



■ With Veronica Cartwright in *Alien*.

white is infinitely more complicated than colour. But I think that lighting is something you have to learn to live with. You learn to live with that which is going to make the best effect.'

Did the quality of lighting, for better or worse, affect his acting performance significantly?

He went on, 'I think it does in several ways. For instance, just as an example, a particular kind of lighting can require a particular kind of voice, because one will suit the other.'

'If there is a particularly moody kind of lighting, you are not going to want to destroy that mood by using a noise that is not going to be compatible.'

'Unfortunately I don't think lighting is talked about enough at the rehearsal stage.'

'There are lighting men that I get to know well, like Mike Molloy, who you can talk to — if you get him on a good day — and one or two others, but that is by fortune of being able to work with somebody more than two or three times.'

'But I don't think that is enough. You are very rarely asked for an opinion but I do take a look.'

'If I notice that for me the lighting is much too 'toppy', then I have to have a



■ As John Merrick the Elephant Man.

word because I know that that is not going to work for me at all on a personal level. I know that it ain't going to suit my physog.

'I personally do it because I know what works for me and what doesn't work. I know that if the lighting is too 'toppy', then you are not going to see my eyes. And if you are not going to see my eyes, then I might as well go home.'

The ravages of time and life have given John what are politely described as 'character lines' in abundance. Did he feel that they made an actor's face more interesting visually?

**IT WOULD MAKE A LOT OF SORRY STORIES A LOT SHORTER IF YOU KNEW MORE ABOUT LIGHTING TO BEGIN WITH. ♪**

He said, 'I think so, yes. How much difference that makes to the lighting I am not quite sure. It is difficult achieving the right balance with skin tones. There is also the big difficulty when you have a black actor with a white actor. That is tricky in anybody's book, but has to be taken into account.'

'There is also quite a difference from the actor's point of view in theatre and film lighting in as much as that theatre is constant. In film it is much more varied, from long-shot to close-up. Each set-up is a new one.'

'In the theatre, once you have made the design and once you know your stage spot, when you know where you are and you can feel the light, it is very much clearer. What is more, you can see all your key lines. It is not quite so evident in films.'



■ In a Turkish gaol in *Midnight Express*

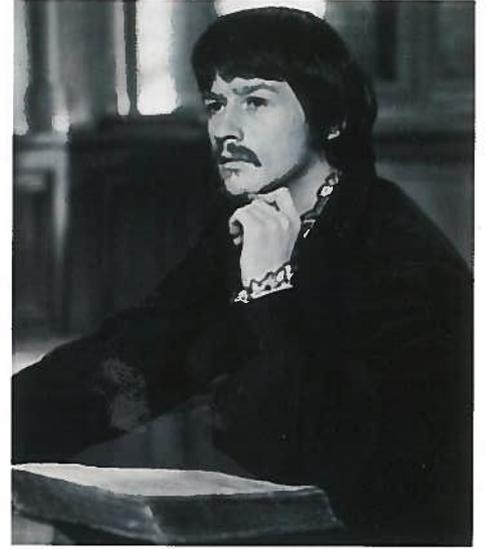
'Over the years I have worked with so many lighting men. They all have their own attributes. They are all extremely good and they are all extremely different.'

For established actors like John Hurt, developing a close working relationship with lighting designers and technicians over the years gives their own professionalism an added dimension. However, experience is still no substitute for the lack of basic training in lighting

techniques at the start of an actor's career, he feels.

He added, 'I would like to see lighting being given more attention. Obviously, with experience you do pick things up.'

'But it would make a lot of sorry stories a lot shorter if you knew more about lighting to begin with.'



■ As Richard Rich in *A Man For All Seasons*.

During his career, John Hurt has picked up a string of acting awards for his performance on stage, TV and film. His list of film credits includes: *A Man For All Seasons*, *Forbush and the Penguins*, *10 Rillington Place*, voiceover for *Watership Down*, *Midnight Express*, for which he won a British Academy award as Best Supporting Actor, A Golden Globe award and an Oscar nomination; *Alien*, with Sigourney Weaver; *Heavens Gate*, *The Elephant Man*; Mel Brooks' *History of the World Part 1*, *Champions* in which he played the part of jockey Bob Champion; *1984*, in which he played Winston Smith; *White Mischief*, *Scandal*, and the much-acclaimed TV productions, *The Naked Civil Servant*, and *I Claudius*. He has twice been voted Best Film Actor by the Variety Club of Great Britain.

**Footnote:** Since John Hurt's days as a drama student, more thought *has* been given to lighting. See our next issue for an update on RADA.

Photos: Ronald Grant Collection.