

ALTERNATIVE PROJECTIONS

Experimental film in Los Angeles, 1945 - 1980

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INTERVIEW SUBJECT: Peter Mays

Biography:

Peter Mays grew up in Los Angeles and attended UCLA where he majored in painting and minored in mathematics. He made his first experimental film while in graduate school, for which he constructed a printer and developing tank. He made several experimental shorts in 16mm in the mid 60's. Inspired by the emerging counter-culture, Mays shot a feature film in 1967. In the early 80s, he began portraying large chapters of history through computer animation of geography. Today he has four 'experimental' educational films with Discovery Education. In 2001 he had a retrospective at the Anthology Film Archives. In 2005 Death of the Gorilla was in the catalogue of the Pompidou's exhibition 'Los Angeles: 1955-1985.' His recent short DV films explore ancient cultures to express spiritual/political meanings.
[Source: USC School of Cinematic Arts Cinematheque 108, 2011]

Filmography:

ASTRAL MAN (2000, 16mm & video, 00:46:00)
LIGHT SHOW (1970, 16mm, 00:04:00)
NIGHT OF THE VAMPIRE (1968, 16mm, 00:09:00)
SISTER MIDNIGHT (1974, 16mm, 01:05:00)
STREAM (1964, 8mm, 00:13:00)
THE DEATH OF THE GORILLA (1965, 16mm, 00:16:00)
THE ONE BEDROOM APARTMENT (1963, 16mm, 00:25:00)
THE STAR CURTAIN (1966, 16mm)
THE STAR CURTAIN TANTRA (1969, 16mm, 00:18:00)
THE TIME BEYOND THOUGHT (2000, 16mm & video, 00:23:00)
VISION (1962, 16mm, 00:50:00)

Tape Contents**Tape 1: Pages 4 - 17**

Interview date: November 7, 2009
Interviewer: Adam Hyman
Cameraperson: Andrew Schuler
Transcript Reviewer: Peter Mays, Stephanie Sapienza

Tape 2: Pages 18 - 30

Interview date: November 7, 2009
Interviewer: Adam Hyman
Cameraperson: Andrew Schuler
Transcript Reviewer: Peter Mays, Stephanie Sapienza

Tape 3: Pages 31 - 43

Interview date: November 7, 2009
Interviewer: Adam Hyman
Cameraperson: Andrew Schuler
Transcript Reviewer: Peter Mays, Stephanie Sapienza

Tape 4: Pages 44 - 55

Interview date: April 3, 2010
Interviewer: Adam Hyman
Cameraperson: Mark Skoner
Transcript Reviewer: Peter Mays, Ben Miller

Tape 5: Pages 56 - 69

Interview date: April 3, 2010
Interviewer: Adam Hyman
Cameraperson: Mark Skoner
Transcript Reviewer: Peter Mays, Ben Miller

Tape 6: Pages 70 - 84

Interview date: April 3, 2010
Interviewer: Adam Hyman
Cameraperson: Mark Skoner
Transcript Reviewer: Peter Mays, Ben Miller

Tape 7: Pages 85 - 97

Interview date: April 3, 2010

Interviewer: Adam Hyman

Cameraperson: Mark Skoner

Transcript Reviewer: Peter Mays, Ben Miller

Tape 8: Pages 98 - 108

Interview date: April 3, 2010

Interviewer: Adam Hyman

Cameraperson: Mark Skoner

Transcript Reviewer: Peter Mays, Ben Miller

TAPE 1: PETER MAYS

[TAPE 1]00:00:50 **ADAM HYMAN**

Alright, can you please start by saying and spelling your name.

[TAPE 1]00:00:53 **PETER MAYS**

Peter Mays. P-E-T-E-R M-A-Y-S.

[TAPE 1]00:00:59 **ADAM HYMAN**

All right let's start by you telling me about your birth your family background.

[TAPE 1]00:01:06 **PETER MAYS**

I was born in Los Angeles, May 2nd, and my family lived in central L.A. and we moved to Brentwood when I was about five. And, I had a sister who was three, two years younger. And, grew up in Brentwood for, you know 15 years. I was a kind of a loner and always had projects. My first big project which dwarfs all subsequent projects was to get a rocket ship and go to the moon, make a rocket ship. I had designed that for years and finally when I saw in LOOK magazine when I was 12 years old that they were going to use a space station I realized that it was beyond my capacity.

[TAPE 1]00:01:58 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And, I gave it up. And, then was into other science, mathematics all that kind of stuff ... physics, a total science freak. And, when I was about 17 I had an incredible dream which I woke up in the middle of. I was standing in front of a mountain with me standing in a kind of lake. And, there were steps, wooden plank steps and water falling down them, little water falls. And, my mother had a paint set. So, I, an oil set so I painted it.

[TAPE 1]00:02:38 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

It's unfinished, I still have it. But, that got me into the other side of my mind which is the dream side, or whatever. And, so I painted dreams and actual dreams for a while. Went to UCLA in '57 majoring in art and math. And, I have to say that Judy Chicago was in my beginning drawing class. But, art was much more interesting to me. And, I sold-- I made a major painting. I spent a year on it of the four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

[TAPE 1]00:03:16 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

I really liked the book of Revelation. And I sold it. And, so parents then decided it was okay to go into art. And, so I majored in art which was great, it's a great social group. And, really UCLA was a pretty good art school at that time. But, as I, how did I get into film? I get into film initially making...

[TAPE 1]00:03:49 **ADAM HYMAN**

Let's not get there yet.

[TAPE 1]00:03:50 **PETER MAYS**

Okay.

[TAPE 1]00:03:51 **ADAM HYMAN**

Let's back up.

[TAPE 1]00:03:52 **PETER MAYS**

Okay.

[TAPE 1]00:03:52 **ADAM HYMAN**

Through the steps and just walk me through all your other family members. Tell me their names and what they did and so forth.

[TAPE 1]00:03:58 **PETER MAYS**

Okay. Roderick Mays is my father, he was initially an actor. He was totally into Shakespeare. When I was born he was actually writing something called the Midnight Chapel for CBS radio that played at midnight for Night Watchmen or whatever. And, then and he got a clue that Barker Brothers was advertising and they needed somebody in advertising. So, he switched over to advertising and spent his life in the advertising business. Very devoted to capitalism. Wrote a book on the key, the importance of the sale. More important than production or anything he saw. Very right, but real right wing. But, right wing and so I was a rather left wing.

[TAPE 1]00:04:44 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

My mother Dorothy Mays was born in California. He was born in Oregon and had a pretty good lineage. It's my mother was born in Bakersfield. And, they are, they were classic parents. My mother was totally motherly, and my father was strongly fatherly. And, they stayed together until they both died within three months in the '90s. My sis--I have one sister who was, who was born two years after me, Patricia. So, we were like a little couple, and they were the big couple.

[TAPE 1]00:05:24 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And, it was a very positive family situation. I was fort--you know it was nice. As I say I was kind of a nerd. And, but in an intellectual-- although I had other intellectual friends. So, and I didn't like the success-- I liked, I went to Brentwood Grammar School where I sat in the row next to Christine Crawford, Joan Crawford's daughter. And, but junior high was tough, it was Emerson. And, very sc--it was a confluence of three-- two tougher junior high... grammar schools.

[TAPE 1]00:06:16 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

So it was a real relief to go to University High School where they had starred classes and what not. And, it was even better to get to UCLA. At UCLA I audited class, it was-- I was an intellectual, I audited classes. The best class was on Kant taught by Abraham Kaplan who was a major philosopher. I audited all the Art History classes. And, I was in a fraternity. My father got me into his fraternity. I was a fourth generation Zate which was good.

[TAPE 1]00:06:57 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

Let's see and that's where I made my first movie was with another guy, Bill Bishop. We did a rushing film with a Mitchell camera and in 16. And, he was in, I was in the Art Department, he was in the Film Department. So, with that this would be around 1960 I guess, or '59. I-- maybe earlier than that. So, I got into film, but in a very sort of odd way. And, I paralleled Pat O'Neill was also following exactly the same path. He was in the Design Department.

[TAPE 1]00:07:40 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

But, if you're an art student we're getting into film, okay?

[TAPE 1]00:07:45 ADAM HYMAN

Uh, huh.

[TAPE 1]00:07:45 PETER MAYS

Yeah, okay so if you're an art student going, art students love films. And, the films were great then. LA DOLCE VITA, L'AVVENTURA, early Godard, you know it was just an amazing renaissance in foreign films. And, so I, you want, but an art student wants control of the visuals. So, I built a printer and a simple drum roller to print. Initially reversal film which you had to sulphuric acid to bleach the film in between. And, the first printer I have to describe. I knew about contact printing. And, I had done photography.

[TAPE 1]00:08:33 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

So, I actually built a strip of wood about 12 feet long and put little nails in all along for perforations for the film laid down a roll in the, with the red light on, laid down a roll of white positive film and then was going to put in the films pieces. And, I had this contraction that would roll over it with a light. Tested it and, of course it was totally blurry. And, then I thought either I'm going to have to get a piece of glass one inch, an half inch wide and 12 feet long to do a contact print.

ITAPE 1100:09:09 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

Or, I'm going to have to think of a better way to do this. And, I finally discovered the perforation where, which is what the basis of film is what each perforation makes each frame the only thing that has to be in focus. And, then you get to go to the next perforation. So, I build a printer out of a magazine, and my erector set motor which I used for all these projects. There are many others, and, had a printer. Got a little camera and bought film from Superior Film Bulk Company, Superior Bulk Film Company in Chicago who had black and white negative and positive.

ITAPE 1100:09:47 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

Which was much easier than reversal. So, that was the beginning of vision. I had everything set from a technical point of view. But, I had no idea what to do. So, I turned to rep--Book of Revelation and I was going to do Dewars Wood cuts. Got into a little bit, and then that began to think of things. And, meanwhile I had to, or go back just a bit because about two years earlier I went to my first, or maybe even more I guess, so late in high school.

ITAPE 1100:10:24 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

I went to a French Film Festival at the Crest which is still there in Westwood. And, saw BLOOD OF A POET by Cocteau and it was just this was about the time I was just beginning to paint. It was just a knockout, absolutely a knockout. I went every night took photographs and everything. That really made the experimental, the avant-garde film something really interesting. So, and about-- and then when I started UCLA I think the very first year '57 they had a lecture by Stanley Fleishman who was an attorney.

ITAPE 1100:11:10 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

A First Amendment attorney on a case he had won for the Coronet Theater and it was four films that had been, you know taken by the police, FIREWORKS, CLOSED VISION, a French film, THE JOURNAL OF ALBANIAN MOONLIGHT by Charles Kessler and THE VOICES by John Schmidt. It was heavily '50s experimental. And, the one that, of course that the police were shocked by was FIREWORKS. But, he'd won the case, so I went, so they were going to do a screening. So, I went and saw that bill which had a very powerful effect on me.

ITAPE 1100:11:55 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

Especially FIREWORKS, I could not watch it. I had to hide my eyes when he was being beaten. It was amazing and it got to you so. But, that was really my-- the first real experimental film I saw. But, that introduced me to the Coronet.

ITAPE 1100:12:16 ADAM HYMAN

Can you tell me a bit more about the effect of BLOOD OF A POET?

[TAPE 1100:12:20] **PETER MAYS**

BLOOD OF A POET, the thing that I was most affected by was the ending where the muse goes-- I was affected by the surrealist transformations that, scene to scene, where like she goes out as a woman dressed in white. Summoned something in a cut that just it doesn't make any sense. But, suddenly she's on some stairs summoning something. And, it turns because it's like a taxi, but it's not, it's a bull with the map of Europe kind of pasted on its body. And, that's what she and the next shot is actually she's with the bull. I mean and these are I can remember pretty well.

[TAPE 1100:13:09] **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And, then the next shot was seeing from behind and now the bull's horns have become part of a lyre. She's holding a lyre and the globe. The fragments that were on the bull's body are now a globe and she's just walking and then you see her lying on a, cut to lying on a kind of a some cloth or something holding these two things. And, Cocteau says on the audio 'mortel l'ennui de l'immortalité,' mortal boredom with immortality. And, that was such a shock. I was very - not real Christian, but brought up Christian and that was just oh, God to be bored with immortality. I mean that was a great line.

[TAPE 1100:14:01] **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And, the surrealist that particular surrealist sequence was just amazing. The whole film though was, but that the ending I was especially struck by. I actually took photographs of the screen. In fact, I still have this because it was so important. The other film that affected me a lot was Orson Welles' **MACBETH** because the visuals are so good. The black and white is so excellent. And, I took pictures of that also. So, those and I've always had this division between experimental film and narrative film which I love them both actually.

[TAPE 1100:14:41] **ADAM HYMAN**

Okay, so then back to did you...

[TAPE 1100:14:48] **PETER MAYS**

Let me just say I'm intending to go on with the **Coronet**, but what...

[TAPE 1100:14:53] **ADAM HYMAN**

Yeah, I want to go back to, in this early period then in **UCLA**.

[TAPE 1100:14:56] **PETER MAYS**

Yeah.

[TAPE 1100:14:57] **ADAM HYMAN**

What was the nature of the relationship between and-- I want to return to this at...

[TAPE 1100:15:01] **PETER MAYS**

Okay.

[TAPE 1100:15:01] **ADAM HYMAN**

...a couple more times in your career. But, like your relationship between your painting practice and your filmmaking practice.

[TAPE 1100:15:06] **PETER MAYS**

Okay, that's a very good question. The department-- there was a funny relationship between the Art Department and the Theater Arts Department which at that time was bungalows, where-- and UCLA the Film Department was very Hollywood oriented. It was a period when they were like what I see is like what UCLA people that SC is which is Hollywood oriented. But, it was amazing how traditional they were. And, Francis Coppola was the, was for example going to school there then. So, we hated them we felt we were, they had no visual sense.

[TAPE 1100:15:46] **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Nonetheless, I audited, as I got into film I audited some classes there. But, I felt at that time that I had been destroyed by the UCLA Art Department. This dream side was not there anymore. I was learning how to draw, drawing actually from Michelangelo drawings, sculptures and so on. It had a very strong drawing school. William Brice was a very powerful influence. He was actually a protégé of Rico Lebrun. And, Jan Stussy was another of Lebrun. Lebrun had big influence both on the UCLA Department and the Santa Moni--Santa Barbara Department where Howard Warshaw was another Lebrun disciple.

[TAPE 1100:16:31] **ADAM HYMAN**

Can you spell that his last name, Howard?

[TAPE 1100:16:32] **PETER MAYS**

Worshal, Worshal is the city. Howard Worshal. He's not known, but he was interesting, he took the more metaphysical side of Lebrun to some lengths. I got into art partly also because of seeing the Walter Chrysler show at LACMA. And, then seeing just the lushness of Gauguin, and Van Gogh and saw his very nice exhibit. And, also they had roundup, LACMA then was having, they had yearly shows of local artists. And, I saw Brice Worshal in film auto actually. He was also taught at UCLA. And, I liked their paintings.

[TAPE 1100:17:14] **ADAM HYMAN**

When did that show...

[TAPE 1100:17:15] **PETER MAYS**

That would have been '56 probably.

[TAPE 1100:17:16] **ADAM HYMAN**

So, LACMA would still have been in Exposition Park?

[TAPE 1100:17:19] **PETER MAYS**

I think so yeah, yeah.

[TAPE 1100:17:24] **ADAM HYMAN**

What other memories do you have of going to things in the art world, or in museums in the '50s and all that?

[TAPE 1100:17:30] **PETER MAYS**

Let's see, I didn't-- there was no Getty or MOCA, I think LACMA was it pretty much, and it was only partially modern. It still had dinosaur exhibits and stuff. It was pretty, what, crazy museum. It was hard, I got into modern art which I was very enamored with through the books. There was a small edition Skira put out with actual cut outs of paintings pasted in. And, that was beautiful and there were other ways to get books on the major people Picasso, Braque, Matisse and so on. Rouault was very big in that in those days.

[TAPE 1100:18:22] **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

So, I was just introducing myself to cultural in general. I had LPs of Bartok and that kind of stuff. I have to say on the other side I, when I was 12 years old 'Let Me Go Lover' became the big hit of Rock 'n Roll. Let me go, let me go, let me go lover. It was a major teenage thing. So, I was there listening to it from the beginning of '50s Rock. And, yeah I got into Folk music more later actually in college. (LAUGH)

[TAPE 1100:19:00] **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

The music, so I didn't get hardly any experience with paintings and museums. There just weren't any.

[TAPE 1100:19:09] **ADAM HYMAN**

Who was teaching in UCLA Theater Arts at that time?

[TAPE 1100:19:12] **PETER MAYS**

Okay, God I don't remember. I remember the guy who taught Photography, but I don't remember his name. Gary Essert was there and he would have his, you know five day marathons of science fiction films or whatever in one of the bungalows. I got in on one of those. I audited I think a little bit of a history class and decided it wasn't I didn't like it. But, I got my film history through the Coronet. I saw POTEMKIN, you know STORM OVER ASIA which you hardly ever see by Pudovkin. It was a very important film.

[TAPE 1100:19:57] **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

The early Russians were very important because of their editing stuff. Early Bergman first and so on. When Bergman's well, not WILD STRAWBERRIES, SEVENTH SEAL came out that was a big. That was really great. And, LA STRADA was available then. This was before the deluge hit with the New Wave and the Italians and so on. Yeah, let's see so that and I know Pat, I've read, I never saw him in any of the screenings. But, Pat was also at the Coronet getting an education.

[TAPE 1]00:20:42

ADAM HYMAN

Pat?

[TAPE 1]00:20:43

PETER MAYS

Pat O'Neill. I have to describe briefly this because the Coronet was like a velvet theater or something. It was a very it had a long history we know. And, it was just-- it had the quality of the films then which were so, all the things that you were taught as a kid not to look at these films were about. Personal weirdoes, I mean weirdnesses which we definitely hid in high school. But, also I remember sitting through like Brakhage's ANTICIPATION OF THE NIGHT which was silent. And, the audience began to get really restless.

[TAPE 1]00:21:34 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And, that was the first I had seen that. I was able to get a really pretty good education through the Coronet of what was available then. It was Anger, especially INAUGURATION, Brakhage, and the early-- I've always been a real fan of early Brack--the early psycho dramatic brought Brakhage the narratives. He was part of the Gryphon School for a while. I saw GEOGRAPHY OF THE BODY by Marie Menken. That was a really important one. Some of them were so repulsively open about inner feelings we all have, I think.

[TAPE 1]00:22:18 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

NARCISSIST by Willard Moss starred Ben something and it was so narcissist. It was just, you know repulsive, but he was I, but especially GEOGRAPHY OF THE BODY I think I only saw it once. But, it had a forbidden, but non-normal experience. The one that I finally could put my finger on what I was think--feeling was Sydney Peterson's THE MINOTAUR AND THE SOMETHING. It's about a guy in a diving suit who goes into the water. And, I forget the whole thing, but I came out. I said I know what I like this is the way a leopard sees things.

[TAPE 1]00:23:07 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

This is an animal way of seeing the world. It's totally irrational. And, I didn't say irrational. But, the idea that it's an animal, the way an animal sees it, was the way I could think of it. And, there was surrealism in painting, was an important part of painting, but it didn't have this effect of surrealism in the screen. And, of course saw UN CHIEN ANDALOU. I really wanted-- there are several films throughout college that I wanted to see very badly.

[\[TAPE 1100:23:42](#) [PETER MAYS \(CONTINUED\)](#)

One was THE AGE OF GOLD or whatever by Bunuel. And, the other was, let me think I can't remember well, the other the whole German school, the early German school DESTINY especially. DESTINY and L'AGE D'OR were the two films I would have done anything to see. I managed to get pretty far, I found CAHIERS DU CINEMA in the library. I could, I didn't, I had taken French, but I really didn't read it. But, then I passed through, oddly enough HOLLYWOOD BABYLON was in it. (LAUGH)

[\[TAPE 1100:24:21](#) [PETER MAYS \(CONTINUED\)](#)

And, I read Bob Pikes thesis which the library had on the Pacific Coast School which is a very important document in all this. But, there isn't much. And, with that background kind of that's background with which I started making the film.

[\[TAPE 1100:24:46](#) [ADAM HYMAN](#)

Okay.

[\[TAPE 1100:24:53](#) [ADAM HYMAN \(CONTINUED\)](#)

Tell me more about Raymond Rohauer, what was...

[\[TAPE 1100:24:55](#) [PETER MAYS](#)

I didn't ever see him.

[\[TAPE 1100:25:00](#) [PETER MAYS](#)

Yeah, okay, I-- Raymond Rohauer was the booker for the Coronet. And, I wasn't-- I wasn't even aware of him. I do have still have flyers from it. They were very-- it was really with great anticipation I would get it in the mail. I don't know how they did it, but they enough black in a kind of shiny surface that made it this dark cinema that they were showing. But, he played, he played everything. But, he caught for eventually, of course was playing MGM musicals. I saw the Marx Brothers for the first time there.

[\[TAPE 1100:25:44](#) [PETER MAYS \(CONTINUED\)](#)

And, as it turns out I guess he was running them by a lab and copying them (LAUGH) at the same time. So-- which I didn't know about. I know it was shut down at a certain point and taken over by the Riviera Capri. That would be around 1992 I think or '91. Do you know about the Riviera Capri?

[\[TAPE 1100:26:03](#) [ADAM HYMAN](#)

But '91 doesn't sound right?

[\[TAPE 1100:26:05](#) [PETER MAYS](#)

Maybe not. What...

[\[TAPE 1100:26:06](#) [ADAM HYMAN](#)

It must have been decades earlier than that.

[TAPE 1100:26:07 PETER MAYS

Oh, no, no it was after, it was like 1960 or later. The Riviera Capri as doing the same thing the Coronet had done pretty close to it anyway.

[TAPE 1100:26:20 ADAM HYMAN

When did there stop being film screenings at the Coronet?

[TAPE 1100:26:22 PETER MAYS

I would say 1960 and I'm guessing. It might have been earlier. I remember seeing **THE FLOWER THIEF** by Ron Rice, I think at the Riviera Capri. And, that was kind of like the turning point in the underground film I feel. It was more openly beatnik and a narrative, and just opening up another space. Not as claustrophobic, or outré as the cinema that the underground, that experimental film was. So, the nice thing, another major influence was an article by Maya Deren in **POPULAR CINEMA**. I think it was '59 where she wrote for people who had their own cameras and stuff.

[TAPE 1100:27:21 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

They ought to go out and make experimental films. It was very inspiring. Her enthusiasm was tremendous and the fact that you could do it. I think before I got into 8mm, I read this. You know you could get the equipment for almost nothing and so, my father meanwhile had shot a lot of home movies. We always rented the camera, but we had gotten pretty far in doing magic kind of stuff and so on. So, I, but that's all color, Kodachrome. Going to black and white was critical. If there hadn't been black and white I wouldn't have gotten into film.

[TAPE 1100:27:52 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

I would not, if it had just been color I don't think I would have ever made the move. Black and white has a distancing and a poetic and a...you can hide. The problem with Kodachrome and color is said it's almost impossible not to get a real feeling of what you're shooting. But, if you're trying to shoot something more ethereal, or more you're trying to create some kind of strange space black and white is wonderful. And, that's what **VISION** got into, just coming one light on something and just, and in the living room, but having no light on the walls, they were black.

[TAPE 1100:28:36 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

So, I could-- which was important in that film, was to have the kind of space that, you know **THE BLOOD OF A POET** had and that John Schmidt had. John Schmidt's another great example that you should research, **THE VOICES**. It's very-- no one could stand it today it is so self centered, or in bad taste. I don't know what to call it. But, that was the berry of those guys and Marie Menken and, especially Maya Deren. Maya Deren began all this. I didn't see her work till much later I have to say.

[TAPE 1]00:29:21 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

But, let's take Maya as the example that she took you into which was a dream space. An archetypal dream space, surreal, but not surreal for just-- surreal with a real kind of deeply romantic purpose. So, that's just such an appealing art form. I had to do it myself. So, anyway I'll go on with VISION I guess if...

[TAPE 1]00:30:29 ADAM HYMAN

Okay, yeah let's go through VISION where we left off, correct?

[TAPE 1]00:30:32 PETER MAYS

Let me just say this though.

[TAPE 1]00:30:33 ADAM HYMAN

Sure.

[TAPE 1]00:30:33 PETER MAYS

Because there's a parallel to the changes in film and all the other which is rock 'n roll, which is music. Rock I thought had gotten really bad, maybe because I was in college, but, I thought it really had run its course. And, just about that time you could start to listen to Folk music. And, I was experiencing the Les Claypool I remember falling totally in love with Joan Baez who's about my age. But, you know singing in Harvard Square. And, this pre-Dylan I also liked Peter, Paul and Mary. (LAUGH) "Puff the Magic Dragon" was wonderful thing.

