (1970). Film. Directed by Peter Plummer. UK: Balfour Films Ltd.

Juno Breaks Out. (1953). Short. Directed by William Hammond. UK: British Films Ltd.

Kadoyng. (1972). Film. Directed by Ian Shand. UK: Shand Pictures Ltd.

The Kid from Canada (1957). Film. Directed by Kay Mander. UK: Anvil Films (Scotland) Ltd.

The Last Load (1948). Film. Directed by John Baxter. UK : CEF / Rank Films / Lion Films Productions.

The Last Rhino (1961). Film. Directed by Henry Geddes. UK: World Safari Ltd.

The Lion Tamer (Original title: *Dressura*). (1970). Directed by Zdenka Doycheva. UK/Bulgaria : Bulgarian State Films.

Lionheart. (1968). Film. Directed by Michael Forlong. UK: Michael Forlong Productions Ltd.

The Lone Climber (Original title: *Der unheimliche Wilddieb*) (1949). Film. Directed by William C. Hammond. West Germany / UK : CEF / Rank Films / Cine-Lingual Ltd.

The Lone Wolf (Original title: *Vuk samotnjak*). (1973). Film. Directed by Obrad Gluscevic. Yugoslavia: Jadran Film / Croatia Film / Cine-Lingual Ltd.

The Man from Nowhere (1974). Film. Directed by James Hill. UK: Charles Barker Films.

Mardi and the Monkey. (1953). Short. Directed by Kay Mander. UK: Peregrine Film Productions.

Mauro the Gypsy. (1972). Film. Directed by Laurence Henson. UK: International Film Associates (Scotland) Ltd.

Mind How You Go. (1973). Short. Directed by Don Higgins. UK: Balfour Films.

The Mine and the Minotaur (1980). Film. Directed by David Cowing. UK: Sailorman Films Ltd.

Mischief. (1969). Film. Directed by Ian Shand. UK: Shand Pictures Ltd.

The Missing Note (1961). Film. Directed by Michael Brandt. UK: Walton Studios Ltd.

Mr. Horatio Knibbles. (1971). Film. Directed by Robert Hird. UK: Anvil Films Ltd.

Mr. Selkie. (1978). Film. Directed by Anthony Squire. UK: Wadlow Grosvenor Productions.

The Monster of Highgate Ponds (1961). Film. Directed by Alberto Cavalcanti. USA: Halas and Batchelor Films Ltd.

Mountain of Fear (Original title: *Srečno Kekec*). (1963). Film. Directed by Joze Gale. Yugoslavia: Viva Film / Eyeline Films.

The Mysterious Poacher (Original title: *Der geheimnisvolle Wilddieb)* (1949). Film. Directed by Don Chaffey. Austria / UK: CEF / Rank Films / Anvil Films.

The Mysterious Wreck (Original title: *Das geheimnisvolle Wrack*) (1954). Film. Directed by Herbert Ballmann. East Germany: Deutsche Film (DEFA) / Cine-Lingual Ltd.

Mystery on Bird Island. (1954). Film. Directed by John Haggarty. UK: Rayant Pictures Ltd.

Night Ferry. (1976). Film. Directed by David Eady. UK : Eady-Barnes Productions Ltd.

No Holiday For Inochkin (Original title: *Dobro pozhalovat, ili Postoronnim vkhod vospreshchen*) (1964). Film. Directed by Elem Klimov. Soviet Union: Mosfilm / Cine-Lingual Ltd.

Nosey Dobson. (1976). Film. Directed by Michael Alexander. UK: Pelicula Films Ltd.

Nullarbor Hideout (1964). Short. Directed by Tim Burstall. Australia: ACCFT / Australian Commonwealth Film Unit.

On the Run. (1968). Film. Directed by Pat Jackson. UK: Derrick Williams Productions Ltd.

One Hour to Zero. (1976). Film. Directed by Jeremy Summers. UK: Charles Barker Films.

One Wish Too Many. (1956). Film. Directed by John Durst. UK: Realist Film Unit Ltd.

