

## Ian Cameron

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[*Oxford Opinion*] ...was a general student magazine that happened to have delusions of grandeur at the time. The film section was perhaps six pages, and I was responsible for that with three others; Mark Shivas, Victor Perkins and someone called Gary Broughton who went into teaching and didn't stay in film criticism ... The important period would be summer term 1960 and autumn term 1960. I seem to remember it coinciding with finals ...

**Q:** *Not detrimentally I hope?*

No! And there were in all, probably half a dozen issues.

**Q:** *Had it been in existence as a magazine before you became involved?*

Yes it had. It existed as a magazine, I think, on a more or less once a term basis. Indeed, I did one long film piece for it (which was actually the first extended thing I had ever written on film) on, of all things, Roger Vadim. And then it changed. But both Mark and I, particularly Mark, had been writing for other student magazines at Oxford. Around that time we also started to write for *Film*, which was the Film Societies magazine.

**Q:** *What were you actually studying at Oxford?*

I was doing Zoology, Mark was doing Law, Victor was doing History.

**Q:** *What was the impulse behind your becoming interested in film, and doing the work at Oxford?*

Well in my particular case, and I think it was probably the same for Victor but not for Mark, it was National Service – I was in the Airforce, Victor in the Army – getting stuck in the middle of nowhere with nothing to do except go to the cinema five times a week. Which we did, and saw therefore, a very large number of films – mainly films of the 50s, nothing particularly early. The period we were in the services was 55 to 57 and at this point I started reading *Sight and Sound* and *Monthly Film Bulletin*. I suppose the initial impulse was the purely practical one that we went to movies, saw things we really liked, thought were really good, and then read the review in *Sight and Sound*, the reviews in the papers and they said, 'just another over-long Hollywood movie'. It was as practical a thing as that. From there, I had no thought about getting involved in film criticism. I suppose the next stage was Victor and me becoming involved in running the Film Society in Oxford – and coming out of that was the invitation to write, first of all for *Cherwell* for which Mark was film editor and which was edited by Peter Preston, who eventually became editor of *The Guardian*. Obviously where we started was reviewing what came on at the local cinemas and, apart from the one long piece I'd written, it was not until we got to *Oxford Opinion* that we began writing at length.

What I wouldn't care to say (Victor might have some more formed ideas on this than I have) is at exactly what point we became conscious of what was happening in France. Certainly it was not where we started from, and I don't think that in the period of *Oxford Opinion* *Cahiers* featured very large, if at all, in our consciousness. You have to realise between *Oxford Opinion* and *Movie* there was a fallow period of two years where we saw a whole lot more movies and read more. I think in general it is true to say that the impulse behind *Movie* was in no way a theoretical

one. It was reacting to films we liked, and trying to say what we liked about them, which led in due course to an interest in direction and, to some degree, towards a more text-based criticism than was current at the time.

Important in the genesis of *Movie* is what else was happening at the time. *Sight and Sound*, which was the dominant film journal in Britain, had been taken over in the early 50s by the people from *Sequence* – Lindsay Anderson, Karel Reisz, Gavin Lambert and their side-kick Penelope Houston. Led by Anderson, they had moved towards a vaguely left wing 'committed' process, where the important operation is seen to be evaluation rather than analysis. At the point when *Movie* emerged – in fact it may even have been *Oxford Opinion* – others were trying to go further along in this direction, which seemed to us entirely sterile. If you look at some of the early issues of *Movie* you will find us tackling films which on an obvious content level we might have found ... I was going to say 'repugnant' but that's perhaps putting it a bit strong – things like Fleischer's *Barabbas* or, in an even more extreme way, Leo McCarey's *Satan Never Sleeps* which is stridently anti-communist and pro-catholic. I've always seen *Movie* as having moved from a practical concern towards any theoretical content or worked-out-attitude that might emerge later. I haven't read Victor's piece on British Cinema in the first *Movie* for a long time (because, although it was ostensibly the editorial board, it was actually predominantly Victor) but I think it was trying to nail the simplistic attitudes of what else was happening at the time. By the time of *Movie*, June 1962, the first films from the *Cahiers* group had appeared, and we were well aware of what *Cahiers* was doing. In fact, we printed the odd bit in English – the Chabrol piece, a Rivette piece on Hawks. The latter we edited because we felt it contained quite a bit of garbage.