[TAPE 1]00:31:13 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

So, there wasn't really-- and in the experimental film itself, myself my impression is that there's about-- another great early filmmaker we know is Markopoulos. And, Markopoulos just dropped out entirely in the later '50s. And, the only two pillars that kind of remain were Brakhage and Anger. And, Anger was really in Paris, but not with still putting out stills and so on. Brakhage was actually functioning. But, was there was a very bleak period for the underground film. I really should say experimental because I-- is for the experimental film from about '59 to '62 or something.

[TAPE 1]00:32:03 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And, it was also bleak because the, when the Coronet stopped showing. And, that's why I say the beginning of something a change was THE FLOWER THIEF I felt. So VISION basically is very much in this early black and white Pacific Coast school. It started with the revelation and has elements of it, but pretty soon I was doing just neat shots that occurred to me. For example, a candle, and I'd shoot the candle over and over. And, each time pan and get a whole bunch of candles. And, then dissolve from those to leaves in a tree, but negative so that they're white on, or gray on black.

[TAPE 1100:33:01 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

Just things would start to occur to me. The same way you do a painting. You're painting and then you look at it a couple days later and you could see the next step. And, doing the stuff would generate the next step. Though I had a script I actually had sort of a storyboard. And, it was, it is narcissistic for the following reason. I would shoot these in the summer time. I shot most of it in two summers. And, I was the only person around that I could as an actor.

[TAPE 1100:33:33 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

So, I built a self timer mechanism, and played the main role which is the protagonist is me, like Maya Deren did and Brakhage did and Anger did. And, it's-- one explanation is you're the only person that's you can get easily. The other people were my family members, my sister, my mother, and my father. And, then for bigger scenes I did get I remember I got the fraternity brothers for the second part of VISION which gets, the first part of VISION is three separate stories. And, this runs throughout all my cinema is having three little vignettes in the beginning.

[TAPE 1100:34:17 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

An introduction in which I am playing John the whatever, John the Divine seeing Christ. And, I also play Christ to invoke the Book of Revelation. But, as it starts you see a hand and this is completely influenced by Cocteau opening a door and going into black. And, then there's a long dream sequence. That's actually based on the Anger going into Gents in his bedroom which is now an open black space of night or dream or whatever. And, I was actually I was very much influenced by FIREWORKS and faked his light, he has lights appear. And, so I did that also, but using a, photographing through a salt shaker so they got distorted.

[TAPE 1100:35:10 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

The beauty was I could shoot, and shoot, and shoot and hardly spend any money. Because I could, you know I processed it myself, made the print on eight millimeter double perf positive and could look at it on this little projector which I still have which I, oh, I should go into the projector for a second. Because I got that when I was about eight years old and some movies. I have to go back just a one loop. I had a cowboy movie and I had some others.

[TAPE 1100:35:42 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

And, when I first got interested in film I read Spottiswoode editing book. Roger Spottiswoode had a standard editing introduction. And, so I cut the cowboy film anyway from 20 minutes to about 20 seconds which was the first cuts I'd ever made. And, I have to report that before I read Spottiswoode I had no idea there were cuts in movies. It was a shock to learn that they were edited. And, it was wonderful to learn that you could in three shots like they saw somebody jumping cut away to something and then showing somebody landing on something. You could have the impression they jumped off a building or something like that.

[TAPE 1100:36:30 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

You could do all this magic through cutting. That was a huge discovery. And, not only did I not hear the film music which many people don't hear, or, aren't aware of, but I was not aware of cuts in film. So, these were, so I edited the 8mm and I played the dailies and so forth on this machine. (LAUGH) So, and another section I remember was more influenced by Eisenstein a cut between a sheet being shaken, shaking the sheet and getting shadows and then water reflections. We had a pool by now and I could do that.

[TAPE 1100:37:18 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

That was very interesting to me was the editing of together of different impossible, different, completely different realities and intercutting them. And, through black and white they melded. The beginning of FIREWORKS there's a terrific little sequence where he has fire, something burning in water. But, the highlights of the water and the flames are both white. So, he's managed to make fire and water merge. And, that's why one reason why black and white is so, if you're doing a metaphoric movie black and white is the only way to go.

[TAPE 1100:38:00 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

Actually, ANTICIPATION OF THE NIGHT was the first time I saw Brakhage do color and it works really well. I mean he uses kind of limited color, but it works. But, that broke the barrier to making regular home movies and they could experimental with Kodachrome. That was a barrier that I had in my mind, but Brakhage broke through it. So, I get it, I had a lot of fun though it was and it cut into two black sequences and then a white sequence too. And, so that's the first part of VISION, and then the second part is straight out of the Bible.

[TAPE 1100:38:54 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

And, it's the destruction of the earth and fire and water and I really took that metaphor to the, you know used it over and over. And, had my, photographed my father with a sword. And, you saw just portions of the sword, this is Eisenstein influence just to have sword, having in a series of cuts. And, the reason that's helpful is because if you see close ups and the cutting is in your mind you're putting together the montage as you, as the mind does. You can imply the same-- you can suggest something that's invisible the same way by having most of the screen be black.

[TAPE 1100:39:38 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

You can make an-- effect it's an epic movie, but have it out of very simple means. So, I remember photographing like a fish's head. I got a fish's head in water and just had it come up in a close up. That was the monster. There's a sec--I'll not, okay so anyway that's all Vision PART one. Part two fire and water and then ending in a lot of water with the ocean coming in. I did a lot of shots at the ocean which is fun to do.

[TAPE 1100:40:12 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

And, then the rising of the dead through a lot of dissolves and a lot of books from a book of Ernst of orbs flashing that's calling you after death. Now, I was scared shitless of dying and going to hell. Like most Protestants and that was a very threatening, or dying at all. But, especially going to hell. (LAUGH) Or, whatever happens to you right after death. So, here so I took the Bible, but I had gotten out of it. I removed myself from the Presbyterian Church.

[TAPE 1100:40:58 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

But, was still affected by it and I portrayed the last judgment and a horrible beating similar to the one Anger does. And, also Brakhage made a film also influenced by where he put out his eyes THE WAY TO SHADOW GARDEN. And, has apparently squiggies with blood, so it has blood running down. (LAUGH)

[END OF TAPE: [TAPE 1100:41:22]

TAPE 2: PETER MAYS

[TAPE 2]00:00:54 ADAM HYMAN

Tell me what you're obsessed by.

[TAPE 2]00:00:56 PETER MAYS

Okay, I decided at some point that, and I've had a whole theories of this can go on and on, that the interior of human beings has been off limits for years and years and years. It came in, you know with Freud and with James Joyce's stream of conscious. And, that's what the experimental film was doing by sort of accident. And, so I continued making in effect experimental films by, with a written journal in the '60s. This was-- the '60s was such an important period that I-- and people's acid trips I especially thought should be recorded. I at least recorded mine, memories of them.

[TAPE 2]00:01:39 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And, then about '77 I stopped doing that and started using audio. And, so I have hundreds of hundreds of hours of audio (LAUGH) going over this kind of, making this detail look like it's overview as a record somebody's done. So, I'm capable, I've trained myself as best as I can to try to remember everything. In fact, when I was a projectionist at the El Rey I did this life here I'm recording now then. It's much easier, obviously talking then writing it. So, anyway I, you happened to have gotten a filmmaker here who was, you know this is anal beyond anal.

[TAPE 2]00:02:22 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

I mean I'm seriously we need, I think humanity needs to know this. (LAUGH) So, anyway so, that's I'm able to go into, but you seem to be into the same things. So, let's keep going.

[TAPE 2]00:02:39 ADAM HYMAN

Where are those audio tapes?

[TAPE 2]00:02:41 PETER MAYS

They're in storage right now. There's a recorder around here that's today's entries. But, unfortunately I've misused it for really talking to myself, and so it isn't, it needs to be edited. But, the written part of notebooks, you now it's a number of notebooks they are more important, they are our record of the second half of the '60s that I think should be preserved. So, maybe this is, okay.

[TAPE 2]00:03:20 ADAM HYMAN

Well, continue from what you were just saying...

[TAPE 2]00:03:22 PETER MAYS

Okay, I also...

[TAPE 2]00:03:22 **ADAM HYMAN**

No, before we do that I want to continue writing the thing right here. Tell me briefly about, briefly about LSD?

[TAPE 2]00:03:31 **PETER MAYS**

LSD, right now?

[TAPE 2]00:03:32 **ADAM HYMAN**

Yeah.

[TAPE 2]00:03:32 **PETER MAYS**

Okay, well let me, okay well that's very mental because what I did want to say about VISION.

[TAPE 2]00:03:40 **ADAM HYMAN**

Uh, huh.

[TAPE 2]00:03:41 **PETER MAYS**

Is that in 1968 when I was living on Frasier Street near the beach I, one night took acid, turned on this projector and watched VISION. And, had the really like the veils dropped and I mentioned that my, that a dream began my art career. It now became clear, it seemed then anyway, that the whole vision was a, is a ploy by the unconscious to describe what dreams also do. It was, I was used, my ego was used by my unconscious to make some statements. And, that the family members that I was having, just this general human beings in it.

[TAPE 2]00:04:35 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

I would put, you know cloth over their heads and so that they're just anonymous archetypal people. In fact, these stories in the hidden way are about these family members. (LAUGH) And, these are early childhood traumas. Or, at least I perceived on acid. And, a great one, a great example of one is in VISION where I go throughout VISION being is the protagonist looking at things going ahhh, you know and falling into waters and all this. So, one of the sequences and let me say this about the unconscious because it is my theory anyway.

[TAPE 2]00:05:20 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Yes, it has the traumas that I have been through and we've all been through. But, it also has higher mind stuff. It also has spiritual hidden stuff. It's not just the unconscious that's hidden. It's higher there's a whole spiritual realm where we know about, but not consciously. That's any way, that's Leary's thinking I think, Timothy Leary. But, there's a sequence where I go into what I would say is the best approximation I could have done if I had known about it which I did not know of the Sahasrara Chakra which is the white chakra at the top of head which is faceted.

[TAPE 2]00:06:01 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

Anyway, I go into a chandelier that was in the foyer of this house. The house is very important to this dream and I dreamed about the house a lot. And, I go into this thing spiraling in and out. And, then you see me looking down from that what could be the Sahasrara chakra to a little set up I had made of my mother who's wearing like, you know a hood and has kind of grayish hair out of yarn. And, my sister is wearing a similar thing, but with black hair.

[TAPE 2]00:06:36 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And, they're together on this cot, or somehow my sister and my mother and they're going aah, and I faint. That, I swear to God is the sibling rivalry. (TAPE DROPOUT/SILENT)

[TAPE 2]00:06:50 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

The two year old would feel towards his sister. And, I was known they were always telling me that at the age of two weeks, when my sister was two weeks old they found me hitting her with a tin can and trying to kill her. That's just the traditional Freudian thing. The attention of the mother is now on the new kid. So, the older one wants to get rid of it. So, that is so close. That's the one I remember anyway. And, as I started to remember that it's all dream imagery it could all be analyzed.

[TAPE 2]00:07:32 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And, LSD in general did what the experimental film intended to do I think. And, it's one reason it shifted from this psycho drama stuff to the structural film is that LSD everybody went through these, everybody had experimental film visions. And, whatever was that apparently, it having the traumas relieved which were big traumas at the time. They aren't very big now. But, they're still there screwing you up. So, reliving them kind of releases energy and you're better off. So, VISION is doing this in a movie.

[TAPE 2]00:08:28 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

So, the guy who really got into his unconscious is Brakhage. But, so the, so that was VISION, in two reels of black and white. I want to say something else about the Art Department. When I was first going to it two of the teachers Gordon Nunes and Jan Stussy were making a film on Saturdays. They had access to a studio. They wouldn't let anybody in. I suppose they were on a minotaur, the minotaur myth. And, everybody tried to imagine what the, (LAUGH) what are the Art teachers doing.

[TAPE 2]00:09:08 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

But, that, but the idea of an artist making a film was kind of like almost archetypal thing. And, also later two of the older students, Chaz Garabedian who's became a famous artist and Louie Lunetta were shooting black and white film down in Mexico a lot. And, they would play these, their film in the print room and we'd all look at it. So, the idea, the artists in general we looked with, you know it was interesting, the idea of going into film was certainly a, but not the kind of films the Theater Arts Department did.

[TAPE 2100:09:43 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

But, some more artistic film. So, anyway I was still in school, and set up a screening of VISION. And, Cocteau's BLOOD OF A POET there was a guy I knew in the Art Department who was working in a lab and could get print, he made a copy of VISION that was very poor. And, then I had a pirated a copy of BLOOD OF A POET. So, I put on a screen which is the beginning of my exhibition career with the BLOOD OF THE POET second.

[TAPE 2100:10:25 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

But, people had to sit through my film first. (LAUGH) So, this is probably my most horrible night in my life I think. So, you started with this 8mm film with these ridiculous from a, and a lot of theater art students were there to see the Cocteau. All right, so they sat through the first reel, the first (LAUGH) 20 minutes of VISION without being too obstructious. And, then there was a pause while I put on the second reel when the second reel stopped...started (LAUGH) there started there was almost a riot.

[TAPE 2100:10:56 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

It was really pretty close to a Brakhage type riot. I mean it was a real restless audience. And, then finally played the Cocteau. And, I am seen in VISION, you know nearly nude at the time. I mean I was doing renaissance type imagery. And, when I come out of the grave I'm there with and my hand it's really interesting I didn't know it, but I'm holding a finger that's sitting a phallus. I'm writing it for the dead. And, so it was very embarrassing let's put it that way.

[TAPE 2100:11:31 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

And, so for the next film which I shot with some art students I said, you know be aware that (LAUGH) my films may lead to, you know social reaction that is, you know is pretty powerful. Anyway, that's the fun, so VISION was not. That was the first and only screening of VISION to the, and then I have it in the trilogy because it's a very important film. No, I could barely preserve it. I had an interpositive of it that's left in the double system. And, so I got it on a, this scanner, this 16mm Rank scanner which I was doing stuff on.

[TAPE 2100:12:15 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

And, figured out a way in AfterEffects to pull out the 8mm. So, but it's very badly damaged. It's got dust and all kinds of really weird, it's almost like, anyway it is, but I did manage to get it. And, the first part is the one that's important I think. Anyway, at the same time, so I was doing this stuff, had a little, this little drum and saw and I remember distinctly being in the upstairs of the Art Department which was then in what's now the urban stuff in UCLA.

[TAPE 2]00:12:51 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And, Pat O'Neill came in, or went in and so, Pat O'Neill with the exact same set up which he and Bob Abel were taking Kodalith which is very high contrast. And, going even a step further they were sending sheets of Kodalith down to someone in San Diego who would perforate it for 16. And, then they had these short ends of 16 they'd shoot, tie them together and then develop themselves with the drum. So, we were on the same course, so we that's how I first got to know Pat.

[TAPE 2]00:13:23 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And, but I was just doing it because it was such, I could have very long dissolves. I could do bi-packs. I could do super imposition, I could make the same thing I do in DARK ISLAND I could make imaginary scenes out of components like coming up through the grave I could have a sky with lightning bi-packed on a mat of a circle that's white and I zoomed into that. And, then put the two together and you get the, you seem to be going up towards the sky or whatever. Just very simple special effects.

[TAPE 2]00:13:59 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

Okay, so the next film, so okay is THE ONE BEDROOM APARTMENT. By now I actually had a girlfriend who I'm sleeping with Judy Batten who was a fellow Art student. And, I finally moved out of my parents' house to an apartment where a couple of guys were living. On the weekend they would go away, so I decided well I got this apartment I might as well shoot a movie in it. So, I shot in 16 now. I got a Pathe which is this camera. I have it down there if you could look at it later.

[TAPE 2]00:14:32 ADAM HYMAN

We'll look at it later.

[TAPE 2]00:14:33 PETER MAYS

Yeah, but anyway I got a Pathe which is a nice camera, it's through the lens viewing. And, my friend Bill from the fraternity shot it, or lit it in one weekend. And, shot a kind of homage to Truffaut, it's a very overly edited, but very simple story. And, that's the only really narrative film I've made. And, so but made, this is ridiculous, made a 16 millimeter printer and a gigantic drum. And, I almost have to leave at this point to show you a photograph. Can I do that?

[TAPE 2]00:15:25 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

Okay, THE ONE BEDROOM APARTMENT was more inspired by the New Wave, not experimental. In fact it's the opposite of experimental it is all real and in great detail. And, with real people, two art students, three art students that I talked into doing it on one weekend. I did write a script a pretty detailed continuity. I was very much inspired, especially by SHOOT THE PIANO PLAYER. And, I remember always the when she at some point she--he pushes a button and then he has it in about six cuts.

[TAPE 2]00:16:07 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

It's really overly, it's overly blocked, but it's fun. So, I did that kind of stuff. Again, kind of it was enjoyable. I did what I enjoyed doing. It was silent and there's music eventually on it. Let's see...

[TAPE 2]00:16:35 ADAM HYMAN

Tell me about Marvin and Leah.

[TAPE 2]00:16:37 PETER MAYS

Okay, Bill Alpert and Marvin, Marvin Gaye it's not Marvin Gaye though it's Marvin Harden were, and Judy Batten, Judy Batten was my fiancé I guess. And, the two other guys were art students. We all liked film. It was easy to get them to do this and they all, both of them were pretty good actors. And, a very simple story, the girl is reading a sex manual implying that everything is not well with her and her husband, Bill. Who is very feminine. It's an interesting film because I anticipate the femininity of men later in the decade, I think.

[TAPE 2]00:17:23 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

He's a little, he's doing dishes initially. He's really doing the housework. And, then this guy comes over, Marvin who's black. And, here I did a stereotype I was told when I played to the school, an art instructor, the old guard said well, you know you're use of the black person, it's a stereotype. You have him being really hip, so okay I did it. That was a mistake, but anyway he comes by and they get into a poker game and drinking and what not.

[TAPE 2]00:17:56 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And, then and the guy gets a little rough, the girl leaves, as part of the game she runs out. He follows her. And, then later I shot the two of them in local riverbeds and whatnot where she's running. And, she crosses a chasm, a river bed sort of with a, that was 10 feet or so. A river down there near Salvation Army or whatever. And, he doesn't, he tries to follow her, but he falls down into this river. And, she stands over looking very domineering, and much stronger than he is.

[TAPE 2]00:18:42 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And, so then they go back and they do a final kiss. And, she sees him I put in one visual thing where he has long hair and wearing bracelets and he sees, she sees him as a woman. He's reaching out to her and she faints. And, that's the end of the movie. I think, you know five years later hippies had long hair and so on. So, I don't know, but in any case it was a short story. And, then added music only. By now, I have graduated both Judy and I were graduated.

[TAPE 2100:19:22 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

And, I sent it to the Brussels Experimental Film Festival of 1963 where it was rejected. However, I later saw Jacque Ledoux a couple years later and he remembered it and said he liked it. He was the, you know curator or whatever. So, that's for that. So, we got out of school, we had a honeymoon in the lengthy, my parents had done a honeymoon in three months in the woods. So, we did it with a house in the Sierras that my uncle owned. It was very nice.

[TAPE 2100:19:59 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

Okay, I have all these stories I have to tell. As we were leaving Hollywood I said what am I going to read there. So, I looked over at the stand and the latest copy of FILM CULTURE was there. So, I jumped out of the car grabbed the copy, we drove up. When I looked at what it was it wasn't (LAUGH) on the experimental film, it was Andrew Sarris' article on the American Cinema, the auteur theory. It was all about Hollywood directors, very obscure ones. Gregory LaCava, Allen Dwan, Douglas Sirk and all these people that I hated, or at least I didn't even know who most of them were.

[TAPE 2100:20:37 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

And, Orson Welles and so on. Having nothing to read I read, so we were three months. I read through (LAUGH) this magazine a number of times. I enjoyed his style actually. And, meanwhile found this river, a little stream on the property and I had taken out my 8mm camera. And, so and there was Kodachrome film at the general store. So, I bought a bunch of rolls of film and shot stream. But, with very short shots with like two or three seconds, again I wanted a lot to work with.

[TAPE 2100:21:13 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

Very like two second or three second shots as the only way I could cover the incredible range of vegetation and stuff there is just in a mountain stream. And, at this point really erased the art position. I mean, reality, this stream had more great compositions than all of our history had in just one pool it seemed. So, and I still kind of believe this that any rock is better than any sculpture. But, anyway so I shot and shot and shot just a couple miles of the stream. And, got back and shot one more shot which I took of the stream going in the ocean.

[TAPE 2100:21:59 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

And, then what is a very traditional or basic story which is the stream kind of it's a birthed in a violence, in a lot of action and then slowly settles into an afternoon you float down the stream in front of the end of the ocean and die. But, very fast cut, very much influenced by Brakhage. Meanwhile, so I come back to L.A. with this footage. I remember the two of us at my parents' apartment. And, one of the great auteur is John Ford.

[TAPE 2100:22:37 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

And, so I looked in the TV schedule and there was SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON playing (LAUGH) that afternoon. One of the great masterpieces of cinema according to the auteur theory. Though I never would have looked it otherwise. So, I watched it (LAUGH) and it was a great masterpiece. He had turned me around. And, getting past the prejudice against John Wayne and popular cinema. And, so I became an auteur, really wanted to set up a little screening room and run it. And, make money. But, I was introduced to non-theatrical and you can't, you know they're not commercially, you don't get commercial rights when you get 16.

[TAPE 2100:23:22 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

So, I decided to start because I had wanted to see-- they're certain films I wanted to see. I wanted to see the early German film. I wanted to see the current-- the next issue was around and it was going into Kenneth Anger and all, SCORPIO RISING. And, there was no way to see these films at that time. So, there was no Riviera Capri, or anything. It was the middle of '63. So, I said well, I'll start a film society. And, so I started what I called the Art Department Film Society.

[TAPE 2100:23:54 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

Got a new faculty member, Ray Brown, who taught prints to back it. Because, somebody told me he was interested in film. It turns out not only was he interested in film, he was a dyed in the wool auteur fan. He and David Glines who was his friend. So, we together put on, had this film society. And, I got films I really wanted to see that I don't think the Coronet had ever played. I remember I got Dryer's JOAN OF ARC and various thing, various films.

[TAPE 2100:24:33 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

And, some of the new American cinema what's now called the new American cinema by Mekas. And, I got I hate to say this I will admit it. Ken Jacobs STAR SPANGLED TO DEATH with Jack Smith and also Brakhage's SIRIUS REMEMBERED. And, at another time I got POTEMKIN. And, I had a movie scope and I looked at I think all of Potemkin on the movie scope shot by shot. I learned a tremendous amount about how Eisenstein, his structure which is amazing. And, then looked at and also looked at SIRIUS REMEMBERED which is striking for the fact that you're taught when you make a cut it's suppose to do something significant.

[TAPE 2100:25:22 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

Well, (LAUGH) Brakhage doesn't begin to follow that rule. He would make a cut that was just an inch or two over from the other first thing, or all kinds of it's just editing like an artist would just know, with no rules at all. But, a lot of very similar cuts, similar shots cut fast. So, that was a big lesson. And, that's one reason I rented the films. When I looked BLONDE COBRA, I think it was, was it yeah BLONDE COBRA by Ken Jacobs which was so badly done and homosexual and everything. I nixed it. I wouldn't play it, it was too embarrassing.

[TAPE 2]00:26:00 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And, but I played the rest of them. I said I didn't I think I actually said I couldn't get the print. But, this led-- the next day there's a knock on the door, I was living on Barrington, we're still recording. And, this beatnik was at the door. It was John Fles. And, he had been instructed that I had these prints because he was going to play them that night at the Movies 'Round Midnight. So, I didn't tell him (LAUGH) that I refused to show them. But, I gave him the prints.

[TAPE 2]00:26:31 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And, he noticed I had this living room and I had this big film processor there and a printer. And, he noticed that. And, so that's how I discovered Movies 'Round Midnight, which had originally been at Mother Neptune's. I don't know if that's, Mother Neptune was a coffee shop. And, Fred Engelberg had a lot to do with starting it. I think Fred and John started it. But, now it was at the Cinema after the show at midnight on Saturday nights. And, Fles was booking it with Michael Getz, Mike Getz who was the son of the owner of the Cinema.

[TAPE 2]00:27:19 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And, that pretty much did what I was desperately doing with this film society. I mean they played SCORPIO RISING within a couple of weeks. I think it was stopped by the police once again, and...

[TAPE 2]00:27:33 ADAM HYMAN

Before we go into that, let's do more about your Art Department. Where did you screen?

[TAPE 2]00:27:39 PETER MAYS

Okay, okay.

[TAPE 2]00:27:40 ADAM HYMAN

The shows, how many shows were there?.

[TAPE 2]00:27:42 PETER MAYS

Okay, they were screened actually in a big auditorium at the school.

[TAPE 2]00:27:47 ADAM HYMAN

Let's start with the Art Department. The Screening Society was screened in. We don't want to hear my questions, so just tell us...