Operation Third Form. (1966). Film. Directed by David Eady. UK : Worldwide Pictures Ltd.

Out of the Darkness. (1985). Film. Directed by John Krish. UK : Childrens Film and Television Foundation Productions.

Paganini Strikes Again. (1973). Film. Directed by Gerry O'Hara. UK: Interfilm (London) Ltd.

The Peregrine Hunters (1978). Film. Directed by Cecil Petty. UK: Mark Forstater Productions.

Peril for the Guy. (1956). Film. Directed by James Hill. UK: Worldwide Pictures.

The Piper's Tune (1962). Film. Directed by Muriel Box. UK: Association of Cinema Technicians

Playground Express. (1955). Short. Directed by John Irwin. UK: Grendon Films Ltd.

Play Safe. (1978). Short. Directed by David Eady. UK: Barrier Films Ltd.

Pop Pirates. (1984). Film. Directed by Jack Grossman. UK: Welbeck Films Ltd.

Raising the Roof. (1972). Film. Directed by Michael Forlong. UK: Michael Forlong Productions Ltd.

The Rescue Squad (1963). Film. Directed by Colin Bell. UK: Worldwide Pictures.

Robin Hood Junior. (1975). Film. Directed by Matt McCarthy & John Black. UK: Brocket Productions Ltd.

Rockets in the Dunes. (1960). Film. Directed by William Hammond. UK: Anvil Films Ltd.

Rover Makes Good. (1952). Short. Directed by John Dooley. UK: Plymouth Films Ltd.

Runaway Railway. (1965). Film. Directed by Jan Darnley-Smith. UK: Fanfare Films Ltd.

The Salvage Gang (1958). Film. Directed by John Krish. UK: Worldwide Pictures.

Sammy's Super T-Shirt. (1978). Film. Directed by Jeremy Summers. UK: Monument Films Ltd.

Scramble. (1970). Film. Directed by David Eady. UK: Eady-Barnes Productions Ltd.

The Sea Children (1973). Film. Directed by David Andrews. UK: Pan Productions Ltd.

Seal Island. (1972). Film. Directed by Ronny Spencer. UK: Pacesetter Productions.

The Secret Cave (1953). Film. Directed by John Durst. UK: Merton Park Studios.

The Secret of the Forest (1956). Film. Directed by Darcy Conyers. UK: Rayant Pictures Ltd.

The Secret Tunnel (1948). Film. Directed by William C. Hammond. UK: CEF / Merton ParkStudios.

Seventy Deadly Pills. (1964). Film. Directed by Pat Jackson.UK: Derrick Williams Productions.

Six Bears and a Clown (Original title: *Sest medvedu s Cibulkou*) (1972). Film. Directed by Oldrich Lipský. West Germany / Czechoslovakia: Barrandov Film Studios / Cine-Lingual Ltd.

Skid Kids. (1953). Film. Directed by Don Chaffey. UK: Bushey Film Studios Ltd.

Skinny and Fatty (Original title: *Chibideka monogatari)* (1958). Film. Directed by Juchiki Uno. Japan: Wakasugi / Cine-Lingual Ltd.

The Sky-Bike (1967). Film. Directed by Charles Frend. UK: Eyeline Films Ltd.

Sky Pirates. (1977). Film. Directed by Cyril Montague Pennington-Richards. UK: Ansus Films Ltd.

Small Smoke at Blaze Creek. (1971). Short. Directed by Michael J. F. Scott. Canada: NFB Canada / Canadian Forest Service.

Smokey Joe's Revenge. (1974). Film. Directed by Ronny Spencer. UK: Pacesetter Productions.

Soap Box Derby. (1958). Film. Directed by Darcy Conyers. UK: Rayant Pictures Ltd.

Stable Rivals. (1952). Short. Directed by Leonard Reeve. UK: Anglo-Scottish Pictures.

*The Stolen Airliner (*1955). Film. Directed by Don Sharp. UK: Associated British-Pathe Ltd.

The Stolen Plans (1953). Film. Directed by James Hill. UK: Gaumont British Picture Corporation.

