56UP

A film by

Michael Apted

Michael Apted, 144 minutes, English, Digital (DCP, BluRay), 1:78, Stereo, 2012, Documentary, Unrated

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Synopsis

Offering an extraordinary look at the unfolding of lives, ***The UP Series*** has been called "an inspired, almost noble use of the film medium" by renowned film critic Roger Ebert.

In 1964, acclaimed filmmaker Michael Apted began his career as a researcher on a new experimental series for Granada TV called *Seven UP*, which explored the Jesuit maxim "Give me the child until he is seven and I will give you the man." The original concept was to interview 14 children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds from all over England, to see whether a class system was in place. By asking the children about their lives and their dreams for the future, differences in attitudes and opportunity were witnessed.

For almost a half century, Apted has interviewed the original group every seven years, examining the progression of their lives. Now they are 56. From cab driver Tony, to schoolmates Jackie, Lynn and Susan and the iconoclast Neil, the present age brings more life-changing decisions and surprising developments. From success and disappointment, marriage and childbirth, to poverty and illness, nearly every facet of life is discussed with the group, as they assess whether their lives have ultimately been ruled by circumstance or self-determination.

Filmmaker Bio

Michael Apted is of one of the most prolific directors of his generation. Since the 1960s, Apted has helmed an extensive list of feature films and documentaries. His feature films include *Coal Miner's Daughter, Gorky Park, Gorillas in the Mist, Thunderheart, Nell, The World is Not Enough, Enigma, Amazing Grace*, and the third installment of C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. His most recent film, *Chasing Mavericks* for Walden Media and Twentieth Century Fox, tells the true story of Jay Moriarity, the youngest person to surf Mavericks, a famous giant wave in Northern California.

Apted's documentary credits include the Boris Grebenshikov film *The Long Way Home*, *Incident at Oglala, Bring on the Night, Moving the Mountain, Me and Isaac Newton, The Power of the Game*, and his other longitudinal series *Married in America I* and *II*. He also directed the official 2006 World Cup Film. But among Mr. Apted's most widely recognized documentary directorial achievements are his internationally acclaimed, multi-award winning sequels based on the original *Seven UP* documentary: *7 Plus Seven, 21 UP, 28 UP, 35 UP, 42 UP, 49 UP*, and the recent *56 UP*, which aired in May on ITV to much acclaim. In addition to his documentary and feature work, Apted has worked extensively in television, including directing the first three episodes of HBO's epic series *Rome*.

Apted was born in England in 1941 and studied law and history at Cambridge University. He has received numerous awards and nominations for his extensive body of work, including a Grammy, British Academy Awards, a DGA Award and the International Documentary Association's highest honor, the IDA Career Achievement Award. By the order of Queen Elizabeth II, Apted was recently made a Companion of the Order of Saint Michael and Saint George for his work in the film and television industries. Apted joined the DGA in 1978, was elected to the Western Directors Council in 1997 and became the Fifth Vice President of the National Board in 2002. He was elected President at the DGA biennial convention in June 2003. He served three terms as President of the Guild, which he concluded in July 2009. He became the Secretary-Treasurer of the DGA in 2011, and sits as a Governor of the Academy of Motion Pictures.

Filmmaker's Statement

Researching *Seven UP* was my first job, directing and producing *56 UP* is currently one of my latest, so this project has spanned my entire working life. It has been a unique and fulfilling experience, the one I treasure most in my career. I owe a debt to Granada for their five decades of unstinting support, to First Run for launching the films in the USA and sticking with us, but my biggest debt is to the participants for their commitment and courage in seeing it all through. It's no small matter offering your life up for public appraisal every seven years to a large international audience.

I've known them so long that they're more like a family than fellow workers. Like a family, we've had our good times, our disagreements, but now all but one of the participants are back for *56 UP*.

I never know how each new film will turn out, except that it'll be quite different from the last. *21 UP* was full of hope, *28* was about children and responsibility, *35* was concerned with mortality when some were losing parents, and *49* had a sense of disappointment with lives maybe not fully achieved. Yet *56* is quite different again, which goes to prove, if nothing else, that our series mirrors life, and is always full of surprises.

I hope you enjoy it.

– Michael Apted

Participants

Andrew, along with Charles (who stopped appearing in the films after *28 UP*) and John, appears in *Seven UP* as one of the three boys from a pre-preparatory school in Kensington. Andrew married Jane before *35 UP* and eventually became a partner at a firm of solicitors. He still works in law and has two sons.

Bruce, as a public schoolboy in *Seven UP*, said he wanted to be a missionary so he could work in Africa and, "teach people who are not civilised to be, more or less, good." The series followed Bruce as he graduated from Oxford before going on to teach in Bangladesh. In *35 UP* he was not married but confessed that he hoped he soon would be. In *42 UP* Bruce revealed he had met a fellow teacher, Penny, while working in London's East End, and the pair had tied the knot. The two are still married in ***56 UP*** and have two sons, who attend a Quaker school.

Jackie has three sons and the series has followed her through her marriage, in her early twenties, and her divorce by the age of 35. In *35 UP* she revealed she had a son who was the result of a brief relationship she had after her divorce. By *42 UP* she had two more children but was no longer with their father. In ***56 UP*** Jackie tells viewers that her ex, the father of her younger two sons, and his mother, both have terminal cancer. Her stepmother, brother-in-law and sister have also passed away recently. Between filming sessions for ***56 UP,*** Jackie's ex is in a major car accident and passes away from his injuries but Jackie also sees the birth of her first grandchild. Due to government benefits cuts, Jackie has also lost her benefits despite her rheumatoid arthritis and is currently being supported in part by her two sons.

John, who attended pre-preparatory school with Charles (who stopped appearing in the films after *28 UP*) and Andrew at seven, became a barrister after studying law at Oxford. He had also married Claire, who, like himself, has strong ties to Bulgaria and her Bulgarian heritage. After *35 UP* he decided to stop participating in the films, but returned for *49 UP.* In ***56 UP*** John talks about how he feels his designation as upper-class and privileged in the series was a misrepresentation, since his father died when he was nine and his mother had to support the family.

In *Seven UP*, **Lynn** said when she grew up she wanted to work in Woolworths. She actually went on to work in a mobile library and at *42 UP* was still there after 30 years. After the mobile library was shut down, she worked in a school library. In ***56 UP*** she reveals that she lost her job due to budget cuts. She has two daughters and several grandchildren, and recently had a grandchild who was born premature, but is now preschool-age and has remained healthy. She is still married to her husband Russ.

Neil appeared as a happy child and friend of Peter's in *Seven UP*, but was wandering lonely and homeless in the Highlands at 28. He surprised viewers when he was rediscovered working as a Liberal Democrat councilor in Hackney at the age of 42. At

49, he'd moved to Cumbre in Northwest England and was a Liberal Democrat of his local council, and he is still there in ***56 UP.*** He also notes in ***56 UP*** that *UP Series* viewers assume they know everything about him, which he feels is untrue, and reveals his ambitions as a writer, which have so far gone unrealized. Despite doubts about God and religion expressed in previous *UP* films, ***56 UP*** shows Neil working in his local church.

When farmer's son **Nick** was seven he told the series he wanted to learn about the moon but refused to answer any questions about girls. In *7 Plus Seven* the shy teenager made the same comment. But by *21 UP* Nick had met his first wife and in *35 UP* the couple had married and were living in the United States, where Nick was a professor at a university. By *49 UP* Nick had divorced his first wife but had remarried to Cryss. Nick still lives and teaches science in the States. Nick and fellow participant Suzy became friends over the course of the series and appear together in this film.

Paul, who lived in a children's home as a seven-year-old, emigrated to Australia with his family in his early teens and now has a wife and children. His daughter, Katy, became the first member of his family to go to university. In ***56 UP,*** Paul is still married to Susan, is working at the senior center at which she's also employed and now has five grandchildren.

Peter and Neil were friends growing up in Liverpool. He went to a comprehensive school and earned a history degree from London University. Peter stopped participating in the *UP Series* films after *28 UP* because of viewer responses to political views he expressed in the film but has returned for ***56 UP*** to promote his band, the Good Intentions, which has had some success in recent years. He is married with two teenage children. He left the teaching profession shortly after *28 UP*, studied law and joined the civil service, where his wife also works.

Symon lived in the same children's home as Paul as a child and is the only non-white participant. His father was absent in his life as a child. By *28 UP* he had married and had five children. By *35 UP* he had divorced, but in *42 UP* Simon had remarried to Vienetta, and a four-year-old son, Daniel, but several of his children from his first marriage refused to see him. ***56 UP*** shows that Symon and Vienetta have trained to become foster parents and Symon works near the Heathrow in a freight warehouse.

In *42 UP*, **Sue** was living as a single mom with her son and daughter. The series had seen her marry Billy when she was 24 and give up her job to have her two children. By *35 UP* the couple had divorced and in *42 UP* Sue, who had returned to work, was supporting her family by herself. At the end of the film, Sue revealed she had met a new man, but said, 'it's early days yet.' *49 UP* revealed that Sue and her new man have been together for the last seven years. In ***56 UP***, Sue is still engaged to Glen and has moved up in the ranks of the administrative department of Queen Mary Law School, where she was also working in *49 UP.* She is also involved in community theater.

In *21 UP,* **Suzy** revealed that when she was in her teens she left school and moved to Paris. At several points in the series she spoke about the difficulties in her own childhood and how she hoped to give her children a more stable upbringing than she had. Suzy is still married to Rupert, her husband since *28 UP* .Suzy and fellow participant Nick became friends over the course of the series and appear together in this film.

Eastender **Tony** spoke in *Seven UP* about his ambitions to be a jockey. The series followed him as he saw his dream come true and then gave it all up to be a cabbie. In *42 UP* he showed viewers around the new home he shared with his wife, Debbie, and their three children – but he confessed to cheating on Debbie and she revealed her decision to stand by her husband. He also talked about his ambitions to break into showbusiness with work as an extra and his appearances in shows like *The Bill*. *49 UP* revealed that Tony and Debbie had become proud grandparents and they also showed off their second home in Spain. In ***56 UP*** Tony shows the lot he was planning to develop before the economy turned sour and made it an impossibility. Tony also expresses frustration at the changes in the population of the East End and the high volume of immigration into the UK. Tony and Debbie are still together and live in their London home with several of their children and one of their daughter's children while their daughter works through some emotional issues. Tony is also still a cabbie.