[TAPE 2]00:27:53 PETER MAYS

Yeah, oh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Yeah, the Art Department Film Society had access to UCLA's, once it was recognized with a faculty member on board you could easily get a auditorium with a projection booth which I did in the Business School. That was pretty big. And, you could make up flyers, put, post them on the campus, and charge money. It should be nonprofit, but you could charge enough to pay for the prints and stuff. So, the first and I don't, I've looked and I don't have a proper record of what I got. (LAUGH)

[TAPE 2]00:28:39 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

But, I know it was SIRIUS REMEMBERED was one of the films. There was a new American cinema night and then I remember the Dryer. I don't remember what else, but it was a mixed bag. But, the next series was all-- the Museum of Modern Art at that time and maybe today had a tremendous selection of early German films. Including Murnau, both Siegfried and the one that followed it the whole works. So, that was heaven. So, I did an early German Film Festival series.

[TAPE 2]00:29:21 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And, that I made money I'd have to say. And, I didn't, you know more than I actually spent because it was popular. I have to mention that as a, in the Art Department I was a T.A., a teaching assistant and one of my students was Ray Manzarek who later became the organist for The Doors. A lot of theater art students would get, would take their art classes. Partly because the women were really beautiful in the Art Department. And, a very beautiful Japanese woman was in this class, Dorothy Fujikawa who was really talented.

[TAPE 2]00:29:57 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

Anyway, he later married her. And, I was the art instructor to which, so he's always-- we later had a pretty good friendship because after he was not, you know was more accessible. But, anyway he came I remember he bought a season ticket for the Art Department for the early German film. The next quarter we played other stuff including I think I played FLAMING CREATURES I can't remember though. I may have seen it at the Movies 'Round Midnight. I know I played a really auteur night of FORTY GUNS by Samuel Fuller, a famous western with women haunchos.

[TAPE 2]00:30:52 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And, something else and that is very memorable to me because I went and looked at the audience and I saw Pat O'Neill and this attractive woman he was next to who are obviously a couple, and this was Beverly O'Neill. He, I think they either just been married, or whatever. At any rate they were a couple right out of art school. And, my, me and Judy were a couple. And, we so we had some times together. He also shared a studio with Carl Cheng and they did screenings there. Carl's a sculptor at UCLA.

[TAPE 2]00:31:32 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

So, so Judy got a job as a, in the medical center while I finished the film and then finally had to get a job. And, I fortunately got one at TRW mainly because I was an artist. They had kind of a crazy guy in control systems where I was an analog programmer, which is a kind of programming where you wire actual components together to simulate a control system in a missile or whatever. Which is a very well paying job. And, she was so she could do art on her own.

[TAPE 2]00:32:19 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And, so the next five years I'm working at TRW in the daytime and at night making these experimental films. Yes?

[TAPE 2]00:32:31 ADAM HYMAN

So, let's go back once to the Art Department.

[TAPE 2]00:32:34 PETER MAYS

Yeah.

[TAPE 2]00:32:34 ADAM HYMAN

Tell me when these screenings were, what month, year?

[TAPE 2]00:32:38 PETER MAYS

Okay, okay it would be the Fall, let's see I got I have more data on this, but I think it was the Fall of '63 was the short thing. And, I'm pretty sure the Spring of '64 was the German film, and then the Fall of the next time was FORTY GUNS and other stuff. I can't remember I think they were only three seasons. I'm not sure though.

[TAPE 2]00:33:06 ADAM HYMAN

The shows run a season?

[TAPE 2]00:33:08 PETER MAYS

Well, I mean a quarter, they are...

[TAPE 2]00:33:11 ADAM HYMAN

(UNINTELLIGIBLE)

[TAPE 2]00:33:12 PETER MAYS

About six or eight. And, let's see...

[TAPE 2]00:33:25 ADAM HYMAN

How many people might attend shows?

[TAPE 2]00:33:26 PETER MAYS

Quite a few at least 40 or 50, 60 maybe.

[TAPE 2]00:33:30 ADAM HYMAN

And, do you remember any other people who were attending who were of interest?

[TAPE 2]00:33:34 PETER MAYS

Let's see, no. A lot of art students and a lot of theater art students. I think it was the only Film Society for a while I can't remember. But, certainly the only one showing the experimental film. Now, as I say at the same time Movies 'Round Midnight started. So, that became a very, very important that replaced the Coronet and then some. And, with big, big audiences 400 people or whatever in the cinema.

[TAPE 2]00:34:12 ADAM HYMAN

Now, what shows do you remember attending Movies 'Round Midnight?

[TAPE 2100:34:16

PETER MAYS

Certainly SCORPIO RISING and I was, okay let's see Mario Bava's BLACK SUNDAY which was the first time I saw Bava who's a big hero of mine because he's such a great visual artist. A very, very influential and strong experience was the first time I saw Warhol. And, he had played SLEEP I didn't see that one. But, I saw EAT with Robert Indiana eating a mushroom and a couple of others. And, that was as strong as any experience I've ever had in film. To have to sit in a theater with a bunch of people and watch the same shot for half an hour of just this guy in black and white guy eating a mushroom.

[TAPE 2100:35:12 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And, it broke through a real barrier in terms of and I thought have subsequently thought it was sort of like Zen Buddhism for the beatniks. It was the ability to stop being in the scene, being in the structure we're in and thinking all the time. And, just be still. So, that was a very, very that's where Warhol was just amazing as an experimental filmmaker. And, of course every time he, well not the selection of his films would be was one of the streams of film... [Technical]

[TAPE 2100:35:57 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

that Fles drew upon. TARZAN AND JANE REGAIN, of course and they got successfully better I guess, or worse whatever you want to look at it. What other films? And, that and so the Movies 'Round Midnight plus FILM CULTURE were the two chief and then pretty quickly I got a subscription to the VILLAGE VOICE. because Mekas had a column and Sarris had a column every week. These things made it possible to working at TRW. (LAUGH) And, it was just a fucking renaissance of artists that showed it seems like almost at the same time.

[TAPE 2100:36:46 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And, must be due to Mekas' publicity and the Filmmakers Cooperative was also just started and I got SIRIUS REMEMBERED from them. Robert Breer, Stan Vanderbeek who wasn't all that great, but is pretty good. Harry Smith who is the equivalent of Picasso or something in the underground film. Who were all the others? And, the three greats to me in my opinion were Brakhage, Anger and Markopoulos. This was '63 late '63. They were all color much longer and much, oh god, heavier is the term we used.

[TAPE 2100:37:33 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

Especially, Markopoulos who's TWICE A MAN introduced single frame editing as a way of not dissolving, but coordinating different shots. And, DOG STAR MAN of course by Brakhage. THE PRELUDE I think was the only one out that year. And, then SCORPIO RISING which was such a masterpiece. And, was you know in regular theaters. It had enough porn elements to be, become to play a fairly big run. SCORPIO was the one that had the most effect. I remember a guy named I can't remember his name now. He had been in one of my classes and went on in film.

[TAPE 2]00:38:23 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

Anyway, he described it in this kind of snooty way that arts, you know the theater arts people do things. But, he was shocked, but liked it. Chrome, leather or whatever. I have to mention here that the Arts Department had a gallery that would show their work called the CG, the CG Gallery. They played, they would show the student, some students and mainly the faculty. At one of those shows and then the thing that happened about then. It would be '60 early '63 I have to go back just a bit.

[TAPE 2]00:39:05 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

We came back I guess it was late '62 we came back from summer vacation and found out that Ellie Neal one of our students who was had been with a guy Lance Richbourg I knew quite well as a, who's in SISTER MIDNIGHT. Who was a really great artist that she'd broken up Lance and had married a Theater Art student (LAUGH) which was just shocking. Who was Francis Coppola. So, who was not in our eyes a very good filmmaker. He made very Hollywood-- we saw one of his films, I think. I don't know, or we just think because he was from the Theater Arts Department he must be a commercial hack.

[TAPE 2]00:39:53 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

At any rate, so at one of these soirees at the one of the opening sets at the CG I had about an hour long talk with Francis Coppola just as he was getting going. And, he explained to me how he was going to be, get in through writing and he had a real hot energy. He was really raring to go. And, I became part of his entour--and Judy and I became part of entourage for a while. He moved to Mandeville Canyon shortly, got a house.

[TAPE 2]00:40:25 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

This would be probably '63, late '63 and I remember going with this group which followed him around because he bought a 16mm projector. In fact, I had the same projector. It was a Devray. He had gotten it from the same place, in fact, Lloyd's. Well, he put it in this house and this is a fantastic story. We're all standing around, got a hammer and went up to a back wall and bashed a hole in the wall. Went around and put the projector in behind it and showed movies through this hand made hole in the wall.

[TAPE 2]00:41:05 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

Which were his father's some of his father's musical shorts. He was really into his father. And, I realized later this was a dramatic, he did it, he's a dramatist. And, this was and he knew he was going to later tell the workmen to cut a wall a little bit bigger thing in the wall to put a glass in and have a portal. So, anyway that's Francis he's, you know he's amazing as a force. And, he did those kinds of...

[END OF TAPE: [TAPE 2]00:41:38]

TAPE 3: PETER MAYS

[TAPE 3 100:01:11 PETER MAYS]

So I spent a ridiculous amount of time editing, inspired by Markopoulos and Brakhage and their editing styles which I must have, which was perfect for the amount of footage I had with, but was typical than 8mm, edited some, including single-frame edits where each frame is a different source. This, doing this with eight millimeter, not 16, and using eight-- 16 millimeter Mylar tape which has just come out fairly recently, and with tweezers placing each frame on the Mylar tape, and cutting with a razor blade that perforation that they had, they didn't have for 16, because it was double eight, and then folding it over and pinching it to make a splice.

[TAPE 3 100:02:08 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

And then, when I was doing a long double, single-frame edit, I pick a big stretch of the tape, taped it down and then placed each frame, you know, down and then, you know, tape it all over. It was really a ridiculous amount of work. But, and the reason I was doing all these was because Fles was beginning to do film festivals or film contests. The first one was with Kenneth Anger judging. And Stanton Kaye won that with GJORG and that's a big moment in the L.A. film history because Stan is a really major talent.

[TAPE 3 100:02:50 INTERVIEWER]

What do you remember about that, that Festival?

[TAPE 3 100:02:51 PETER MAYS]

I remember, I don't, I didn't enter it but I remember seeing GJORG for the first time which was completely in tune with the period. I mean, it was anti-war, very strong statement about. It was a bit, it was a late beatnik period. And folk music was still, Dylan hadn't showed up yet I don't think. But very (MAKES NOISE) being, it's the Norman Mailer's, THE WHITE NEGRO period. I mean, these are hipster but they're very isolated and Stan really captured it.

[TAPE 3 100:03:39 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

To give you the idea of how filmic he was, he, there was a shot of, supposedly a Nike missile being driven up the coast to be, and he faked it. He knew he had to have that, so he faked the missile and you don't, you can't tell. He knew where to do what to get a very strong film. Anyway, and on the basis of that, Stan of winning that, I think he got into UCLA. It was the first, the film schools that he burned through his short career. The next, MMFF of whatever he called them...

[TAPE 3 100:04:21 INTERVIEWER]

(UNINTELLIGIBLE) filmmakers Pasadena.

[TAPE 3 100:04:23

PETER MAYS

Yeah. Was, Brakhage was going to be, was announced as the judge. So that's the one I was working toward with STREAM. And since it, I don't know. I can't, so far as I know, and I don't know cinema very, you know, limited. But I would say STREAM is closer to a Brakhage film than anybody has ever done. Now they get Solomon, somebody, I've never seen his work. He's supposed to be close to Brakhage. They're may be, there probably are others. But...

[TAPE 3 100:04:56

INTERVIEWER

Phil Solomon (UNINTELLIGIBLE)

[TAPE 3 100:04:57

PETER MAYS

Phil Solomon, yeah. STREAM is more energetic, more forceful than Brakhage. It's more pushy and it's more driving. But, and I actually preserved it in this room with this projector which has variable speed, projecting in on a pretty small screen and videoing the screen, and I'm looking at the monitor on the video and adjusting the speed until there were no bars, then it would be exactly 15 frames a second. And it came out really well, I have to say. And that's the original, that's the original Kodachrome.

[TAPE 3 100:05:34 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

I have a problem with the, with screening up to mid, every week at midnight because I needed a 16. So I actually made a quick printer using this projector and that camera, but linked with a copper thing I made to be able to, I forget now how I did it, but I, it was frame by frame and very slow. And if you go slow enough, anybody can make a good film print, took about 14 hours and it would skip every now and then, so I had to keep an eye on it. But that way, I had a, and I did it on Ektachrome which is a low contrast with the camera original, for original in which I shot later on.

[TAPE 3 100:06:23 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

But and then had it coated and that was the print they submitted. Anyway, I don't even know of, that's right, Brakhage didn't show up. And I tried to remember now. I think, Markopoulos and Jack Smith substituted, unless I'm wrong, unless I did this another time. But I'm pretty sure Brakhage didn't show up or maybe he did. I can't remember really well. There were two occasions, though, where I was helpful to these guys, because I could get money out of the school, at UCLA to pay for an honorarium to someone to show up. And I did for Brakhage, he premiered part two of DOG STAR MAN at UCLA. He was late getting there, but he's, and I had to do a bunch to get him paid.

[TAPE 3 100:07:19 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

And then later, I had, we've gotten into little routine where Fles would have like Markopoulos and Jack Smith and then I would also book them the next night or something. I could pay them a little more money and could have them at UCLA. I remember the two of them because Dennis Hopper, I take him out to dinner first, they were very late. And so I had a, just a regular projector set up for the screen in a small room in the art department. And they came in and Markopoulos had his original Ektachrome, this is a very soft film, low contrast.

[TAPE 3 100:07:58 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

And he went up to the projector into that [makes hand motion] to the gate and then showed it, this is an underground film, a real underground filmmaker, show the original Ektachrome on that projector that he didn't know anything about it except he just rubbed his finger down for one second to clean up. That's an underground filmmaker in my opinion. He could have easily ruined a very important, but you saw, and so you saw the lush, original Ektachrome. It was really special. And then, Smith just kind of did an act. He kind of did a comic act, sort of. So that was nice. It was nice to be part of that circuit, sort of.

[TAPE 3 100:08:43 INTERVIEWER]

But you weren't actually in attending UCLA at the time?

[TAPE 3 100:08:45 PETER MAYS]

No. No. I was out of the school. It's only as-- this Ray Brown made it official, but I was not in the school and I had an M.A. that's for maybe two years. This, the next period is kind of, five years are the same, so I, but I'll go through the film, my film stuff now. So I'd finished STREAM. I proceeded to Ektachrome and shot without any particular movie goal on the weekends and so on, but tried a lot of these things.

[TAPE 3 100:09:31 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

I tried filters over the camera. I tried doing a split screen sort of two different things, I shot at night very slow with a very open, you can, on as the Pathe, you actually can control the shutter, so I could open to see if, I forget how I did it. But I could shoot real slow at eight millimeter, anyway, and get nighttime stuff pretty bright. And then I also shoot single frames at night. I wanted at night and get brightly lit scenes. Okay, the next thing, Fles had seen that I had movie equipment, that I had, you know, the equipment.

TAPE 3 100:10:20 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

So I got a call from someone named Jerry Katz who had a hot film and the labs wouldn't print it, would I print it?. He'd heard about my place from Jerry Katz. So I said, okay. I had him actually in my mind as someone else who had a really beautiful girlfriend. He came by, he also had a pretty nice girlfriend but not quite as beautiful as the other one, and it was black and white, and so I did it. I print, I used this huge roller to, for his, I guess he had the negative done but he couldn't do the print, I guess. So I printed it and then, and unfortunately, the film kind of looped down at part of it and scraped off a lot emulsion which just happened to be the porno section.

TAPE 3 100:11:13 PETER MAYS

So, Jerry was a very aggressive guy. And so we looked at it and he said, well, you know, why, (LAUGH) there's a porn section here that's damaged. But in any case, we became friends. And he was my total opposite, but a very important guy in this period. And if he's still alive, you definitely should interview him. But all his films are just, were, are gone. Actually, Thom Andersen helped preserved one, then, film, on the roses but...

TAPE 3 100:11:45 INTERVIEWER

Why are the rest gone?

TAPE 3 100:11:46 PETER MAYS

He allowed it to be destroyed. He, Jerry went through a catharsis of amazing proportions at the, as the beatnik went into the '60s. It went to the high '60s you could say and drugs. He did not, using drugs, I think. He changed his head and dropped out completely. He went to live with his mother. And he can still be living there. And mere physical possessions were all let go off. I don't know the story exactly, but he made about six films. They were really good. It's that, he made this film, black and white in his, with his wife.

TAPE 3 100:12:30 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

He was also doing photography. He's very close to Dean Stockwell and Wallace Berman. And made, this next film was shot without a camera, oh, I was shooting at night, taking still frames or something, or shooting at eight frames per second. Jerry actually took the lens out of the camera and just shot the film with pure, neon light coming in and made a really beautiful rose kind of color, kind of very gentle, abstract film. And we had kind of parallel careers. We both got into shooting off the TV at the same time. We must have been talking that caused this, I don't know.

[TAPE 3 100:13:16 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

As part, one of the experiments I did in this Ektachrome, what I call Ektachrome dream, which is all this different, just trying out stuff, was I shot the television at eight frames. And, so that, yeah, I would get a very warm room with the, and if I kind of move the camera I'd get the different frames of the TV almost gushing out of the black-and-white TV was one thing. Then I also made a set of gels, theater gels with about 20 colors, and shot the black-and-white TV through the gels at a fairly slow rate and then shot it again through a different color as an experiment.

[TAPE 3 100:14:03 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

I was using gels for other, I was an artist so I wanted to color and so on. And that worked pretty interestingly. So that was the beginning of DEATH OF THE GORILLA. I then got into, and I could do this at night, I would get, I would shoot the film, send it to Hollywood Valley Film in Hollywood and they would mail back the print, or not the print, the original, but developed, and where I would shoot entirely by palette. I would shoot like, and I would look up in the schedule. And the movies they were playing then, they aren't playing now.

[TAPE 3 100:14:48 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

I mean, they were old. They were Japanese science fiction, Maria Montez, not Mario, island films with John Hall. I went for exotic films mainly, Hercules versus underworld creatures or whatever. All these cheap but very ornate, you know, Italian low-budget films and some of the great B movie classics. Anyway, I got into shooting a film a night, like, but rolling through the film on one color, let's say red, rewinding or actually shooting the whole film and then starting again, but in a way, I think, I rewound at that point as it rewind.

[TAPE 3 100:15:34 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

And then shooting green, let's say, helps something else, and then making that very contrasty in shooting yellow or something else. In each case trying to get pretty complicated patterns like, especially Arabic film, Arabic settings where the Arabic stuff's on. Take Cleopatra. I have a Cleopatra with Pascale Petit. I've never found out actually what it was. But, and then I would get the roll back and look at it and, you know, it often was just amazingly great, completely, not completely random because I was at least choosing the colors. But certainly I didn't know what was going on or what.

ITAPE 3 100:16:22 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

So that was satisfying, at least none of them were really auteur films. I also was viewing auteur films, but Hollywood, like a noir film, wouldn't work, because it's got too much, too many walls and so on. I needed, anyway, so that went for about six months of shooting. Got to a final Arabic film, Arabian Nights-type film and where I've had very controlled palette of browns and rose, and it came back and it was fucking amazing. And it's still by far the best film I've ever shot. Just as something would fade here, you'd see a horse going on me. Very romantic impressions of Arabian Nights. And all worked perfectly. I wouldn't change a frame.

ITAPE 3 100:17:21 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And then the next reel, roll that came back was just awful, and it's just muddy and bad. And I said, okay, production's over. (LAUGH) You have to cut it now. So then I got into, really, it was just fun. This was, we're having fun with film. Got into editing it to form a sort of continuities out of this. Like at one, all red thing of a space of a flying saucer attacking Washington, D.C. And so I made that one section. And would just cut it, or maybe not, depending on, I cut a lot though. And then this is on a Moviescope with a motorized, I think it was still with the erector set motor ... you know, this thing [points to mechanism], with teeth.

ITAPE 3 100:18:24 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And that, I would put aluminum tape on it so I could sync a tape recorder to begin. And on the tape, I would make the sound and, I tape the sound off on the TV or whatever, music usually. And it sort of put together this, the film, A roll only. This was all using Mylar tape. In my whole career, I only used Mylar tape. I never used cement splices, because I couldn't handle the idea that you were going to destroy frames. And if I wanted to, we, and I, we cut a lot, so. And I also cut the original.

ITAPE 3 100:19:04 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

At any rate, so that's how, DEATH OF THE GORILLA was a result of that. Jerry made a more political film, but also off a TV. He had Nixon in it and stuff. Anyway, so that gets us up to '64 or '65. And that was-- I played at the Movies 'Round Midnight. The most-- DEATH OF THE GORILLA, is a film of a type that I don't know that there are, there are other films of that era that are like this where they're superimposed a lot. And so you can see different things in it according to your mood. And definitely, the sound affected what you saw.

[TAPE 3 100:19:57 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

Also learned that when you had a cut, your mind blocked out the next couple of frames. If I, if you cut and there was something for two frames only, you wouldn't see it. The mind removed it. At any rate, finished that film, played it at the Movies 'Round Midnight. I forget how, maybe it was for a festival or, I don't know how I got in there. But what was very shocking was that it was a completely different film in, with an audience, because it's so ambiguous. I saw a completely different continuity. Much simpler. Much more, and more like, and it was a mass reaction, I guess. I, it's much simpler but deeper, often. Much deeper.

[TAPE 3 100:20:48 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

And so that put me into a real conundrum, was I making films that I liked, which is sort of what an experimental filmmaker does, or was I going to make it the way a group would see it? And here is a really experimental film and it could be either. So I was, I don't know, that was interesting. I had no idea that we shared feelings this much, that, what the hippies could call vibrations. Anyway, let's see... (TECHNICAL)

[TAPE 3 100:21:29 INTERVIEWER]

Okay. Just tell me what else you remember about...tell me about the making of Sister Midnight (TECHNICAL)

[TAPE 3 100:21:42 PETER MAYS]

STAR CURTAIN was another experiment that just, I made into an extended film, and I shot whole rolls of paint. And meanwhile, I did some painting on footage, so I projected that on my wife's body and filmed it, and other things like that. These are all, there was a lot of sexuality in these films. And there was in the period, it was the beginning of the sexual revolution as well and also of a revolution in censorship. (TECHNICAL)

[TAPE 3 100:22:26 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

Where, and you saw these in the Movies 'Round Midnight, the risqué, more and more risqué footage was being seen. And at some point, pubic hair began to be seen, which was amazing at the time. These were very nice films, though, at that point. It was, I shouldn't be calling it porn. It was sensual, I think, sensual going to the next step. At the same time, though, The Beatles were coming out. Dylan was beginning to be heard. The whole, there was a whole, the new age, the '60s was beginning, '64, '65.

[TAPE 3 100:23:03 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

So I got a porn film from this place that was very, low-key porn. I mean, it's just a woman with breasts or something. Put that and shot off my movie scope. I have a four-frame thing and other experiments like that. But very casual, very Warhol, just do a, you know, and I shot it all in a week. Had the six rolls, just cut the rolls together basically. And that was the original STAR CURTAIN. Let's see now, at, by this point, the experimental film was beginning to really blossom, and I think it was '66 that Warhol finally made CHELSEA GIRLS, and that had a big run.

TAPE 3 100:24:05 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And about this time, the Cinematheque 16, I think it was '66, was founded on the Strip. And the Strip was becoming a really big acid thing with, and there were hippies now, strippies and so on. And at this point, I was also following the UCLA screenings, the student screenings. And the films were beginning to reflect this. And I have one of, I have preserved one of these films, Felix Venable's LES ANGES DORMENT, LSD in code, which is a couple, him and his old lady, and they have an acid trip and he cuts from black and white to color.

TAPE 3 100:24:52 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And that's a very important film, actually. I think it's the first time acid was really dealt with. And I have them. I have a, Stehura got me a print of that. And the film itself was lost. Felix Venable. I think it's '65. Also, I watched Ray Manzarek's films because I knew him. And he was shooting also pretty experimental work.

TAPE 3 100:25:21 INTERVIEWER

Where were these films being screened or...

TAPE 3 100:25:22 PETER MAYS

(OVERLAPPING) These were screened at Royce Hall. It's part of the UCLA student film.

TAPE 3 100:25:29 INTERVIEWER

Did they screening anywhere else in L.A.?

TAPE 3 100:25:31 PETER MAYS

I don't think so, no. I don't think so. The Movies 'Round Midnight, more and more San Francisco films are being screened. Bruce Baillie, the big hit of all these was Robert Nelson's OH DEM WATERMELONS, and then Gunvar Nelson showed up, would release a really icky film. Larry Jordan's PATRICIA GIVES BIRTH TO A DREAM BY THE DOORWAY and his animated films began to happen. It was really clear that if you give filmmakers a place to exhibit and an audience, they'll respond with great work. But in addition to that, the '60s were really revving up now.