**Q:** *Yes, the 'Big themes, Little themes' piece in *Movie* 1.*

Well it was an obvious thing to translate from *Cahiers* as a starter, as it did link in with Victor's piece on British Cinema.

**Q:** *The idea being that ‘meaning’ in a film isn’t necessarily contained in the plot or in the dialogue, but elsewhere?*

There had been a tendency to look at films in an overall, rather than concentrated, way and to take from them basically what the plot synopsis told you was in there. One of the things we were interested in was trying to get to grips with the decisions that were being made, whether it was in terms of camera movement or camera position – which was what we were trying to do (and, I may say, attracted widespread derision for doing) in the Minnelli piece: ‘Why does the camera go up now?’, ‘Because he’s watching the sky.’; which I still feel was a valid attempt. And other things, like the order of presentation of information in a film which emerges, I think, in the pieces on Hitchcock. Definitely, we were interested in the detail in a way that people had not been.

This did not purely involve the American cinema. The biggest article I did at this point was one on Antonioni which didn’t appear in *Movie* – it was a whole issue of *Film Quarterly*, and then we published it as a separate publication. (Eventually it became the first part of a *Movie* paperback for which the later films (after *L’Eclisse*), which I disliked, were covered by Robin Wood.) This was in 1962, or it might have been 1963. It took me a long time to write it because of the key difference between dealing with films then and dealing with films now – no video.

**Q:** *That was something I was going to ask you. The technology you had at your disposal for attempting close analysis – was it just public screenings or ...?*

Yes. Basically, it was all done in public screenings. Which meant in order to deal with *L’Avventura* I saw it eight times, at public screenings. And it meant that something which turned up once or twice at the NFT presented a considerable challenge! I got very good at writing notes in the dark. For the Antonioni book the only one I was able to view on a Prevoist, or similar, was *Le Amiche* – and that was very interesting because I found one could actually do a whole lot more if one could sit down with the thing, run it backwards and forwards and play with it. But this

was just not available to us because at that point none of us were involved in film teaching, not that there was any. The first academic thing that happened in Britain was in 1960. Thorold Dickinson was made Lecturer in Film at the Slade (which is part of UCL) and the impact of that was that there were two research students per year. I think Ray Durgnat was one in the first year, and Charles Barr was one in the second year – and it was through Charles that I got access to the Prevoist. But apart from that, it was all accomplished at public screenings.

**Q:** *Is that the case right the way through those first nineteen issues?*

Yes. Which meant that if you wanted to do something extended on a film that was not current, you tended to have to travel all over London to all sorts of cinemas.

**Q:** *Must have become quite expensive!*

The key cinemas like the *Tolmer*, which was a converted church of some sort by Warren Street tube station, cost, even in the sixties, only 1s.9d (which is less than ten pence). The *Rex* in Islington, which is now *The Screen on the Green*, was about the same. So it wasn’t particularly expensive – if it had been we wouldn’t have been able to do it.

**Q:** *In your introduction to the *Movie Reader* you talk about the ‘prevalent woolliness’ of the existing British criticism. Was the desire for empiricism very important?*

Yes. There were all sorts of clichés flying around and a general lack of empiricism. A reasonable example is the idea of the ‘anti-war’ movie. The number of war movies that could be counted as pro-war movies is really pretty limited, and in that most war movies tend to show war as a rather unpleasant experience they can all, or almost all, be taken as anti-war movies. Yet almost the main evaluative term about war movies at this point was whether or not they were ‘anti-war’. Which in general, with a few exceptions of a heart-on-sleeve nature like Stanley Kubrick, meant *not American*. This is one area, another

