Value for money: Baker and Berman, and Tempean Films

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YOU DON'T NEED to be as fond of British 'B' movies of the 1950s as I am to feel that there is something to be said for the production team of Bob Baker and Monty Berman and their production company, Tempean.¹ The second features that emerged from this partnership are generally speaking fast-moving, unpretentious, lively and characterful, and, within their modest budgets, well enough staged to look more expensive than they were. However, it is not my primary intention to offer elaborate analyses of these films, or to make unsustainable claims for their being long-buried, unsung treasures of auteurist film-making. It is worth looking at the Tempean phenomenon for a number of reasons in a book devoted to 1950s British cinema. First, it relates significantly to the exhibition procedures of the period, when audiences typically expected a 'double bill', with a main feature and a supporting film, which might be designated either a co-feature or a second feature according to the lavishness of its casting and budget. If a major film ran to over two hours, say, it was likely to be supported by 'shorts' (often designated 'selected featurettes') rather than by another feature film of the kind made by Tempean. In any case, a three-hour programme was the norm, and as long as this persisted, there was a steady demand for the sort of supporting film Tempean made until the late 1950s.

Thus, second, Tempean sums up a prolific area of 1950s production, fuelled by these exhibition patterns. To riffle through the pages of Denis Gifford's *British Film Catalogue* is to be aware of how much activity at this level there was from the late 1940s through until the mid-1960s.² If it has been the focus for so little critical attention, this may be the result of several factors, including the unforgiving approach to the 'quota quickies' of the 1930s, films

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made in the expectation of swift oblivion and to satisfy quota requirements for British films, with no reference to aesthetic criteria. Another reason for so little notice having been taken of so vast an area of film-making (much of it certainly deserved no more) may be that reviewers almost never saw or reviewed these films. They were both prolific and disregarded. They made their way direct to the public without the intervention of quality-minded middle-brow critics.

Third, Tempean turned out 'B' movies at a more sustained level of competence and enjoyment than perhaps any other of the companies regularly occupied with filling the bottom half of the double bill. Baker and Berman relied on the services of personnel they could trust and built up a roster of actors and others who knew their job and could be relied on to get it done in the required time and within the allotted budget. This was a company that knew exactly what it wanted to achieve and did so; and what they achieved is worth looking at nearly half a century later.

Who were Baker and Berman? Both had been involved in film-making before World War II. Monty Berman (born in London, 1913), not to be confused with the costumier of the same name, entered films in 1930 as a camera assistant at Twickenham Studios, and during the 1930s worked as camera operator at Teddington (1934–8) and Ealing (1938–40) Studios. Michael Powell described him as 'a young cameraman who had done outstanding work on my two films at Warner Brothers' Teddington Studios', at the time of appointing him lighting cameraman for *The Edge of the World*, and he went into the army as a camera operator.³ Robert S. Baker (born in London, 1916) entered films in 1937 as assistant director 'on a film called *Night in Havana*, which was basically a musical that ran for about 20 minutes'.⁴ He had been a keen amateur director before this and had even won prizes for short documentaries. Baker and Berman met in the African desert during the war, when both were army sergeants and were transferred to the army film unit, both having had significant experience as cameramen covering military action. Their memories of this was later to feed into their 'A' film, *Sea of Sand* (1958). As Baker recalled in 1995, they decided that

when we got out of the army we were going to make our own pictures. We were demobbed at roughly the same time and we begged, borrowed and stole to get finance together to make a picture called *A Date with a Dream* (1948). That was our first break, as it were, into the movie business. We were pretty green at that time, so we used our own money, which we probably would have been forced to do, because, coming out of the army, we had no reputation to fall back on. So we financed it ourselves; I think the film cost about just under £10,000.⁴