TAPE 3 100:26:15 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

I forget all now-- Fles had a very broad sense of, a very broad taste. He had Carey? I forgot the guy's name. He made a film about himself and he played that. He became, you know, people with funny films could go there, I guess. And if Fles liked it, he'd play it. But a lot, and he played FLASH GORDON the first time. The original FLASH GORDON. And this was, it was camp, it was pop changed into camp. He played that and your ears are popping. It's a drum, people react. I've never heard such a reaction. Screaming, laughing, the reaction was just amazing to this kind of, this, FLASH GORDON the first time. What else did he do? I hope you can get hold of his stuff.

[TAPE 3 100:27:18 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

He continued to put on the festivals or the contests. I remember, and Wallace Berman became the house artist. He's really a major artist. And Jerry Katz and I, I remember one day coming by and we delineated all the heavyweights, what we considered the heavyweights. Warhol, Breer, and so on. There are at least 15, or is it 10 or 15, including, for me, Ron Rice, who died young. And the three greats, I think, went on to greater-- what I feel followed Griffith's example, went on to their INTOLERANCE, beyond the movie, giant film. With Brakhage, it was THE ART OF VISION, which he just took the different rolls and put them up all end to end, so it's a four-and-a-half-hour film.

[TAPE 3 100:28:18 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

Kenneth Anger, it was originally going to be KUSTOM KAR KOMMANDOS, and he got a, the Ford Foundation gave out grants at this point. They began to recognize this as an art form. He never did that, but he started LUCIFER RISING. In '66 he moved to Haight-Ashbury, which was taking off. And Markopolous, who's going to make THE ILLIAC PASSION. And Ron Rice, whose CHUMLUM would have a powerful effect on me in terms of superimposition, and really, the first rule of superimposition, filmed my scene. Was going to shoot the Atom Man Meets The Queen, THE QUEEN OF SHEBA MEETS THE ATOM MAN with Taylor Mead.

[TAPE 3 100:29:08 PETER MAYS]

None of these, the only one that really became a giant film was THE ART OF VISION. There's a little story there that's interesting. One night, Kenneth Anger was at the Movies 'Round Midnight and they played INAUGURATION. And apparently, he was in the booth reciting love letters from Anais Nin to him or something. I just heard about this, like, the next week. And Mathison, Paul Mathison apparently stole the print, or it had been stolen from him so he took it back or something, and Anger was hurt somewhat. There was a physical, it was actually a physical thing.

[TAPE 3 100:29:53 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

So the next week, I did go and here's Kenneth Anger in front of the theater with a picket, with a picket sign, a small Band-Aid on the back of his neck and telling us these are not good guys. These are bad guys. You should not go in, and all this. So, anyway, that was kind of, Kenneth's last thing. I think he got one at San Francisco at that point. But, anyway, the only person in the world who observed this boycott was Stan Brakhage. And he wouldn't play any films at the, at the Cinematheque because of what they'd done to Anger.

[TAPE 3 100:30:34 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

So, finally, he made a deal that if they showed a huge amount of his work including a complete screening of THE ART OF VISION, then he would, they could take his work again. So they agreed. I forget the, what all was shown, but I went on a Sunday, Jerry Katz was there, to sit through four and a half hours of THE ART OF VISION, which, it was exhausting. It was a commitment, from your body to do it. And I remember actually almost getting sick towards the end, and having to go to the men's room and almost barfed, and I went back. Anyway, it was a great, deep...

(AUDIO DROPS OUT)

[TAPE 3 100:31:14 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

...of, real commitment on the part of Fles and Mike Getz. At this point, they were beginning to expand their movie, their midnight playing. And, okay, so...

[TAPE 3 100:31:31 ADAM HYMAN]

Fles was also gone by the end of '65. That was all Getz after that.

[TAPE 3 100:31:34 PETER MAYS]

Oh okay. I didn't even know that. I became less interested in it and, especially since the Cinematheque started. And Lewis Teague is a very important person in this history, was managing it. Originally, that's where I met both David Lebrun and Jeff Perkins because they were both projectionists. And they screened, I saw CHELSEA GIRLS there, to two screen projection. What was going on at the same time is this, was expanded cinema. And there was a lot of, there were some of that at the cinema we showed at midnight. And we all, one time, we all brought films and projectors and we tried to cover the space, which was impossible, but that's experiment.

[TAPE 3 100:32:28 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

So, to the back to Cinematheque, it was a tastier, more sensuous experience. They played LAPIS quite a lot, the Whitney film. I think they had a, bought the print. And I played that, STAR CURTAIN, THE STAR CURTAIN, the original version, which was just in the rolls, which is a Warholish thing. That was played a lot. He played that quite a lot, Louise did.

[TAPE 3 100:33:04 INTERVIEWER]

And when you say a lot, what do you mean?

[TAPE 3 100:33:06 PETER MAYS]

Like four or five weeks, I would say. Not necessarily in a row, but more than one booking. I mean, I would say three or four bookings. And Jeff saw it, and I met him then. Meanwhile, I had, I gave up on Coppola really stupidly. That was among the stupidest things I've ever done because he was so square. He was just totally square. But he had a big career still. And I hated YOU'RE A BIG BOY NOW, which was visually awful. I had to reverse myself after THE GODFATHER, but, yeah, I dropped my acquaintance with Coppola, which wasn't smart. Anyway... (TECHNICAL)

TAPE 3 100:34:07

INTERVIEWER

Well, tell me a bit more about Cinema, Cinematheque 16.

TAPE 3 100:34:09

PETER MAYS

Cinematheque 16, Lewis was, it was ideal for Lewis because he's girls in minis, you know, hot pants would come in and talked to him and all. And, Lewis, this was certainly connected with Barney's Beanery at that era. Fred Engelberg is another very important person in all this. He was with Fles in the beginning at the Movies 'Round Midnight. He was always at Barney's Beanery. Lewis would go there and some of us after the screenings. Fred's most important film was EPISIOTOMY, which I think is lost. Lewis was from New York. He had gotten us a scholarship or something to be on Hawaii and become a Hollywood director. But instead, he's, a smart guy, he got this job at the end of the Strip. I mean, it was two blocks away from the Whiskey.

TAPE 3 100:35:11 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

You could, Bob Maurice who later produced Woodstock, I think, parked his car and lived in a parking lot and would go up to the, up the Strip from the Cinematheque. At anyway, the night I met Jeff, he tried to get me to do a black bag piece where I would be tied up, put in a black bag and deposited somewhere in the city, and then just take it from there. I declined the offer. It was a Yoko Ono thing. So, but anyway, that was the very first night I met him. He and I did a bag, but we became friends. And about now, after, okay, there's a missing film here.

TAPE 3 100:35:56 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

In '66, as I could feel, and everybody could feel this energy was beginning. I remember, Mellow Yellow was out. Bruce Lane and I, we're very close friends. We went to the Movies 'Round Midnight a lot. We actually tried to make bananas into something you can smoke. I mean, it was, we didn't have drugs but we sure had the, and Dylan was, you know. So, I decided to make a movie about a group of young people, sort of like, I was, in addition to Movies 'Round Midnight and seeing, and Jerry was very, we were very together on this, every Antonioni that came out, and Godard. Godard became very important. He probably is as important as everything else put together, each successive Godard film.

TAPE 3 100:36:50 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

But, and I would also go to see Mario Bava films and other horror films. I was into horror films and liked Corman because I like the decadence of, the color and the artificiality of the sets, and just the mythic nature, but I would, it's still is appealing. I still like horror films. But, and Corman himself was shifting over into the, the trip about this new experience, new stuff. And, let's see, so, anyway, Louise had, so, I decided to shoot this movie. Bruce knew a sculptor, Herb Elsky in, who had a big studio in Venice.

[TAPE 3 100:37:45 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

And I wanted to shoot there, not a-- and I was having dreams about it and so, and I also wanted to shoot in the hallway of the art building where you are with a group of young people and on an adventure, but it wasn't, which all have been happening in horror films. But it wasn't a plot. It was just, it was some more kind of dreamlike thing, like, amongst, in sets that were happening, like, happenings. Okay. And so, I, and Elsky had two girlfriends, one current and one older, Susan Marshall and Kirsten Weimann. And then, they were, and then I knew all the art students. So I had them over and shot the beginning of THE TIME BEYOND THOUGHT, which I didn't like at that time in Ektachrome, in Ektachrome ECO, then made a, this huge set of, which is the final number in the current version.

[TAPE 3 100:38:57 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

Got this girl to be a nude vampire and all these kids are supposed to be at the center of the earth now where they're being harvested for their blood by the vampire girl. And then shot one immediate scene at my place in a, where Judy and I lived in Inglewood, of just kind of the kids waking up in darkness and groping around, very much, very close to a happening, with draper, you know, plastic things rolling. And, actually, Venable was at that and a girl named Joanne Jordan from UCLA.

[TAPE 3 100:39:35 INTERVIEWER]

Where did you build that big set?

[TAPE 3 100:39:36 PETER MAYS]

The big set was in his studio. It's...

[TAPE 3 100:39:39 INTERVIEWER]

Yeah.

[TAPE 3 100:39:40 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

...Herb Elsky's. Got the, you know, web maker thing, fog machine, got all these special effects equipment, and then, lit it all with different kinds of colors, lighting, oh, especially the fog, the smoke with an orange filter or whatever. It was the first time, that's a, and shot it on Ektachrome EF, which is a very high, very, they're grainy, but high, but sensitive news film. Happily, ECO, Ektachrome EF and Ektachrome, hold on. I'm getting them mixed up. There's a third one which I shot SISTER MIDNIGHT in. But anyway, these are news films.

[TAPE 3 100:40:28 PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)]

But Kodak, since news, you want to be able to keep news films, they use permanent dyes and they use permanent dyes in ECO. They changed in 1970, as we know. So that was THE TIME BEYOND THOUGHT. I shot those three scenes and realized it was just not, and I was going to go on with the whole JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH-type stuff. But it was just, it wasn't enough and I stopped.

[END OF TAPE: [TAPE 3 100:41:01]

TAPE 4: PETER MAYS

00:00:39

PETER MAYS

Peter Mays. P-E-T-E-R, M-A-Y-S. As to my filmmaking philosophy, it's changed a lot from the beginning when it was just experiments. Playing, around, doing this stuff. And about the time we're talking about now, 1966, where we stopped, the philosophy changed from, really from experimental to narrative.

00:02:01

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And that was because of the going of the, what was happening in society at that time. It was so amazing that it became— before movies were better than life, now life was becoming better than movies. So I and a number—and I feel like more people, partly lead by Andrew Noren, or, not Noren, I forget his name now.

00:02:36

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

But he shot EARLY CLUE TO THE NEW DIRECTION, [Andrew Meyer] I think 1966, he was a protégé of Warhol. Very gentle, but narrative films that didn't have Hollywood plots or action, but were about people. And so, but more than that, the social changes. I had to record them. And I wanted to interrupt at this point, talk about pure films, just talk for a few minutes about why the '60s was, went in the direction it went in.

00:03:17

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And you had kind of asked the other time about acid, and that is the driving force. I would like to look at a top down version for a couple of minutes into why it was so weird. Okay, and it really springs from I think more than anyone else from Timothy Leary, who was a Hollywood— [laugh], Harvard professor in the late '50s, and interested in interviewing prisoners for, or testing them to determine how they could be helped.

00:03:52

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

How they could be actually helped by the system. He got into testing multiple levels. If the prisoner purposefully wrote the wrong answer, rebelling against the test, he was capable of analyzing that and determining what part of their mind and attitude was avoiding or rebelling against the system.

00:04:16

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

So, and then he pretty quickly got— so he wrote a book about analyzing the multiple levels of mind of a criminal, or a prisoner, and about that time got hold of acid, realized it had tremendous power to change a person, and so began to administer sessions, as a Hollywood— god, Harvard professor, he had the wherewithal to do this.

00:04:48 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Where he gave people psilocybin, which is a very soft psychedelic, mushrooms. And then 20 minutes in or something would give them acid. And if they had a good trip they were a different person when they came out of it. A more positive, and more... and so forth. So he really, in a way, brainwashed them, but also really improved their attitudes.

00:05:10 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And, but it pretty much got out of control, and other people began taking acid. And he followed that, and actually using adman's techniques and very American stuff, wrote like a coffee table book called THE PSYCHEDELIC EXPERIENCE. And went further than that, and acid is very powerful, of all of the drugs, it's the most... and if you take enough of it, everything changes, there's nothing left that's normal anymore.

00:05:45 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And it's a projection of that you're making— a movie that you're in that you're making. And he chose to use as a model of a good acid experience, the TIBETAN BOOK OF THE DEAD, in which one dies and, and goes to the white light, for maybe a certain period on what is called the Bardo Thodol, and then is reborn, is pulled back into the system and is reborn.

00:06:19 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

So the death of the ego became a thing you had to go through to get to this nirvana, because Buddha took the same idea. And that was his guidance via a coffee table book, and via lectures he gave throughout the country. I actually went to one in 1966 at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, where he appeared dressed in white with a first version of a light show, a Rudi Stern and Jackie Cassen, which was just kind of crystal lights.

00:07:00 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Crystal passed-through light, so the whole auditorium kind of had light playing. And then a rock group dressed in black called The Grateful Dead. And he took that trip around, and literally was like selling snake oil in the 19th Century. And he was a very smooth talking guy. Anyway, he guided a whole generation into using acid in a positive way in the sense of a good trip to advance and expand your mind, as he said.

00:07:36 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Unfortunately you could also have bad trips, but, so that— and what came out in acid was a need to be reborn. And I would say it's like rebooting a computer. The mind wanted to start over. And the only way to do that was to have a death of the ego, and then a reformation, and get rid of all the old traumas or whatever.

00:08:02 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

So that spread, and increased for what— it explains why the hippies were so interested in Tibet and Nepal, and the Himalayas. And was the first time Americans really got interested in the rest of the world in a mass group. And soon change, started to change all their ideas about things. Like in the cowboy versus the Indians, they liked the Indians.

00:08:32 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Primitive societies were really interesting now. The earth was really interesting. So that gave an ideology to what was a growing youth movement, which already had an anti-war ideology. Now they had a positive spiritual ideology which merely by taking a pill you could participate in.

00:08:55 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

So it was just too much, and the other thing that really helped, was essential was music, that rock and roll music form was more and more taken over by people singing about this. And among them Bob Dylan. Bob Dylan was a key figure. And took over radio, which had mass... could be heard everywhere. And so what happened was— and Leary was not originally, but became part of the beatnik.

00:09:34 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

He brought in Ginsberg quickly and other beatniks. And so that avant-garde beatnik minority managed to connect to the huge high school youth groups, the youth of America, already kind of against the government because of the war. But now with this tremendous possibility of personal, not salvation after you die, but just by taking a pill.

00:10:04 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

So in trying to figure out why, how this movement expanded so quickly, I would say those, that was the key thing was radio, and the art of popular music. The Beatles had begun this some time earlier, actually. So, and there was by now an underground free press. The media itself was very critical, but, so an alternate press grew up in an alternate sub form of the society, which was into this stuff.

00:10:51 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

A key figure in this was Andy Warhol, whose CHELSEA GIRLS had a big effect on me in terms of a new narrative about what Americans were going through. And I particularly remember Eric Emerson's monologue on acid, which lasted for about an hour, with bright color lights. I also remember a group of four people in chairs sort of like they were in a car, and they were talking back and forth spontaneously.

00:11:16 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Warhol was a really big figure in giving genuine portraits of the people that were around now. So anyway... and I was, I was in the funny space of being very middle class, working at TRW and doing films at night. But my mind and my feelings were really beginning to be engaged by this new society, which was very sensual, for one thing.

00:11:57 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

People were beginning to make their own clothing, there was brighter colors, and, you know, just, it was an acceptance of pleasure, basically that Americans had not done en masse. So it was inspiring to try to do a movie and the one that I began to write was one with colored lights. And I specifically wanted to express not the reality of people in a room, but a sense of the interconnection of their feelings and potential, as if barriers between them were to drop away as they were in group drug experiences.

00:12:52 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

I hadn't really had any [drugs], but, or I imagined there would be. And so they interacted more acting out their inner feelings. And if you look back in American drama, an awful lot of it is about people not being able to express themselves in, like Tennessee Williams, or whatever, tragedies by their romantic and hopes being dashed and whatnot.

00:13:22 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

So that was ending, it appeared to be. And so I thought there needed to be a new kind of movie that would express this. Antonioni was an inspiration that was well ahead on this. His BLOWUP was a big influence on me and my friends. Jerry Katz, I've mentioned before, was into all of this.

00:13:43 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

So I began writing, I quit my job and got, actually got one at Mount St. Mary's teaching photography to Catholic girls. And learned a lot from them about where the hippies were living, and all this stuff. It was all kind of— you had to get it by word of mouth or something. And, like, Laurel Canyon and Topanga Canyon and, and Beverly Glen Canyon, those were all hippie enclaves.

00:14:18 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

So I started trying to write, but by now rock music was changing, and getting more philosophical. Dylan's BLONDE ON BLONDE came out, it was the first double album, he had a really, he had a whole side on "Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands," one song that was 30 minutes long. Mick Jagger was a big influence. I actually would get rec— they didn't publish the lyrics in those days, I actually got records and wrote, transcribed the lyrics to get a taste of it.

00:14:54 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

I had some actors from this earlier film, *THE TIME BEYOND THOUGHT*, which I mentioned in the last thing. Two girls, so I wrote for them and other friends. And began to actually get things together for a full movie. That's what, so I have here...

00:15:33 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

I built actually, for a couple years, what was the kind of camera people were using, which was shoulder mounted and blimped. This thing has, it actually, this is the camera, my camera which I had from the beginning, the Pathe. And it would fit in here, and then you closed the whole thing up and you could film people talking. So, which is the blimp situation. It was ridiculously heavy and complicated, and I never in fact used it. But it does give an idea...

[close up of camera]

00:16:33 **ADAM HYMAN**

Now what would inspire you to build your own camera?

00:16:37 **PETER MAYS**

Now what inspired me was that there weren't such cameras out. This was the only... the Maysles Brothers and Ricky Leacock had begun shooting cinema verite with shoulder held cameras. There was no video at this point, So it's a 16 millimeter camera held on your shoulder. And actually I don't think anyone had made a camera along these lines yet. Or if they did it was really expensive.

00:17:05 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

I went further than that, though, it was ridiculous. I actually started constructing a tape recorder to carry around like this. Now why I did all this it's a good question. And all I can say, it's the same reason I was an underground filmmaker. I was into this on my own to, I believed, you know, express my own view of things, that was an urge. And so I had to have the, I started with the equipment.

00:17:31 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

As I say, when I actually got to shooting it, it was too ridiculous, and I didn't. So I shot it with the sound of the camera, and a scratch track on a, recorded on a Uher, intending to dub it all. And then just used some of the sounds from the scratch track, eventually. I did do some dubbing.

00:17:54 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Anyway, but I really liked Roger Corman's films, I liked corny sets, *JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH* or something. I liked the fantasy sets. I really liked, let's see, *FANTASTIC VOYAGE*, the movie shot supposedly inside the [body]— I really, it was a very psychedelic film, I thought. And so I was living with my wife in a one-bedroom apartment in Inglewood. I actually painted the ceiling of the living room black.

00:18:31 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

I hung flowers, I'd read about flower children, so I hung phony flowers from the ceiling. And made a kind of strange— and I got posters, there was a store in Westwood that sold Haight-Ashbury posters. So I kind of tried to fake the hippie beads-type culture, but happily I was very unsuccessful, so it's not, the film isn't dated in that sense.

00:18:57 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

But, and I got to know more people, more younger people. I got to know Burt Gershfield who was a student of Pat O'Neill's, I knew Pat quite well. And so, and he[Burt] was a hippie. [laugh] I wanted him and his wife, Carol, as the examples of the hippies. I would drive, like lots of other people—on Sunset Strip on Saturday night—past The Whiskey, you know, very slow movement of cars.

00:19:24 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Never get out, but filmed these people on the street. And acquired other night-time footage. I had shot a lot at night. So but filming actually began around— well, oh, then casting was an issue. I wanted to cast the girl who had been in, the vampire in A TIME BEYOND THOUGHT, but she was in a rehab now. So we looked for an actress to play the main part.

00:20:01 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And unfortunately— the movie was going to express not only sensuality, but sexuality. And I intended, and did, end it with a climax of a sexual act hitting also at the climax of the movie. I wanted to do that as a pure film. So we had to find a woman who would...a young... girls as we used to, because we called them in those days, who would be in the nude.

00:20:29 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And Lewis Teague of the Cinematheque actually got the script to Brian Epstein's girlfriend, and when she read that she rejected it. So at any rate, Jeff Perkins, who had been the projectionist at the Cinematheque was a good friend now, was in the movie and also found a woman named Victoria Bond, who was a performance artist and musician.

00:20:54 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And she was willing to do it. And the other two girls were from the earlier movie. And Lance Richburg who was a really great potential James Dean-type actor, who was an artist, also played in it. So I had five people, five friends. Bought Acapulco Gold, which was a very good form of pot, and bought a lot of it, well it seemed like at the time. Four sticks, four big, juicy sticks.

00:21:25

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

So I'd have people— so I shot at night, had these people over. We'd smoke the Acapulco Gold, SERGEANT PEPPER'S band album just came out about that time. We would listen to a couple cuts on it. By the way, that album is crucial for the beginning of the hippies rather than the beatniks. The richness of it is— the panorama of all the people in back, told you who was in, like Aleister Crowley and other people.

00:21:58

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

It was a very major influence. Plus, actually—and I didn't see them—but Andy Warhol was sending the Velvet Underground around now, this would be early '67, with the Exploding Plastic Inevitable, which was one of the early light shows, but a very Warhol one, very strong colors and so on. Kurt Vonnegut had a— it was a UCLA professor had a show on the radio where he would announce this stuff.

00:22:35

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And I first heard The Doors on that, on that show. In fact he played “The End,” which was a very long piece, and that was unheard of to hear. So, rock and roll was becoming a—which was the music of the, of teenagers—was becoming the expressive means of the new movement. And because it made money, they would play it.

00:23:06

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

So, and there was also other new art forms, in posters. Especially San Francisco, Haight-Ashbury posters. And light shows were beginning. Clubs would have multiple projected light shows. The whole purpose of all this was to take a space and completely animate it with sensual movement, as if you were hallucinating.

00:23:37

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And the real challenge of a light show, like, was to have every corner of the room filled with light and strobing and all this stuff. The Whiskey was a good example, though, I didn't get into The Whiskey until later, but they would, one way to do it is to have slide projectors that are going everywhere.

00:24:00

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

At any rate, so we began shooting,—Bruce Lane initially was my cameraman—only at night. And with the cast high, but the crew not high, [laugh]— that was an essential thing. Bruce and I smoked one time and took about 20 times to get one take. So that was the end of our participation in that.

00:24:27

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

But on the other hand, the cast would get really inventive and started inventing good stuff based on the script, which was not all that good. At any rate, but distorts— none of it is realistic. Like one person would move around, Kirsten, one of the heroines, would move around the other people, but they're all still. I was trying—I would say looking back it was intuitively done—but I was trying to change the normal kind of equal... what's the right word?

00:25:06

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

Almost Robert's Rules of Order that we all follow as social beings trying to do something. Changed that to something more dreamy. So the structure of the movie actually started with them in the apartment, and then— actually I initially just had a storm break out, later I had a drug, smoking one joint was the beginning of something. And then they find themselves in a much larger space, which I got from Peter Alexander, the artist.

00:25:42

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

He was living in a big, kind of, not big, but a mansion anyway. So I had— well, and that had multiple rooms. So I'd go there and light with old furniture and whatnot, and stained glass windows and so on. Like an expansion of the apartment into a much more, an ornate space. And also some stuff and outside and so on.

00:26:06

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

So shooting... and this would eventually be **SISTER MIDNIGHT**. And shot through— and meanwhile different people like Burt Gershfield, David Lebrun, people that I know quite well ever since, Pat O'Neill, would help, I would have them hold lamp lights and whatnot. And so they were kind of a, it was a social gathering, which kept the actors coming. There were a number of set romances that started under this.

00:26:41

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

Especially between Jeff and the lead actress, who later—I just will point out, that, for such a sexual movie—she later became the first woman conductor of... she's a really important conductor now for Julliard graduate in conducting and composing. At any rate, Victoria Bond. But everybody enjoyed it, except it was becoming more and more impossible to spend all night doing this.

00:27:15

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

But anyway, it did get shot into the summer. Meanwhile Monterey Pop Festival had happened. This, you know, it was the Summer of Love, the summer of '67. And the most radical thing that was happening were be-ins, were gatherings, large gatherings of people with no particular reason to be there.

00:27:40 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

They weren't there even for a political cause, or speech, or to hear a concert or something. It was just to be together, and that was real power in terms of people taking over a society, is when they actually could gather together. So there was a lot of attempts by the police to break up crowds and whatnot. But it taught me that freedom of assembly is the key right that we have as Americans.