is the fact that critics weren’t bothering to *look*. If you read the reviews of *Rio Bravo* – which emerged in Britain, I think, in 1960 which was a rather crucial moment for *Oxford Opinion*, and us – you will find that they were almost all saying ‘another John Wayne movie, *much* too long, an example of Hollywood current inflation, etc. etc.’ and not noticing that actually the thing was rather tautly constructed. So we did want to make everything more analytical, clearer. We wanted to do this, I suppose, to explain what was good in directors that were being ignored; for all sorts of reasons, many of them straightforward ‘cultural gap’ reasons. An obvious example is Frank Tashlin. He was just seen as irredeemably vulgar and this was at the point when he had just made his handful of really good movies, which had passed without note – like *The Girl Can’t Help It* where the critics were totally unable to see beyond Jayne Mansfield and Rock ‘n’ Roll. It was something that I thought extremely good at the time, and there was no one else to say it. They were in fact saying it in France, which I certainly wasn’t aware of when I first saw *The Girl Can’t Help It*. Trying to clarify detailed responses to film was, I think, *Movie’s* main feature. The fact that it happened to have a second characteristic which was a taste for the American cinema probably concealed this from at least part of *Movie’s* public at first, and quite a lot of critics. Certainly the operations we chose to perform on the American cinema could be, and *were*, eventually, performed on the European cinema .... I suppose an image of the difference between the way people who wrote on *Movie* looked at cinema and the way others did can be seen in our reaction to the three dominant, early, New Wave directors from France. Virtually all critical opinion in Britain and America preferred Truffaut to everyone. And you can see exactly why they did, because *Les Quatre Cents Coups* is a very heart-on-sleeve movie. We, on the other hand, liked Chabrol which invited a very different response. *Les Bonnes Femmes*, which was widely hated at the time, is actually a movie which demands a much more complex and detailed response than early Truffaut.

**Q:** *Were there any modes, or models of close analysis, within literary criticism that you might have been aware of, do you think?*

Absolutely not. Indeed, I think one of the things about early *Movie* was the absence of English degrees around the place, the fact that we were coming to it without any background in literary criticism. Certainly in my case, as someone who was doing a science degree, I had not read any literary criticism. This changed a bit with the arrival of Charles and, particularly, Robin Wood whose background was much more in this area (although I think Charles' first degree was not English, Robin's most certainly was) and that did introduce another element. No, the literary models were just not taken account of, and indeed if anyone had suggested to us that that might be a way to go I think they would have met with some resistance. The idea that cinema could be treated as a more or less literary medium, rather than a more or less visual medium, would have made us not at all eager to look in that direction. As for myself, I was much more interested in the directions indicated in the Lawrence Alloway article, in *Movie* 7, which I suspect has been more anthologised than anything else *Movie* ever did. And rightly so.

**Q:** *It certainly prefigures a lot of later approaches, doesn't it?*

Yes, that and Alloway's book for the Museum of Modern Art, on thrillers and violence, which is also very good. In fact Alloway, who by the late 50s / early 60s had quite a big reputation as an art critic, was one of our more vociferous supporters. Although it never surfaced very much he, and I believe also the architectural critic Reyner Banham, had tastes in movies very similar to *Movie's* tastes in movies before *Movie* came along. Somewhere (I've never been able to track it down, but I heard it from Alloway) Reyner Banham is in print as saying 'Written on the Wind is the movie that sorts out the men from the boys', which is not something that you would expect *Sight and Sound* to be saying at the time.

**Q:** *So, in the period between Oxford Opinion and Movie you had encountered a fair amount of French criticism.*

Yes. We were all, I think, limited by not being particularly confident readers in French. So while one collected *Cahiers du Cinéma* and leafed through it, I'm not sure how much in detail we took from it. Victor reckons that we mainly looked at the interviews, and I'm inclined to agree. We certainly took pointers in terms of what we should go and see from it – the idea of the importance of direction, *mise-en-scène*, I guess not. The works of André Bazin had not been collected in English at the time, and the important ones were quite early in *Cahiers'* existence. I think that it was a matter of us, in a parallel and I guess much less intellectual way, finding that we shared a lot of *Cahiers'* tastes and approaches. But I don't think there was anything more worked out than that.