Like many film-makers whose careers had been disrupted by the war, they were determined to make their way in what was still far and away the most popular entertainment form available. What they did was to set up Tempean as their production company. It was possible then to set up a company for £100 but, in order to make it look more than a fly-by-night enterprise, they felt that they needed to finance it to the tune of £1,000, thereby creating a thousand £1 shares which could be allocated as they chose. The 'board' consisted of Baker and Berman, Baker's father Morris, and Dicky Leeman who was also their contract director, though he made only one film for them before leaving to work in television variety.⁵ Their contract screenwriter was Carl Nystrom, who wrote three screenplays for them: *Date with a Dream*, *Melody Club* (1949) and *Impulse* (1955). The studio at which they made their first film was Viking, a tiny studio in Kensington, with some interiors shot at Collins Music Hall, Islington, neither of which survives. It was one thing to set up a production company, even to make a film as Baker and Berman had done, but the effort would have been wasted without effective distribution. According to Baker in 2000, they 'didn't go to a distributor to get a deal to make the film [*A Date with a Dream*] ... we showed it to a company called Eros who ... liked the picture and decided to finance us on our next pictures, so we then had a distribution deal with them. We were coming in on budget with presentable pictures and they were happy with them. We must have made twenty to thirty pictures with Eros.'⁶ Having steady distribution arrangements was an indicator of Tempean's businesslike approach from the start. Eros was primarily the concern of two brothers, Phil and Sydney Hyams. Phil Hyams, chairman in its key period, and his brother Syd Hyams, managing director, entered the industry in 1912 as cinema owners, forming Eros post-World War II. In the mid-1950s, Eros also became involved in the production of such independently produced 'A' films as *The Man Who Watched Trains Go By* (1952) and *The Sea Shall Not Have Them* (1954), but it was essentially a distribution outfit. It went into liquidation in 1961. Bob Baker recalled that Eros would buy American films outright for showing in the United Kingdom, then take a British film as a co-feature and distribute the double bill, an arrangement which was clearly to the advantage of Tempean.

Tempean finally wound up in the early 1960s, having by this time produced several 'A' films, including the war film *Sea of Sand* (1958), the horror films *Blood of the Vampire* (1958), *The Flesh and the Fiends* (1959) and *Jack the Ripper* (1959), an unusual tale of pre-World War I anarchists in London, *The Siege of Sidney Street* (1960), and *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1961). These last two, in fact, appear under the company name of Mid-Century,

but, as Baker explained, this was just an arm of Tempean, deriving from a loss-making company he and Berman had bought up as a legitimate tax manoeuvre. They bought loss companies such as Mid-Century, Kenilworth and New World so that they could write off any profits Tempean made against that loss. All the 'B' films bearing the Kenilworth/Mid-Century logo were distributed by GFD. The other company whose name appears on some of Baker–Berman's second features (e.g. *Barbados Quest* (1955), *Breakaway* (1956) and *High Terrace* (1957) is CIPA, 'a company with some other people [including Emmett Dalton] involved in it, and which made films for RKO Radio Pictures as it was then' (Baker in 2000). (They also made four films in Eire for Dalton, a friend of Michael Collins during 'The Troubles', who had tried to start a film industry in Ireland, and Baker and Berman made *Professor Tim* (1957), the first film at Dublin's Bray Studios. These Irish-based films had nothing to do with Tempean.) As for the others, they are Tempean under other names. A list of the full Baker and Berman output, under various company names, can be found below, on pp. 188–9.

The details of the organisation of Tempean Films and the other companies are interesting not so much in themselves as for what they reveal of Baker and Berman's business acumen, which, along with an ear to the ground for judging what was acceptable to audiences, perhaps accounts for their sustained success. They had a sure grasp of film financing, and knew how to make best use of the National Film Finance Corporation's processes, especially as they related to cross-collateralisation. In Baker's own words:

For instance, if you had a picture that was successful and you wanted to borrow money, from the National Film Service, they often asked you to cross-collateralise your successful film with the film that you wanted to make. Consequently, if the film that you wanted to make didn't make any money within a certain period of time, then they could take the profits from the successful film to set off against it. It was just a way of the National Film Finance Corporation securing their loan ... What happened was you went to a distributor and he gave you a distribution contract. A distribution contract covered 75% of the budget. Then you took the distribution contract to a bank who would advance you the money against the distribution contract. You are left with 25% to find in order to finance a picture, so what we used to do invariably was we would defer our fees, which would pay a certain percentage of the 25%, and the National Film Finance Corporation put up the rest of the money.