Summer Holiday. (1973). Short. Directed by Philip Leacock. UK: Lion Pacesetter Productions.

Supersonic Saucer. (1956). Film. Directed by S.C. (Guy) Fergusson. UK: Gaumont British Picture Corporation.

Swift Water. (1952). Short. Directed by Tony Thompson. UK: Documentary Technicians Alliance.

Terry on the Fence. (1985). Film. Directed by Frank Godwin. UK: Eyeline Films Ltd.

That's an Order. (1955). Short. Directed by John Irwin. UK: Grendon Films Ltd.

They Found a Cave. (1962). Film. Directed by Andrew Steane. Australia: Visatone Island Films Ltd.

Tightrope to Terror. (1983). Film. Directed by Robert Kellett. UK: Childrens Film Foundation Productions.

Tim O'Driscoll's Donkey. (1955). Film. Directed by Terry Bishop. UK: Bushey Film Studios Ltd.

To the Rescue. (1952). Short. Directed by Jacques Brunius. UK: Massingham Productions.

Toto and the Poachers. (1958). Film. Directed by Brian Salt. UK : World Safari Ltd.

Trapped by the Giant (Original title: *Kekec*) Film. Directed by Joze Gale. Yugoslavia: Triglav Films / Anvil Films.

Treasure at the Mill. (1956). Film. Directed by Max Anderson. UK: Wallace Productions Ltd.

Troublesome Double, The (1967). Film. Directed by Milo Lewis. UK: Interfilm (London) Ltd.

Up in the Air. (1969). Film. Directed by Jan Darnley-Smith. UK: Fanfare Films.

Watch Out! (1953). Short. Directed by Don Chaffey. UK: Grendon Films Ltd.

What Next? (1974). Film. Directed by Peter Smith. UK: Kingsgate Films (London) Ltd.

Where's Johnny? (1974). Film. Directed by David Eady. UK: Eady-Barnes Productions Ltd.

Wings of Mystery. (1963). Film. Directed by Gilbert Gunn. UK: Rayant Pictures Ltd.

The Wreck Raisers (1972). Film. Directed by Harold Orton. UK: Eyeline Films Ltd.

You, Your Pets and Neighbours. (1972). Short. Directed by Rhonda Small. UK: Anvil Films Ltd.

The Zoo Robbery (1973). Film. Directed by Matt McCarthy & John Black. UK: Cine-Lingual Ltd.

FILM SERIALS PRODUCED FOR THE CHILDREN'S FILM FOUNDATION

The Adventures of Rex (1959). 5-part series. Directed by Leonard Reeve. UK : Anglo-Scottish Pictures Ltd.

Ali and the Camel. (1961). 8-part series. Film. Directed by Henry Geddes. UK : World Safari Ltd.

Ambush at Devil's Gap. (1966). 6-part series. Directed by David Eastman. UK :Rayant Pictures Ltd.

Beware of the Dog. (1963). 6-part series. Directed by Philip Ford. UK : Mandarin Films Ltd.

The Boy with Two Heads (1974). 7-part series. Directed by Jonathan Ingrams. UK : Eyeline Productions

The Carrington School Mystery (1958). 8-part series. Directed by William Hammond. UK : British Films Ltd.

The Chiffy Kids (1978). 6-part series. Directed by David Bracknell. UK : Anvil Film and Recording Group.

The Chiffy Kids (series two). (1979). 6-part series. Directed by David Bracknell. UK : Anvil Film and Recording Group.

Chimpmates. (1978). 6-part series. Directed by Harold Orton. UK : Eyeline Films Ltd.

Chimpmates (series two). (1978). 6-part series. Directed by Harold Orton. UK : Eyeline Films Ltd.

Chimpmates (series three). (1978). 6-part series. Directed by Harold Orton. UK : Eyeline Films Ltd.

Danny the Dragon. (1966). 10-part series. Directed by Pennington Richards. UK : Angus Films Ltd.