**Q:** *The term mise-en-scène itself... I had imagined that's where it came from, is that the case?*

I'm just wondering where the term *mise-en-scène* came from. There don't seem to be many other candidates around. It was certainly not current as a critical term. You wouldn't have got Dilys Powell or C.A. Lejeune talking about the *mise-en-scène*. So I guess it must have come from *Cahiers*. I'd be very interested. Undoubtedly if you are reading all this stuff you will discover what the first use of *mise-en-scène* in *Movie* is. I doubt you'll find it in *Oxford Opinion*.

**Q:** *I think the first time is in the first issue in Mark Shivas' piece on Minnelli which precedes the interview, he slips it in on the second page.*

Ah, does he? It is difficult now to think back and remember how self-consciously one was using the term *mise-en-scène*. Certainly we recognised direction as the key function ....

**Q:** *I was going to ask how much attention to style and mise-en-scène come hand in hand with an interest in authorship?*

I suppose the interest in authorship came partly out of seeing lots of movies, initially unselectively, and discovering that the common link between the ones you liked was not that they were all made by Columbia, or starred Alan Ladd, but that they were directed by people one hadn't been instructed by the critics to notice. There was always the view, which is of course not entirely without truth, that film is an art form involving groups of people rather than single people. This always seemed, oddly, applicable to Hollywood but not to similar operations in France. The formulation of the idea of a director as author might, I think, have been stimulated by *Cahiers*. The idea had been floating about in our minds before that. We were always clear, in a way that I think *Cahiers* were not, that there were other things in movies that could be crucial – whether a star or a script-writer or what have you – and this had undoubtedly occurred to us by the start of *Movie*. But amongst directors there were those who could almost be relied on to produce a remarkable product and there were, at the other end of the scale, those who could be relied on to screw it up. And in between there were a lot of other people who could produce staggeringly good movies if the stimuli were right and really appalling ones if they were not. Richard Fleischer is a particularly good example – The range between *Mandingo* and *The Spikes Gang* is very wide!

**Q:** *It was the act of direction, and those sort of questions, that interested you rather than a polemic around who is an 'auteur' or not?*

Ah, the whole 'auteur' thing comes from another source.

**Q:** *Andrew Sarris?*

Andrew Sarris. Those who were in the general area of *Movie* included the British contingent and also three Americans – Andrew Sarris, Eugene Archer (who was the second film critic on *The New York Times*) and then, and entirely separately, Peter Bogdanovich. There was also a Swede Stig Björkman and a Spaniard José Luis Guarner who shared a lot with us, and in fact Guarner

was responsible for the translation of some of the books into Spanish. Sarris, who unlike the rest of us had a regular critical niche (in *The Village Voice*), had – the word ‘soundbite’ comes to mind – had identified something which was lurking in *Movie 1* in that histogram of directors. But he had identified this, more strongly than the rest of us, as something that was in effect marketable, and he then took it to absurd lengths – the ‘is he / is he not an auteur’ view. I would say that all directors are ‘auteurs’ but the likes of Fred Zinnemann are lousy ones. Whereas Andrew definitely saw auteurship as various levels of state of grace. That was, I think, actually going off in not merely a wrong direction but rather a dangerous one because it allowed everyone else to take a very simplistic attitude to what we were trying to do.

**Q:** *It gave director-centred criticism a bad name which, in a way, it is still trying to shake off today.*

Yes. Certainly we were much more about text-based criticism than about trying to sort out ‘the pantheon’, which is a foolish occupation because we all have our own. It’s not a matter of great significance that I like Joseph M. Newman movies and it’s not going to be significant unless I happen to be able to make a case for them, which I never did. No, the whole ‘auteur’ thing I see now as a slight red herring, though at the time I also saw it as an annoyance that Andrew was attracting a lot of publicity for what really didn’t seem to be helping the cause of what we were trying to talk about.