The remarks show business acumen, an ear to the ground – and also a genuine feel for the game. This was not immediately apparent from their first two films. *A Date with a Dream* has some engaging moments, some of them provided by the often insufferably cute, but here poised and confident

Jeannie Carson, and with ‘turns’ by Terry-Thomas (paid £50 per week) and Norman Wisdom each in his first film, and the likeable comic team of Len and Bill Lowe. This is basically a low-key, domestic version of the US musical staple of the kids’ saying, ‘Let’s put on a show’, and of course finally doing it – in production circumstances considerably more restrained than, say, Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland would have had to contend with at MGM. It is an ingenuous piece of work, which just about gets by on the basis of the inherent talent of its cast and a kind of amateur’s enthusiasm it would be surly to abuse. Tempean didn’t make any money out of *A Date with a Dream*, partly because its distributor – Grand National – was a very small company and perhaps, as Baker says, ‘their bookkeeping wasn’t strictly accurate either’ (Baker in 2000). They began with Eros as distributor on their next film, *Melody Club*, starring again the Lowe brothers and Terry-Thomas. Directed by Baker himself, it seems no longer to exist, about which he is glad, calling it ‘terrible’. It has been described as a ‘collection of well-worn jokes stitched together to make a plot’.⁷

These were not the sort of films that would account for Tempean’s prolific output in the 1950s. In 1950 they began to turn out the kind of efficient crime thrillers that would be their staple for most of the decade. The first five are wholly indigenous in flavour, with British stars, generally of the second rank, supported by sturdy character actors who became a sort of Tempean repertory company. I have not been able to see *Blackout* (1950) for this study – it is the second film in this category and features Dinah Sheridan, before she became a major star, and Maxwell Reed, who never did become one – but the other four are more than adequate second features. *No Trace* (1950) stars Hugh Sinclair and Dinah Sheridan again, here pluckily unmasking a murderous employer and reminding us never to trust men in smoking jackets; *The Quiet Woman* (1951), set and filmed on the Romney Marshes, starring the excellent and undervalued Jane Hylton, and Derek Bond, refreshingly combines smuggling, fractured personal relationships and postwar malaise; *13 East Street* (1952) involves an undercover detective and rackets in luxury items like nylon stockings; and *The Frightened Man* (1952), with Charles Victor and Dermot Walsh, quite grippingly mixes father–son conflict with robbery. These are the films that made me Tempean’s devoted follower. They are entirely without pretension; they tell their stories neatly and suspensefully; they make excellent use of location and studio shooting; and they are already establishing that reputation for dependable character work that makes them still so enjoyable to watch. Michael Balfour, who first appears for Tempean in *Melody Club*, John Horsley, who may have arrested more felons than any other British actor (or possibly most

British policemen), Thora Hird, Dora Bryan, Michael Ward and Michael Brennan all appear in these and other Tempean films, so that it is not so surprising if the films seem to have a richer texture than might be expected, given their modest budgets.

With an eye on the US markets, Baker and Berman very often secured the services of American actors. These were not major stars at the height of their fame, of course; they were people who had enjoyed palpable if not first-league stardom, like Mark Stevens – the first of Tempean's imports – in *The Lost Hours* (1952), or Scott Brady, or Arthur Kennedy, names big enough still to mean something in the mid-West, even if not huge draws. Some had been 'B' movie leads in Hollywood: actors like Rod Cameron, Mary Castle and Forrest Tucker; and there was the sad serendipity of blacklisted Larry Parks, briefly a big star after *The Jolson Story* (1946), but destroyed by McCarthy, and finding asylum in the politically more tolerant climate of England. Baker and Berman knew exactly what they were doing in signing these Americans. It wasn't just a matter of their minor or faded stellar status; it was because they gave a touch of international gloss to the modest programmers. As Baker said, 'They [American actors] gave a lift to British co-features – plus the different accent helped to make the picture more universal', and he praised them for their efficiency, which he believed came from their training in the art of film-making. '[They] knew the camera and consequently their performances were very, very smooth ... The result was a bit like a professionally made pullover compared to a well-meant hand-knitted job.'⁸