00:28:19 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And at the same time there were protests, anti-war protests and so on, which were also very controversial. So around the end of the summer, the Summer of Love, when "Light My Fire" was the big hit, my wife, who was from Kansas City, returned there for a two week vacation, and told her mother what was going on in Los Angeles.

00:28:52 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And she came back and kind of took the silverware, and I heard the door close, and she was gone. So I was getting... a divorce was in the wings here. The story now somewhat follows Peter Fonda in THE TRIP, where he gets a divorce and then goes into the movement. So that happened. The next thing that happened was I had a, as a student of mine when I was teaching art at UCLA, was Ray Manzarek, who now was the organist for The Doors.

00:29:28 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And I thought, well why don't I try to get The Doors to do the music for my movie? So I went to my— actually went to the first rock concert that I've ever been to, which was at The Cheetah, which was on Pacific Ocean Park, which was actually a pier over the water in those days. The first time I ever actually went into a rock club. Went backstage to find Ray and was amazed to find wave upon wave of young Americans, youth surrounding this little teeny door to the dressing room.

00:30:06 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

So I couldn't see him. So I watched the show, it was a great, great Doors show, with Morrison actually masturbating onstage it appeared, doing "The End." John Densmore throwing the ring, the bronze rings of the drums into the audience like Frisbees. If it hit someone it would be terrible. Anyway, one of their theatrical presentations.

00:30:37 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And then went back[stage] again and came across a former art student, another former art student—we'll call her Ann—dressed in white like a— and really strange, and she said, hi. And so I began like a two week courtship of this... of what was an acid queen. One I really respected as an artist. I had seen some work of her earlier at UCLA, where she was painting under ultraviolet light.

00:31:12 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Of very strange paintings. So I saw her on and off— this is like the classic thing, a guy's wife leaves him so now he's meeting someone else. But she was really into acid. And way too much. And lived in a place on Sunset Plaza, which was on stilts. None of it was on the ground, actually, as she said. At any rate, towards the end of that, I came over there one night and she showed me her work.

00:31:49 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And I looked through it like I would as an art instructor. And she seemed to be, to me, I seemed to interpret from it, that she was seeking the white light, and she had confused the white light and an orgasm. And with seeking that total ecstasy, or her body was seeking it everywhere, including with acid, using it to pursue her cellular knowledge—a big thing in Leary was that the cellular knowledge that finally was coming out under acid—

00:32:30 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

—of her mother and father trying to seek their orgasm when they had her, and other desperate searches for total paradise. Anyway, I remember— so I was looking at and getting this take on her work, looked over at her and she was like looking at me very intensely. Like feeding me, you know, energies. And I just burst out in tears, it was so tragic. Then she kind of started being two different people.

00:33:03 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

One was very sexual, and one was a very unsexual. And I thought, well we've got to have a sexual healing now, I'm going to have to make a move. So I did, she screamed, the guy next door, who was an engineer, came over started fighting with me. And one of my greatest fears was fighting. Nonetheless I found myself in a fight with this guy.

00:33:24 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Another guy joined him. As I fought them, very—it's like in slow motion—one was twisting my arm and I went back— my mind changed to a 12 year old. From between two cars in the neighborhood I used to live in, fighting a gang, which was probably my greatest fear as a kid was to be beaten up by a gang of boys.

00:33:47 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

I was apparently doing that. And then I would flip back to Sunset Plaza, to these guys. It wasn't a very hard fight, I mean, but if I did something they would do something in return. And I would do it in order to be pushed, in order to break through to this early self. It was shocking that as soon as I was there I knew myself as a 12 year old really well.

00:34:15 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Anyway, I did that for a while, then stopped, kind of stopped and, what goes on next. And at that point Ann turned to the engineer and said, “well, I think he's done enough now.” And they stopped. And I continued to believe this was all— something set, because what happened due to it was all kinds of feelings.

00:34:40 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

I began to have real feelings, which I was a very intellectual person, and I'm, I started to feel, feel all, I could feel. I could feel again. I could crawl again, there's a movie about that. So I was arrested, taken— and my other great fear was being arrested. So that happened right away again, the next thing. Very nice Hollywood police, who were very gentle with me, took me down to their station.

00:35:10 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

I looked at the guy next to me in the backseat, and I was sure it was Jeff Perkins but with a false jaw somehow. I looked at other cops and they would look back like they were 12 years old, and kind of childishly happy with me. Thrown in, put in a cell with a guy who looked exactly like Kenneth Anger, lying on a cot with one thumb up his mouth, and one thumb up his ass.

00:35:36 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

They gave me one phone call, and I called Jerry Katz, who had—as a beatnik—had, you know, advised me to go to jail. That, you know, change my uptight, middle-class bearing. And so I gave him the call in Topanga at 3:00 and he came out with his wife, and they got me out of jail. Anyway, so that was my— so the next day I had courage, I had freedom, and I actually hitchhiked, which was another thing I was afraid of doing, back to Sunset Plaza to try to get my car.

00:36:12 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And was arrested again, and got out of that because Ann was just incoherent at this point, the cops realized that this was crazy. And finally gave me the [keys], told me my car was parked around up on the block from the station. So then I had my car. Anyway, that is how I got into the hippie movement. I actually got in, it's like I walked into the movie.

00:36:36 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

I was now a different person. Jeff was there as a friend, close friend. I got out of Inglewood and left the landlord with a black ceiling, and moved into a room with Jeff. And he lived on Kirkwood in Laurel Canyon. And I was in a new life, it was fantastic. And the first thing that happened that first night was I reached over on the table next to the bed, and picked up this book on yoga. [technical; hold up book YOGA: THE METHOD OF RE-INTEGRATION]

00:38:02

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

Which is the method of re-integration. Alain Danielou, who was a Frenchman who... it's just about all the aspects of yoga, including the chakras, which was very... and just became a bible. That there was an inner body, that the feeling... I was very fortunate in that having this dramatic breakthrough, like break on through to the other side, I had done it.

00:38:31

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

Not through my, not through any willpower, but being pushed through in a weird scene. But could explore feelings that most people, I think, I assume, have known from birth and so are very used to. I wasn't used to them. So I could kind of understand them better. And that they are, there is a body of light. An inner body, an astral body, which is very important and is completely ignored by western science and medicine.

end tape four

TAPE 5: PETER MAYS

00:00:55

PETER MAYS

So I was now a hippie living in Laurel Canyon, thanks to Jeff, who had a great record collection, he had Jimi Hendrix Experience and the whole works. Jeff had only been here a few months, but he knew a lot of great people on the Strip, and so on. So pretty soon Jeff and Burt discovered a house off of Sunset, on the hill, on a street called Cresthill, between Kings and Queens Road.

00:01:29

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

There was a huge house that they wanted to rent as a group house. So we did. I got to take the lease out. And a bunch of guys moved in there. Myself, Jeff, Burt, who was married to Carol at this point. I brought in Bruce Lane who I'd gone to college with...

00:01:55

ADAM HYMAN

Can you spell Bruce Lane's name?

00:01:57

PETER MAYS

B-R-U-C-E, L-A-N-E. Who was a very important person in this era, he only made one movie, but... and brought him in. And Burt now was a student at UCLA Film School, and brought in, eventually, a guy named Terry Forgette.

00:02:17

ADAM HYMAN

Can you spell his name, Terry?

00:02:17

PETER MAYS

Terry, T-E-R-R-Y, Forgette, F-O-R-G-E-T-T-E. So this was strongly a UCLA Film School type house. I purposefully chose a pretty small room, a lot like a monk's room, with a filligrated window and stuff, that was off the living room. The house was fantastic, it had an entrance on the street Cresthill, but then you went downstairs to get to the living room which looked out on a circular wall, looking out over Hollywood.

00:02:53

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And then you went down more stairs—and my room was off that, and there was a kitchen—and then you went down more stairs to a basement, one basement that was one room, and then another basement that was a huge room under the living room. And then yet a third basement was hidden underneath the house.

00:03:11 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

So it was bizarrely multileveled. And became a center for the UCLA film students and other filmmakers. Of which I was a filmmaker, Bruce was, we were both underground filmmakers. Terry and Burt were in school as filmmakers, and Burt had made NOW THAT THE BUFFALO'S GONE, probably the most famous, really famous film, for which he is well deserved.

00:03:43 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Following the similar precepts to me, actually, but not—completely disconnected—but doing a story, but using a lot of color and, in his case, very complex multi-frame coloring that he did with the printer that Pat O'Neill worked on. Burt was very much a... what's the right word? He explored everything in the hippie world.

00:04:15 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

He actually owned a suit, and it belonged to Jimi Hendrix, a pink suit that he wore a certain amount of time. And would get his nose in everything. Jeff had Fluxus background in New York, pure art, was a minimalist art. He had some Yoko Ono pieces in the basement that he had brought to Los Angeles. He was not a filmmaker but an art-in-general person, but was getting into film.

00:04:41 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And Terry was a full-on film student. And, but a very far out guy, an extraordinary womanizer. A womanizer that ranks with Casanova or somebody. He would go out at night, down our backyard, and just get picked up by always a beautiful woman. [laugh] Have a great, some great thing and come back. His instincts were incredible.

00:05:06 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And I now had most of my stuff stored at the campus for Mount St. Mary's, and, but had an editing setup in the room. And I was starting to go through the footage of SISTER MIDNIGHT, which now seemed a distant... I was now, like, on the other side of it and it seemed pretty corny. But anyway, I was stuck with it.

00:05:32 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And not only that, but there was still some shots that had to be taken, which was basically, it was this scene of people screwing. Which starred Jeff and Kirsten, and, and Jeff is the one that pushed this through that, we actually shot in the living room. It's all, it's faked, but nonetheless the lab tried to not give it to me.

00:05:57 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

But anyway, so the film was in the can now, and I was beginning to edit it. And teaching at Mount. St. Mary's. And pretty soon one of the... a blond, another blond like Ann [Ed: ANY PUBLIC USE OF THIS TRANSCRIPT MUST USE "ANN"]—became interested in me, and I had a relationship with a student, a Catholic girl. So it was actually— it was like being in a movie for me, with the very repressed background I had.

00:06:27 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

At any rate, this house started getting into different things. One of them was, or the biggest one was The Shrine Exposition Hall. Which at this point had begun doing huge rock shows. A group named Pinnacle was the promoter, and had been founded by John Van Hamersveld, a poster artist, as a kind of happening thing. And then it expanded to be an ongoing business. They would...

00:06:57 **ADAM HYMAN**

Can you spell his name, please?

00:06:58 **PETER MAYS**

Yeah, okay. Van H-A-M-M-E-S-V-E-L-D [sic]. And, and also two other guys. Sep Donhauer, I can't spell it right now. And Mark Chase who are both business students at USC. Along with John. There were also... the USC Film School was by now hippie-ized, or psychedel-ized, I guess. And so they, and the UCLA Film Students, and other people became very..., discussions began as to how to do a light show for The Shrine, which is a huge hall that would be anything like adequate to the music we were hearing.

00:07:43 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

The Grateful Dead and everything. The Beatles and The Stones never played there, but everybody else did. Janis Joplin and so on. It became part of a circuit for traveling rock bands with thousands of people in the audience. So, and a guy named Charles Lippincott, who was the, L-I-P-P-E-N-C-O-T-T [sic], he was originally a law student now into film, and was running the USC cultural events.

00:08:18 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

He was given the job by Pinnacle to form a light show. So he had a meeting, we held a meeting in the living room of Cresthill house, that's a critical meeting in the formation of what eventually became The Single Wing Turquoise Bird. And the idea there basically, which was put forward by David Lebrun, who was living with The Hog Farm, which is a commune.

00:08:46 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

One of the other things about hippies is they got out of the primal family and into expanded families, which would be communes. Usually lead by an older man who was their mentor, in this case Wavy Gravy. Ken Kesey and The Merry Pranksters is another case of an older guy who was leading a group of youngsters.

00:09:08 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Which is a very standard social fun thing in the '60s. And but they had a lot of liquid projectors, projectionists. Now a liquid—which is a core thing in a light show, we're switching now to the expanded cinema side of the experimental film. Which... [technical]

00:10:23 **ADAM HYMAN**

Do you remember the address of the Cresthill house?

00:10:25

PETER MAYS

Oh, that's a great question. I don't. It's the middle of the block between Kings and Queens Road. You can get to it off of Sunset, go up one block, right on Cresthill, it's about, I think the second house. It reminds me a lot, the whole thing reminds me of THE LONG GOODBYE by Robert Altman. And like them, we lived next door to these great girls who were out tanning themselves, not nude but nearly, you know, and so on. And despite all these hungry guys, I don't think we ever contacted any of them. But, but anyway, and...

00:11:02

ADAM HYMAN

Do you remember who owned the house?

00:11:04

PETER MAYS

The interesting... no I don't, but I think John Houseman owned it in the '40s. And I say that because his introduction to THE BLUE DAHLIA, which he produced and, and Raymond Chandler wrote, he talks about a meeting with Raymond Chandler at his house between Queens and Kings Roads, just off Sunset. So I don't know, it might be that house, it would be nice if it was.

00:11:32

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

But it's pink now, and, I don't know, it has turrets— it's in ASTRAL MAN. This house is memorialized, like thoroughly by myself in ASTRAL MAN, which was shot in 1968.

00:11:53

ADAM HYMAN

Okay, so Single Wing, in this first meeting...

00:11:56

PETER MAYS

Yeah, let me go back, though, before— this is the first meeting on a light show. Let me go back just a bit in how I got into light shows, because it starts out as expanded cinema, which is just a bunch of projectors at the same time, which happened at the Movies 'Round Midnight. Where [John] Fles had us all bring a projector and a film. And we all, you know, there were about 30 little images all around.

00:12:23

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

Which didn't do anything to the interior space of the Cinema [Theater], it wasn't enough. Later Lewis Teague, who's a very important person in this history—T-E-A-G-U-E—he later got into Hollywood and directed JEWEL OF THE NILE, as his biggest movie. And he was one of the Corman directors. Anyway, he was running the place and wanted to do an Indian show.

00:12:48

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

So he had Jeff and I do it. We bought different old projectors, got a lot of footage from Burt, and put on a multi-screen show. And for that I went down to the Free Press Bookstore, which was on Fairfax, to their classified ads, and found a Haight-Ashbury liquid projectionist who wanted work. It was a guy named Scott Hardy.

00:13:17 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And he brought his units in— his is a classic example. He had two overhead projectors, he usually worked with pairs. And where the glass is, where normally a teacher's writing something, were two, at least two clock faces, spherical glass, with a liquid area of water, which could be dyed one color, and oil, liquid oil, which could be dyed another color. Like red and blue, let's say.

00:13:51 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And then if you moved these clock faces around and pressed them and so on, you would get motion between the two colors, a really violent sort. And it's projected on a big screen, so with very little movement you get a lot of visual action, spontaneous, completely live. And usually we would work on one machine with the dimmer, which you operated with your knee, and then you could switch over and prepare the other machine and switch over to it.

00:14:20 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And you often had an assistant who would work on the plate that wasn't on yet. This is the most inventive and important new development that came into light shows. When I went to The Doors, the first Doors show, they had a whole ring of liquid projectors. I think all operating automatically, mechanically. And the usual liquid projection in a light show was just pumping up and down to match the beat of the music.

00:14:52 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Which is a highly uncreative use for this machine. Better liquid projectionists get into much more complicated stuff. Anyway, this Hog Farm had about six liquid projectionists, the lead one was a woman named Helena Lebrun, the wife of David Lebrun. Who had learned the craft from Elias Romero, who was the—I think that's his name—who created it in San Francisco.

00:15:22 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

This liquid type projection was, as far as I know, invented in San Francisco like many other things. So David brought in those that could bring in that group. He also made films, too, specifically for light show use. And then the film students tried to bring in the others. So for a period of about three or four months there were very haphazard experiments trying to put together the show.

00:15:56 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And these usually... because The Doors came from UCLA, there was a whole following for The Doors who actually worked for them on the road and stuff. Bill Kerby was probably the most important, who was still a student there, but was close to The Doors. So he would... so anyway, one evening in December, Terry Forgette was given, Bill, Bill Kerby gave Terry Forgette the task of putting on a show for the next week.

00:16:27 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And it was when The Doors were going to be there. So Terry— it was a good exercise for a film student, it's like a large set you would have to put things together for. So he did that, and at that point my relationship to the light show— I wasn't really into the light show. I had my movie to make, and I was doing psychedelic art and I didn't really want to spend too much time on a light show.

00:16:50 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

But what I did do was, I would take an empty film can and go to the ticket [booth], you know, to the entry point of The Shrine, say I was with the light show, look at the can, and then get in free. So I did that, we all did that. And I remember looking up on the stage to Bill Kerby, and trying to talk him into letting me up on the stage and actually hold a light, which he did.

00:17:20 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

So I have the experience of holding a light on a Doors concert, because it turns out it was Morrison from the back, so I saw this concert looking past Jim Morrison into this ocean of faces. Him really working hard at it. And at point he just suddenly dropped out of, dropped down, I lost him in the light, because they were doing, for the first time, "The Unknown Soldier," which he is supposedly shot by the guitarist.

00:17:48 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

It turns out that night was the anniversary of the marriage of Ray Manzarek and Dorothy, who he had met in my class. So it was an amazing coincidence. Anyway, so that was one thing we were into and were kind of mulling around. There were a lot of big parties. A lot of, some shooting of student movies at Cresthill. And I had my gels for color down in the basement, and they would grab them and use them.

00:18:23 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

An example of an expedition was we... Jeff knew about La Monte Young, from New York, and he had a show out in Pasadena, so we all trekked out to Pasadena for a great avant-garde show. I do want to also mention one incident that really is... as this was going on I felt like I was almost being carried around in a basket by my friends.

00:18:51 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

I really had no, I was just receiving everything, this stuff. Anyway, Ray Leong was a friend of Jeff's who had, Ray had shot a photograph for the cover for FREAK OUT! by Zappa, a very important early album. And was making a... here I'll digress again, a lot of people were making 16 millimeter movies at this time, financed by the music business, on groups and heavily influenced by The Beatles movies.

00:19:25 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Especially by [Richard] Lester. Have, having Strawberry Alarm Clock guys run around and dance like The Beatles, and be screwy. I don't know what's happened to this, there were a whole lot of them made. It's a missing... it's early MTV type of the movies that who knows where they are now. But a lot of those guys were around. Different, there were different pairs of them. At any rate, Ray, who— and Joe Ravitz, and one thing about this period was you dressed however you wanted.

00:20:01 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

There was no conformity of dress. It was like every day was Halloween. I wore— I went around wearing all black, it was my choice, and a huge chain, a parody of a hippie amulet. This guy Ray Leong was kind of more sadistic. He wore high boots all the time, I don't know if he carried a little whip or not, but you could go to the limit.

00:20:26 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

David Thompson, he was this film student dressed as Wyatt Earp continually for a couple of years, and so on. But anyway, so Ray Leong took me over to this apartment of a girl who he was meeting for some reason. And she had just bought STRANGE DAYS by The Doors, their second album. Which is such a dark but realistic novel on that period.

00:20:54 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And so that was played for the first time, I was not on drugs, but I was sitting on a couch, and this kid came out, about two years old, struggling to walk, and I was so open, I had become so open emotionally that I just totally identified with this kid, and I can now attest that when you're really young and you can't remember it anymore, you're doing heroic stuff like, like in THE ODYSSEY.

00:21:25 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And to sit up or to walk is like crossing the Atlantic or something. I mean, those are really hard tasks. And then it's all kind of hidden because it's too emotional. This is just my theory, anyway, once you get a mind, once you get an ego. Anyway, this kid struggled over to me, a little girl, she struggled over to me, picked up a matchbox, and held it on my chest.

00:21:51 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And I went, wow, that's the breast. And so I immediately picked her up, carried her over to her mother. And that was my introduction to body language. And the fact that the matchbox had square, you know, had corners, and of course the breast is round, that made it just interesting.

00:22:17 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

But it was a symbol. And since then I've done experiments to realize that if we taught kids by body—if we were spontaneous enough to have genuine body language, kids would learn everything right away. It's the way animals and kids think, that's my theory anyway. So that was a big, that would be like an example of what I was going through in those days.

00:22:39 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

I was just having all these... and I was also moving around in my head without, I would just start to be able to move through stuff. And I found all kinds of rooms with hidden material. That as soon as I left the room it would disappear again. Anyway, and this was some of the time, I'm pulling out the big times. At any rate, so this meeting began this search for a light show, which began to coalesce by March or so. And kind of dominated, and began to dominate. I got into it actually in April with, when they played The Velvet Underground.

00:23:27 **ADAM HYMAN**

What year?

00:23:28 **PETER MAYS**

'68. April of '68, they had The Velvet Underground, which is an anti-hippie group. And I came up with— Jeff and I, we were, at that point in the spring, our group of guys was beginning to intersect a galaxy of women. And two of them were a girl, a woman named Troy, and her close friend Andi, who was the darling of Mick Jagger. She's mentioned in Marianne Faithfull's book.

00:24:04 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Anyway, her friend, her close friend was Troy who was also a very intense and they had in their apartment a book, first book I saw of occult diagrams. A popular, populist book on witchcraft.

00:24:36 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And that clued me into— I had been an art student, I had taken all the art classes, art history classes, and they never showed us any alchemical or magical diagrams. But there's a very rich material there. So I thought, this is great for a light show. So Jeff and I shot a lot of them.

00:25:06 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

So I had the responsibility of developing the stuff and printing them at Mount St. Mary's, [laugh] the devil's imagery. And then gave them to the light show the next weekend for use with The Velvet Underground. And it was just the most sickening show ever, because they used little hippie doilies and bits and pieces of cut-up gels that they liked to use for hippie stuff.

00:25:31 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And it was all mixed with what should have been in black and white for this very harsh rock group. But anyway, they did. And I remember afterwards having a tremendous abdominal attack, and going, trying to get towards the restroom, which you couldn't get near. Just a very bad reaction. But anyway, that was my introduction to the light show.

00:25:51 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Michael Scroggins also joined that same weekend, I believe. And what happened next was, so I was in the light show for about a month while we would, while it was big. It was a big show, you, we would have, like, two risers above the crowd, and project two completely different shows on two sides of the screen. We did that for The Who, I remember. And each week we would, at this point, get paid by Pinnacle.

00:26:26 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And partly for our, ourselves, and partly to develop new material. And as the weeks went by, we would— Burt actually, Burton Gershfield would get the album, like Traffic, The Cream, I mean, great, great albums before anybody got them. And then we'd sort of see what they were doing, and for The Who I remember we had a kind of modernist, we developed new material that would work for that.

00:26:55 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And I was developing new material for the Velvet Underground show. So we were amassing a library of material. And this would show up in the slides and large 8 by 10s, black and white stuff on the overheads. They also had a— member of The Hog Farm was a guy named Allen Keesling, who had terrific, made a great collection of glass slides, psychedelic slides, so he would play those.

00:27:29 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Anyway, the Hog Farm... April and May were really big months and it was a climax throughout the world, it's not recorded properly. But one thing that happened was we all left Cresthill. I had been getting into yoga and really getting there, discovering the chakras and whatnot. And about a week later I just couldn't stay in this place.

00:27:56 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And everybody else seemed to want to leave, also. So I think it was May, we left Cresthill, kept doing the light show, I lived in my car and on people's couches for a month. This was really finally being a hippie. Troy's was a couch I was on a lot. And Jeff, each... we kind of dispersed.

00:28:25 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

The other things that happened in May were the Tet Offensive, which showed the guerillas could win [Vietnam], and change the mind of American as to whether we could win the war. The Soviets moved into Czechoslovakia, the Prague Spring was over. Students occupied buildings in Columbia, UCLA, and other universities. What all else happened? It was close to— and the most important was a student/labor coalition did a revolution in Paris.

00:29:03 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Which supposedly came out of a concern about the... it's a film about the Cinematheque or something. But all these things coincided and came to near fruition as a world revolution. Or this was what it seemed to be to me, at the time. Some of them were pretty small, like us leaving Cresthill, but some of them were really big like the Paris Revolution, two weeks there.

00:29:28 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

But it didn't take, it, it was quelled, and so then the next thing that happened of course was the riots in the Democratic Convention in the summer. And that was finally the end of, beginning to be the end. There was a great fear among the hippies, and one reason we left Cresthill was a huge fear that was beginning to grow, paranoia, that the authorities were going to stamp it out and we'd all be sent to concentration camps, or some kind of, some way would be found to deal with us.

00:30:05 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And it was universally felt. At any rate, but by now, so about this time the Hog Farm went on the road, and took most of the people, leaving about four of us to do the... or five of us to do the light show for this huge, for this thing. But we were able to do it.

00:30:34 **ADAM HYMAN**

Who were those?

00:30:35 **PETER MAYS**

Scott Hardy was with the thing now, really good liquid projectionist. He stayed with us. Michael Scroggins was just learning liquids, but did it. Allen Keesling was still with us, myself, Lippincott did a certain amount of projection. The easiest thing was just to run a projector. Both Jeff Perkins and Jon Greene, very important person.