**Q:** *You mentioned André Bazin, earlier on, as someone whose earlier articles you certainly wouldn’t have seen, but people have suggested that *Movie* is in a line of descent, a tradition, from Bazin. Do you feel there is any validity in this view?*

Only in the most ill-defined way. If one takes Bazin as being the person who set out early in *Cahiers* a lot of the ideas that *Cahiers* espoused, *Movie* certainly espoused quite a lot of the same ideas. But I think they were probably differently articulated and if there was a direct link it was almost by osmosis – from reading things in

*Cahiers* which would have been somewhat informed by Bazin’s view. I think the people we were reading, as far as we read anything in *Cahiers*, were probably Chabrol and Rivette .... Certainly I would not for a moment accept any sort of placing of Bazin in the intellectual parentage of early *Movie*.

**Q:** *Do you feel that CinemaScope was a factor in encouraging you toward a style-based form of criticism?*

CinemaScope definitely was important. It was important partly because all the other fellows hated it, and certainly it encouraged us to look at what was happening on the screen. In a slightly different way if you, which I would not recommend, were to look at the thing I wrote on Vadim in 1959 quite a lot of it was on the details of composition and so on .... Hell, it was bigger!

**Q:** *Is it the case that another factor in British criticism at the time was the montage-derived theories of film, and might CinemaScope be seen as nurturing something of an opposition to that?*

There had been, I think, very little action on the theoretical front in cinema. There’s the early Eisenstein and Pudovkin, and then what? ‘What’ is Ernest Lindgren, Béla Balázs, people who actually started from the viewpoint that the theory of the cinema was established by Eisenstein and Pudovkin. It had certainly occurred to us that Eisenstein and Pudovkin were wrong! We were pretty immune to any taste for the Soviet cinema, but no one had really thought about the cinema in those terms when we were writing. I’m sure people had, but in terms of what was published and available it wasn’t around. I think the hostility to CinemaScope came from people whose feeling that montage was the basis of cinema was almost being undermined by CinemaScope, where you can put two heads on the screen at once in close up – gosh! – and, probably intuitively, we took to it. But the currency of montage theory? ... it was lurking somewhere, not much articulated, a sort of ‘fundamental truth’ – as indicated by Alfred Hitchcock, who was only too glad to refer to it.

**Q:** *There is a moment in the ‘*Movie Differences*’ discussion, in *Movie 8*, where you make the point very clearly that editing is not something a director has to use but can use, it being one of the options the director has at his or her disposal.*

It seemed to be self evidently true, and had in fact been noticed before in the work of Gregg Toland for Welles and Wyler. People had said, ‘gosh, here he is playing around with other things than editing’ and no one seemed ever to have taken it any further than that. It’s interesting to note what at that time we *hadn’t* seen, in this context. Before the start of *Movie* we hadn’t seen *Rope* – though we knew about, and were fascinated by, what it was said to do – and we certainly hadn’t seen *Under Capricorn*. Yes, montage was something we all assumed was a tool, not *the* means.

**Q:** *Do you think you were conscious, at the time, that under the ‘umbrella’ term of *mise-en-scène*, or in talking of style, there were a number of quite different ways in which the concept was being used? So, on the one hand you might compare Preminger’s style with Hitchcock’s in terms of where it positions the spectator, and on the other you might talk about *mise-en-scène* as expressive of character in, for example, the Barry Boys piece on *The Courtship of Eddie’s Father*. Were you aware there were a number of different, quite distinct, ways in which you were talking about *mise-en-scène*?*

I think we were happy to use *mise-en-scène* as a rather inclusive term, rather than actually analysing what we meant by it. So, no, I don’t think we went very far in that direction.