To acquire this American connection, Tempean worked through a man called Bob Goldstein who had been a casting director for many years at Universal and who then 'came over here and established a co-production organisation. He was able to get quite big names; we would make a deal together whereby he would supply the actor and a certain amount of the finance and we would supply the rest.' They would commission a script with an American lead, meet with Eros and Goldstein, and go through a list of names that he could supply. Baker and Berman would choose who they thought was the right person and Goldstein would do a deal with the American. This arrangement relieved the pair of a lot of responsibility and saved the time it would have taken to do the deal in America. The whole negotiation was conducted in Britain, and Goldstein was happy with his percentage of the American market.

Whatever the quality of second or co-features, there was little chance of their being critically noticed. There was no British critic with the eye for a 'sleeper' on the bottom half of the double bill in the way that James Agee had

spotted them in the US in the 1940s. The pictures would be noticed in the trade papers, such as *Kinematograph Weekly*, and might get very brief notices in *Picturegoer* and *Picture Show*, but the daily and weekend newspapers virtually never reviewed – possibly never saw – them. The Tempean pair accepted this and got on with the business for as long as there was a market for their product and, when this dried up, turned first to making the ‘A’ features referred to above and then with consummate success to television, where their Tempean experiences fitted them admirably to adjust to the length, generic conventions and tight shooting schedules of weekly episodes in such series as *The Saint* (1962–9), *Gideon’s Way* (1964) and *The Persuaders* (1970–1). In 1964, Berman told a reporter, ‘To produce a TV series, you must keep everything orderly; and providing the scripts are all right, then the rest of the work is selecting the right people and checking up all the time.’⁹ That sounds very much like the successful recipe they had followed at Tempean.

In the end, though, audiences are not going to be moved by sheer efficiency, or by amiability, even if Brian Worth said at the time of Tempean’s silver jubilee (that is, the celebration of their twenty-fifth film completed since the company was founded), ‘I have never worked with two nicer blokes.’¹⁰ It matters nothing to filmgoers that films were made on time or within budget, however impressive such virtues may be in the industry – and however important they may be in accounting for the productivity and continuity of the company. It is one thing for the article just quoted to claim that ‘A company which uses its resources so competently deserves to succeed’ (and remember, we are talking of films made in about three weeks for between £12,000 and £20,000), but the time comes when one asks: What was the production output like?

In terms of genre, Tempean and its associated companies produced mainly thrillers. This was largely a matter of market demand. As Baker said: ‘The public appetite was in favour of thrillers ... You could make a comedy or a thriller. Anything in between was very dubious! ... It’s easy to hook an audience with a thriller, not so easy to hook them on a soft romantic plot.’¹¹ It may be that in relation to romantic films, audiences expect major stars as a focus for their attention and empathy. For whatever reason, none of Tempean’s second features fall into this category. There is usually a romantic action proceeding in parallel with the thriller plot, as was the case with most crime films, but the romance was never the centre of attention; it provided a means of winding up the film on a more or less upbeat note, though the films do not follow this pattern slavishly. *The Voice of Merrill* (1952), a strong co-feature with a significant star in Valerie Hobson, and *The Frightened Man*

(1952) both end with one of the romantic pair dead while the other walks off into the night. There is also in some of the thrillers a touch of American *film noir*, quite deliberate according to Baker, who admired this moody style.