00:31:00 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Jon was part of a group that came to Cresthill in around March or April of about 15 people, Burt knew them. And we were kind of a commune, you know, we allowed them to live in the basement. And we were paying the rent, but we had people coming and staying. And they stayed down there.

00:31:23

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And Jon, who had a music background, got into liquids. And really liked it. In fact, and pretty soon moved to The Hog Farm, and then to Venice. So he was a liquid projectionist. We asked, we needed—the liquid projectionist lineup has got to be pretty substantial in a light show. Let's see, Rol Murrow was a, a supporter and did stuff.

00:31:53

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

There were people who gave us movies. We got out-takes from Pat O'Neill, Burt Gershfield, John Stehura. I forgot to mention one thing about Cresthill. In the first basement, Terry and Burt talked Pat O'Neill into giving us his Model C Printer. Which is a huge item. I remember Pat lugging it in. Pat is such a sweetheart for being a communal artist.

00:32:20

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

He was happy to do this. So we had a printer in the basement, and I made black and white, a number of black and white copies and negatives of the later material in *SISTER MIDNIGHT*, which was shot outside, in planning to do a spectacular Burt Gershfield-type ending for the movie. And these would be the mattes I'd use. To do a color thing you would have a pure black and white matte, and then just put a colored gel over the printer and you'd have pure red.

00:32:54

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And then what Burt did was he'd put a, he would—every other frame was black—and he could alternate, let's say that with blue and gold or something. And then alternate them. The strobing was very important in both the kind of film and in light shows. John Stehura spent about three days solid down there putting together one of his movies.

00:33:19

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

Which he did something wrong, I remember, he came, on the third day he came out and said, oh my god, I made this mistake, and he had to lie on the couch for a couple of days to recover. What, who else? Jerry Katz brought by his current film called *CANCER MOON*, which was a short made with Anscochrome, with one four second shot of intercourse.

00:33:45

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And on the basis of that shot the lab refused to print it or give him back the original. And Jerry being Jerry, when he was told this, leaped over the divide between him and the, and the clerk or whatever, grabbed his film and just took it out. Anyway, so he couldn't get it printed. And that was the way I first got to know...

00:34:08

ADAM HYMAN

[overlapping] What lab was this?

00:34:10

PETER MAYS

That was Hollywood Valley. They were on Sunset, around 6000, I don't think, they, they were there for a long time, I think they may still there. But that was typical of labs, I don't want to point them out. That was the thing, it was classified as pornography, based on three seconds. Now, and Jeff, I'm sorry, Jerry had such a purity as a beatnik, that he would not cut it.

00:34:39

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

So anyway, so I had that film with me for a long time, I never actually printed it, I'm sorry to say. Partly because it was color, and that would mean it would be harder to do. But I was really influenced by it. I was probably more influenced by that film than any other film I've ever seen. It was, it was...

00:34:58

ADAM HYMAN

Describe it for me.

00:34:59

PETER MAYS

Yeah, it was about shots of Topanga, different aspects of Topanga, different times of day and so on. Like a John Benning, James Benning film, but different shots. But very open, there was no manipulation. There was, it was just... but they were all different. It was pure, the only way to enjoy it was to just completely go with the reality it was doing. There was no... he didn't force anything on you.

00:35:37

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And I thought it was— and it was a stoic film, or a spartan film, there was no, so it had a huge influence on me, actually. And I had, we had both bought the Anscochrome film together, so I had a huge amount. So I was shooting Cresthill now, during the latter period.

00:35:58

ADAM HYMAN

Could you spell Anscochrome?

00:35:59

PETER MAYS

A-N-S-C-O-C-H-R-O-M-E. Ansco, A-N-S-C-O, it's a European company. The big one, the big, whatever the big, I forget their name. It was actually high-speed film for the Air Force. It was actually on ester base at that time. So, and it hasn't had any problems with preservation, aside from very fast— and it, so this was a big war surplus deal, that was the reason we got it.

00:36:36

ADAM HYMAN

And then back to Jerry, or his other films.

00:36:39

PETER MAYS

Now Jerry... [all talking at once]

00:36:41 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Jerry a tragic case of... let's do talk about Jerry, he was really an interesting guy. He made about six films, the first film was a black and white film, just a diary film. The next one was a beautiful color film where he was shooting at night, but like taking the lens out, so that the neon lights would just go straight on the film and stuff.

00:37:05 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Really beautiful film. He and I both shot TV films at the same time. I shot DEATH OF THE GORILLA, and he shot one without color, but, but just a lot of superimposition. Superimposition was a really important device to get random footage. So he shot a rather political film off television. I can't remember, and there were a couple of others.

00:37:31 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And then there was this film, CANCER MOON, shot on...

00:37:35 **ADAM HYMAN**

How do you spell that?

00:37:36 **PETER MAYS**

What?

00:37:37 **ADAM HYMAN**

How do you spell that?

00:37:38 **PETER MAYS**

Cancer, C-A-N-C-E-R, Moon, M-O-O-N. He was a Cancer.

00:37:41 **ADAM HYMAN**

Oh, Cancer.

00:37:42 **PETER MAYS**

Cancer in the sense, yeah... but Cancer the crab. Yeah. Astrology was very big in the '60s. And the moon is the ruling planet for Cancer. And it's gone, I'm pretty sure. Tim, or excuse me, Thom Andersen, I believe, preserved one of his films, or, or gave him, shot in a rose garden. And I saw it at the Belly of the Beast, your earlier, guy in, I think '92.

00:38:20 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

It was a big, big— it was a good show. A good thing. But it was a show that Thom put together. And one of the pieces was by Jerry. And I think, he said, I think, that that was Jerry's only movie that remained. Jerry did that as an experimental filmmaker, and was using drugs, but not too much. Changing his mind. Changing his personality.

00:38:48

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And had gotten to the point, I remember going over there once, like in '67 or something, it was '66 maybe, and actually getting high off his vibrations in a very peaceful but kind of death-oriented thing. He was really into combining sex and death, and remembers, he would, he would tell me about something about his mother, and then they went— or no, he found out, oh, I know.

00:39:14

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

It was a family event for a funeral. He went as a kid, maybe eight years old, to a funeral. And they went and saw Snow White. And so he connected in his mind, this child mind, death and Snow White. And this was... he was very close to Wallace Berman, and, and Berman would do the same thing.

00:39:36

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

So he slowly let everything go. He became like a Buddhist, I mean, he didn't try to keep possessions. And I'm afraid just let go of his wife and his film career.

end tape five

TAPE 6: PETER MAYS

00:00:42

PETER MAYS

Okay, there's another filmmaker parallel to Jerry that I really think is a great, great artist, I think has completely disappeared. And this guy's named Fred Engelberg.

00:00:53

ADAM HYMAN

How do you...

00:00:53

PETER MAYS

E-N-G-L-E-B-U-R-G, or B-E-R-G, I'm not sure. Fred Engelberg. He was a folk singer, big guy, huge Hell's Angel looking guy. He was the original partner of John Fles in forming the Movies 'Round Midnight when it was at Mother Neptune's. And I remember he used to stand at the back of the theater during screenings. He made a lot of films.

00:01:21

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

The, the one I remember is EPISIOTOMY. These were L.A. films that are much more depressing and raw, I guess you want to say. Or novelistically... I mean, just what you're saying, actually. The dailiness films that people would have made careers out of. And Fred's career, he did EPISIOTOMY, he was, I mentioned...

00:01:50

ADAM HYMAN

Spell his film title.

00:01:50

PETER MAYS

Episiotomy, it's the operation of getting a kid out. E-P-E-S-I-O-T-M-Y, something like that. Episiotomy, it's a well-known procedure. But he had, used to... I forgot to mention with Cresthill, the place we really went to a lot was Barney's Beanery. And Barney's Beanery, you walked in the front doors, immediately there was a bar, and Fred Engelberg always stood at that door and greeted everybody that came into Barney's Beanery every night.

00:02:28

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

He was a very social man. And when, in the early '70s, about the time, or after Woodstock came out, he made a two-sc— he talked Bert Schneider—who had produced EASY RIDER and others, part of BBS—into backing a film called THE LAST OF THE POLISH JEWS. It was a film where he went to Denmark and interviewed Jews stuck on a boat without a country.

00:03:01 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

They'd all been in concentration camps, and were still on this boat, in a mix up between nations. And he interviewed them, and then made a two-screen, very tough to take movie, of that. And then shot a feature— this is your underground filmmaker who gets into the industry at least to a degree.

00:03:28 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And, Fred did this through Bert [Schneider], and shot a film called GOD'S WILL, about Yogi Bhanjan who was a local guru, took a group to England, or to India. In fact, Lewis Teague shot it. And that was a feature 35 millimeter film, which I cut dailies on it. Jeff also did. And, just it was never released in any way.

00:03:56 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And, the next thing Fred did, this would be the early '70s, was he got a hold of all the outtakes for HEARTS AND MINDS, and was going to make an epic statement about the Vietnam War—he was very political—the Vietnam war and blacks and so on. But got into a war with Schneider about ownership. And I guess he lost it.

00:04:18 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And then he moved to the desert, and that's the end. But both those guys are major artists. But part of their ethic was not to promote themselves, except to make work. But in terms of showings, so.

00:04:36 **ADAM HYMAN**

Any idea what happened to Fred's films?

00:04:38 **PETER MAYS**

No. And, no I, no.

00:04:40 **ADAM HYMAN**

And then what happened to Fred? And then to Jerry?

00:04:43 **PETER MAYS**

[overlapping] We don't know, we don't know.

00:04:46 **ADAM HYMAN**

I mean, are they alive?

00:04:47 **PETER MAYS**

I don't know. Thom Andersen would know more about probably both of them. He kind of was in touch with most of them.

00:04:55 **ADAM HYMAN**

And Jerry died, right?

00:04:57 **PETER MAYS**

I don't know.

00:04:59 **ADAM HYMAN**

You can't remember anything else?

00:05:02 **PETER MAYS**

Oh, did he die?

00:05:03 **ADAM HYMAN**

I'm trying to remember it all. Anyway...

00:05:04 **PETER MAYS**

Anyway, I'll just go on.

00:05:06 **ADAM HYMAN**

But tell me a bit more about... actually back up slightly and tell me a bit more about Burt Gershfield. Describe him and so forth.

00:05:15 **PETER MAYS**

Okay. Burt, I knew him well, especially at Cresthill, where his wife moved in with us, the only woman in the house for a couple months. And they were quite a battling couple. Bert moved through film pretty fast, now that *THE BUFFALO'S GONE* was quite successful—that was his first and only film.

00:05:41 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

He moved through film pretty fast using it to do other stuff, and was kind of an agent for other people a lot. He was probably more important than anybody in getting the light show going. The Pinnacle people had what they called The White House, which was where they all lived, near where you live. It was East Hollywood.

00:06:06 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And I remember following Burt up the stairs into it, I feel like, like it was the Irish mafia. I mean, he was like in an overcoat, he was going to go in and negotiate. So he was very good at, and liked the tension of putting deals together. He and Bruce, as Cresthill was splitting up, got a deal with Bob Rafelson, Bert Schneider's partner, who was shooting *HEAD* with The Monkees.

00:06:38 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And so they wanted some psychedelic footage, so they had Burt and Bruce make that footage. And that's another— of the small amount of footage that he has to his name, the footage in *HEAD*, that psychedelized, but with more detail and modulation in 35 [mm], was their work.

00:07:01 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And he did additional work, he did this process he developed, this colorization process for Frank Zappa on some footage, and then actually got me a job in '69 working for Zappa. And I worked with that footage and other footage. So he liked to get, he liked to start projects, get people hired, get things off the ground and then kind of move on.

00:07:30 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And he had an all girl rock group for a while, and was doing all kinds of stuff. But none of it permanent. But they interviewed him, as you probably know, yeah. He's married now to Anya, a totally— well I shouldn't say... a very strong woman. And, but he's not in good shape at all, he hurt his back in the '90s.

00:08:01 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

He's confined to bed, I think. He was one of the most active of us. He had a deal going with The Who in the early '70s to make a movie. And he was talking to Peter Townshend and so on. He got easy access to especially rock people. Terry is also interesting, he lived in Topanga for a while, shot a movie there, which was never edited.

00:08:28 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Was up in San Francisco for years. He took the hippie idea of enjoying yourself to the limit, and doesn't have much of a film career but has a great life. Well, so anyway, yeah.

00:08:48 **ADAM HYMAN**

What other art forms were all of you at Cresthill house working in? Or were you really working in cinema expanded cinema?

00:08:55 **PETER MAYS**

Well I was completing the editing of SISTER MIDNIGHT. Burt wasn't doing anything except making deals. I think he was going to school, I'm not actually sure. Terry was in school, in film school, and made a really neat film using the Cresthill house.

00:09:20 **ADAM HYMAN**

What's that called?

00:09:20 **PETER MAYS**

And I can't, it has a weird name. I'm preparing a DVD called Lost Films of the '60s And '70s and I'm going to try to get it for that. Let's see, in the Cresthill house we also had a dwarf living with us that Bruce brought with him, Larry, who lived in different communes and appears in ASTRAL MAN and also was in his [Bruce's] movie ALBION MOONLIGHT. I don't know, what other lost filmmakers are there? [Joseph Bogdanovich] I don't know, I'll have to think about that.

00:09:56 **ADAM HYMAN**

Okay. So let's...

00:09:58

PETER MAYS

But in terms of the balance of— once the light show, the light show really didn't take much of our energies, as I remember. Jeff became manager of the Cinematheque, and also of other theaters that this company was making. And I should mention this, because I finally figured it out. The company that owned the Cinematheque 16, which they opened in 1966, they also had a theater up in San Francisco, a 16 millimeter.

00:10:35

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And I believe that they were hoping for an expansion of 16 millimeter as an independent film, and they were going to have store theaters, as lot of store theaters, and it didn't happen, it didn't, that narrative, that didn't really... I mean, with *SISTER MIDNIGHT*, it took me until 1975 to show it, and I was wrong.

00:11:02

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

The direction that the experimental film [went in], it was not narrative. I was narrative. [laugh] And there were some, Stanton Kaye is a major... is closer to the beatnik people, but did a great narrative film... oh God, somebody *IN THE WILDERNESS*. *BRITTANY IN THE WILDERNESS* [sic, *BRANDY IN THE WILDERNESS*], but that's not the name. But anyway, it was about him and his girlfriend.

00:11:35

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

Really good, he's a great narrative, he could have been a great narrative filmmaker. He has a mixed, a strange career. His first film was *GEORG*, which was at the Cinematheque [PM: I am pretty sure it did not play at the Cinematheque], or at the Movies 'Round Midnight. There's a parallel as you know, there's a parallel to underground film, which is the independent film, which are features.

00:12:02

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

There were only a few in those days, there are millions now. But, so Cassavetes, what do you consider him, you know? Narrative filmmakers would tend to get into features. *DAVID HOLZMAN'S DIARY* is another narrative film, and James McBride eventually did get into features. Andy Meyer, I think that was his name, who did *LITTLE MATCH GIRL* was a Corman director for a while doing horror films.

00:12:33

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

You have to not— actually Brian De Palma originally was close to experimental, and his first two features in New York with Robert De Niro are strange. But then he moved to Hollywood and has become... it's a certain pattern that you followed, which was to go through Corman once you had, something you could show, you would go to Corman and he would give you a job.

00:13:03 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And I have since decided that the energy to making narratives about this new society really went into Hollywood. And, like, COMING HOME, you know? Altman, so on are new nar—took that energy. And it's interesting how the experimental film went into the structuralist phase. And I was just deciding a few days ago that that's really because the so-called psycho-dramatic phase had succeeded.

00:13:49 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

People on acid and so on, subjectivity, which is what the films were about, succeeded. People did express themselves and have freak outs and so forth. So the purpose of exploring your interior lost its power. And I would say that's part of the reason why they didn't continue, really.

00:14:16 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

But I should say that they— but the climax of that was really the San Francisco Canyon Cinema people. There was really a lot, and that went into film schools, too, personal film. I don't know, it's a period up to about 1978— '68 or so was well covered. And the New York structuralist is really covered. There's a lot of other films that are not known about, there's a lot of other movements that aren't. And of course there's the newsreel movement. So...

00:14:54 **ADAM HYMAN**

What other movements?

00:14:55 **PETER MAYS**

Well here's what I have to say about that I really stopped seeing movies when I became a hippie. It wasn't, the urge was gone. I saw Godard...

00:15:09 **ADAM HYMAN**

Could you spell Godard? How do you spell Godard?

00:15:11 **PETER MAYS**

[laugh] G-O-D-A-R-D.

00:15:13 **ADAM HYMAN**

Okay, thanks.

00:15:13 **PETER MAYS**

Yeah. And the big film for all of us was 2001. That was the big picture, the big one. But Hollywood, other than that, ignored, or didn't ig— very few of them were related to this movement. And I was looking up him yesterday, the one director who was really sensitive to it was Arthur Penn. And if you follow Arthur Penn's career in the '60s, he starts in the old school, like THE MIRACLE WORKER, which is a serious drama and very repressed things and whatnot.

00:15:50 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Then makes a couple of films with Warren Beatty and then makes **BONNIE AND CLYDE**, which was a very... it was taken as hippies. They were taken as a couple on the run like hippies. And then made—and when I worked at the Fox Venice, we looked at all these films—and I could say the only film that really reflected life in the later '60s is **ALICE'S RESTAURANT** by Arthur Penn.

00:16:19 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Which felt like it. And then he made **LITTLE BIG MAN**, which is a total commitment to the new thinking, which is the Indians are good and that white people are bad. And that was Dustin Hoffman in an Indian tribe. Where all the Indians did was humorously and, you know, treated really genuine. So he really—and then he went onto **NIGHT MOVES** and kind of good Hitchcockian stuff.

00:16:51 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

So he, he has a terrific career. Especially having started out in the old school. Of which the worst is **THE CHASE**. **THE CHASE** was half old school, Tennessee Williams-type stuff, and new stuff. And they're mixed together, it's really a weird film to see. It's interesting, though. And I wanted to say this, I wanted to say two other things about the overall effect of the '60s.

00:17:21 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

One is that the effort to give people self-expression, and I believe that the underground film is basically the people expressing themselves rather than Hollywood making you see something. And then the drug taking you were, your inner feelings came out. Okay, that led to a huge revolution in our normal society.

00:17:51 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

For one thing the inner child was a big deal with hippies. You shouldn't be putting down your childishness. You should be in touch with it. And especially that men have a feminine side and women have a masculine side. And the strict stereotyping of them is completely wrong. Of which the worst offender is—which happened in the, up to the '50s. I can bear witness to it, and you can see it in the movies—

00:18:18 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Women were not allowed to be angry. If you became angry, it was considered hysteria or they would use the double meaning of mad, mad angry or mad crazy, to do something to you. And, and the proper... in the '50s films you would see this. If a woman really gets angry, starts getting “hysterical,” the man will slap her. Physically hit her as a way to bring her into reality again.

00:18:50 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

So that's way out there in terms of the, you know, pushing women into a servile role. That changed, so women now, like in the period today, the woman who's running Wellstone, who's, you know, is a chief executive. That was thought to be impossible in the '50s, and was well, you know, became, along with the feminist movement of the '70s has generated a whole change in there.

00:19:19 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

So that's a major positive, or for other people a negative, about the '60s stuff. And the other great thing that came out of it, of course, is the ecology movement. In the early—I've looked into all this—the early, the Congresses under Nixon actually, the Clean Air Act and so on are due to hippie awareness of earth as a worth... not just something you plow and make money from but is actually good. Okay, so...

00:19:54 **ADAM HYMAN**

Let's return to your movies then.

00:19:56 **PETER MAYS**

Okay. Well...

00:19:56 **ADAM HYMAN**

So let's continue the editing completion of SISTER MIDNIGHT.

00:20:01 **PETER MAYS**

Okay, SISTER MIDNIGHT, everywhere I went I had an editing room. And I have, just, much like this. I would have a table with a rewind setup. I moved to Frasier Street in Venice in the summer of '68, finished the film to the point where I couldn't find the footage of intercourse. I had lost the one radical thing I wanted in the film.

00:20:36 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And as I stopped, I gave it up finally. Was in the light show, and found it [the footage] after seeing, about a year later, after seeing Welles' film with five people, based on Isak Dinesen's short story, really good movie [THE IMMORTAL STORY]. Decided that actually I could make a movie with five people, and just put my left hand into a box and pulled out the missing footage.

00:21:01 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

It's a great example of how my unconscious controls, I think, controls my filmmaking. But, so I was for, about a year or two not making— I did take the footage from THE STAR CURTAIN, which was a kind of slow movie, and decided to cut an ending for it after I had been through all these changes. I thought surely the movie would have some kind of change within it, and if I just do it when I was a lot different from what I was.

00:21:41 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And grabbing other footage, also from the light show. So I cut a version, the ending of that. And called now, called THE STAR CURTAIN TANTRA. And by now knew— Bob Maurice who, who produced WOODSTOCK was living in his car on the Sunset Strip when it was very active. And he saw THE STAR CURTAIN a lot in the Cinematheque.

00:22:09 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

So he took it on as a distribution thing. And I also edited living in different places. I edited, slowly edited a work print and showed it to him at some point for funding. And he looked at about 20 minutes and said, no way. This is so '60s. The last thing people in the '70s are going to want to know about is what just preceded them.

00:22:43 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And he, having produced WOODSTOCK, he knew, you know, but so I rejected that, and also Charles Lippincott told me the same thing and [unintelligible]. But, let's see... so I was editing little sections of the Anscro film. They begin editing it, that's the alternative to SISTER MIDNIGHT, because I was really in the hippie movement now.

00:23:17 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And it was very, and it was realistic and very spartan. I began to build that as a kind of complement or opposite to SISTER MIDNIGHT. SISTER MIDNIGHT had one huge problem, which was its really sexist attitude I had managed to preserve as it got more and more bad. And in a very real way. I would show it to a small group and a woman I know would look at me afterwards and go [makes noise], you know, or something.

00:23:46 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

I could see it her eyes it wasn't working. So I, I don't know. I finished it anyway. But let's see, okay, the narratives more in the light show at this point, if I can go... The light show proceeded through the summer of '69 [PM: Actually, summer of '68]working on our own, at that point Pinnacle put all their money on a big show at the Rose Bowl with Joan Baez and it rained or something. And they were over.

00:24:23 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And so our light show— and I was now living, I think, in a one room at the Marco Hotel. And I still had the editing setup, but I wasn't really using it. I don't know if I still had the editing setup. But anyway, and Jeff was down the hall. We retreated to Joe Funk's Pot Shop on Sunset in Venice, which John Greene had found, and had the equipment there.

00:24:52

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And that's where Sam Francis, the painter, made lithos [lithographs]. So he became our backer and we decided to go on as a performance group, independently of rock and roll. And there was about a year when I wasn't working on any movies, I was just in the light show. We did continue— Jeff and I made movies, still. We would get movies from the Santa Monica Library and copy them to black and white, or we did some of our own shooting.

00:25:24

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And spent a really strong year doing shows that Sam often set up, like the Santa Barbara Museum which were pure art shows. We started working with minimalist musicians, and developed a very, much more sophisticated version of this Velvet Underground thing, with just black and white slides strobing, and so forth.

00:26:04

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And Sam, in 1969, he rented the ballroom of the Santa Monica Hotel, which is on the beach, a big, big space for us to do a really big show. So Sam was very ambitious, and he was hardly painting at all at this point, I mean, in my opinion. He was doing the edge paintings which allowed him to just play. So we were one of the ways he played.

00:26:30

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

He had other, he was backing other, he backed Stan Brakhage, and was doing other kinds of performance pieces. I have to mention one thing that's odd, very revealing at this point, when Sam was first our backer we did shows in his studios on his canvases. And one night, I think I, or somebody, got hold of DOG STAR MAN by Brakhage.

00:27:06

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And so we projected it to the group and our friends. And so this was a light show group— now not... I should back up just for a second. The light show operated a lot by telepathy. I mean, you didn't, it wasn't planned. You would look at the screen, you weren't even sure what you were doing in it. It was a wonderful experience in non-ego action.

00:27:34

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And you would tend to, whenever one person faded in, another person would tend to be fading up, I mean, it was very coordinated for having no cues. So we were what was in, I would say we were a little mass mind, we were a little of mind, group mind that had begun to find it easier to work together by some kind of connection.

00:28:02 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Anyway, and I had with me this girl Troy, who I had a kind of funny drug experience. We were not physically connected, but we were astrally. I mean, we took drugs together, we were really, generated energy. So she was with me, and this guy Jerry Katz was at the show, and other people. Anyway, I knew it was getting weird because when the movie began and it was just a black screen.

00:28:30 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Nonetheless there was a tremendous feeling of moving into it, of just black. Which was our minds, which was coming from us not the objective screening. And I was so awed, we were all awed, but I remember going over to the projector because it's dark then, I wasn't sure it was in focus. And I put my hand on the lens, and just at that instant a scratched-on-film frame came, and I focused it.