Credits

Directed by	MICHAEL APTED, PAUL ALMOND
Produced by	MICHAEL APTED, CLAIRE LEWIS
Film Editor	KIM HORTON
Executive Producer	ALEXANDER GARDINER
Production Executive	KAREN STOCKTON
Production Managers	HELEN HOUSTON, LAURA MCCOMBIE
Production Secretary	JO LEWIS
Production Co-ordinators	AMY BROWN, CORT KRISTENSEN, JACKI TURNER
Audio Dubbing	TIM COCKERILL, SAM HANDY
Graphics	3 SIXTY MEDIA
Colourist	NEIL PARKER
Online Editors	IAN BROWN, DANIEL WARD
Additional Sound	STEPHEN HORWOOD
Sound	NICK STEER
Music	ANDREW GILLOOLEY, RIK CURTIS, STUART BEDFORD
Additional photography	JASON TRENCH, RUPERT MURRAY
Director of Photography	GEORGE JESSE TURNER
Production Company	ITV STUDIOS LIMITED

http://movies.nytimes.com/2013/01/04/movies/56-up-adds-to-michael-apteds-documentary-series.html

The New York Times The New York Times

MOVIE REVIEW

The British Class Divide, on a Personal Scale

'56 Up' Adds to Michael Apted's Documentary Series

NYT Critics' Pick

By MANOHLA DARGIS

Published: January 3, 2013

Life rushes by so fast, it flickers today and is gone tomorrow. In "56 Up" — the latest installment in Michael Apted's remarkable documentary project that has followed a group of Britons since 1964, starting when they were 7 — entire lifetimes race by with a few edits. One minute, a boy is merrily bobbing along. The next, he is 56 years old, with a wife or an ex, a few children or none, a career, a job or just dim prospects. Rolls of fat girdle his middle and thicken his jowls. He has regrets, but their sting has usually softened, along with everything else.

In a lot of documentaries you might not care that much about this boy and what became of him. But if you have watched any of the previous episodes in Mr. Apted's series, you will care, and deeply, partly because you watched that boy grow up, suffer and triumph in a project that began as a news gimmick and social experiment and turned into a plangent human drama. Conceived as a one-off for a current-affairs program on Granada Television, the first film, "Seven Up!," was a 40-minute look at the lives of 14 children from different backgrounds. Britain was changing, or so went the conventional wisdom, with postwar affluence having led the working class to adopt middle-class attitudes and lifestyles.

In 1963, though, the sociologists John H. Goldthorpe and David Lockwood disputed this widely held "embourgeoisement thesis," arguing that the erosion of social class had not been as great as believed. In its deeply personal fashion, the "Up" series went on to make much the same point by checking in with many of the same boys and girls, men and women, every seven years. Despite some dropouts, the group has remained surprisingly intact. For better and sometimes worse, and even with their

complaints about the series, participants like Tony Walker, who wanted to be a jockey and found his place as a cabby, have become cyclical celebrities. For longtime viewers they have become something more, including mirrors.

It's this mirroring that helps make the series so poignant. As in the earlier movies, Mr. Apted again folds in older material from the ages of 7, 14 and so on, to set the scene and jog memories. The abrupt juxtapositions of epochs can be jarring, unnerving or touching — sometimes all three — as bright-faced children bloom and sometimes fade within seconds. An analogous project in print or even still photographs wouldn't be as powerful, because what gives the "Up" series its punch is not so much its longevity or the human spectacle it offers, but that these are moving images of touchingly vibrant lives at certain moments in time and space. The more you watch, the more the movies transform from mirrors into memory machines, ones that inevitably summon reflections of your own life.

Save for "Seven Up!," filmed in gorgeous black and white, the documentaries are aesthetically unremarkable. Shot in digital, "56 Up" pretty much plays like the earlier movies, with its mix of interviews and location shooting. Every so often you hear someone off screen, presumably Mr. Apted, make a comment, though mostly he lets his choice of what to show — the subjects at work or play, with family or friends — and his editing do his editorializing. In the past he has brought participants together, but he doesn't here, which feels like a missed opportunity. Have the three childhood friends from the East End of London, Jackie Bassett, Lynn Johnson and Sue Sullivan, two of whom have recently endured heart-rendingly bad times, remained in contact? Mr. Apted doesn't say.

With few exceptions and despite potential path-changing milestones like marriages and careers, everyone seems to have remained fairly locked in his or her original social class. At 7, Andrew Brackfield and John Brisby already knew which universities they would or should attend. "We think," John said in "Seven Up!, "I'm going to Cambridge and Trinity Hall," though he landed at Oxford. Like Mr. Brackfield, who did attend Cambridge, Mr. Brisby became a lawyer and still sounds to the manner born, with an accent that evokes old-fashioned news readers and Bond villains. The two hold instructively different views about whether the series

corroborates the first film's thesis about the rigidity of the British class structure, never mind that their lives are strong evidence that little has changed.

Mr. Apted, who was born in 1941, was a researcher at Granada when he helped find the original children for "Seven Up!" By the second installment, "7 Plus Seven," the series had lost its excited punctuation and its first director, Paul Almond. Mr. Apted has ably shepherded the series while also directing fiction films like "Coal Miner's Daughter" and "The World Is Not Enough." After its third chapter, the "Up" series also lost a participant with the withdrawal of Charles Furneaux, who attended the same exclusive school with Andrew and John, at which the 7-year-olds sang "Waltzing Matilda" in Latin. Mr. Furneaux went on to become a documentary filmmaker. There may be a lesson in his departure, although maybe he just didn't like sharing his life.

Why did the rest of them decide to keep going? It's fascinating to listen to the participants mull over the series and their own roles in it. Over the years some have felt misrepresented, aggrieved and at times angry, though usually their complaints have been expressed with British restraint. Mostly, they have voiced an ambivalence that rarely emerges from subjects in documentary film or reality television. Today people expect their 15 seconds, but not these souls. And yet, for all their reservations, they opened their mouths, hearts, homes, veins. They've shown that class is alive and well in Britain, even as the documentaries have also exposed that sharing your life with the public, receiving its love and its criticism, can itself be a profoundly complex leveler.

http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=50138305n

SUNDAY MORNING

Recording life, seven years at a time

January 6, 2013 7:13 AM

Imagine what it would be like to have your whole life, from childhood on, made into a documentary. Lee Cowan talks with director Michael Apted, who has chronicled lives of the same group of British people since they were seven years old through middle age.

[VIDEO SEGMENT ON SITE]

http://www.wnyc.org/shows/lopate/2013/jan/04/56/

WNYC 93.9 fm am 820

The Leonard Lopate Show
"56 Up"

Friday, January 04, 2013

Documentary filmmaker **Michael Apted** talks about the latest in his 7 Up series, "56 Up." Joining him is **Tony Walker**, one of the subjects who has been featured in the films since he was 7 years old.

[AUDIO ON SITE]

http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/moviesnow/la-et-mn-56-up-documentary-review-20130118,0,5807042.story

Los Angeles Times

MOVIES NOW
FILMS: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Review: '56 Up' reveals more about lives long followed

The eighth in Michael Apted's installment in the documentary series that has interviewed members of the same group of British children every seven years since they were young finds most of them participating in the film and discovering life lessons worth sharing.

By Kenneth Turan, Los Angeles Times Film Critic
January 17, 2013 5:05 p.m.

To see "56 Up" is to be reunited with an old friend. Make that 13 old friends, together again for a documentary project the likes of which the world has never seen.

It all started in 1964, when Britain's Granada TV gathered 7-year-old schoolchildren from divergent economic backgrounds and asked them to talk about their dreams, their ambitions, their fears for the future.

That 40-minute program went so well that future directorMichael Apted ("Coal Miner's Daughter," "Gorillas in the Mist"), who was a researcher on the original show, came back to interview everyone seven years later to see what the passage of time had done to their thinking. He's been back every seven years since, making for a remarkable string of eight documentary features that add up to a matchless portrait of our time.

One idea behind the original "Seven Up," inspired by the Jesuit notion of "Give me the child until he is seven and I will give you the man," was to see whether England was still in the grip of a Dickensian class system that doomed the children of the poor to inferior lives.

One message of "56 Up" and in fact the entire series is that personality and resilience trump economic station as a predictor of happiness (though obviously not material comfort). As one of the group pointedly says, "Life is not there to be regretted, life is there to be lived."

Apted has also been the interviewer on all the documentaries, and that continuity has been invaluable in encouraging from-the-heart candor from the participants. They speak to him as if they were talking to an old friend or perhaps to an avuncular therapist they've been going to for decades.

One pleasure of "56 Up" is the ability to continue to eavesdrop on private lives, to see how things have turned out for these individuals as compared to what they hoped for in earlier episodes.

This latest film features a generous selection of footage from all seven previous ones (expertly edited together by Kim Horton), so even a lack of previous knowledge is no barrier to full enjoyment here.

For those looking for life lessons from these stories, two key ones emerge: the significance of family, especially a lasting relationship, for personal happiness, and the importance of education for success in the workplace and the world.

More than previous episodes, "56 Up" deals with the annoyance interviewees feel about how the world has reacted to their stories. Several felt irked that viewers tend to think they know all about them when they really don't, and in point of fact three of the original 14 were irritated enough to leave the series at one time or another, with only one still absent.

Peter, for example, who is newly returned after a 28-year absence, is candid that he is returning now because he is happier and because he wants to publicize the Good Intentions, the band he is now in.

Neil, who was Peter's childhood friend in Liverpool, has had perhaps the most unconventional life path of any of the group. An intense, wary man, he was a homeless wanderer in the Scottish Highlands at age 28. But for the last seven years he's been living in Cumbre in Northwest England and serving with distinction in local government. You never know.

Perhaps the most resilient of "56 Up's" participants are a trio of women — Sue, Lynn and Jackie — who were best friends growing up in London's lower -class East End and have among them weathered all manner of difficulties with enviable unflappability.

"56 Up" saves its best participant for last. That would be fellow East Ender Tony. Determined to be a jockey when he was young (and proud of once being in a race with the great Lester Piggott), Tony couldn't make a career of it and ended up "on the Knowledge" at 21 and a licensed London cabbie at 28.

Proud of the celebrity the "Up" series has given him — he gleefully recounts how a fellow cabbie once ignored American astronaut Buzz Aldrin to him ask for his autograph — Tony's buoyant spirit remains as infectious today as it was at age 7.

To witness Tony's journey from a young man who was contemptuous of women to a 56-year-old who cries on camera when talking about the love he feels for his wife is to understand what makes "56 Up" such a singular film and why it's such a privilege to be able to watch Apted's project as it continues to unfold.

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/06/movies/michael-apted-keeping-up-with-the-up-series.html?pagewanted=1&hpw
The New York Times

They Grow Up, but They Remain a Lifetime Pursuit

By MARY JO MURPHY
Published: January 3, 2013

MICHAEL APTED has done the math: “I figured out that when we do ‘84,’ I’ll be 99.” He’s talking about what would be the 12th installment of his monumental documentary series tracking a group of English schoolchildren from different social spheres at seven-year intervals. What began in 1964 with “7 Up” and no longitudinal ambitions is now at “56 Up” and staring down the actuarial tables.