Of the more than thirty second features that Baker and Berman produced for Tempean (including Mid-Century, Kenilworth and CIPA) and one for Butchers (*Blind Spot*, 1958), and not including the Irish-set and -financed films they made for Emmett Dalton's own company (for example, *Professor Tim* (1957), *Sally's Irish Rogue* (1958), *Home Is the Hero* (1959) and *Boyd's Shop* (1960)), only six belong to non-thriller genres, and none is among the pair's best. The first two – musicals – are referred to above, and no one would have expected much of the makers; there are two mild comedies – *Love in Pawn* (1953) and *The Reluctant Bride* (1955), the latter given some zing by two second-league Hollywood stars, Virginia Bruce and John Carroll; *No Smoking* (1955), described by David Quinlan as a 'potty comedy'; and the science-fiction piece, *The Trollenberg Terror* (1958), the last of their 'B' films. The last-named has some scary moments though the special effects, for those who care about such matters, today look inevitably meagre, but the Swiss Alps are the real thing – shot by Berman while he and Baker and their families were on holiday there.

This last point about locations is worth noting. One of the besetting faults of British 'B' movies is their airless look, as if they were made entirely in some very confined studios, as indeed many of them were. The Tempean pair made a point of using actual locations whenever possible, believing it 'gave another dimension to the picture ... But Britain has never been geared to location shooting like America has. You had to get police permission and there were all sorts of problems.'¹² This complaint has been borne out by other film-makers, working on a more ambitious scale than Baker and Berman, who were also motivated by the fact that, if carefully planned, location work could be cheaper than building lavish sets. They used back-projection when they had to, as in the case of *The Quiet Woman*, for scenes involving the smugglers' boat, but Baker felt it wasn't very efficient and they tried to avoid it whenever possible. His own account of their location shooting habits gives a vivid picture of location work at these budget levels:

Since we would select our locations before production we would make quite sure that they were feasible and they weren't going to be too expensive and that the hire cost wasn't going to be too high. We were shooting on locations before it was the popular thing to do as it is now. Nowadays, if they go on location they have all sorts of wagons, eating wagons, food wagons, cars or trailers for the stars and so forth. We had none of that. We just went in two or three cars and the location manager would go to the nearest cafe at lunchtime and get some

sandwiches and an urn of tea or coffee or something and we would sit quite often at the kerb sometimes having our lunch during shooting. We'd never thought of taking a caravan for an actor. We used to go somewhere and go into a pub and hire a couple of rooms so the actors could get changed if they had to. We'd make do on a day-to-day basis. It was planned, but it was planned very economically. (Baker in 2000)

Another aspect of their efficiency was no doubt in using personnel they could rely on. They had Michael Craig and the Canadian actress Dianne Foster briefly under contract, but in general people such as those character players named above worked for them again and again and understood the constraints of filming on tight budgets and schedules. Apart from actors, they also used the same director, John Gilling, on a dozen second features, Gilling often being responsible for the screenplay as well. Some actors, including Craig and Diana Dors (replaced, owing to 'illness', after a couple of days on *The Quiet Woman* by Tempean regular Dora Bryan), thought Gilling was abrasive, but the producers found him wholly reliable, and, after he had gone off to direct a series of mixed-genre pieces for Warwick Films starting with *The Gamma People* (1955), he returned to Tempean to direct *The Flesh and the Fiends*, the horror calling-card that took him to Hammer for the final stage of his prolific career. Much of Tempean's most enjoyable output is directed by Gilling, but others such as Baker himself, former editor Charles Saunders, former theatre producer Henry Cass and cinematographer C. Pennington-Richards each directed several for the company. Apart from Gilling, though, the chief continuity was in the Baker-Berman production team itself and in having Berman as the cinematographer. As Berman said: 'Because I'm co-producer with Robert, I can take far more chances than an ordinary cameraman. I don't have to worry about where my next job is coming from.'¹³ Tempean was nothing if not pragmatic.

All these elements which characterise the Tempean enterprise – continuity of personnel, the use of locations outside the studio when feasible and desirable, the ensuring that the money spent on the films (on casting, on settings) would be up there on the screen, the clear sense of what would work with audiences, the long background of varied experience amassed by the partners – help to account for a sustained level of achievement not common in the British second feature. (It is worth noting that this corner of production is not as barren of interest as has been assumed: directors such as Ken Hughes, Lance Comfort, Montgomery Tully, Peter Graham Scott and Francis Searle all made second features that repay closer attention.) I want, before concluding, to look briefly at several paradigmatic second features that derive from Tempean in one or other of its mutations, to suggest how a more or less

conventional framework has been worked on to provide more than conventional interest.