00:29:01 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Within a millisecond I was there at exactly the right time to do it. So it isn't just people's telepathy, it's reality itself it's connected somehow. This is all explained more in DON JUAN and so on. But anyway, seeing the film with Troy on one side and Jerry on the other, every time that there was fire I would feel I could really get into it with Troy.

00:29:27 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And every time there was something more like death, I would feel something from Jerry. And it was epic. It was just an epic film, within that mindset. And I could prove that self to myself because about six months later I saw DOG STAR MAN again at UCLA and it was veiled over again, I couldn't hardly get anything out of it.

00:29:51 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

So the light show was a live thing, and we worked with the audiences' vibrations, so they were much better... or they were a different experience, anyway, from watching a movie that isn't sensitive to the to the audience. At any rate, so the climax of this was the Santa Monica Hotel, where we were for about three months, we had about eight screens, we were gessoing with Sam's machine.

00:30:26 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Big screens, and I was living behind the screen, and Jeff was living in a room next to it, and we were kicked out. Maybe because I was living there. Or because we were long hairs walking through the, you know, the building. And that ended what could have been, what I feel was the arc of our, of our show. However, Rol Murrow, who was one of the film students who was an engineer also, or had an engineering side, had rented the space above the Fox Venice.

00:31:04 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

A, what do you call it?[PM: loft] A large space, anyway, that was not part of the theater. And he set up a film post-production situation there with Moviolas and whatnot. And also put the light show in. We could set up all our equipment on one side of the room and leave it there. Which, when were on the road, like— the two greatest shows were Santa Barbara and one at the Cinematheque.

00:31:38 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

But you had to carry, you had to move in all this equipment, and then move it out the same night. John Greene worked out a way to do that, but we could set up permanently at the Fox Venice. Anyway, so the first thing we did there, we came back from losing the Santa Monica place by Sam set up a deal with Jim Bridges to do a section of THE BABY MAKER, a movie, for the movie.

00:32:09 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

So we did that at the Fox Venice. And they paid us 10 thousand dollars, and just today there's an email to the light show from a show in Colorado that we're being invited to be in next, in the fall of 2011. And they can't offer us very much, but they'll give us 10 thousand dollars. [laugh]

00:32:38 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And, and Larry Janss noticed it's the same sized space as the one he has where we did a show recently. It's just funny, light show's very peculiar for luck, a strange kind of luck. Anyway, so we did the light show there, I was finishing— I actually then had an editing space to work on SISTER MIDNIGHT, found the footage. I transferred it... my mother was helping me getting money and stuff.

00:33:12 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

But, so I work-printed it, finally went to a work-print. I never had used a work-print before in film, but I had about two hours of stuff, and got it work-printed for Moviolas. And then edited the final edit with sound. Did some dubbing there, and actually I have a— well, a big sound effects collection.

00:33:36 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Did a very complex track. Where I was changing here with the end of THE STAR CURTAIN in the edit, which was in purely post-production editing, and editing SISTER MIDNIGHT, was building up the track to be much stronger. I felt the audio track should be the equal of the video track, of the visual track.

00:34:01 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And in fact in SISTER MIDNIGHT I specifically put in one section which is silent, was just visuals, and there's another long section which has sound but no visuals, it was just black. And in general I tried to make them equal in their information and in their impact. And I learned a very important thing from Zappa when I worked for him, which is totally random stuff.

00:34:33 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

That happened when I finished a five minute section of film, I'd been working on it for a long time, he was in the same room, he was at an editing, sound editing. And he came over, and brought a roll of 35 [mag] film that was about that, about as long, that was from a concert or something. We put them both on the Moviola, set the start mark, and just played it.

00:34:59 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And it looked just great. And it was wonderful. And he says, that's it. And I knew he had— I had not edited the footage to the music or vice-versa. And that was a huge, that's the biggest lesson I've ever learned, and so I used a lot of random play. And I still do. That I'll get a better result if it's not too much handled by humans.

00:35:24 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And that's standard for a lot of art today. So we went through three years at the Fox Venice, and what we did was we played a series of light shows each spring. And that was pretty solid, except it got worse and worse, and we got tired of it. Michael Scroggins left at a certain point to go to CalArts. And we finally stopped after three years, in '73.

00:36:00 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And about that time— and then I very cleverly continued editing the film but screening it on a double system that Rol had set up, and invited the same audience of about 30, 40 people to screenings of *SISTER MIDNIGHT*, so I could test it on them. And I was sensitive to their vibrations. And, you know, did big changes in the editing to try to have it work with an audience.

00:36:31 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And so that was very valuable. But meanwhile, so the light show stopped and one among the last light shows, we were in this space above the Fox Venice. There was a big metal door that we never went through. That door opened at one point, and this guy came in. It was Kim Jorgenson who was running the theater itself, which was running blaxploitation films and so on.

00:37:01 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And he and Rol and two others, Bobby Maestri, who'd joined us by this time, M-A-I-S-T-R-I [sic], and Larry Janss both had money. They formed a partnership to buy, to take over the theater and run the theater. As filmmakers we were interested in that. And so what had been a light show, pretty much the same people now took over a 35 millimeter theater.

00:37:32 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And got into, after a while— the roles were reversed. I was kind of on top in the light show and now I was at the bottom. They finally hired me to project 35 millimeter films, Mexican films on Sunday. But we adapted to the— my opinion, we adapted to the '70s like hippies in general. We became more productive, more useful and so on .

00:38:06 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And in this case it was to provide entertainment to hippies, of movies, and we got quickly into changing the bill every night. Because you could, at that point, get what really were B movies, movies that had been out for a while, you'd get on a flat rate for a very small amount of money. And the studio, the distributor wouldn't get a box office report.

00:38:29 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

So we could have 800 people see two of those, we put two of those together that had recently come out. There was no home video and no cable at this point. A movie either was a movie in theaters or it went to television. So this was in between. And thus I was able to see, I was a projectionist now, these great movies of that period, COMING HOME and so on, over and over.

00:38:59 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

MCCABE & MRS. MILLER, so on. And we made money, we actually made money for about five years. We also played new movies, we played John Waters and so forth. Kim was the original booker, for about six months, his taste was too flamboyant for Rol. And he was fired. And we continued. And then about six months later The Nuart began, under Kim, forming a new company called Landmark.

00:39:37 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

It was first called Parallax, I think, and then Landmark. And they had the brains to actually expand this way of making money, and had 30 or so theaters in about three or four years. We chose not to, and slowly died. Because when you're making money you either, in America, my opinion is you either keep making it and build new ways, or other people will take you, take over. [Expand or die.]

00:40:02 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Anyway, and Kim [Landmark] eventually bought the Fox, bought the Fox Venice. But we did some really— we introduced Fassbinder and the new German cinema to Los Angeles. I actually projected ALI: FEAR EATS THE SOUL, the first time it played in Los Angeles. And I saw it for the first time. And so on, and any number of films, like ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW, that had no, it couldn't make it in one week, which was the allowed time in Hollywood distribution.

00:40:36

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

But if you played it, like, once every couple of months, the word of mouth had, on a specialized film, has time to spread. And we could fill the theater, an 800 seat theater on certain bills. PERFORMANCE was big, and other hippie oriented stuff.

end of tape 6

TAPE 7: PETER MAYS

00:00:45

PETER MAYS

The Fox, I worked there, I think '74 to about '79. I was there the whole time. I came in six months late, but was there at the end.

00:00:56

ADAM HYMAN

What was the end?

00:00:57

PETER MAYS

The end was being bought by Landmark and Kim. No, Kim was no longer with Landmark, but being bought out. Larry and Rol, especially, having to take a huge loss. We had three bookers; Kim, who did really well financially, Bobby Maestri who is with the light show and his father was in the theater business and had just a great sense of booking, and finally, and I don't want to put him down, but Michael Donnelly.

00:01:32

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

With Michael Donnelly, we became more radical. And I can't remember— we became more radical in general as we went along. We played UNDERGROUND, by Emile De Antonio, for a week. The police were ready to— on opening night the Venice cops told us they had a whole bunch of patrol cars in a nearby parking lot to suddenly descend on the theater if there was a riot. Of course, there wasn't going to be. And so two cops would be there to say, no, don't kill everybody.

00:02:03

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

So by the middle '70s, I could tell the hippie non-violent thing —wasn't worshipped as much. We were angrier and we like the Weather Underground. We also did a big show with Toni Basil, a live show, that Dean Stockwell directed. I forget what— Folies Bergere or something with a lot of Topanga people. It was a live show, which was stopped because we had already printed the next month...

00:02:41

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

...What our system was, we printed a monthly calendar, put them in stores around Venice and so on where they would accept it because people would come to the store to get the calendar and it was a two-way thing. So it was good for them and it was good for us because we got calendars out. And we changed every month. That was the key to such a theater. You have to have people knowing what's coming up...

00:03:11 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

...since you're changing the bill every night. I have all those calendars, by the way. And I snuck into the Fox Venice towards the end and wrote down the grosses for all the evenings because well, we almost broke what is a horrible barrier in filmmaking, where you produce the film and then what? How do you get it out? The way it is now, you have to get a distributor and you have to get a lot of people.

00:03:47 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

We would take on new films and play them and start to develop an audience for them. That was the idea. And I played SISTER MIDNIGHT there. I finally finished the film in 1974, did a lot of special effects stuff and all. Played it with LUCIFER RISING, the version that was around then. Got a lot of people, but the film played—and I thought I had it tuned into people like an audience by 40 or 50 people.

00:04:16 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

But that's not like 500 apparently or the size of the room or I don't know what. But it did not play and so I pretty much decided that was the end of that arc. But I made money so the theater allowed me to book other new films and promote them. And so I enjoyed doing that. The way I got into it was like I opened GOD'S WILL. I would play it with a film that would pull in an audience. you know, it's just mechanical.

00:04:46 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And you know a lot about this. I would pull in an audience with, in that case, TIBETAN MEDICINE, which was pulling a full audience of hippies. They'd have to sit through GOD'S WILL between the next showing of it. It's a double-bill. And GOD'S WILL played very well. But at that point, Fred was in a fight with Schneider or whatever and wouldn't go on with it. I could've, I should have pushed through on my own, but I didn't.

00:05:13 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Because these are big investments, feature movies and yet they have to way to get started in with the audience. You can do it with theater that plays a different bill every night. So I played Stanton Kaye's BRANDY IN THE WILDERNESS—was the movie I was thinking of—with a Wim Wender's film. They were both black and white and 16. And the Wenders's brings in an audience and they would see Stanton's work.

00:05:48 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

So that was positive. So I enjoyed that a lot actually. And having made a deal with myself, I was not going to make another feature and I was not interested in experimental films anymore. But I would not make another feature and get to this point where it just dies or you can't find a distributor. I would learn how to cross that bridge with somebody else's film. So I did that with a bunch of films. And then, had a really funny relationship with Burt for a while.

00:06:24 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Because I got into actually buying... This was weird. I got into punk. I was interested in punk and actually was trying to do a thing with X, but it didn't happen. But I saw THE GREAT ROCK 'N' ROLL SWINDLE by Julien Temple, which was distributed by Virgin and they played it at, I think, Filmex. And it was for sale, the distribution rights were for sale. And so it was \$300,000.

00:06:56 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

It was about the amount of money that this film that I was trying to do with X would have cost by the time everything was paid for. And I thought, well, my God, The Sex Pistols are going to sell a lot better than X so buy the North American rights. So Burt found out about this, got very excited and brought in Ed Pressman. But unfortunately, Ed couldn't quite sell it.

00:07:25 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

I actually had gotten friendly with Ray Manzarek now, finally. He was no longer as popular. And had The Doors for a while interested in seeing the movie and buying it, but they didn't. That's what I call the end of my career. I then went on to other stuff. But it was interesting to me that without— and nobody ever asked me what I did for a living or did I know anything about film or anything.

00:07:58 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

I mean, there was a guy who was an agent for Virgin, I think he finally once said, well, how are you going to distribute this? And I said, well, I'm going to get it in one— which was my plan to get it in one theater and play it for a year. It would be like another club. Anyway, so that's sort of the tragic side of this, is it is possible to break the log-jam for independent films if you can go straight from the producer to the exhibitor.

00:08:36 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Bypass the distributor— excuse me, the producer of the film to the audience and build an audience. It's a hard thing to do, but otherwise, you're stuck anyway.

00:08:48 **ADAM HYMAN**

What happened to the Fox Venice?

00:08:51 **PETER MAYS**

Now, so the Fox initially went under Landmark and Michael Donnelly stayed with it and it didn't work out as could be predicted. They sold it. I don't know if they sold it or leased it to an Iranian student at UCLA who had a lot of money. And he played Iranian films for about six weeks and that didn't work. And I think there may be someone else owned it, and of course now it is literally a flea market.

00:09:30 **ADAM HYMAN**

When did it stop screening films?

00:09:33

PETER MAYS

So it stopped in the early '80s. It stopped with our films in about '78. Which is about when home video and cable were beginning to fill the void that we were filling. It couldn't be done after because cable gets the films now and originally VHS release, now DVD. There's that window, and then, it finally gets to television three years down the road or something.

00:10:07

ADAM HYMAN

It's shorter and shorter now. How important was the Fox Venice in terms of experimental filming exhibition?

00:10:13

PETER MAYS

Hardly any. I hate to say it, but we played on the edge features, like [George] Romero, and we played like, CHALK was one we played that never got a distributor. It was a UCLA student had made a feature on middle America, which had the right elements for a hippie audience. It built up an audience. We had a distributor actually working renting space in the loft space. New Image, I think they were called, who were beginning to pick up these films.

00:11:06

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

It's too bad we couldn't continue it because from the ground up we were— this was before the real increase in independent films. Then there were maybe five or ten a year. Now, it's 3,000 a year and there's no way to play them.

00:11:26

ADAM HYMAN

Now, let's go back to Sam Francis. How does Sam Francis have money to be supporting various things?

00:11:32

PETER MAYS

Sam Francis made a tremendous amount of money as an artist. He made more money than any other artist, and that was within ten years. He was a very smart guy about sales. He had a series of galleries. He directly dealt with them and was quite wealthy on his own. You had some other questions about him... Did we influence him? It's hard to say because I mean, obviously he was interested on it because he actually did liq— we may have actually.

00:12:15

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

I don't know when he actually started putting water down on a canvas and then dripping acrylic into it, but that's very close to a liquid. I think we had some influence on him. He never did liquids. He never participated in the light show at all. He was very, very good as a patron. He did not try to direct us at all. And he introduced us to the Taper. We couldn't do that because they had to have a union guy for everything.

00:12:48 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

That was a very idyllic period, I think, when we were just under his patronage. He bought us very good strobes. Strobing is very important to a light show because it will melt things together. So we got two machines we could control very closely on strobes, when you started to see things in it, everybody was probably.

00:13:24 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And Jeff, who has a real reverence for artists, in about '72 or something talked Sam into letting him shoot a painting while he was doing it, which took a long time. It was a big painting. It was like 200 foot, a huge painting. So Jeff shot about two hours of 16 millimeter footage and then shot later footage. Then, in the 21st century here, got a DVD camera and shot a lot of interviews about Sam.

00:14:07 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And just made a film. And many people consider it to be the best film made about an artist. He did a long interview with him, which Sam wasn't very into it. Yeah.

00:14:23 **ADAM HYMAN**

Okay. Now, tell me a bit more about the relationship between all of you or if there was any. Or if there's not, just say that. I mean, Toni Basil, Dean Stockwell, the Topanga Canyon scene.

00:14:39 **PETER MAYS**

I knew Dean pretty well, Dean came regularly with...

00:14:45 **ADAM HYMAN**

[overlapping] Dean who?

00:14:46 **PETER MAYS**

Dean Stockwell. I really like Dean Stockwell a lot. He's a neat guy. Every day he would be at the Center—what they call the Center in Topanga, which was a small restaurant—reading the paper. So I saw him a lot. I knew Wallace. Wallace hung out at the Topanga—Wallace Berman—at The Corral, which was THE night club in Topanga. I lived there from about '78 after I did SISTER MIDNIGHT I moved to Topanga.

00:15:21 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Saw Wallace a lot. I have to mention, I purchased a book called THE SACRED MAGIC OF ABRAMELIN THE MAGE, which was about connecting with your guardian angel and then getting demons to obey you and do magic for you. I bought the book, a couple of days later, did some mescaline, which is a drug I really liked because it promotes a lot of feeling and you can still walk around on it and stuff.

00:15:59

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

Anyway, so I had a mescaline trip, went to the Corral and I remember Wallace looking at me like I was Jesus Christ, I mean, really luminous. Either because I was connected to this book, which I think was it because Wallace almost communicating with angels towards the end. I mean, he was writing Hebrew letters, which are numerically written, without knowing what their numerical— or maybe he did, I don't— writing Hebrew letters on stones in Topanga with a chain attached or something.

00:16:32

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

So, and he died in exactly 50 years. He was killed in an accident about an hour after he became 50, and 50 is definitely a number in the Kabbalistic stuff. So anyway, I knew Wallace, who was just a friendly guy, at that point, and I knew him before. Jerry Katz brought him by once. Neil Young lived there, I had no idea about that.

00:16:59

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

I wasn't there during the real height of the '60s. Larry Janss had a house there on Hillside from about, let's see, 1970, around '70, '71 for a few years. I lived there for awhile. That was a small commune. Michael Scroggins actually lived— I lived in a small space under the house and Scroggins took over my space after I left. So a lot of people kind of— that was more a real commune.

00:17:34

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

That was a huge— Larry was very generous. People lived there for free, I know. I met I think some people, other kinds of people there. Topanga's, despite not having a very big population, people are kind of not... there's a lot of different types there.

00:17:53

ADAM HYMAN

So where else? Did you live in Topanga or just in Larry's basement?

00:17:58

PETER MAYS

I lived at Larry's, then had a relationship with a witch, which is portrayed in ASTRAL MAN, who has as big an effect on me as the whole '60s, and that would be another tape, because I was with her when she would summon up demons and stuff. She was really into it. But I had a horrible break-up with her and moved back to the city. And then, ten years later, moved to Topanga again, but at the Moonfire Inn, initially.

00:18:29

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And then to Robinson Road, which is on the Valley side.

00:18:34

ADAM HYMAN

Do you remember the address?

00:18:35

PETER MAYS

Yeah. 755 Robinson Road. It's a house. We shared.

00:18:42

ADAM HYMAN

And then, what was it— I mean, what were people— is there anything to say about that Topanga Canyon scene?

00:18:49

PETER MAYS

Yeah. Topanga is still hippie oriented. You'll still find people hitchhiking and women wearing hippie clothing, and it's a nice place. They've managed to keep— it's fairly rural. I didn't have a girlfriend. You need to have a wife or a girlfriend to be there and it's nice. Or be a writer or something. Topanga is a really special place. It was a major thing in it for the Indians, this character tried to buy the east half of Topanga for development...

00:19:34

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

...and the fence for the development went across an Indian burial ground and he wound up in the hospital with stomach cancer and died. I mean, it's a magical place. I did a lot of ceremonies there, actually. I remember taking acid there at night under the moon at old Topanga, which was really neat. And a lot of people have done a lot of drugs in Topanga. [laugh] Yeah, no, it's a great— I don't know how to descr— socially, it is isolated.

00:20:14

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

You almost had to go to the Valley to see people. It was just horrible because the Valley there, Woodland Hills is really not much. So I wore it out for myself, but it's beautiful. It's a beautiful— there's a lot of land there.

00:20:33

ADAM HYMAN

So then, back to Toni Basil and Dean Stockwell.

00:20:39

PETER MAYS

Yeah, that was interesting. Larry put that together, I think. That was a big show just before punk was getting in and it starred Spaz Attack, which was a pre-punk or a punk, and had a guy named Kedrick Wolf was in it, a lot of actors from Topanga, a lot of dancers. Toni Basil ran it, she was the only one on the mic. She could yell out— I mean, someone should have made a movie of this, of the rehearsals.

00:21:13

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

I remember at one point being out in the lobby putting up stuff and Dean Stockwell coming in kind of angry, going to a thing with plastic over it which listed the people working on the show, pulling—he was a '50s guy—pulling a penknife out and cutting out what's somebody's name. Apparently, they'd just had a fight and he was taking them off the show. I remember walking by him as he was doing this, then I was walking up the stairs trying to hang something and he came up the stairs next and helped me hang it.

00:21:51

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

He was a beautiful man for being there always in his self. You know, he could change from cutting something to helping in an instant.

00:22:04

ADAM HYMAN

So how did this show play?

00:22:06

PETER MAYS

The show played about two months. I can copy off the flyer for it.

00:22:15

ADAM HYMAN

And what was the show?

00:22:18

PETER MAYS

The show was crazy. Toni had all these nutty costumes. She danced. It was a dancing—it was sort of a musical. But they set up a swing. I remember Kendrick was in the swing and it was an avant-garde musical. What connects in my mind is the cult events at midnight with ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW. We would put on live shows of guys who could dress up, cross-dress, like the guy in ROCKY HORROR.

00:22:59

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

Then we'd have a contest and women could vote the guy they liked the most. It was a very strong cult thing for a while. We also did small concerts, working with somebody... Don Pico [PM: he ran the Troubadour on Pico Blvd,], who got the music acts. Bonnie Raitt, we had The Grateful Dead there once, we did a play by Luis Valdez. Luis Valdez was there. Once you have a theater space, there's plenty of very talented people who could use it.

00:23:39

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

So we did a Valdez play. And these are the things we lost money on, you know.

00:23:46

ADAM HYMAN

But how would you book them? Like the same day-as films or just be like [unintelligible] nights?

00:23:50

PETER MAYS

[overlapping] No, that was a problem. They were for weeks. We would have a calendar with one week blocked out and that was the Toni Basil show, let's say. I think they are very angry at us because it was a hit, but the next calendar was already out without the Toni Basil show. So there was problems with doing something like that. We were popular, we made certain film--BEING THERE [PM: This is incorrect. The film was HAROLD AND MAUDE] was an early film by the guy who made COMING HOME. God...

00:24:41

ADAM HYMAN

Hal Ashby.

00:24:41

PETER MAYS

Hal Ashby, yeah. Was one of his first films. A very abstract film. A very low-key film —and we made that into a hit. And Bud Cort one of the actor's, anyways, career was saved by it. We were liked by off-Hollywood more than anybody, or lower levels of Hollywood because— and as they say, *ROCKY HORROR* was a great example. I was actually the projectionist when Lou Adler was in the booth for a premiere of it at the Fox.

00:25:13

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

Preview of it. It played in real theaters for one week. It was gone because it wasn't popular enough. And then, plays now. Played at midnight for next 10, 20 years and has made money. It eventually made its money back. So any specialized film, off-beat film...it's interesting. They have Anthology, Filmforum, you guys do not subscribe to the basic thing we were into, which was repeating popular shows regularly in order to build an audience.

00:25:53

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

But you don't have a big enough theater to really do it. The Anthology does and I've tried to talk them into doing it, but they don't want to do it.

00:26:06

ADAM HYMAN

Okay. Tell me a bit about the making of *ASTRAL MAN*.

00:26:09

PETER MAYS

Okay. *ASTRAL MAN* was shot at Cresthill. Most of it was shot there, and then, for several years afterwards, I would like do other shooting. Like I'd drive by slowly and shoot the exterior, and I also shot a lot of stuff in Topanga and other— it was a diary film, basically. It was first edited seriously— it was part of *SISTER MIDNIGHT* for a while.

00:26:41

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

In fact, one reason the first screening was so bad was I wanted to have a violent cut on the screen so I cut from the movie *SISTER MIDNIGHT* to my life in Ansochrome at the end. It was a really dumb move and so that was taken off *SISTER MIDNIGHT* and was the beginning of *ASTRAL MAN*. Was just very spartan footage and then shot in the mountains where I wanted a very strange trip up a path.

00:27:15

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

By the '80s, by late '80s it had a cut and in 2000 I was offered to do a retrospective at the Anthology. Jeff was in New York and he fixed that up. So I finished *ASTRAL MAN*, shooting two sections that had to have special effects, but shot them off the screen, off a computer screen using Premiere, mainly, as a special effects thing. And that's what got me into computer special effects.

00:27:56 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

So that was finished and that was when also, when I finished what's now is **THE TIME BEYOND THOUGHT** for that show. In-between here, there's a big space in-between. I was doing educational stuff and some experimental, but the experimental had now really gone over into the soundtrack and inches into words, into meaning. I would describe stuff and then the weaker component now became the visuals, which these were slide tape shows, very cheap.

00:28:36 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Where the slide can be on any amount of time and a lot of stuff is carried in the track. So I went from silent to finally completely audio almost.

00:28:46 **ADAM HYMAN**

And when were you making these?

00:28:48 **PETER MAYS**

The major one is **THE WAR OF THE ROSES**, all my life in Topanga, that's from the late '80s. It's in a trilogy. There's three long films that are about the '60s and the aftermath: **SISTER MIDNIGHT**, which is a fantasy about it; **ASTRAL MAN**, which is the real thing, so to speak, at least I was living it then; and then **THE WAR OF THE ROSES**, which is a more novelistic film.