The signs are there, in the deep-lined face of Mr. Apted, the nearly 72-year-old director of the series. Gravity likes this face. It tugs at the cheeks and chin as he sits for an interview in his office here, framed posters of his movies arrayed on the walls around him. There’s “Coal Miner’s Daughter,” which won an Oscar for Sissy Spacek. And “Gorillas in the Mist,” “Nell” and “Amazing Grace,” as well as his contributions to the Bond and Narnia franchises. His only comedy, “Continental Divide,” starring John Belushi, hangs in the little bathroom opposite the toilet. As many and varied as these films are, it is the “Up” films that have set the unbroken rhythm, punctuating not just their 14 subjects’ lives but the private life and prolific career of this once timid son of a London insurance man turned expat Hollywood workhorse who seems to have little thought of slowing down, despite his contention that “ageism is a bit of an issue” in the industry.

“As long as my marbles stay in order,” he says, “we’ll keep doing it.”

The “we,” this time around, includes 13 of the 14 former 7-year-olds who are defined by sound bites now a half-century old. Loyal viewers can recite them by heart as they’re redeployed with each successive film. “I want to be a jockey when I grow up” is the irrepressible East Ender Tony Walker’s line at 7. “My heart’s desire is to see my daddy, who lives 6,000 miles away,” is the wistful boarding schooler Bruce Balden’s. “I want to be an astronaut, or if I can’t be an astronaut, I think I’ll be a coach driver” belongs to the lively Liverpool lad Neil Hughes. “56 Up” finds Tony deflecting suggestions that he is racist because of his comments about immigrants in his old London neighborhood; Bruce camping out and telling flatulence jokes on a cricket field with his two young sons; and Neil, neither astronaut nor coach driver but the perennial searching soul of the series, quoting philosophy: “I think it was Albert Camus who said that life is what happens while you’re waiting for something else.”

Participation in the “Up” films remains voluntary, although for some you sense that it’s voluntary the way pulling an abscessed tooth is voluntary. There are no contracts, but Mr. Apted has paid his subjects £10,000 to £20,000 (about $16,000 to $33,000), he said, because he views them as partners who should share in the small

rewards of having their ordinary lives sliced open for a world of voyeurs; they are not, after all, Kardashians.
For “56 Up” Peter Davies, Neil’s childhood friend, resurfaces after skipping the last three films. He was scorched by “28 Up,” when he’d been a discontented schoolteacher who’d worn his scorn for Thatcherite Britain on his sleeve. Now he fronts a folk-rock band, the Good Intentions, named Americana act of the year at the British Country Music Awards. He didn’t hesitate to tell Mr. Apted that the reason he finally answered his persistent summons was to promote the band.

Only Charles Furneaux, one of the three upper-class boys, hasn’t returned to squirm in the petri dish that is Mr. Apted’s grand experiment. This rankles the director. Mr. Furneaux, who last appeared in “21 Up,” went on to make documentaries himself. “Someone who lives by the sword I feel should die by the sword,” Mr. Apted says, with a spark of irritation, as he contemplated his longest-term dropout. Mr. Furneaux does not comment publicly on why he left, but Mr. Apted says: “I think we had a very bad time together when he said he wasn’t going to do ‘28 Up.’ I probably behaved badly. I think I swore at him.” He concedes that “probably there’s quite a depth of ill feeling.”

Still, it’s next to astonishing in a group this large that defection has claimed just one and death none. Mr. Apted himself rounded up the children when he was 22, just out of a university and a researcher in Granada Television’s training program. The process was quick and arbitrary, he says. He called on rich and poor schools, as well as a few in between, and asked them to volunteer their brightest and most voluble boys and girls to appear on an episode of the “World in Action” current affairs show. The show would examine the Jesuit maxim “Give me a child until he is 7, and I will show you the man.” There was not even a glimmer of intent then to check up on the man. Or rather the 10 men and 4 women. Mr. Apted says he regrets the shortsightedness of the gender imbalance; many of his feature films tell the stories of singular women forging a rough path, and he cites these later career choices as something of a corrective.

Mr. Apted would not have chosen his own 7-year-old self for the program and might have given the Jesuits a rethink too. His mother was evacuated from London while his father served in the war, so he was born in Aylesbury, a few miles northwest, but by the age of 7 he was living in the middle-class suburban London neighborhood of Ilford. His mother “used to have to walk me to school in case people stole my school hat, as I recall, because I was a bit weedy at 7.” He was, he says, “a very shy, timid child” — not one even he could foresee barking orders to a crew of 900 as he directed his 1999 James Bond film, “The World Is Not Enough.”

“I don’t know if one would have had any clues there,” he says. That goes for the 14-year-old Michael as well. He was attending a good school on scholarship, but “I hadn’t yet had my epiphany about movies.”

He puts that at the age of 16, when he saw Bergman’s “Wild Strawberries.”This might seem apt to the point of pat. That Bergman classic is about an old man looking back over his life — his childhood, his choices, his marriage, what it means to be human — all themes of self-reflection that power the “Up” project. If the names Apted and

Bergman are separated by more than A and B in the film directors pantheon — words like “efficient” and “competent” tend to attach to him more often than “brilliant” or “visionary” — it is this project, begun seven years after “Wild Strawberries,” that puts Mr. Apted in his own sphere. “No one is ever going to do what I’ve done,” he says, and he’s not being immodest, just stating what is fairly certainly the truth. (It’s also fairly certain that no one ever suggested making a Broadway musical of the Bergman film, whereas Marvin Hamlisch once tried to interest Mr. Apted in a musical “Up.”)

Despite his Bergman moment Mr. Apted says he was “clueless about how I would ever get into the business,” so at 21 he was studying law at Cambridge. But Granada opened doors. He filled in for a vacationing director on its long-running soap opera “Coronation Street,” and “that’s the beginning of how I had two careers.”

There is more on the horizon besides the stalking sunset of his signature work. He is looking to make yet another film with a female protagonist — this one about a woman living in the Middle East, where he was last month to pick up a lifetime achievement award from the Dubai International Film Festival. He would also like to return to his TV roots; like others he has noted that some of the best work around is on cable, and he wants a piece of that action.

Mr. Apted points out that he is the only British director of his generation who “actually picked up my bed and walked,” as he answered the siren song of Hollywood, and in this he sees his nearest doppelgänger in the “Up” series as Nick Hitchon, the farm boy who made it to Oxford and then moved to America because that’s where the work was (in his case as a nuclear physicist). “We’ve had the same life,” Mr. Apted says. “We both had the casualty of a marriage en route to that; children to bring up in different societies.” Mr. Hitchon divorced a Briton and married an American, as did Mr. Apted, who is also divorced from his second wife, the screenwriter Dana Stevens. He has a 12-year-old son by his second marriage and two sons from his first, both now in the industry.

Mr. Apted’s first film here, “Coal Miner’s Daughter” (a musical adaptation of it is Broadway bound), was one of several he’s done that tell distinctly American stories. Once he did back-to-back films on the American Indian Movement: “Incident at Oglala” was a documentary and “Thunderheart” a drama. As much as any director around, he toggles between the forms, but when it comes to documentary, including the “Up” series, he says, “I don’t consider it to be any purer form of art than the feature film.”

There is “something bogus about everything — about art.”

He adds that he doesn’t believe objectivity can exist, that “the only pure documentary I know is Andy Warhol filming the Empire State Building for 24 hours.”

It was six and a half. But who’s counting.

A version of this article appeared in print on January 6, 2013, on page AR12 of the New York edition with the headline: They Grow Up, But They Remain A Lifetime Pursuit.

http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/moviesnow/la-et-mn-michael-apted-56-up-conversation-20130120,0,2751718.story

Los Angeles Times

MOVIES NOW
FILMS: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

The Sunday Conversation: Michael Apted keeps 'Up' series up and running

The filmmaker's long-running documentary's latest installment is '56 Up.' He talks about the series as well as his tenure as president at the DGA.

By Irene Lacher

January 19, 2013

Director Michael Apted is known for such diverse films as "Gorillas in the Mist," "Coal Miner's Daughter" and the James Bond romp "The World Is Not Enough," but it's the "Up"series of documentaries following a small group of Britons every seven years, starting at age 7, that carries his most distinctive signature. His latest entry, "56 Up," exploring their lives well into middle age, is now at the Nuart Theatre. And at the DGA Awards on Feb. 2, Apted (British-born and now a citizen of both Britain and the U.S.) is slated to receive the Directors Guild of America's Robert B. Aldrich Award in honor of his tenure as guild president from 2003 to 2009.

What did you discover in your latest installment in the "Up" series?

I discovered that despite the fact that I thought it was going to be depressing, that people would be concerned, disgruntled, wary of the future, [but] the people who found a solid base in life with their families — as opposed to others who put their initiative into careers and moneymaking — there was some payoff for that. And I could relate that in a sense to my own life.

That family matters most?

Not that it necessarily matters most, but it's a fair choice. I grew up with the feeling, at least in my adult years, that you pursued a career or you concentrated on your family. And I chose a career. And I suppose the rewards of that were fairly quick to come, in terms of decades. But those who invested their lives in their family, they had a somewhat later payoff, but this was kind of a manifestation of this generation of the film. In seven years, who knows?

So there will be another installment in seven years?

I hope so, if my marbles are in order.

How old were you when you started as a researcher on the series?

Twenty-two. I'd been at Granada Television out of university for about six months. One of my first on-the-job training [tasks] was to be put in with Paul Almond as a researcher and make

this "World in Action" special program. "World in Action" was a weekly news show, and it was very revolutionary in its early days. Paul Almond was the heavy hitter on "Seven Up" and I was his, as it were, his tea boy. He was busy, so I had to go out and find the children, which I did very quickly. We had three weeks to shoot.

How did you pick the kids?

My assignment was to choose selections from the empowered class and the unempowered class and try to get some geographical variety. I did all the London ones. We weren't particularly interested in the character of the children at that point. It was how they were a product of their class and how that determined their view of the world and their view of their options and each other.

We now know where they ended up. Was it true that people stayed pretty much in the classes they were born into?

Pretty much, yes. I think it would have been different if it started a decade later, but generally, I think those that were empowered, who knew they could plot their lives out, at least the first 20 years of their lives, with school, university and career, did that. And those for whom the options were less clear or more restricted rolled with the punches and stayed within the perimeters of that class.

Did you find any group was any happier than any other?

No, I don't think so. I think that was a very important lesson I learned throughout the decades on the film, that I can't project my version of happiness or success or ambition onto other people.

There were a lot of complaints from the participants. What was their beef and why did they continue anyway?

I think the beefs are not as deeply felt as their loyalty to staying in the film. Their beefs, particularly in "49," were, you can edit this any way you want, which of course is true. But then it's a matter of their trust in me and their trust in my value judgments, and none of them called out particularly because I'd misrepresented them.

