



O DREAMLAND! LINDSAY ANDERSON'S DARK BRITISH CINEMA

Lindsay Anderson vs the Short Films Industry

+ intro by Patrick Russell, Senior Curator of Non-fiction, BFI National Archive

Idlers That Work

Director: Lindsay Anderson
Production Company: Richard O'Brien
Sponsor: Richard Sutcliffe
Producer: Richard O'Brien
Unit Assistants: Bill Longley, Geoff Oakes, Ernest Slinger, George Wilby
Continuity: Lois Sutcliffe
Cinematographer: George Levy
Music: Ralph Vaughan Williams, Aaron Copland
With:
Lindsay Anderson (*commentator*)
UK 1949
17 mins
35mm

Three Installations

Directed by: Lindsay Anderson
Made by: Sutcliffe Film Unit
Presented by: Richard Sutcliffe Ltd.
Produced by: Dermod Sutcliffe
Production Manager: John Exley
Unit Assistant: Vincent Young
Photography by: Walter Lassally
Additional Photography: John Jones
Assistant Cameraman: Desmond Davis
Editor: Derek York
Laboratory Work: George Humphries & Co.
Music (Piano): Alan Clare
Music (Drums): Johnny Flanagan
Orchestral Music from: Copland, Gillis, Katchachurian
Sound Recorderist: Charles Green
UK 1952
24 mins
35mm

£20 per Ton

Director: Lindsay Anderson
Production Company: Basic Films
Sponsor: National Industrial Fuel Efficiency Service
Producer: Leon Clore
Production Manager: John Fletcher
Cinematographer: Larry Pizer
UK 1955
5 mins
Digital

Henry

Director: Lindsay Anderson [*uncredited*]
A film by: Basic Films
End log: NSPCC
Photography: Walter Lassally [*uncredited*]
Sound System: Western Electric Recording
UK 1955
5 mins
16mm

Green and Pleasant Land

Director: Lindsay Anderson
Production Companies: Western Electric, Basic Films
Sponsor: NSPCC
Producer: Leon Clore
Script: Lindsay Anderson
Cinematographer: Walter Lassally
UK 1955
3 mins
16mm

Anderson spent some time toiling in Britain's sponsored shorts industry. This screening explores the intriguing relationship between this thriving post-war sector and the combative young filmmaker-critic. It features rare early Anderson pieces, including the Oscar-winning *Thursday's Children*.

Idlers That Work

Between 1948 and 1954, Anderson made four films for the Yorkshire industrial firm, Richard Sutcliffe Ltd: *Meet the Pioneers* (1948), *Idlers That Work*, (1949), *Three Installations* (1952) and *Trunk Conveyor* (1954). *Idlers that Work* shows conveyor belt idlers in construction and operation.

Three Installations

How fortunate that Lindsay Anderson should bump into Lois Sutcliffe at a gathering of film societies in 1947. The meeting resulted not only in a warm friendship which lasted until Anderson's death in 1994, but also in the start of his filmmaking career. Sutcliffe soon commissioned the inexperienced Anderson to make pictures for and about her husband's conveyor belt business, Richard Sutcliffe Ltd and the result was a series of four films, made between 1948 and 1954, of which *Three Installations* is the third and most accomplished.

Watching *Three Installations* now, it is strikingly – irrepressibly – kinetic. The film documents three separate conveyor belt operations at an iron works, a cement plant and a dock construction – so there is some degree of movement built in. But Anderson does all he can to inject even more. Conveyor belts zig-zag across the screen. Shots tumble on swiftly, one after the other. Dials turn, lorries shudder, typewriters bash, and all the while accompanied by a sprightly soundtrack which includes a number called 'Conveyor Boogie'. Yes, this is more lively than Anderson's narration about 'rubber-covered impact idlers' would have you believe.

Which is not to say that there aren't moments of reflection. Working on the first of nine documentaries with the cinematographer Walter Lassally, Anderson incorporates luminous interior shots of 1950s factories, and pulls back to reveal delicate landscape compositions. A scene where heavy boats glide their way into the Manchester canal is playfully reminiscent of one of Anderson's favourite films, Jean Vigo's *L'Atalante* (France, 1934). And, at all times, the camera shows more interest in the people operating the machines than in the machines themselves. As with Anderson's earlier work for the Sutcliffes – especially *Meet the Pioneers* (1948) – there is an honest concern for the working man and woman.