The Frightened Man, *The Voice of Merrill* and *Impulse* will do as well as any to suggest the Tempean virtues in action. The first is a thriller based on a jewel robbery masterminded by Alec Stone (the ever-oleaginous Martin Benson in a smoking jacket) and involving the son of Stone's gang's usual fence. The son, Julius (Dermot Walsh, whose 'A' film career had petered out by now), has been sent down from Oxford and his father, antique dealer Rosselli (Charles Victor), is desperate to keep him out of the robbery. In a rooftop chase, very well filmed by director Gilling, Julius falls to his death as his father tries to save him, and Rosselli's wife (Barbara Murray) walks off into the night. On to this bare outline are grafted several strands which give the film more than usual texture. The relationship between father and son is given more interest than the plot strictly needs: the idea of the son educated above his father's aspirations and having been corrupted in the process makes some unobtrusive points about class in 1950s Britain, points reinforced by the casting of Walsh, who projects an insolent superiority, and Victor, so resonant of working-class decency, even if here he is a notch or two higher socially as keeper of an antiques shop. There is a brief touch suggestive of Rosselli's Roman Catholic background in the saying of grace at meals in the house which takes in lodgers, one of whom is an undercover policeman, played of course by John Horsley, and presided over by housekeeper Thora Hird. This only matters insofar as it suggests the kind of trouble taken to imbue the film with a touch of what Henry James might have called 'felt life'. The same might be said of Julius's homophobic reaction to his father's shop assistant, Cornelius, played by the inveterately camp actor, Michael Ward, but here given a chance to do more than his usual prissy cameo. Again, this interaction between Julius and Cornelius is not a major plot point, but it works as an individuating touch: the film merely notes, and doesn't need to explain, why Julius reacts as he does; and Cornelius is allowed the dignity of being seriously good at his work.

In this unobtrusive way, second features sometimes wear better than 'A' films because they are not so *consciously* commenting on the age, but simply (and unconsciously?) build perceptions into the fabric of events: in hindsight, a film such as this can suggest a range of social connotations which probably didn't bother Tempean at the time, in a way that, if they had been, say, Basil Dearden, they would have been bothered at the forefront of their minds.

Baker was very clear on the differences between second features and co-features. You could tell it by the billing – half-and-half for co-features and roughly 80–20 ratio for second features – on the posters. *The Voice of Merrill*

is distinctly a co-feature. Valerie Hobson, though near the end of her career, didn't come as cheaply as, say, Barbara Murray, the female lead in *The Frightened Man*, and the money was well spent. She had been a major star and came trailing associations of class and classiness that one wouldn't expect of the usual 'B' movie leading lady. Her elegance, the subtle sexiness alongside a certain chilliness, and her intelligence make her very good casting as the erring wife of a famous writer (James Robertson Justice). Her persona generates the right degree of interest without evoking a tone-destroying sympathy. The more than usually complicated plot concerns the murder of a blackmailer, the suspects James Robertson Justice, Valerie Hobson and another writer loved by Hobson (Edward Underdown). It ends badly for everyone. One wonders why Hobson was ever sufficiently attracted to the vituperative Justice to marry him, but their difficult marriage does provide a starting point for her interest in Underdown. The film makes neat use of radio as plot device; the plot has enough twists and turns, made more provocative by the casting; and there are convincing sexual sparks between Hobson and Underdown. The murder which initiates the film is shot with a properly mystifying sense as the camera picks out legs moving down a dark, wet street, entering a building with back still to the camera; a woman turns around; a shot rings out and she collapses. Again and again, the Tempean films succeed in hooking the view with provocative opening episodes which have an element of ambiguity that one doesn't expect in budget film-making. Gilling, working again from his own screenplay, maintains a degree of tension between event and consequence, and between event and character, impressive enough to lift the film well clear of second-feature obloquy. In fact, it played co-feature dates and was sometimes the main film on a double bill, the distributors finding they had bought more than they had expected.