There is a kind of residual anger because they found themselves in the middle of this roller coaster, without having any input into whether or not they should be in it. They were yanked out of school at 7 and presumably persuaded when they were 14 by parents and schools to carry on. Of course, it is a tremendous invasion. They have to put their lives up for analysis to a very large audience.

How do you think portraying a life going forward differs from doing it through a retrospect-oscope, which is how most portraits are done?

You truly are in the position where you don't know what's going to happen next. I've become more and more aware that every time I do a new show, I have to blank my mind out and not make it an update from the previous one. I have to try and create a conversation that really reflects their thinking at this moment in time and not think about whether it reflects what they said about themselves in previous generations. That's quite hard to do. I want to keep the "Up" films going because no one's ever done it to the extent that I have, so I want to keep ahead of the game.

Your other most recent project was "Chasing Mavericks," about surfers in Northern California. You took that over from Curtis Hanson.

Yes, I came in about halfway through filming, but when it was clear Curtis wasn't going to return [for health reasons], I stayed throughout the rest of the movie, so I was on it for about a year.

What happened with the star, Gerard Butler? He was reported to have nearly drowned?

He did have an accident toward the end of the shooting. He hadn't done much surfing and we all got a bit overconfident because we hadn't had any accidents and we'd been shooting on and off for some months. It had all gone safely, considering it was incredibly dangerous, these vast waves. He fell off a wave and immediately got hit by a second wave, and he was underwater for about 40 seconds, which must be an eternity when you don't really know where you're going. But they yanked him out and he had to go to hospital. They kept him in for a little bit. It scared the ... out of us all.

You were head of the DGA during a period of great technological change. Did you accomplish what you set out to accomplish?

I did three terms and two negotiations, and the second negotiation really was about a brave new world — the world of new media, where nobody knew what was going on. It's still unclear, but in those early days it was very difficult to know how big it was, how important it was going to be, how quickly the world would change and how much we should hang on to the old world that we knew and how much we should in a sense begin to come to terms with the new world.

A lot of intimate dramas have moved to television.

That's definitely true. Things go in cycles. There was the independent film business for a bit and it got bought up by the majors and imploded, and now a good chunk of the American film industry is alive and well and living on cable.

Actually, the next thing I'm going to do is an episode of "Masters of Sex" for Showtime, which I start in about three weeks.

http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,20665266,00.html

Entertainment Weekly

MOVIE REVIEW

56 Up (2013)

MPAA RATING: UNRATED

Reviewed by Lisa Schwarzbaum | Jan 16, 2013

One of the greatest projects in television history — and, as it turns out, in feature-film history, too — began 49 years ago as a black-and-white TV documentary about the lives of 14 British 7-year-olds first seen enjoying a day at a zoo. Some were posh and some were working-class. Ten were boys and four were girls. (Diversity was not quite as diverse back then: All except the biracial boy named Symon were white.) The documentary team wanted to test the thesis that the random luck of being born into one class or another shapes a British child's future, whether in limitations or opportunities. The team was also inspired by the Jesuit motto "Give me a child until he is 7, and I will give you the man." All 14 children had their futures ahead of them in 1964. What, the voice-over narrator wondered, would England look like in the year 2000?

The program was called *Seven Up!* And every seven years since, for nearly half a century now, filmmaker Michael Apted has returned from his career directing big- and small-screen stuff (including *Coal Miner's Daughter* and episodes of *Rome*) to observe and interview the adults those kids became. (Apted was a researcher on the first installment, directed by Paul Almond, and helped choose the young subjects.) Along the way, he has created a series of nonfiction films as profound as they are straightforward: Here is a chronicle of real human souls evolving in real time, a longitudinal study unique to the medium of moving images — and a documentary masterpiece.

We're now at **56 Up** (released here in theaters), and with each passing calendar leap, the experience of watching has only become more soul-stirring. For those who, like me, have been enjoying the series since the first film, these reunions are both cheering and poignant. We catch up with the upper-class Andrew, Suzy, and John; the East London working-class kids Jackie, Lynn, Sue, and Tony-who-wanted-to-be-a-jockey; the charity-school boys Paul and Symon; and the questing outliers Nick, Peter, Neil, and Bruce. (Charles, another of the posh kids, left the project after *21 Up*. He is, by the way, now a documentary filmmaker.) The shock isn't that time has flown since *49 Up*, but that it hasn't. And yet seven years later, here we are. How have or haven't Sue and Tony and Neil changed? How have I?

The series' accessibility and genius also lie in the invitation that long acquaintanceship isn't necessary to fall under the *Up* spell. With perceptive editing, footage from past episodes enhances Apted's clear-eyed portraits of each middle-aged adult — clips that chronicle but never presume to explain the mysteries of psychological constitution, physical aging, and existential happenstance that make the man. Or woman.

And as a result, each viewer's own experience — mine at my age, yours at your age — contributes as much to the power of the project as the facts of these particular lives themselves.

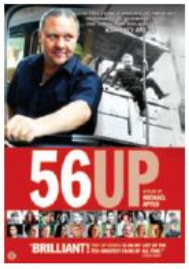
There have been some divorces and remarriages. Tony, who became a London cabbie rather than a jockey, is a grandfather who gives off some of the same pugnacious energy he exuded as a boy; Neil, so open and expressive at 7, has trod an emotionally and mentally precarious path to become the anxious local district councillor he is now. The working-class girls wear their years on their faces in a way the upper-class lot do not. At 56, all these individuals seem to have turned a corner toward greater wisdom and acceptance in the trajectory of their lives. Or maybe they just appear that way to me, who hopes I have done likewise. Maybe a younger or older person would interpret the map differently.

Aside from such singularities as the 1973 TV series *An American Family* and a desultory American imitation of *Seven Up!* in 1991, there has been no such category as "reality television" for most of the 49 years that *Up* has been under way. These days, private citizens treat a camera's omnipresence with nonchalance, acting "real" in front of an anonymous public as a moneymaking opportunity, or perhaps just an exhibitionist kick. Through their generosity in sharing themselves with us, the men and women of *56 Up* are an awe-inducing reminder that real life follows no rules of marketing and promotion. Real life is much bigger than that. **A**

Entertainment WEEKLY

The Top 10 Things We Love This Week

The MUST LIST



9. 56 UP In the eighth installment of Michael Apted's long-view documentary series, the group of British kids we first met in 1964 are now well into middle age, but remain as singularly fascinating as ever. *(Not Rated)*

10 DALLAS The late Larry Hagman's swan song will be appropriately dramatic when the reboot returns Jan. 28. (The TV legend filmed five episodes before his death in November.) Later installments will memorialize his indelibly evil J.R., while the premiere looks at the intrafamily conniving of the younger generation as they battle over control of Ewing Energies. *(TNT, Mondays, 9 p.m.)*

fried cop saga, puzzling over a crucial cold case and—in the Jan. 22 episode—getting in trouble with the FBI. *(FX, Tuesdays, 10 p.m.)*

MUST LIST APP!
You can sample and download songs, buy movie tickets, see videos, and more with EW's Must List iPad and IPhone app, available at iTunes.

A/GETTY IMAGES; JUSTIFIED: PRASHANT GUPTA/FX; THE STAIRCASE: SUNDANCE CHANNEL; DALLAS: SKIP BOLEN/TNT

http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/cinema/2013/01/28/130128crci_cinema_denby

THE NEW YORKER

THE CURRENT CINEMA

STIFF UPPER LIPS

"56 Up" and "The Impossible."

BY DAVID DENBY
JANUARY 28, 2013

THE CURRENT CINEMA reviews of "56 Up" and "The Impossible." In 1964, Michael Apted, a young researcher at Britain's Granada Television, helped assemble a group of seven-year-old children (ten boys and four girls, an imbalance that he subsequently regretted) for a single half-hour program. It was called "Seven Up." Wriggling in their chairs, twisting their hands, and screwing up their mouths, the children, who were from all classes of society, answered such blunt questions as: What would they do when they grew up? Did they have girlfriends or boyfriends? The questions managed to set up the principal concerns—class, career, love—of what proved to be an enduring film series. Forty-nine years after the original show, "56 Up" brings both relief and dismay. Some in the group have taken on new husbands or wives, or new jobs; the working-class characters have taken on weight, too. The loss of youthful beauty—the thickening of necks, the rounding of bellies, the wrinkles—is upsetting, but the added weight has a kind of reassuring fullness, like moss growing on the trunk of an aging tree. Much of "56 Up," like the earlier films, is devoted to recapitulation: we see rapid shots of each man and woman at different stages, a steady march toward maturity and, now, toward mortality. Inevitably, one looks in the mirror afterward and thinks, What have I lost? What have I gained? And at what cost? In "The Impossible," at a fancy beach resort in Thailand, birds take off, the ocean roars, windowpanes rattle, two trees collapse, and then, without further warning, water rears up and pours over the cabanas, and it keeps on coming. We watch people, buildings, furniture, cars, toys, plants, all the living and material life of the resort get pulled into a swirling, tangled mess and randomly deposited for miles inland. "The Impossible" offers an impressive cinematic realization of the 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean. The Spanish director Juan Antonio Bayona got the essential thing right: in a tsunami, the distinction between one object and another dissolves. It is nature's realization of chaos. With Naomi Watts as a tough mother of three.

http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/culture/2013/01/what-56-up-reveals.html

THE NEW YORKER

CULTURE DESK

Notes on arts and entertainment.

January 9, 2013

WHAT “56 UP” REVEALS

Posted by *Rebecca Mead*

The other night, I spent two and a half hours in the company of a group of people I’ve known and cared about for most of my life: the dozen or so subjects of Michael Apted’s landmark “7 Up” documentary series. The series began in 1964, with what was intended to be a one-off documentary about the disparate lives of British seven-years-olds from different economic backgrounds. They included a working-class schoolgirl whose ambition extended to working at Woolworths; a junior toff from a prep school who read the *Financial Times* and anticipated with equanimity his eventual admission to Cambridge; and an irresistible lad from the suburbs of Liverpool who aspired to be an astronaut or, failing that, a bus driver. Apted, who worked as a researcher on that first film when he was in his early twenties, had the bright idea, seven years later, of revisiting the subjects; he’s been back to check in on them every seven years since. The eighth, and most recent, installment, “56 Up,” was shown on British television last year, and is now running at the I.F.C. Center.

I’ve forgotten when I first encountered the series, though it was probably the broadcast of “21 Up,” which aired on British television in 1977, when I was ten. I haven’t missed an episode since, and I’ve watched most of them—including the earlier ones—two or three times—often enough so that certain phrases and scenes stay with me, like familiar lines of poetry or passages from a favorite novel. The plaintive response of seven-year-old Paul, a worried boarder at a grim-looking charity school, to a question about whether he wants to get married eventually has, in my house, become shorthand for the tragicomic trials of domestic relations.