00:29:20 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

They all have a certain amount of yoga— and that has a lot of references to yoga and stuff. Again, if I wanted to express something, I would just say it like I'm doing now. It's the most efficient way to communicate. So that went on for a while. And then since 2000, I've been making these films with lots of effects using other civilizations' artifacts. **ARRIVAL OF THE PURPLE LEGIONS** uses Viking artifacts, which are in the public domain.

00:30:06 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

I did history, American history stuff so I've gotten into history and I like other cultures. **CLEOPATRA** uses Egyptian and Roman material, and **DARK ISLAND** and the current **YOGA-SUTRAS** uses more Buddhist and Hindu material.

00:30:34 **ADAM HYMAN**

What is your goal in these pieces?

00:30:37 **PETER MAYS**

The goal in these pieces is unknown when I started. **WAR OF THE ROSES** was the most extreme for the— well, **ASTRAL MAN** I shot without knowing where it was going, and it was edited for a long period. This is because I find my first choice is often usually the best, and also because I decided that this experiment I did with **STAR CURTAIN** where I did the first part of it and then four years later cut the next part, made sense.

00:31:16 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

My intention in experimental film is to tell the truth and not fake it. The only way I know how to do this is to get the organic body processes into the rhythm of it so it's coming from your body, in your unconscious, and not your mind. So therefore they really need—the body can't figure out jumping around. You can't use a standard shooting situation where you shoot all the shots in a certain apartment at one time.

00:31:54 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And the actors have to adjust. I shoot the first thing first. And the more appealing way to do it is to do the first thing and not know what you're going to do next. And so THE WAR OF THE ROSES began with doing some photography, still photography of a cactus plant that interested me in this Robinson Road place in Topanga. And then, I did an oral statement about it.

00:32:29 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Meanwhile, I decided that experimental film wasn't sufficient to record all this stuff so I started a long written journal, which I have about that wide of a space of notebooks, and then, started doing actual recording...

00:32:47 **ADAM HYMAN**

Oh, don't get up.

00:32:48 **PETER MAYS**

Oh, okay. Anyway, there's a recorder there. Yeah, anyways, so I then recorded some thoughts about this plant and cut it to slides. And then, about six months later, decided, gee, this could be a movie. And so I kept doing it, and just, it grew. It grew like a plant. I'd gotten into this to the point where I used musical section and that from The Song of the Earth by Mahler.

00:33:25 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

A Bruno Walter '30s recording. Put it on tape, quarter tape, and then found some the beginning music, played it and then would record all of the light show on the slides by just, every time I would hit the button the next slide would come up. But I would make live editing to the music of slides that I had arranged in some order and have it record a pulse.

00:33:56 **ADAM HYMAN**

Which work is this in?

00:33:57 **PETER MAYS**

This is WAR OF THE ROSES. And then, maybe have a spoken interlude or something like that. Then went back to the next music, didn't listen to it, put it on the tape recorder, had the slides lined up, and listened to the music for the first time and performed the cuts on the slides. And then stopped it whenever it felt right, and then did other stuff until the next need for music and I went right from where I made the cut.

00:34:37

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

So random process here is determining the order of the music. There's no aesthetic intrusion. I would be surprised. And fantastic stuff came up, like a section of these two cacti, and at a certain point, I show them really brown and dying. And so I thought, Okay, well I ought to have— the music's getting really dull or depressed there.

00:35:12

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

But when I record it, when I played it live, the music became ecstatic at the very moment that the plants were seen in brown and the contradiction between the two was incredibly powerful. So you know and I had the recording so that's... I had it. So that I learned from the light show is the performance--to make as much as you can that's [PM: intuitive] including editing which has the strongest affect on the form of a film than anything else.

00:35:53

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

So doing live editing is one way to get material you wouldn't think of. And doing it in order that— and then the more recent stuff uses a lot of that philosophy, but I'm dreaming up stuff a lot, like... and what I've learned to accept is if it doesn't work, don't worry about it. If it feels bad now and some part of it doesn't show whatever you were working on, just live with it, and that will irritate or will affect... if it's a feeling, if you really feel bad about it, your body will react and try to make it better.

00:36:45

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And you'll think up, even dream what the answer is. So I try to make the organic process have an effect on the work.

00:37:01

ADAM HYMAN

About to ask about the economics of your filmmaking. Has any film ever brought back any sort of money and then, if not, how do you make them?

00:37:13

PETER MAYS

Okay. THE DEATH OF THE GORILLA was distributed by Bob Pike and he made some money. Also when I moved to Cresthill I initially had a softcore porn director for the nasty footage of the new vampire— it's called VAMPIRE FLASH. And then, I re-edited it as NIGHT OF THE VAMPIRE and sold three prints to Bob. He actually produced, in '68, a movie which has disappeared, SOFA FIRE DEATH SONG.

00:37:51

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

Which Angie has lost most of it.

00:37:56

ADAM HYMAN

Who made it?

00:37:56

PETER MAYS

I made it.

00:37:58 **ADAM HYMAN**

Oh, and what's the name of it?

00:37:59 **PETER MAYS**

[overlapping] and I made it. SOFA FIRE DEATH SONG.

00:38:01 **ADAM HYMAN**

And what was that?

00:38:02 **PETER MAYS**

That was an awful— that was a one day shoot with this new model [PM: actually, Victoria Bond], at Cresthill, with some color stuff. That's what Pike wanted. Softcore porn.

00:38:12 **ADAM HYMAN**

Why?

00:38:13 **PETER MAYS**

To sell, to rent. He could rent it then. And he paid me in advance. The only time I ever actually was produced by someone.

00:38:23 **ADAM HYMAN**

What overall was your--well, go on with..

00:38:28 **PETER MAYS**

So I made a little money there. I have never made any money since, but the production cost has gone down and down and with the computer, it's zero. I mean, except to buy blank CDs or something, and I use public— I use the internet. DV, you don't need to process it.

END OF TAPE 7

TAPE 8: PETER MAYS

00:00:43

PETER MAYS

I first became aware of Pike seeing LOVE IN A DUMP or whatever at the Coronet. LOVE IN A PUBLIC DUMP. I think that's the name of it. That was his '50s film. That's his claim, [claim to fame] or whatever as a filmmaker, starring Angie with big breasts, nude. He went to UCLA and wrote a thesis on the Pacific Coast School. I avidly read that when I was at UCLA in the early '60s.

00:01:15

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

When I finished STREAM, it seems to me... I don't know how, I'd heard somehow that he had a film society. So anyway, DEATH OF THE GORILLA, I showed him and you know, please distribute it and he did. He had a bad case of asthma, was one problem. But he was a nice guy. He looked at STAR CURTAIN TANTRA and said it was too rough, that he wouldn't distribute it, which Bob Maurice did later.

00:02:01

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

He really was trying to make money so he did the softcore aspect of it, he could use those. It was interesting when C.F.S., when he died and Angie took it over. It was almost fated because that was around 1970 and she was as bright and you know, New Age-ish as you could be. So I thought it improved it a lot. And she just kept distributing, I didn't have any further work.

00:02:48

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

I did show her a VHS copy of SISTER MIDNIGHT in the early '90s maybe or late '80s, and without telling me, she called James Whitney, who she represented, and told him that his footage was in a really raunchy underground film. And then she told me that I should call James Whitney and apologize for making this thing. So I called James Whitney. He was the only Whitney I had never spoken to because he was very isolated.

00:03:29

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And he had the same voice as a Whitney. There just a slight difference, tone or whatever, and was very friendly, was very much like a coach, was saying, no, you ought to make your own films instead of taking them out of mine. [laugh], and the DVD version OF SISTER MIDNIGHT is not his LAPIS. I should mention about the Cinematheque, I may have mentioned it, but Lapis was the hit, was the house movie by James Whitney. It was very popular in that era.

00:03:57 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And I did have the privilege when I was doing the new films, I remember John [Whitney] Sr. came by with a movie that he needed to play in a theater to get into the Academy. He had to play it for a week so we played it, and that brought Michael Whitney with his only film, which is about Tai Chi and so we played that for a week.

00:04:22 **ADAM HYMAN**

And where was this?

00:04:23 **PETER MAYS**

This was the Fox Venice. It was the kind of theater you could— if I can't get it played anywhere, I'll go to the Fox Venice-type thinking.

00:04:32 **ADAM HYMAN**

What would you do? Just throw up a short...?

00:04:34 **PETER MAYS**

[overlapping] and we would throw it on as a short, yeah. We had to play it in a straight week. We conformed to the Academy's requirements.

00:04:44 **ADAM HYMAN**

And then, what else? Who did distribute Star-crossed... whatever, you know?

00:04:51 **PETER MAYS**

STAR CURTAIN?

00:04:51 **ADAM HYMAN**

STAR CURTAIN.

00:04:52 **PETER MAYS**

Well, that was distributed by Bob Maurice, by Paradigm Films. He called it Paradigm Films. Joyce-something, his girlfriend, was in charge of it. He opened a 16 millimeter distribution. I don't think I ever got any money from them and I don't think the whole venture didn't work. It [STAR CURTAIN] was entered in the San Francisco Film Festival and it played. And I remember Maurice and Joyce and I took a plane up to San Francisco to see it.

00:05:25 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

To see the screening. And then, afterwards, Maurice said, well, now we're going somewhere else. You're on your own. And he left me there in San Francisco without a place to sleep that night. So I found a place and got home. Maurice was a beautiful guy. I mean, that was one thing hippies learned, and I less than most, but Maurice learned to just live on the street, you know, to be resilient in terms of survival.

00:06:01 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

So he put that on me. That was a great joke.

00:06:06 **ADAM HYMAN**

When was that?

00:06:06

PETER MAYS

That would be '70, 1970. But they eventually faded and I got the three prints back and I sold one to Sam Francis. It's the only sale I've ever made of a print.

00:06:22

ADAM HYMAN

What did Sam Francis do with the prints that he bought?

00:06:24

PETER MAYS

Good question. I don't know, and the estate would know. I don't know. He just did things, he might have a big collection. I don't know. I know he was backing Brakhage for a while, and he backed the Whitneys. Oh, I missed--here's a good thing. In 1970, it was the beginning of a new decade. Judy Chicago, who I actually was in my beginning art class with at UCLA when she was Judy Cohen, anyway she had this idea.

00:07:03

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

She was living with Lloyd Hamrol, landscape sculpture. To have a set-up where they had a studio in Pasadena, and put the light show in one building and the Whitney show, which was our big competitor—but they always did the same thing, it was the three-screen Whitney multi-screen show—on the other side of the street. And they would project on our building and we would project on their building. Then she had put together some search lights with huge gels as a gigantic color wheel.

00:07:36

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And would have colored search lights up. So that happened on the new year of 1970. And I don't know that we ever even found the plug to get the electricity. We never got up on it. But it was interesting.

00:08:00

ADAM HYMAN

Wait. I don't understand. Did the event happen?

00:08:03

PETER MAYS

The event happened. I don't know that the Whitneys ever actually projected. I don't believe we ever could get our machines going. But she had her search lights going and so on. It's kind of not a great story, I guess. But it's interesting.

00:08:16

ADAM HYMAN

You all brought your gear, but then it didn't...

00:08:19

PETER MAYS

Yeah, yeah, but we were an art thing for a while. I also know that the show at the Cinematheque, which was 1969, spring, Jim Morrison was sitting in front of my machine, I was told. And was later quoted as saying it was the best light show he ever saw. This was a show where I had a lot of rain footage from *SISTER MIDNIGHT* and it was raining that night and we played just realistic footage for a while.

00:08:59 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And then slowly brought in the liquids and stuff. So it was like you were on the street and beginning to see stuff.

00:09:09 **ADAM HYMAN**

Now, was there any critical coverage of the experimental films printings in L.A. in the '60s and '70s that you recall?

00:09:20 **PETER MAYS**

Yes, there was Gene Youngblood, was working for THE EXAMINER, and the L.A. FREE PRESS, as long as it was functioning, covered Movies 'Round Midnight and reviews, and Richard Whitehall came in around '68, I think, or '67 and wrote extensively. Lewis Teague did a retrospective of my work in the spring of '68 and I remember Richard Whitehall wrote a big spread on it, which I don't have, but...

00:10:01 **ADAM HYMAN**

That would have been in what?

00:10:02 **PETER MAYS**

And that would have been in... I don't think it was in the L.A. FREE PRESS, I think it was in another underground press at the period. I don't know where that would be.

00:10:11 **ADAM HYMAN**

So what do you feel like? The critics were good or not good or what?

00:10:16 **PETER MAYS**

Again, there was a sub-culture of the filmmakers and of critics and of exhibitors. It was all much smaller than the other one, but I mean, Gene Youngblood was great, and of course, he wrote the book on expanded cinema. No, I feel like that was a good period in terms of recognition and of a functioning art form. Yeah, especially with the Cinematheque open every night.

00:10:48 **ADAM HYMAN**

What do you think happened?

00:10:50 **PETER MAYS**

That's a good question. Jeff was actually working for them for a while. I think it just petered out. I don't know. I don't know. I mean, the real bulk of film was coming from San Francisco. I think maybe it's possible that the structural film just wasn't as popular. I don't know. I know I stopped seeing movies— oh, I've got to mention Lippincott put on a complete Godard retrospective in '68, which we went to.

00:11:39 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And in '69, he had The Living Theater here, and I went to the PARADISE NOW screening and met Morrison finally. Jim Morrison.

00:11:50 **ADAM HYMAN**

And where were those screenings?

00:11:51 **PETER MAYS**

Those were at USC, and there was a riot. People were following the dictums of The Living Theater and taking off their clothes and so forth. So that was the last thing Lippincott did for them. Lippincott...

00:12:07 **ADAM HYMAN**

[overlapping] On campus?

00:12:08 **PETER MAYS**

...Yeah, on campus, yeah. Lippincott actually had a very interesting career. He was our manager of the light show and worked with us for the first few years. And he did the negotiation with MGM for THE BABY MAKER thing. He went on as a publicist on, initially, independent films and then on Alfred Hitchcock's last film in England. I forget what it's called [FAMILY PLOT]. Then came over here for STAR WARS. Lucas was a classmate, and so he was initially the publicist on STAR WARS.

00:12:51 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

He's really intelligent and got very into structuralism [Claude Levi-Strauss]. And he, I believe, is the brain behind the marketing of the materials for STAR WARS. I think he invented—and Lucas probably—dolls, saber swords, the whole huge industry of licenses to people to work off of a movie, and STAR WARS was the first one that sold laser sword toys, books and everything like that. So he vaulted up in the industry. Did the same thing for ALIEN.

00:13:35 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And was working for Dino De Laurentiis and so on. He finally made JUDGE DREDD with Sylvester Stallone for 70 million dollars with Ed Pressman and it bombed. And then, he's left the industry.

00:13:57 **ADAM HYMAN**

So where is he now?

00:13:58 **PETER MAYS**

He's in Freedom, New Hampshire, living in a house with his wife. I've got to call him, have to find out how he's doing.

00:14:06 **ADAM HYMAN**

Doing what?

00:14:08 **PETER MAYS**

Well, he's retired, but he had three great interests: film, comic books and jazz and modern music. And he has huge collections of all that.

00:14:20

ADAM HYMAN

Oh, well, I'm working on a documentary about comic books. I should give him a call.

00:14:23

PETER MAYS

You really, you should.

00:14:25

ADAM HYMAN

What did you do in the '80s and '90s?

00:14:28

PETER MAYS

Okay. What I did was to try to get serious and decided that I wasn't going to make it on my name so it should be the subject that would get people. So I decided to do documentaries or serious explanations of history and especially of wars, actually, like World War II. But animate the geography, especially in war, animate the strategic moves, not soldiers running around, but what the strategy is.

00:15:09

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And animate it, and so I got an Atari computer and eventually came up with World War I, which was to be a prelude to World War II, but I finished off that. Which strategy is very important and you cannot understand strategy without seeing maps, frankly. So anyway, I got into—you've put on a show about this—about animated documentaries. So these are animated documentaries, but specifically to show history on a very large scale.

00:15:39

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

That took years. And then I've made three more on American history and I'm making money on them. The American history ones are with—and World War I—are with Discovery Education, because the company I was with was bought by them and I probably shouldn't say this but they haven't even paid me a royalty this year because of the recession, I'm sure. I've got a letter in to them.

00:16:07

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

But it's the lowest rung of actually making money in film. And I like it, I think it's positive. You're actually making something useful.

00:16:19

ADAM HYMAN

What's the product?

00:16:21

PETER MAYS

The product usually was video and now DVDS, half hour show, 20 minutes is best, 20 minutes to a half an hour for kids, for schools, for class. To publicize them better, I made a website around 2000, and following the same technique, did a history of the United States in ten minutes. It's on animatedatlas.com. And that is by far— I finally have made something that the audience likes. Over a million people have looked at it.

00:17:03 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Because you can follow the whole history where how the states in and so on, all in ten minutes, which is plenty of time to show the large picture. And I have taken that and expanded it for sale in a DVD form or a CD form using Flash so it can be both narrative and interactive.

00:17:27 **ADAM HYMAN**

So when you were doing, like, the first one of those it was in the 80s, how were you earning a living?

00:17:32 **PETER MAYS**

Projecting. I dropped out in the '60s, like Timothy Leary said. Timothy Leary was good at slogans and his slogan was, turn on, tune in, drop out. I was ready to drop out—I mean, it's something you want to do anyway so I did it. so I lost whatever... they gave me a job as a projectionist at the Fox Venice. Before that, I was distributing leaflets on cars and things. And with the I got a job in the '80s, which I really liked, at UCLA working as a projectionist in what was then Melnitz Theater, and became the James Bridges Theater.

00:18:13 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

In those two cases, it was a pretty good job because I was seeing films, like I saw a lot of the archive films at UCLA, and they also played lots of good movies. The last year was a retrospective on Jon Jost. God, I'm beginning to fade. The Italian filmmaker, made ACCATTONE and MAMA ROMA [Pier Paolo Pasolini]. It's really good. I would never have seen those films if I hadn't been a projectionist. I had a prejudice against structuralist film.

00:19:00 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

Finally saw Michael Snow, his work and became really amazed by him. And I met him, he was there for a while. It was good. It was fun. And I listened to the—you could listen to the teachers doing critical studies and so on. And the third projectionist job, it was in a way the weirdest, was at CAA for four years. The heart of darkness of Hollywood, where they really run everything.

00:19:24 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And I was the projectionist, an avant-garde filmmaker.

00:19:27 **ADAM HYMAN**

Which years?

00:19:29 **PETER MAYS**

Those would be '94 to 19— or '93 to '97. I was there for the last two years of the Ovitz regime, Ovitz and Ron Meyer and the first two years of the Young Turks that took over it. I haven't really been back since, but I left on good terms. Very stressful job and there the movies were awful. They were directors trying to get work and most of them were terrible. Though I have made some copies. And not only did I have to project, but I also had to dub videos. Yeah.

00:20:03

ADAM HYMAN

It's probably worse now...

00:20:04

PETER MAYS

And my parents died, frankly, in '97, and I got some inheritance, but not enough. That's what's getting me through.

00:20:15

ADAM HYMAN

And then, as your work moved from film to video, did the medium itself—what was the meaning of it for you in changing medium from film to video? I mean, since you were concerned more with narrative, at that point, I don't know if, like, an aesthetic inquiry into the medium would matter.

00:20:35

PETER MAYS

No, it does matter, it's a very good question. The last time I worked with film was actually doing the negative cut, so to speak, of *ASTRAL MAN*. Film seems very—and I've done some work on the *DEATH OF THE GORILLA*. Films seem really like an antique now. I was at Christy's a couple of years ago, which is now it's got a little museum, and they had a piece of 35 film on the counter.

00:21:11

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

I thought, God, that is so ridiculous, so mechanical to have little holes and then a claw comes in and moves it. So I have adapted. And I didn't like video. I worked in video a fair amount and it's so fragile that it's really... but DV, which is not fragile, is really a good, I really like the medium. It's true the film has a veneer, especially black and white, has a quality that you can't get in video. But the difference in cost alone makes it great.

00:21:52

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

Now, my DV, my current films are all not normal in their— they have the film structure, but it's not divided into editing and shooting, you're making up the shot and editing at the same time. I'm using After Effects exclusively now, and to edit a film whether it would be a hard job because you have a new layer for each shot and so on. You can do it, but it's really designed for compositing.

00:22:30

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

So I can do mattes and all the kind of stuff really easy and free. So it's more like painting. I mean, the problem is that you're sitting in front of a computer all the time. I've done some shooting. So at least through now it's been a very fruitful, I really enjoy it more. But film had also a physical quality that's wonderful so I don't know. They're both neat. I could see doing theater as well, you know.

00:23:04

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

Friedkin is now doing opera as well as movies.

00:23:08

ADAM HYMAN

What do you think is the relationship between your painting work and your...?

00:23:12

PETER MAYS

[overlapping] Painting has had a big effect on me. I was painting last couple years and this recent film, which has just been finished, I'm able to make aesthetic decisions much quicker. I can only think the painting has a lot to do with that. Also, I'm accepting the pictorial quality of the screen more, that it will have a more of an art feeling even if it's not, you know, something or another, and I accept that a lot—that's happening more.

00:23:53

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

I don't know how it's happening more, so I'm more sure of myself as to what I do. I think the painting improved that a lot. So it was very valuable.

00:24:08

ADAM HYMAN

Do you have any other points that you wish to address?

00:24:13

PETER MAYS

My overall career is a little prelude with some films and three major films on the '60s period, which I think are the most important things. And then, these newer ones, I don't know how to describe—that are more universal, I guess. I don't know. It would be better if there was... I mean, selling them through DVD seems like a really good way to make a living, but I don't know how to do it.

00:24:53

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

I don't know.

00:24:54

ADAM HYMAN

Are people interested in...I don't know. Is there an audience now for experimental films?

00:24:59

PETER MAYS

I mean, the interesting thing now is the means of production are out there for everybody, like cameras, you know, your phone. Your iPhone you can shoot with. Everybody can shoot. There's a tremendous democratic—from the beginning, from Maya Deren's first essay that I read in the '50s about using an eight millimeter camera creatively, there's been a democratization of the film, of the motion media, that's just stupendous.

00:25:34

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And it not only includes the means of production, but also the means of distribution through YouTube and the web. So the paradise is here in terms of really being able to do it. The only problem's there's so many people doing it. There's so much stuff on YouTube. So I don't know what's going to happen. YouTube is like a gigantic film school because you can critique each other, they got film answers and so on.

00:26:06 **PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)**

And YouTube itself, kind of in some way organizes it all. People learn from each other the way really at film school, students really learn from other students more than the film class teachers, at least at UCLA. I don't know what's next. And the youth is much more organized than ever before; texting everywhere. So it has the organization that it didn't have in the '60s, and we have a president [Obama] who is on the edge of transforming this society into a healthy society.

00:26:45 **ADAM HYMAN**

All right. Do either of you have anything, [unintelligible] questions?

00:26:51 **MARK SKONER**

Yeah, I have a question. Have you looked into, like, the current practice of live cinema very much? You know, there's people now using modern tools to do essentially live projection cinema. It's much more kind of quasi-narrative than what you guys did back in the '60s, but they call it live cinema. The idea is that it's live improvised, using a lot of found material, but, you know, the idea of re-combining stuff in a live form.

00:27:18 **MARK SKONER (CONTINUED)**

So I was just wondering if you had...

00:27:18 **PETER MAYS**

[overlapping] I haven't actually seen any of it, no.

00:27:20 **MALE ONE**

Just because you were doing it. You had a paying practice, basically doing live projection.

00:27:25 **PETER MAYS**

Yeah, Yeah.

00:27:26 **MALE ONE**

And now, it's kind of coming back now in a way.

00:27:29 **PETER MAYS**

We are beginning to work again.

00:27:30 **MALE ONE**

It's interesting because I think there's interest in that stuff now.

00:27:32 **PETER MAYS**

There's a tremendous amount of using material of the past. What is it called? Acquisition or whatever.

00:27:43 **ADAM HYMAN**

Found footage or appropriationist.

00:27:44

PETER MAYS

Found footage. —Okay, I had a background in art history, and the final decadent bottom of a movement is mannerist, where the artists no longer invent anything and just used material from the past. So I don't think it's a very good sign of the creativity of this period, frankly. At the same time, ordinary people— I myself first got into it editing a cowboy movie that I bought.

00:28:18

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

And eight millimeter cowboy movie. So it's a way to get into the media. I don't know what'll happen. I think we are in a transitional period. I use a lot of it, but I use very generic footage just by other people, frankly, like a pyramid or something. A pyramid is a work of architecture... or if I use Yantras, I feel like it's okay. I don't know. I don't know.

00:28:58

PETER MAYS (CONTINUED)

We are very acquisitional now.

00:29:01

MALE ONE

Appropriationist.

00:29:02

PETER MAYS

Appropriationist, yeah. I'm not real excited about it.

end of tape 8