One of the most interesting films in the Tempean output is *Impulse* (1955). Though the credits list Charles de Lautour (a.k.a. de La Tour) as director, the actual director was blacklisted American Cy Endfield. According to Baker, 'in order to overcome the problem of Cy Endfield – if his name was on the screen they wouldn't take the film in America – we just had this stand-by director who was actually a documentary film maker, Charles de Lautour, who just sat on the set all day long whilst Endfield directed and he [de Lautour] just sat there and did nothing' (Baker in 2000). *Impulse* is much influenced by noir narrative tendencies: the hero, Alan Curtis (Arthur Kennedy), an American lawyer in an English provincial town, presumably having stayed on after the war (though this is not spelled out), is vaguely dissatisfied with his life. He is caught in a domestic and social routine which

offers little prospect of excitement, when an attractive woman, Lila (Constance Smith), enters his life and, in the absence of his wife (Joy Shelton), on impulse he lies to the police about Lila's whereabouts. She is a nightclub singer, a very noir job for a dangerous woman, and she lures Curtis to London where he becomes involved with the shifty club owner, falls easily for Lila's sexual allure, and is caught up in crimes including diamond theft and murder. The London scenes, many at night, have the sense of big-city danger associated with *film noir*, whereas the provincial scenes which flank them are photographed in a way which flattens out distinctions. The film has marked similarities to the 1948 Hollywood thriller *Pitfall*, directed by André de Toth and starring Dick Powell and Lizabeth Scott as the straying husband and the siren. The American gloss, in the better sense of the word, which derives from the noir influences and from the complex, intense performance from Arthur Kennedy, gives *Impulse* a restless, teasing quality that works in significant opposition to the English setting and supporting cast.

There is not the space here to work one's way through the Tempean filmography, nor is it my intention. The three films briefly noted are perhaps enough to suggest ways in which these robust film-makers went about giving touches of individuality to more or less quotidian enterprises. There are plenty of others which deserve to be noted. *The Quiet Woman* (1950) makes valuable use of its rural setting and contrasts this to both the criminal activities involved and the sense of postwar restlessness that motivates its hero. *The Lost Hours* (1952), mixing romantic triangle with murder enquiry, in its use of Mark Stevens, a US pilot in England for a RAF reunion, ushers in the deliberate Tempean policy of blending Hollywood influences with the domestic. (His British co-star, Jean Kent, recalled suggesting she should initiate a kiss, but he courteously explained that this was not the American way, implying that it would compromise his masculinity and be unacceptable to US audiences.)¹⁴ *The Embezzler* (1954) marries thriller to morality play in the style of *Passing of the Third Floor Back*, the two elements linked by another excellent performance from Charles Victor; and *Black Orchid*, *Deadly Nightshade* (both 1953), *Delayed Action* (1954), with American Robert Ayres, and *Double Exposure* (1954), all work enjoyable variations on conventional thriller plots.

No one wants to suggest that the prestige of British cinema depended on Tempean and the like. It is, however, equally true that, in their unaffected meeting of a marketplace demand, Baker and Berman made every penny work in the interest of the film-goer. Their aim was to entertain, and in providing films that found ready acceptance with audiences for a decade they are often revealing about the nature of public taste, not just in films but

in a wider sense culturally. The lure of Americanisation, albeit in a setting cosily recognisable, is but one example.

Tempean Films

This list includes films made under the company names Kenilworth and Mid-Century. Those made as CIPA are asterisked. Directors' names are in brackets.