And when twenty-one-year-old Tony, the working-class would-be jockey turned taxi-driver, declares to Apted, “All I understand is dogs, prices, girls, knowledge, roads, streets, squares, mum and dad, and love. That’s all I understand; that’s all I want to understand,” it doesn’t just sound a bit like Keats; it makes as much sense, in its own way.

The age gap between me and the subjects of the program—once enormous—has diminished. Fifty-six doesn’t seem quite far enough off these days. But I have always regarded the characters on the “Up” series as a monitory advance team, like older siblings, forever one step ahead of me on the path through adolescence, the onset of adulthood, and, now, the long, narrowing years of middle age. These days, I’m the mother of a seven-year-old, and I see the series in light of my son’s own unimaginable future, catching glimpses of him in the children on the screen, and hoping for his growing happiness as I’ve hoped, sometimes seemingly in vain, for theirs.

The series began with a political agenda. Taking the Jesuit maxim “Give me a boy until he is seven, and I will give you the man,” it suggested that the prospects of the participants were determined by the class into which they were born. To a certain extent, this turned out to be true, particularly for those participants belonging to the social and educational élite. John, the prep-school boy, became a barrister, while his classmate Andrew became a solicitor. (The third child from their privileged group, Charles, dropped out of the series after appearing as a restive malcontent on “21 Up.” Charles eventually became a documentary filmmaker, and I can’t be the only viewer to fantasize about the film he could make, if he wanted to, about participating in Apted’s experiment.)

Less predictable were the fates of the working-class and middle-class characters. Lynn, who thought she’d work at Woolworths, established a career as a children’s librarian, while her classmate Sue became a university administrator, despite never having been near a university—or even attending grammar school. After the first two episodes, no viewer could have anticipated that Neil, the charismatic would-be astronaut, would develop chronic mental-health problems by twenty-one, or that, by twenty-eight, he would be homeless. Nor could viewers have predicted the dignified and moving way in which he has rebuilt his life in the decades since. Neil’s illness—a gift to Apted, if a trial to Neil—shows the limitations of the original show’s simplistic sociopolitical premise, and it underscores the series’ actual accomplishment: revealing the gradual development of ordinary lives in all their

extraordinary complexity. As my husband put it, after we left the theatre the other night, the series began like Zola, but, half a century in, it touches Proust.

The series has been described as a precursor to reality television, but its participants were too young to give reliable consent at the outset, and they did not seek celebrity. Most, if not all, seem to regard their participation—permitting viewers to see their lives, judge their accomplishments, and witness their insecurities and failures—as a sacrifice for the greater good. No one watching is likely to envy them their calling. But the series also obliquely reveals another evolution, that of Apted himself. In episodes from the seventies and eighties, his questions about political conditions in England sometimes seem crudely ideological. He can be unbearably patronizing toward his subjects, particularly the working-class women, while he sets his more affluent participants up to look ludicrous, as in a scene showing John foxhunting at twenty-one.

Apted's subjects were less willing to be subjected as they grew older, and Apted, like an author of a realist novel whose invented characters start to make their own demands upon the direction of his plot, has been obliged to bend the series' conceit to his participants' reality. In "35 Up," it was disclosed that John is descended from the first Prime Minister of Bulgaria and has strong ties to that struggling country. In "56 Up," he reveals that he was orphaned at nine; brought up by a single working mother, he went to Oxford on a scholarship. None of these facts negate the foxhunting, but they do demand a more nuanced interpretation of John's fogeyish embrace of the pursuits of the English landed gentry. To his credit, Apted has shown participants arguing back against the show's premise and against his own prejudices. One of the most exhilarating moments in the series occurs in "49 Up," when Jackie, an unemployed, single mother of three who grew up in the East End of London, rounds on Apted, castigating him for his decades of underestimating her. Apted's implied humility is ultimately, if belatedly, Jackie's vindication.

Apted has said that the subject with whom he most closely identifies is Nick, the precocious farm boy who goes to Oxford and thereafter moves to America with dreams of making an advance in nuclear physics, only to abandon his research and become a university professor. Apted left England for Hollywood and, like Nick, married and divorced and remarried. But the story of intelligent, ambitious, thoughtful Nick is a story about failed aspiration and the

dawning, mortal recognition of limitation. While apparently content—or at least not discontent—with his work and his second marriage, Nick has not done what he once meant to do. I wonder whether Apted—who, beyond the singular accomplishment of the "Up" series, has made films that have been successful, workmanlike, and unremarkable—feels anything of Nick's sense of resignation, too. And this would be the point to acknowledge that, having moved from a provincial English town to America by way of Oxford, I feel my own painful kinship with Nick, who, in "56 Up," articulates the loss experienced after self-imposed exile: the sense of distance from the beloved landscape of one's birth; the remaining visits, so few as to be counted on one hand, that will be made back home to one's elderly parents in decline.

It's Nick who, in "56 Up," best sums up Apted's achievement. The self he sees represented on the screen, changing and growing over time, isn't him, exactly, he suggests. His story, like that of any individual, is too broad to convey with a twenty-minute segment every seven years. But, Nick says, it's a portrait of *someone*. "It's a picture of everyman," he says. "It's how a person—any person—how they change." He's right, of course. This is a series about us as much as it is a series about the individual fates of the children plucked from their classrooms in the early sixties. Apted's achievement, it turns out, has been quite different from that which the project originally proposed. Rather than revealing the pressures of exterior social forces, the series shows the gradual inner development of empathy and sympathy—on the part of its participants and on the part of its maker. It demands the same enlarging sympathy from its audience. It's strenuous viewing. It insists that we care, deeply, as we watch Apted and his subjects grow up, and as we follow them down.

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/07/booming/56-up-shows-generations-commitment-to-family.html?_r=1&

The New York Times

OUR GENERATION

Taking Family Seriously in 'Up' Series

By MICHAEL WINERIP

Published: January 7, 2013

On Sunday I went to see the film "56 Up." It's the latest installment of the remarkable British documentary project that in 1964 began chronicling the lives of several 7-year-olds from a variety of economic backgrounds and has re-interviewed them every seven years since.

As the title suggests, they are now 56.

The intent of the director, Michael Apted, was to explore whether the economic class that the 14 were born into would influence their success in life. The film, Mr. Apted has said, was meant as a test of the Jesuit maxim: "Give me the child until he is 7 and I will show you the man."

And while the documentary seems to focus mainly on social class in Britain, I was surprised by how much it had to say about one of the best qualities of our generation: our commitment to our children.

Would children from the rich families stay rich and the poor stay poor?

In the first installment, 7-year-old Paul Kligerman, who grew up in a children's home, asks the interviewer, "What does 'university' mean?"

Meanwhile, 7-year-old Andrew Brackfield, who was attending a private pre-preparatory school, explains that he enjoys reading The Financial Times and plans to attend Trinity College at Cambridge University.

Did class matter? The short answer is yes; it was a major influence in the 14 lives. Mr. Kligerman held several jobs as a laborer and is now a handyman at a retirement village; Mr. Brackfield is a well-to-do lawyer.

Tony Walker grew up in a housing development in London's working class East End and at age 7 wanted to be a cab driver.

At 56 he is.

John Brisby, who at 7 predicted he'd go to Cambridge University, actually attended Oxford and became a lawyer with houses in London and out in the country.

I wasn't too surprised by these developments, having seen most of the earlier installments.

But what was striking this time is how many of the East End kids rose from working to middle class — a defining experience for the boomer generation, in England as well as here.

Mr. Walker, the taxi driver, bought his own cab at age 28 and by "56 Up" owns a home in London and a vacation house in a seaside community on the coast of Spain.

Sue Davis, another East Ender who did not go to college and was a single mother, went on to become the top administrator at a law school in London.

Symon Basterfield grew up in the same state home as Mr. Kligerman. Now, he and his wife have solid jobs (he's a forklift operator) and a nice home, and care for foster children.

The economies in both England and the United States have expanded so much since "Seven Up!" that by "56 Up," it's clear that almost everyone has been upwardly mobile.

About half have been divorced, but what comes through more strongly is that almost all, regardless of class, regardless of whether they've been married 30 years or are single parents, have made their children, grandchildren and families one of the top priorities of their lives.

Bruce Bladen, an Oxford graduate teaching math at a prestigious prep school, tells the interviewer that he had no relationship with his father, a businessman who spent much of the boy's childhood away in Zimbabwe. Mr. Bladen, on the other hand, is seen camping out with his two young sons. The three, crowded together in a tent, can be heard joking and laughing in the dark.

This, I believe, will be one of the most important legacies of our generation, the willingness to put children and family first.

The most touching of the characters for me — and the only one without a family — is Neil Hughes, a beautiful, precocious child at 7 and 14 who is homeless by 28.

Mr. Hughes's problem is not class or politics, it is mental illness. He describes having to drop out of college after a nervous breakdown and not wanting to have children because it would be unfair to pass his genes on to anyone.

Despite a very hard life, much of it on the dole, he has lived a purposeful life, becoming a town councilman in Cumbria and a lay leader of his church. He shows the interviewer a public bathroom he is proud of getting built in a local park. When

asked what makes him feel good, he says he supposes he's most happy when he's not aware of it, like walking across the fields absorbed in conversation with a friend.

Perhaps because I'm about as old as the subjects, I found seeing how much they'd aged disheartening. They had put on weight, particularly the women; to my eye, the men had aged better.

Most heartening, on the other hand, were the scenes of the men from state homes and the single mothers in what appeared to be pleasant suburban settings, surrounded by children and grandchildren who clearly loved them dearly.

At the showing I attended at the IFC Center in Manhattan, Mr. Apted, the director, took questions from the audience after the film. Asked what conclusions he'd drawn from the project, he said little about the strictures of class in society, which, he noted, had eased considerably during the 50 years of filming.

"What struck me," he said, "is how valuable the family is. At 56, for people who put energy into families, there was a big payback."

http://amanpour.blogs.cnn.com/2013/01/08/growing-up-on-camera/

Growing up on camera

January 8th, 2013

[VIDEO ON SITE]

By Samuel Burke, CNN

For half a century, British filmmaker Michael Apted has been conducting one of the world's greatest sociological experiments on film.

He has chronicled and recorded the lives of ordinary people who come from sharply different ends of the British class spectrum.

He started filming the “Up” series when the characters were seven years old, and he has revisited them every seven years since.

Apted was a young researcher when he started working on the project, which he said was never meant to last this long.

“It was a one-off. It was just a quick snapshot of England in 1963-1964 to see whether the English class system was alive and well,” he said in an interview with CNN’s Christiane Amanpour.

