

Interview with Gary Dixon

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Brief Summary: Gary Dixon talks about his upbringing and how it moulded him to be perfect for UTV. He joined at 16 and spent 47 years there. He reminisces on his time at the company and the trajectory he had through the organisation. He talks about the familial aspects and recounts how he met his wife at UTV. Working on the revival reminded him of how close he was to his work colleagues.

GD: 00:00 Okay 00:01

Other: 00:01 We're rolling, mid shot and a tight shot so, 00:03

GD: 00:03 Ok, I'm not moving 00:05

Other: 00:06 You're alright, and 00:07

Int: 00:07 So, it's wonderful to see so many UTV people working together seamlessly as ever. How has it been all getting back together like this? 00:15

GD: 00:15 Well, we've had a ball, to be honest. It was good that we could all remember each other's names, some people have been gone longer than others. But as a few of us have said, the system hasn't changed much in making a program. Yes, we're working with students here and we're trying to bring as many on board as possible. But the actual structure of making a program, it's just the same old same old. And like riding a bike, you get onto a camera, and you do the shots that you did years ago. So, it's been easy going, no real stress. **00:49**

Int: 00:50 and it- very professional to-to my eyes anyway, 00:53

GD: 00:54 Yes, I'm actually impressed by the turnout in the long run. We have done a lot with equipment which was not up to the standard that we're used to, but it is excellent equipment for learning the industry. And I just hope that the students take that away at the end of the series, that they've actually seen how to make a program. We've done the best that we can and it's- it's on air! And quite acceptable. **01:19**

Int: 01:19 So looking back on your own career, how long were you in UTV? 01:23

GD: 01:23 I was in UTV for 46 years and 1 week. I started at 16 years of age in June 1973, and I went in at the bottom rung, glorified tea boy in the film library. Yes, we used film back in those days. And that gave me the opportunity to rub shoulders with everyone in television, from the managing director right down to the man at the front door. And I didn't realise at the time how good that was, because most the time was spent with camera men, sound men, lighting guys, film editors and so on. So, after about two and a half, three years, there was an opportunity to go studio cameras, and I managed to get the post. I did that for 9 or 10 years, moved up through the grades. And then I'd moved sideways from fifth year substantive I think the term was, and into the bottom row of lighting, lighting assistant. And that opened up a whole new world in all, lots of other responsibilities in actually creating pictures, outside of the camera. So, I did 9 or 10 years in that, and then things went downhill, they moved me into middle management. And, the difficult thing was, working with people, it wasn't just the- the whys and wherefores of cameras and lighting -you were actually working with people who had emotions, who had problems, and that was sometimes very difficult. But I got through it and lasted 46 odd years, I can't complain at all. **02:58**

Int: 02:59 and looking back, a good career? 03:00

GD: 03:00 I had a brilliant career. I'm very, very lucky. I left school with virtually no qualifications. But I was good with my hands, had a good eye, I had been keen on photography and filmmaking before I started at 16. That was one of the reasons why they brought me in. George Shields very kindly said to me after a half hour interview 'You're actually talking about film work the way our camera men do.' So, I'd had a good start due to my father and my uncle bringing me onboard with Cinefilm, and I didn't realise it was going to be such a good career when it started. **03:35**

Int: 03:36 And it, people talk a lot about UTV a family, and a great place to work in terms of friendships and colleagues! Did you find that? **03:44**

GD: 03:45 I did! I did, yes. While I was glad after that length of time to walk away from it, this has brought it home to me just that relationship with people. And working one guy on camera's here, Mervyn Maw, and he introduced me to the lady how became my wife. She worked in UTV as well, and just a coincidence and we hit it off. Small world from that point of view, but all the faces. We've had, we've had so many experiences over the years, experiences that you wouldn't get in a normal field of work. We were going away on outside broadcasts, the film crews were going away on shoots, and those sort of shoots took days at a time. So, you were not only working with people, you were living with them. Staying in accommodation, somewhere, up the next day, breakfast and away, so it was like a family, and family experiences, yeah. **04:40**