1948	<i>A Date with a Dream</i> (Dicky Leeman)
1949	<i>Melody Club</i> (John Gilling)
1950	<i>No Trace</i> (Gilling)
	<i>Blackout</i> (Robert S. Baker)
1951	<i>The Quiet Woman</i> (Gilling)
1952	<i>The Frightened Man</i> (Gilling)
	<i>The Lost Hours</i> (Gilling)
	<i>The Voice of Merill</i> (Gilling)
	<i>13 East Street</i> (Baker)
1953	<i>The Steel Key</i> (Gilling)
	<i>Recoil</i> (Gilling)
	<i>Three Steps to the Gallows</i> (Gilling)
	<i>Deadly Nightshade</i> (Gilling)
	<i>Black Orchid</i> (Charles Saunders)
	<i>Love in Pawn</i> (Saunders)
1954	<i>Escape by Night</i> (Gilling)
	<i>Double Exposure</i> (Gilling)
	<i>The Embezzler</i> (Gilling)
	<i>Delayed Action</i> (John Harlow)
1955	<i>The Gilded Cage</i> (Gilling)
	<i>Tiger by the Tail</i> (Gilling)
	<i>The Reluctant Bride</i> (Henry Cass)
	<i>No Smoking</i> (Cass)
	<i>Impulse</i> (Cy Endfield, as Charles de Lautour)
	<i>Barbados Quest</i> (Bernard Knowles)*
1956	<i>Passport to Treason</i> (Baker)
	<i>Breakaway</i> (Cass)*
1957	<i>Hour of Decision</i> (C. Pennington-Richards)
	<i>Stranger in Town</i> (George Pollock)
	<i>High Terrace</i> (Cass)
1958	<i>Stormy Crossing</i> (Pennington-Richards)
	<i>The Trollenberg Terror</i> (Quentin Lawrence)
	<i>Blind Spot</i> (Peter Maxwell, for Butcher's)
	<i>Blood of the Vampire</i> (Cass)
	<i>Sea of Sand</i> (Guy Green)
1959	<i>Jack the Ripper</i> (Baker)
	<i>The Flesh and the Fiends</i> (Baker)

- 1960 *The Siege of Sidney Street* (Baker)
 1961 *The Hellfire Club* (Baker)
 The Treasure of Monte Cristo (Baker)
 1962 *What a Carve Up!* (Pat Jackson)

Baker and Berman made for Emmett Dalton's Irish company:

- 1957 *Professor Tim* (Cass)
 1958 *Sally's Irish Rogue* (Pollock)
 1959 *Home is the Hero* (Fielder Cook)
 1960 *Boyd's Shop* (Cass)

Notes

- 1 Bob Baker can no longer remember the origin of the company's name, except perhaps that, recalling the Vale of Tempe, it suggested a touch of class, borne out in the classical pillars of the Tempean logo.
- 2 Denis Gifford, *The British Film Catalogue, 1895–1970* (David & Charles, 1973).
- 3 Michael Powell, *A Life in Movies* (Heinemann, 1986), p. 242. It is not clear which 'two films' Powell means; Berman is certainly listed as co-cinematographer with Basil Emmott on *Someday* (1935), but the inadequate credits available for Powell's other Warner films offer no clue.
- 4 All further unattributed comments from Robert S. Baker come from my interviews with him in either 1995 or 2000. Some of the earlier interviews were published in my *An Autobiography of British Cinema* (Methuen and British Film Institute, 1997).
- 5 See Peter Noble (ed.), *British Film Yearbook 1949–50* (Skelton Robinson, 1949), p. 272.
- 6 McFarlane, *Autobiography*, p. 43.
- 7 David Quinlan, *British Sound Films. The Studio Years 1929–1959* (B. T. Batsford, 1984), p. 230.
- 8 McFarlane, *Autobiography*, p. 44.
- 9 Quoted in Tony Gruner, 'Baker and Berman's 'Saint' goes marching on – and on', *Kinematograph Weekly* (13 August 1964), p. 15.
- 10 Quoted in Tom Hutchinson, 'Tempean Films to Make Bigger Pictures', *Kinematograph Weekly* (21 April 1955), p. 37.
- 11 McFarlane, *Autobiography*, p. 46.
- 12 McFarlane, *Autobiography*, pp. 44–5.
- 13 Quoted in Hutchinson, 'Tempean Films to Make Bigger Pictures', p. 37.
- 14 In conversation with the author, UK (September 2000).