The series took on a life of its own, becoming a cultural phenomenon. “56 Up,” just released in the United States, is the eighth installment in the series.

Apted said that when he chose the young characters he was not particularly interested in their personalities – there was no time to be selective.

“If I was going to do it now, I'm sure I'd vet them and audition them,” Apted said. However, he believes that all of the people in the series turned out to be compelling characters, proving that everyone has a story to tell.

As the children have grown up it has been increasingly difficult to get them to return every seven years. Some of the participants characters became more reluctant as they became more recognizable to the public. Others were dissatisfied with the fact that seven years of their life was compressed into less than 20 minutes on film.

At one point a participant, Suzy, was adamant that she would not return to the series. But upon forming an email relationship with one of the other subjects in the film, Nick, she proposed that the two sit down for the next interviews together.

The filmmaker had to accept their proposal.

“I suppose I have this ridiculous sense of loyalty to it, even though I hate it,” Suzy told Apted in the latest series.

“I think [Suzy is] wonderful. And it's been a real pressure on me to try and keep her in the film, because she never liked doing it. And she's very difficult to interview,” Apted said. “But she's incredibly valuable in the film, because she's a middle class girl; the rest of the women tend to be working class girls. So she's very valuable to me.

Apted does not mind that the participants have exerted themselves more in the how they are filmed as the series has matured.

“They own it more,” he said. “And to me, that's great. So they tell me what they want to do rather than me telling them and since it's about them – that's good.”

The highs and lows of the characters lives have been chronicled in often gut-wrenching moments on the screen. At seven years old, a young, smiling boy named Neil looked at the camera and said that he never wanted to have kids because they make a mess in the house. But decades later a clearly anxious Neil said he still does not want to have children, but this time he for very different reasons.

“Children inherit something from their parents and even if my wife were the most high-spirited and ordinary and normal of people, the child would still stand a very fair chance of being not totally full of happiness, because of what he or she will have inherited from me,” Neil said looking down.

Apted says that Neil was the “roller coaster” in the series. By 21, Neil was homeless and Apted wondered if he would ever see him again.

“There is a medical issue with him,” Apted said, “But he's always refused to confront that.”

Neil’s life made a positive turn, and the series chronicles his current life as a church deacon and a local politician in his neighborhood in northwest England.

As many aspects of the characters’ lives changed throughout the series, Apted remained one of the constants.

“I think they would call me a therapist,” Apted said. “But as we got older, we became collegial. And by now we’re equals as it were. So our relationship has changed: the dynamic in the interviews has changed. It's got much more intimate, much more emotional. Like life, the whole series is a very fast-moving thing.”

CNN’s Meredith Milstein produced this piece for television, CNN’s Ana Bickford served as Editorial Producer.

http://andrewsullivan.thedailybeast.com/2013/01/from-class-to-fame-or-reality-stars-without-the-endorsements.html

Life-Long Reality Stars

7 Jan 2013

Tasha Robinson is struck by how Michael Apted's revolutionary documentary series, tracking British children from age 7 to 56, has evolved. As the program has advanced, publicity features more prominently:

> Several of them express regret over artistic or political careers that never coalesced, particularly Neil Hughes, a periodically homeless, perpetually desperate-seeming district-council representative who complains that he just wants to be a writer, but that even the documentary series hasn't sparked interest in his work. (This may come as bad news to interviewee Peter Davies, who returns to the series after skipping the last three films, and openly states that he's doing it to draw attention to his latest band.)

Her takeaway:

> Part of Apted's focus on the everyday seems to be an attempt to get at relatable, universal parallels—the similar concerns and the core values of life. ... But the piercing scrutiny probably has its own chilling effect, particularly as the rise of reality television has taught a generation the importance of self-mythologizing by staying calm, cautious, and self-aware in front of cameras. And it's periodically worth wondering whether some of *56 Up*'s expressions of contentment and lack of regret are just the subjects playing to the cameras, knowing their life choices will be scrutinized and analyzed, not just in the moment, but by generations of filmgoers to come.

The NYT interview with director Apted is definitely worth a read. Bilge Ebiri's take:

> The film misses out on intimacy, which could do more to reveal these people as individuals, for the sake of charting a broader trajectory. This is more social anthropology than psychology. *56 Up* isn't concerned so much with opening up individual lives as it is with showing us how the journey of an ordinary life — or over a dozen ordinary lives — can offer insights into our own, and into society.

And that was far more emphatically the case when the project was started: it was designed as an exploration into the British class system. My view, having watched almost every one, is that the individual stories eventually trumped the sociological ambition of the series. Maybe that has now come full circle, like so many of the lives in the film itself.

http://www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/tv-movies/movie-review-56up-article-1.1232332

DAILY NEWS

TV & MOVIES

Movie review: '56Up'

Michael Apted finds the stories of a lifetime with his latest 'Up' installment

Joe Neumaier

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

★★★★★

THURSDAY, JANUARY 3, 2013, 2:06 PM

Fans of the BBC's "7Up" documentary project — which has followed a group of Englishmen and women since 1964, when they were 7 — can be excused for approaching each entry with hesitation. What's occurred that warrants a new visit?

The answer, always, is plenty, and how this extraordinary series chronicles, every seven years, the living of ordinary lives is mesmerizing. "56Up," its eighth edition (edited, as earlier films were, from a week of British TV programs), sees its subjects' touchingly human experiences tinged with a bittersweet feeling as they arrive at the half-century mark.

Yet viewers have the pleasure of being reintroduced to them, seeing how they've changed — or stayed the same. We meet their spouses, kids and grandchildren, see them work and play. Some, like Paul, Bruce and Andrew, are content in middle-class or well-off domesticity. John is a barrister, while Sue shares her financial hardship. Once-feisty Peter, who opted out after "28 Up," is back as a mellow musician.

Nick and Suzy wryly mull the "Truman Show"-like aspect of being on a show that's made them stars just for being themselves.

Then there's Neil, the Liverpudlian lost soul who's been the series' haunted conscience since even before this thoughtful, nervous man, who once dreamed of Oxford, was seen enduring tough times in "28Up" and "35Up."

"I wanted to be a person of importance," Neil states. At 56, he's a local politician in his small Northern England community, yet still tortured by his connection to a show that's documented his often painful life. He confronts the series longtime director, Michael Apted — unseen but heard often — and chafes at what the show has and hasn't wrought. Then his need for connection emerges, and it's moving.

In contrast to Neil are: Symon, raised in a children's home in the late 1950s; Lynn, who loses her longtime job as a librarian with grace; and Tony, a rough-hewn East End cabbie. They are people whose journeys to middle age have also brought heartbreak, but whose tiny achievements are quietly epic.

The same is true of "56Up," as it shows that life is what happens when you're busy making other plans. And how, in case we forget, every age can predict the next.

http://nymag.com/listings/movie/56-up/

NEW YORK MOVIES

56 Up

Critics' Pick

Review

Apted's monumental documentary series— revisiting the same group of Brits every seven years from childhood on—has now reached that stage where the characters' touching ambitions have now been fully thwarted, sidetracked, or fulfilled. The cascade of years remains as emotionally powerful as ever, even though the tone has become more reflective and political.

http://gawker.com/5974562/the-up-documentary-series-is-the-anti+reality-tv

The *Up* Documentary Series Is the Anti-Reality TV

Rich Juzwiak

If Michael Apted's *Up* series of documentaries plays like the older, more relaxed brother of reality TV, it's because that's basically what it is. Launched in 1964 as a one-off special of interviews with 7-year-olds in *Seven Up* by director Paul Almond, the film surveyed 14 kids of various economic backgrounds to explore England's class system (it was based on the repeatedly invoked Jesuit motto "Give me a child until he is seven and I will give you the man"). Apted, who helped cast that film, then took over and has returned to its subjects every seven years to document their lives over time. Though the films are still inherently political, what emerged was less of an economic survey and more one of humanity. Reality TV is often referred to as a sociological experiment, but the *Up* series is as bona fide of a longitudinal study as pop culture has ever offered.

56 Up, the series' eighth film and most recent entry, features all but one of the people interviewed in the first film. It aired last year in England and opened last week in America. While you feel the project's prescience – our cultural ideal that, as Apted put it to me last week in the First Run Features office, "every life is worth sharing" – the film plays vastly different than what you'd expect from reality TV. It's almost two and a half hours of soft-spoken, 56-year-old British people describing their quiet existences which, in most cases, seek to avoid drama as opposed to reveling in it. Take Jackie, who describes a string of familial deaths she's endured since *49 Up*, and whose mother and ex-husband have since been diagnosed with cancer. She is without a partner, suffering from rheumatoid arthritis and her benefits have been taken away, forcing her to rely on her sons for support. And yet the tone of her segment is as upbeat as the rest. She likes her life, she says. We see her meeting men. She is, in fact, here to make friends.

The pacing of all of these films is perhaps the sharpest contrast with modern reality's sensibility. Each subject gets a little over 10 minutes to update us on what would be mostly unremarkable lives were they not being remarked on by one of the greatest undertakings in the history of documentary filmmaking. Most of them are, at this point, settled into gentle domesticity. There is no underlining music or apparent

sensationalizing, and the segments' effects can be as soothing and banal sitting with your mom's kindly older neighbors. *Up*'s deliberateness runs counter to the short-attention-span baiting that is de rigueur in today's pop culture.

"Whenever I do one of these, there's always new management at [the films' production company] Granada Television and they say, 'You have to put music on it, you've gotta do this,' and I say no," said Apted, who's also directed more traditional Hollywood fare like *Gorillas in the Mist* and the 1999 Bond entry *The World Is Not Enough*. "I've always been a square about it because of the big thing I've got, which is to be able to counterpoint the generations — my big card was always that people's faces changing over the decades would be the shocker. When you get to eight, which is where I am now, there's got to be such a straightforward style to it. I'm giving the audience enough to worry about – figuring out where the fuck we are – without having them worry about new styles. I've always kept the rhythm and style the same so I can meld them all together."

I asked Apted if he felt at all responsible for reality TV, and while he conceded that you can see its roots in the manner that the *Up* series has "celebrated ordinary life," he says he thinks reality "would have happened anyway," especially as so much of its presence is based on economics (reality shows are, in short, cheap to put up). But the functions of his medium and reality TV are also at odds.

"Reality puts [its subjects] in situations they aren't used to and see how they respond to it, which can be illuminating but it can also be very cruel," he explained. "Whereas with a documentary, what you're trying to do is express as truthfully as you can, the moments that you're meeting with, the situations people are in. You're trying to express their frame of reference, not extract it form them."

The extraction is palpable, too – unlike the talking-head, "confessional" segments of reality TV that seem driven by the ids and wills of its subjects but are the results of interviews with producers, Apted's guiding hand is never less than apparent. You hear him conversing with his subjects, giving his films what he refers to as a "transparency" that conflicts with the "spontaneity" of reality TV (which itself is often guided, at least to a point).