Three Installations is also drenched in raw optimism. Anderson seems to be enjoying himself as he uses conveyor belts to join the dots between the different parts of the industrial process, from design to installation to fabrication to finished product. But the real delight comes in watching the workers interact with one another, weaving themselves into the fabric of society. And so it becomes clear that everyone, from draughtsman to driver, has a place in this particular patchwork. Anderson simply sits above it all, quietly observant, and following E M Forster's dictum – only connect.

Peter Hoskin, BFI Screenonline, screenonline.org.uk

Thursday's Children

Directed by: Guy Brenton, Lindsay Anderson
a Morse production
Presented by: World Wide Pictures
Written by: Guy Brenton, Lindsay Anderson
Camera: Walter Lassally
Music: Geoffrey Wright
Sound System: Western Electric Recording
With:
Richard Burton (commentary spoken by)
The Royal School for the Deaf (with children from)
UK 1954
22 mins
35mm

O DREAMLAND! LINDSAY ANDERSON'S DARK BRITISH CINEMA

Stand Up! Stand Up!

Thu 23 May 20:30

If....

Fri 24 May 12:10; Tue 28 May 20:45

Never Apologize

Fri 24 May 17:50

The Whales of August

Sat 25 May 16:00; Fri 31 May 20:30

Britannia Hospital

Sat 25 May 18:00

If You Were There...

Sat 25 May 20:40; Fri 31 May 18:30

In Collaboration: Anderson and Others

Sun 26 May 18:10

O Lucky Man!

Mon 27 May 19:20

Lindsay Anderson Experimenta Mixtape, curated by Stephen Sutcliffe

Thu 30 May 18:10

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Wintry snowfall in a factory yard contrasts with the furnaces burning within. This film follows the eye of the firm's accountant as he traces waste and excess about the works. The concerns for fuel efficiency and reducing pollution are all about economy, even when the narration talks of coal heating up the atmosphere. Among the wastrels are the workers, who are shooed away from a warming stove.

This early documentary by director Lindsay Anderson hints at his later work with its use of comedy and its glances at class division. Producer Leon Clore was a great supporter of film talent encouraging many young filmmakers en route to feature film success. The film's sponsors meanwhile were a newly formed outfit advising energy users on ways to improve efficiency as the end of rationing, and a growing global market, provoked fuel crises.

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Henry

One of four films Anderson wrote and directed for NSPCC, *Henry* is the story of a small boy who runs away after his parents have quarrelled and wanders around the West End of London until cared for by the NSPCC.

Green and Pleasant Land

An appeal on behalf of the NSPCC, *Green and Pleasant Land* begins with a choir of children singing 'Jerusalem'. It then features shots of the British landscape with narration about Britain's pride in itself, including pride in its treatment of its children followed by stills of squalid living conditions, and neglected and injured children. It states the number of cases that the NSPCC deals with in a year and ends with an appeal for donations to the NSPCC.

Thursday's Children

Shot at the Royal School for Deaf Children at Margate, this short film deals with the problems of educating children who are born deaf or have become deaf before they have learned the meaning of language. The youngest must first be introduced to the idea of what a word is, taught to understand when words are spoken, and finally to use words himself. The second half of the film shows how children who have learned to speak use what they have learned to achieve contact with the world from which they have been cut off.

This short and unpretentious film achieves its object by the simplest possible means. There are no heroics or climactic structures of pathos; the children are always laughing and happy at lessons that seem more like games. The commentary (admirably spoken by Richard Burton) describes calmly the nature of the problems and the way they are tackled. But through all this is revealed a great warmth of affection and a sort of defeated indignation. The secret is perhaps that the people who appear in the film – the bright, tired teachers and the puppy-like children, struggling unconsciously towards comprehension – are treated, and emerge, as human beings and individuals – an attitude not always common in British documentary. This has been largely achieved by the remarkable intimacy with which the camera has caught the children at their lessons and in their social life together. In its narrow scope, *Thursday's Children* is possibly more effective than that other admirable film on the same subject, *Mandy*.

Monthly Film Bulletin, October 1954