**Q:** *How much do you think of early *Movie* writing as an attempt to explain how films work, in relation to the spectator?*

Certainly. The larger articles in *Movie* very often had a dimension of trying to explain how the films we liked (because it will become apparent to you that, on the whole, we only wrote about the films we liked) worked. The article on *The Man Who Knew Too Much* was definitely an attempt in that direction. As was the other Hitchcock

piece I did and I think this is true of many of the better things in *Movie*. Certainly, that's what I was after in the Antonioni piece and I think you will find it was what Charles Barr was up to in the CinemaScope piece, which appeared in *Film Quarterly*. *Film Quarterly* was, incidentally, a journal even more reactionary than *Sight and Sound* at the time, but it was willing to try things. If I had offered them something on Howard Hawks at length, rather than something on Antonioni at length, I think I would have got a resounding negative. But one could get things in there – Charles' piece on CinemaScope.

**Q:** *Did you attempt submitting articles to Sight and Sound?*

No. We saw *Sight and Sound*, and the British Film Institute in general, as the enemy. If you look at the first issue of *Oxford Opinion*, there is a lengthy dissection (and when I say lengthy probably I mean 2000–3000 words because film criticism has definitely got longer) of a British Film Institute publication, which purported to identify the fifty best films ever made. The BFI was firmly identified as what we were against – I suppose, in fact, we gained some of our identity from that very thing. Also the tastes that we displayed and the views that we'd expressed were taken, quite wrongly, to mean that as we were not obviously left wing critics (in the sense that the people on *Definition*, the left wing film magazine of the time, were) therefore we had to be right wing critics. And liking the odd Leo McCarey movie was merely going to confirm this. No, *Sight and Sound* was not something we ever wanted to get in and write for. After *Oxford Opinion*, which got us noticed, what we wanted to do was start our own magazine – and having got noticed by the press, we thought that the people who ran magazine empires would only be too glad for us to do it. We were, of course, wrong.

**Q:** *Do you feel, in retrospect, that many of the directors you were writing about – Ray, Minnelli, even Preminger – were directors that would, a decade later, be celebrated as melodrama directors and do you feel that there might be a generic specificity to 'mise-en-scène'.*

We certainly liked films that were melodramas. We enjoyed, I suppose, excess. The flippant Reyner Banham quote about *Written on the Wind* actually is quite significant because liking *Written on the Wind* is automatically a statement against a certain good taste and dignity.

**Q:** *Sirk, although I believe there is something on him in Oxford Opinion, is not a figure who is particularly noticeable in early Movie.*

He was right at the end of his career, don't forget. One unfortunate feature of *Movie* is that *Movie* came out as the great days of the American cinema were drawing to an end. *Oxford Opinion* more or less coincided with *Rio Bravo* and *Psycho*, the beginning of *Movie* coincided more or less with *Advise and Consent*. Hollywood was definitively falling apart. There was a regrettable fact that a lot of the directors we espoused realised they were auteurs, moved to Europe and started making lousy movies. Anthony Mann, Tashlin, Nick Ray for that matter, had all made their best movies by the time *Movie* started. So, although we didn't know it, what we were looking at was an area of cinema that was actually in decline.

**Q:** *That's a very good point. I had been wondering why, say, Preminger whose style is so effaced as to be almost invisible at times caught your enthusiasm and attention whereas someone like Sirk who is much more obviously working with elements of mise-en-scène didn't seem to be so much of a focus. But I suppose that's a very good reason – that Preminger was bringing out films the whole time through that period ...*

Yes. That is, I think, very important. Preminger was actually more available. When we saw the Sirks, we loved them. But I think the only one we saw in the days of *Oxford Opinion* was *Tarnished Angels*, and we had to go to a flea-pit 15 miles out of Oxford to see that – and it was astonishing. But so too was, say, Losey's *Time Without Pity* which was a movie made in Britain which is, as I remember it, devoid of what were seen as the strengths of British cinema. I suppose the idea of melodrama was

not definitely articulated at this point, and had it been we would have undoubtedly said, 'Gosh, yes, melodrama – a lot of what we like is melodrama'. But then a lot of what we liked were westerns. The other thing that was absent, apart from video which has allowed one to study film in detail, was television as a source of almost limitless films to watch.