The transparency extends to the treatment of the production. Whereas referring to "this show" is a general no-no in reality TV, Apted includes footage of his subjects discussing the impact of appearing in a series of documentaries all of their lives. They are often critical of the *Up* series. Suzy, one of the most naturally eccentric personalities who has matured into a lovely and pleasant woman, says in *56 Up* that she "hates" the films and likens showing up to participate every seven years to "seeing through a bad book." We watch Nick balking at his portrayal, saying what is seen in the documentaries is "not an absolute accurate picture of me, but it's a picture of somebody."

"I think they make good points," says Apted on including critiques of his movies within his movies. "They're answerable points, but they're good points...[The subjects are] not so angry that they fuck off and never come back."

I wondered why they come back, when so many of them (probably around half in *56 Up*) voice disdain for their participation.

"I think we're all in this together and they see some value in it," Apted told me. "It is well received. It's not brain surgery, but in the spectrum of television documentaries, it's well regarded and they're part of it. The older they get, the more they realize it and they have a certain respect for it."

Also, he has started paying them. He won't say how much, but he described the fee as "not bad." It was enough that I knew they wouldn't want to turn it down," he added.

Subject Tony, a former aspiring jockey turned cab driver, was also in town last week and he told me he saw the value in the series as a document.

"I've often said that when I'm gone, it will be a testament to my life," he said. "My kids can press the video recorder button and see their dad, their grandfather, their great-grandfather."

Tony is one of the ones who likes the films, unlike the aforementioned Nick, who in addition to criticizing the films in *56 Up*, also told *The Independent* last year, "I've learnt that the stupider the thing I say, the more likely it is to get in. You're asked to discuss every intimate part of your life. You feel like you're just a specimen pinned on the board. It's totally dehumanizing." Apted told me the article left him "gobsmacked." I wondered, if Nick's comments, especially the "picture of somebody" one, underlined the impossibility of Apted's task.

"Any time you're condensing a life, you know it's going to be some version of life," he said. "Some immense distillation of life. And then it's just down to me and my sense of taste and responsibility. It's so self-evident that it's not life that it's not even worth thinking about. It's a view of a tiny part of life. It's a snapshot of when I visit them every seven years. God knows what happens in the other 6 years and 363 days when I'm not with them. If you break it down to what it is, it's sort of ridiculous, but that doesn't make it irrelevant, unimportant or trivial. It's what anyone has to do when they're communicating anything about other people."

http://filmmakermagazine.com/62075-the-up-films-the-speed-of-life/

FILMMAKER

The *Up* Films: The Speed of Life

by David Licata on Jan 8, 2013

"If one were to watch all of them, god forbid at one sitting, but over a period of time, how different they'd all be…" Michael Apted on the *Up* Series, from the director commentary of *42 Up*.

It begins in grainy black and white. A rambunctious boy runs in front of a brick wall, another walks through the foggy, rainy English countryside, three girls in a playground descend a slide side by side by side toward the camera. "In 1964," a buttery, avuncular English voice-over begins, "Granada Television brought together a group of seven year olds, from all over the country and from all walks of life. They talked about their dreams, their ambitions and their fears for the future … we have followed their lives every seven years. They are now 56."

Eight films with an average running time of 106 minutes, or one film with a total running time of 14 hours and 8 minutes. Forty-nine years in the making and still incomplete. What would it be like to experience all of the *Up* films, and in a cinematic sense all of those years, within 24 hours? The point was not to take an endurance test, but to experience what captured time, 49 years of it, was like and what insights might be gleaned from viewing it this way.

But first, some history. When Granada Television aired *Seven Up!*in 1964, it had a very specific agenda. This one-off, 30 minute television program was intended to show that despite England's cultural loosening up (the Beatles and Rolling Stones, Mary Quant and Twiggy, *A Hard Day's Night* and *Goldfinger*) the class system was still very much in place. Its premise, a permutation of a Jesuit aphorism, appears in every film: "Give me the child until he is seven and I will give you the man." The liberal-minded Granada TV took this to be a socio-economic truth. The children of working class East Enders would become working class East Enders, the posh children would inherit the posh world of their parents. Granada chose 14 children but didn't do such a great job of representing England's demographic: Ten boys and four girls; six from the lower class, three from the middle class, five from the upper class.

Working as a researcher on *Seven Up!* was Michael Apted, 21 years old and straight out of college. This was his first job. Apted would direct every subsequent *Up* film and, though he has also directed blockbuster narrative films (*Coal Miner's Daughter, Gorillas in the Mist, The World Is*

Not Enough, The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of Down Treader), the *Up* series is, he has said, the most important work he'll ever do. It is his life's work.

The children in *Seven Up!* are charming, adorable, sad, precocious. They say incredibly cute things about the opposite sex and incredibly telling things about the social environment they're growing up in, such as, "What does university mean?" from a boy in an orphanage, "I'm going to work in Woolworth's" from and East End girl, and "I read *the Financial Times*" from a boy attending an exclusive school. The world we are seeing is black and white, and for viewers who are contemporaries of the "Uppers," it is a nostalgia trip. These seemed like simpler times. Blasting a rocket into space was a marvel and many little boys wanted to be astronauts. Two of these English boys did.

Seven Up! and *7 Plus Seven* (they hadn't committed to "Up" at that point) are the shortest films (together they run 92 minutes) and are watchable back to back without a break. We don't even need to get up from our seat to change the DVD–since they're on the same disc we simply go to the menu and select play with our remote. The remote as we know it didn't exist when either of these films first aired. That could be said of thousands of films, of course, but more than any other film the *Up* series has a way of repeatedly bringing to mind the leaps and bounds made in technology, and specifically cinematic technology, over the last 50 years.

7 Plus Seven hit on the idea of using the past film to remind the viewer of the subject's background, schooling, and ambition, and using the new footage to catch to us up. For example, Tony, that rambunctious seven-year-old boy tells us, "I want to be a jockey when I grow up!" When he's 14 we see if that dream is on the road to being fulfilled or if it has vanished. Seen every seven, these clips remind us of their past ambitions, triumphs, setbacks, and failures; they enables us to follow their lives. They are necessary if each film is to stand on its own, which each does. These clips also act as something like a highlight real. But they can also have a recurring dream quality, such as when we see 14-year-old Suzy sitting on the grass in a beautiful Scottish garden on a beautiful sunny day. She sits in the foreground and tells us about how she spends her free time. The dream becomes nightmarish when her dog, in the background, chases, captures, and kills a rabbit.
Apted estimates that 20% of each film after *Seven Up!* is comprised of footage from the previous films. So there is repetition, but the films, even watched this way, are not repetitious. There is a mind-boggling amount of information in these films, and the repeated clips are an invitation to look and listen more closely, to analyze and draw comparisons on all sorts of levels. In *7 Plus Seven* Symon is interviewed in a kitchen. We'll see him in that same kitchen in *21 Up*, with that same wall behind him, though the wallpaper will be different. Symon, it will turn out, is one of the least upwardly mobile of the group.

At seven, Tony, an impish East Ender says “Is it important to fight? Yes!” When we saw this the first time we were taken with his words and accent. The second time with his frenetic delivery. The third time how the frame barely contains him. In *28 Up*, we might notice that his sweater, possibly a hand me down, is slightly unraveling at the left shoulder. Later on in this film we will see Neil, the Liverpool boy who danced and skipped at seven and wanted to be an astronaut or a tour guide, slip deeper and deeper into mental illness. He is homeless at 28, finding shelter in a trailer in a remote part of England, a place that looks like the end of the world, and fighting to keep his sanity. His coat has a large tear at the upper right shoulder. Tony’s unraveling sweater at seven makes us smile and think of harmless schoolyard scuffles; it’s a bit endearing. That awareness heightens the sadness we feel when we notice adult Neil’s tattered coat. Neil’s clothes tell us about the hardness of his life, they are a symbol of the inner fights he engages with daily. We make this poetic connection because we have been given the time and opportunity (the repetition) to study the images flickering before our eyes and then reflect on them.

Each film has its own overriding theme. *21 Up* is all about the excitement and uncertainty of entering adulthood. *28 Up* is about the radical transformation many of us undergo, from carefree and often clueless college students to one half of a couple, perhaps even parenthood. *35 Up* finds many of the subjects struggling. Marriages are shaky, bodies are falling apart, and a few are grieving the loss of a parent. *35 Up* is a sad, intense film but one that is also rich and fulfilling. Those grieving are on the verge of tears, and often bring us to tears, especially if we have lived through that kind of loss. When it’s over, we think this is a good point to take a break from watching. Drifting off to sleep, we wondered if these people will show up in our dreams. They don’t.

42 and Beyond

As the first cup of morning coffee goes down, we reflect on time. Apted has made everyone wait 7 years between *Up* films, and here we’ve gone and subverted that. In our seven-plus hours of viewing the night before (not including the brief breaks taken between films for stretching and sustenance), we watched 28 years flit before our eyes. All of those hours, all of those years, gone forever. But a few snapshots have been captured here.

42 Up, the last *Up* film shot on celluloid, begins with the irrepressible Tony and his wife, Debbie, seated at the kitchen table discussing Tony’s infidelity. Witnessing this is rough stuff. Debbie smugly tells us that she caught him cheating and Tony tries to be upfront and to evade at the same time. This is perhaps*Up*’s most sensational scene, and it occurs to us that even in this instance, what separates the *Up* films from reality television is the lack of the over-top moment. The outburst of anger or excitement doesn’t happen here. Instead, the subjects reflect on the last seven years. Outbursts result in histrionics and ratings; there’s dignity and grace in reflection.

The vérité footage celebrates the everyday. Neil purchasing socks; Suzy gardening; Andrew on a family vacation; Bruce the teacher working in the classroom; Jackie the barmaid pouring drinks in the pub; Sue working in an office. There are family trips to parks and zoos, a couple riding bikes, a father teaching a son to drive, a mother serving breakfast to children before they go off to school. “The drama of getting through the day. The drama of ordinary life,” Apted says in *42 Up*’s DVD extras. The moments captured here are the ones we forget, but the ones we long for when such moments are disrupted by tragedy.

An uneasiness falls upon us during *42 Up*. Maybe it has to do with Symon, who talks about his mother’s passing. “There were so many things I never actually said to my mum, that I would have liked to say to her.” Or maybe it has to do with Bruce, now married, who says, “That lightness, that youth, it’s just gone.” Yesterday he was a seven-year-old towhead with a cowlick and gigantic ears being bullied into doing calisthenics by a classmate. What happened to that little fascist? Is he in the military? A member of Parliament? Is he still alive even?