The Dawn Killer (1959). 8-part series. Directed by Donald Taylor. UK : Associated British-Pathe Ltd.

Dead End Creek (1965)

Five Clues to Fortune. (1957). 8-part series. Directed by Joe Mendoza. UK : Merton Park Productions.

Five Have a Mystery to Solve. (1964). 6-part series. Directed by John Durst. UK : Rayant Pictures Ltd.

Five on a Treasure Island. (1957). 8-part series. Directed by Gerald Landau. UK : Rank Screen Services Ltd.

Fourwinds Island. (1961). 8-part series. Directed by David Villiers. UK : Merton Park Productions.

The Ghost of Monk's Island (1967). 7-part series. Directed by Jeremy Summers. UK. Countrywide Film Producers Ltd.

A Letter From…. (1951-54). 4-part newsreel series. Various directors. UK : Clarke and Hornby Productions.

The Magnificent Six and a Half (1968). 6-part series. Directed by Harry Booth. UK: Century Film Productions.

The Magnificent Six and a Half (series two). (1968). 6-part series. Directed by Harry Booth. UK: Century Film Productions.

The Magnificent Six and a Half (series three). (1968). 6-part series. Directed by Harry Booth. UK: Century Film Productions.

Masters of Venus. (1962). 8-part series. Directed by Ernest Morris. UK: Wallace Productions Ltd.

The Mystery in the Mine (1959). 8-part series. Directed by James Hill. UK: Merton Park Productions.

Night Cargoes. (1962). 8-part series. Directed by Ernest Morris. UK: Film Producers Guild.

Our Magazine. (1951-56). 15-part Magazine series. Various directors. UK : Wallace Productions Ltd.

Professor Popper's Problems. (1974). 6-part series. Directed by Gerry O'Hara. UK: Mersey Film Productions.

Project Z. (1968). 8-part series. Directed by Ronald Spencer. UK: Lion Pacesetter Productions.

Raiders of the River. (1956). 8-part series. Directed by John Haggarty. UK: Merton Park Studios.

Rangi's Catch. (1972). 8-part series. Directed by Michael Forlong. UK: Michael Forlong Productions Ltd.

River Rivals. (1967). 7-part series. Directed by Harry Booth. UK: Century Film Productions.

Son of the Sahara. (1966). 8-part series. Directed by Frederic Goode. UK : Associated British-Pathe Ltd.

Treasure in Malta. (1963). 6-part series. Directed by Derek Williams. UK: Anvil Films Ltd.

The Trouble with 2B (1972). 6-part series. Directed by Peter K. Smith. UK: Balfour Films Ltd.

The Unbroken Arrow (1976). 6-part series. Directed by Matt McCarthy & John Black. UK: Brocket Productions Ltd.

Valley of the Kings. (1964). 6-part series. Directed by Frederic Goode. UK : Associated British-Pathe Ltd.

The Young Detectives (1963). 8-part series. Directed by Gilbert Gunn. UK: Littleton Park Film Productions.

The Young Jacobites (1960). 8-part series. Directed by John Reeve. UK: Rayant Pictures Ltd

COMPILATIONS PRODUCED FOR THE CHILDREN'S FILM FOUNDATION

Thirteen compilations of clips from CFF productions were made in the 1970s, for distribution to matinee clubs to promote the Foundations catalogue. Compiled by Gordon L. Shadrick for Anvil Films, they were all around 20 minutes long. The titles were:

Crime Doesn't Pay (introduced by David Lodge)

Don't Make Me Laugh (introduced by David Attenborough)

Saturday, Lovely Saturday (introduced by Leslie Crowther)

Always on Saturday (introduced by Leslie Crowther and David Lodge)

Saturday Special (introduced by Leslie Crowther and David Lodge)

Super Saturday (introduced by Leslie Crowther)

Yesterday and Today (introduced by Bernard Cribbens)

Michael Rodd Introduces…

Ed Stewart Introduces…

Rolf Harris Introduces…

Valerie Singleton Introduces…

Keith Chegwin Introduces…

In the Projection Box with Rod Hull and Emu