**Q:** *And films from the past, I suppose?*

Yes. The thing about obvious (not in the derogatory sense of the word) *mise-en-scène* as exemplified by Sirk as opposed to Preminger reminds me of another aspect. There was one other area of film criticism from France which was the MacMahonists. There was a cinema in Paris called *Le MacMahon*, and a group of people around it who produced a magazine that ran for a few issues, called *Présence du Cinéma*. They were into directors who maintained a totally naturalistic surface. What they liked was Preminger, Tourneur, Walsh, early Losey. There was a defining moment in *The Criminal* when the background light dims behind someone in a totally artificial manner, which was the moment at which these guys parted company from Losey. It took the rest of us a few films more. Again, it is very difficult to analyse now, but availability was a big part of what shaped our tastes – and what was conspicuously absent was the American cinema of the 40s, the movies that Andrew [Britton] loved. Bette Davis movies were just not around. There were two routes to the American cinema of the past. One was what you could catch at a flea-pit, which was shown with the reels not necessarily in the right order and usually substantially damaged, but that got you back to the early 50s. The other source was film societies and the NFT, but this was a very limited view which included Frank Capra, Frank Capra, and Frank Capra. *Bringing Up Baby* was allowed. The Capras included *Mr Smith* and *Mr Deeds*. And a rather random selection of other things, Cukor was three films, no four – *Pat and Mike* and *Adam's Rib* were accepted, *Born Yesterday* was accepted, not as a Cukor movie but as a Judy Holliday movie, and *The Philadelphia Story* which was nice and stage-play-based. Apart from that,

the period from 39 to 49 was represented by *Stagecoach*, *Citizen Kane*, *The Best Years of Our Lives*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *The Oxbow Incident* ... very little else. That was really all we had seen of the 40s ... Victor and I managed to get a few other things that were available for the Film Society in Oxford. There was quite a lot still floating around in 16mm.

**Q:** *Just returning, for a moment, to the MacMahonists. Where were you encountering their views?*

They came over. At some point, I cannot remember exactly when it was, they came over and hired themselves a small viewing theatre in Covent Garden and 16mm copies of everything they could lay their hands on. This is how I got to see things like the early 40s movies of Edward G. Ulmer, they had not merely *Detour* but things like *Club Havana* which were of no great import but at least one got to see them, and a lot of Raoul Walsh, like *Salty O'Rourke*.

**Q:** *Was it a commercial venture or was it artistic ...?*

Oh, their hiring of a viewing theatre was purely for their own delight and instruction. I suspect they were in a position to afford it. There were two of them, one was a man called Pierre Rissient who has turned up on the television – I think he became a PR person, particularly for American directors much in the way Tavernier did. I forget who the other person was ... but we saw quite a lot of films. Mainly, we got our film-going through a keen study of *What's on in London* and being ready to go to very strange places.

**Q:** *And the interest in 'invisibility' – do you in retrospect feel that to be important ...?*

Yes .... Of course, that led us towards directors who simply hadn't been noticed – invisibility in *mise-en-scène* was a sure recipe for invisibility in terms of critical reputation.

**Q:** *It strikes me that many of the articles in early *Movie* make the same points that one would wish to today, in the light of feminist theory and other debates that have had an impact*

*on the study of film – which I feel is something of a testament to the method, and to the films themselves.*

That is, of course, very cheering. In a way it is almost a natural product of trying to go into films without great preconceptions. Trying to see what they are saying or doing, rather than assessing them against a standard of what you would like them to say or do. What people would like films to be saying or doing is really rather too important in most mainstream criticism of the late 50s.

**Q:** *Finally, is there anything else in particular which you feel we haven't covered but that would be important to talk about?*

I'm sure the key to the early *Movie* is that it was very much something that was designed to work from the ground up, from analysis of detail, and that any theoretical overview emerged from that. If there is something we opposed more than anything else it was doing it the other way around ....

**Q:** *Do you think your scientific background helped in that respect?*

Oh, Certainly. I went to movies wanting to look. And I think one might have done that to a greater extent, more successfully, had the technology that is now available, been available then – and had we been situated in institutions of higher learning rather than variously scratching a living.