And suddenly we can articulate that uneasiness. There will come a time when either one of the subjects will die, or Apted, 14 years their senior, will die. What then? Will the series stop? Over the course of eight films, no fewer than 11 Uppers participated in each film. When any of them doesn’t, and it doesn’t matter which one is absent, we mourn a little. A virtual community has been created around these people and we are part of it, participate it in it. We don’t want to see that dismantled because one passes. We want it to continue.

But this gloom appears to be a hangover from the previous film because *42 Up* is about carrying on despite the knowledge that statistically half of their lives are behind them. There is joy at the local pub on karaoke night with a new love interest; there is concern about a son with a learning disability; pride about a published book; and there is more failing health, arthritis, but its sufferer finds relief by joyously romping in a pool with her young sons.

“Life chugs along in varying degrees,” John, one of the upper class participants, says. He said this when he was 35 and it has become one of the highlights. But it delivers a powerful punch here, reminding us that a lot time can pass between when we see and hear something and when it impacts us. Yesterday, or seven years ago, we saw that same scene and we nodded; now it resonates profoundly.

42 Up ends with Neil in London. He is friends with Bruce and close enough a friend to deliver a speech at Bruce’s wedding. If the morning and the past seven years started off with an unnameable anxiety, it ends reaffirming the very best that life has to offer: friendship, love, compassion, people brought together through art, through film. It occurs to us that, though watching 35 years of 13.5 lives (one subject dropped out at 21) pass in such a compressed time

is factitious, in many ways the *Up* films do travel at the speed of life. One quiet afternoon we are having a cup of green tea and reading the newspaper when the phone rings and unthinkable news is delivered. Another gray morning we sit at a café and meet the person we're destined to spend our lives with. In between there are innumerable meals to be cooked, countless walks to take dogs on, relentless shrubs to be pruned.

We spend a lot of time thinking about the passing of time while watching the series–it's impossible not to–and how we handle and manhandle time in film. If the edit from bone twirling in the air to starship rotating in space in *2001: A Space Odyssey* is the jump cut to end all jump cuts, the *Up* series contains many runners up. Seven-year-old Nicholas walking below a menacing towering cliff cut in mid stride to 56-year-old Nick walking by that same cliff. They are in color now. Nick is bigger, rounder, the cliff looks smaller, mellower. Everything seemed so much bigger when were children. London's East End get a similar edit to a different effect. A street shown to us in 1964 is unrecognizable in 1998; we really we can't go home again. Not technically a jump cut but a three shot sequence packs a similar wallop. Medium close up of Tony driving his cab at age 28, cut to the road he's driving down, cut back to Tony and he's 35. A recent studied revealed American's spend 100 hours a year commuting in their cars; we don't need to know that stat to relate to the shot. We are spending a huge chunk of our lives in traffic behind the wheel. Some days, when we're caught in traffic in L.A., it can seem like it took seven years to get from home to work.

But watched this way we notice something else about the editing. In *21 Up*, Bruce, then a student, sits beside his math teacher and runs through a proof for a full 50 seconds. It is a beautiful moment and warrants all that time. It gives us a lot of information about Bruce and his life then. I have no idea what is being discussed, but it's impressive and geeky. This scene reappears in the all of the subsequent films, but it is given less time—in *56 Up* it lasts 10 seconds. The specific details are no longer there. The mathematician is no longer referenced and the teacher no longer has the final word. These details are gone, the way the theorems we learned in high school geometry are gone. What remains is the feeling of learning at that age, the glow of pride because we know we impressed our teacher. The essence of the moment remains, but that distillation could only be experienced if we had watched the longer shot. When watched this way, the *Up* series achieves this like no other film.

These films have a timeless quality. That might seem like a paradox–how can a film that's been 49 years in the making and that's about the passing of time have a timeless quality? The secret is in the films' consistent aesthetic. The subjects' clothing and hairdos may tell us what year it is, but cinematic style will not. We will not see animation, re-enactments, or jittery handheld camera work. That being said, the films are not cinematic dinosaurs, either. Apted went digital with *49 Up* (2005). DI, unimaginable in 1964, is simply and elegantly employed: a familiar long shot of

Bruce's boarding school from *Seven Up!*, cut to another long shot of the building in b&w, which then slowly saturates with color. And just like that we leap over decades.

A more dramatic kind of time leap occurs with the unexpected reappearance of a subject we haven't seen in almost thirty years. Attuned to the seven year rhythm and with the changes those seven years produce—wrinkles, more girth, less hair, grayer hair–seeing this subject, someone who inexplicably disappeared from the *Up* universe after so long an absence is initially stunning. (He explains the reasons for his disappearance in *56 Up.*) But we quickly make sense of the physical change that real time has exacted on him, the same way we can recognize our parents as children in photos. Oh yes, there he is, it's the eyes, he is the same. And the way he tilts his head, very much the same, and in his smirk and dry wit, unchanged.

So the *Up* films can be something like a time machine, but they are also a time capsule, a fluid one, added to every seven years so we can witness transformations, and not just of people, but of places as well. There is no better example of this than the closing sequence. We saw Tony at 21 taking bets at the frenetic dog track, and then at 42 visiting it, shuttered, the footage from 21 years earlier as close to seeing someone else's memory as we'll ever get. In *56 Up*, Tony sits in an arena chair where the dog track once was, and the zoom out reveals that the once seedy space has undergone a grand transformation.

But if the *Up* films were just these things, time machine and time capsule, they would be interesting historical and sociological documents and not much else. But they offer more than that; the reason we anticipate their arrival and watch them over and over is they are not just the story of 14 English people who were born in 1957, it is our story as well. It is a mirror that allows us to look at ourselves now and as we were at various ages. If we are significantly younger than these 14 people, we can relate to their childhoods, adolescence, young adulthoods, and we can see what awaits us, the good, the bad, and the indifferent.

No matter how we experience the *Up* films, watching them in a fell swoop or over years and years, it is similar to looking at family photos, home movies, or scrolling through our Facebook timeline; we are taking our own trip through time, with these people as our stand-ins and guides. Nick, the nuclear physicist, sums it up. Commenting on the series' limitations, he says, "And then they present this tiny little snippet of your life and it's like, that's all there is to me…?" He then weighs in about its value, "It isn't a picture really of the essence of Nick or Suzy, it's a picture of everyone." Yes, that was us, with those mustaches and outsized collars. We thought there was so much there, but really, when we look back on it, there isn't. And it was so long ago, but didn't it just seem like yesterday?

http://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2012/06/michael-apted-documentary-up-series

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When We Were 56

By John Heilpern Photograph by Steve Pyke

Every seven years, Michael Apted, the British-born Hollywood director (*The Chronicles of Narnia, The World Is Not Enough, Coal Miner's Daughter*), returns obsessively to his first love and what will surely be an astonishing legacy—the TV documentary known as "The Up Series," which began almost half a century ago in 1964. British TV came of age with its innovative concept of interviewing a group of seven-year-old children in class-torn England, and every seven years since then the series has gone on to record their unfolding progress or cruel fate, and their touching, inevitable aging.

"Give me a child until he is seven and I will give you the man," goes the Jesuit maxim that has guided the series. Apted, a Cambridge graduate who began his career as a 22-year-old researcher for *7 Up,* has directed every episode since 1970. This month, *56 Up* will be televised in England on ITV1 (it will run later this year in the U.S.), and, remarkably, all but one dropout from the original group are re-united in it.

The 71-year-old Apted doesn't see the series coming to an end anytime soon, however. "When I film *84 Up*," he says, "I'll be 99!"

What has he learned over the years about himself from this group of intimate strangers? "The center of my life has been the choices I've made between career and family, and I haven't done too well." He mentions two marriages and three children. "I see my life and conflicts through theirs more and more."

http://tv.uk.msn.com/features/56-up-a-torchbearer-of-respectable-reality-tv

msn TV

56 Up: a torchbearer of respectable reality TV

56 Up, part of the acclaimed Up series, is now out on DVD. Contributor Jackie Bassett talks about the show.

56 Up, the latest instalment of ITV's landmark documentary series, is out on DVD. Every seven years the makers return to visit the people whose lives have been followed since they were seven years of age.

Inspired by the Jesuit saying: "Give me the child until he is seven and I will show you the man," 7 Up was broadcast in 1964 as a one-off World in Action Special featuring children who were selected from different backgrounds and social spheres.

As ground-breaking television, the series has won an array of awards.

Director Michael Apted, who has since moved to Hollywood to direct films including Gorky Park, The Coal Miner's Daughter, The World Is Not Enough, The Chronicles of Narnia and Gorillas in the Mist, has returned every seven years to chart the children's progress through life.

Jackie Bassett is a stalwart of the Up series and she shares her thoughts about the programme.

How would you describe your 7 Up experience?

On the whole, my experience with the series has been good, you always look back and think, "why did I say that", or "I wish I hadn't said that" but I believe that can is a good portrayal of life in general.

For people who might have missed the series on TV, how would you describe it?

I think it's best described as a reality show with real people from all different backgrounds, talking about their lives and how they cope with the trials and tribulations that it brings.

You have obviously been involved in reality TV for many years now, what changes have you noticed?

In the actual programme, very little, except we have all got older! But in general, I have noticed massive differences. Women are now captains of industry, running their own businesses and generally taking on positions of power.

However, I still don't think it's easy for any woman to get to the top of an industry and that we, as a country, are still more male-orientated.

If you could go back in time, would you still go through with each series?

Yes, most definitely, although doing 56 Up was more emotional for me than any of the previous series. If someone was to watch 21 Up, it's obvious I'm not happy but that was still easier than doing the last programme.

Looking back over the previous series, is there one stand-out episode or moment?

I think, for me, it would be either 7 Up or 56 Up. 7 Up because we are all sweet, innocent children with no inkling as to what was ahead; 56 Up because it was so emotional, with the loss of so many close family and friends and the birth of my first grandchild.

Would you let your children enter the world of reality television if a similar opportunity came along for them?

If it was in a similar format as our programme, yes. Although, I don't think I could stop them anyway, they are grown men now.

What effect has the series had on your friendship with Sue and Lynn?

I don't think it has had a massive effect, we always pick up were we left off from the last time we saw each other.

You gave Michael Apted a bit of a hard time in the last series, what are your thoughts on him as a director now?

Firstly, Michael is a director doing his job - which I understand. I don't always agree with it and as I am not a shrinking violet, I decided it was time to let him know.

Secondly, Michael Apted the man is one of the nicest, most successful people I know. If I rang him and needed help I know he would be there for me so it is important people understand the difference.

In your opinion, how well would a regular viewer of the 7 Up series 'know' you and your life? Is it important to hold some things back?

The only thing I have held back was something that would hurt other people if it went out in a public arena. I'm sorry, but I am not prepared to do that. The programme makers also know that this one area is off limits. Apart from that I have been totally honest in my opinions and reactions.