

May 2016

# Television



**Poldark's  
pulling  
power**



RTS  
STUDENT  
TELEVISION  
AWARDS  
2016

**3 JUNE**

1:00pm  
BFI Southbank,  
London SE1 8XT

[www.rts.org.uk](http://www.rts.org.uk)



## From the CEO



I am delighted to announce the headline speakers at our London Conference on 27 September. Steve Burke, CEO of NBCUniversal, is our

keynote speaker, and is joined by: RTS President Sir Peter Bazalgette; Ofcom CEO Sharon White; Kevin MacLellan, Chair of NBCUniversal International; Tom Mockridge, CEO of Virgin Media and David Abraham, CEO of Channel 4.

The focus of the conference, entitled "Full stream ahead", is on commissioning, developing and producing TV content in the on-demand age.

Booking is now open and we have a very enticing early-bird rate that you won't want to miss.

We all know that drama continues to drive TV schedules. So it was especially heartening last month to have

one of 2015's breakout hits, *Poldark*, featured as the latest subject of the RTS's "Anatomy of a hit" strand.

The evening was a great success as the four panellists each gave their own, unique insight into how the series was brought to the small screen.

I'd like to thank each one of them and I am very grateful to Boyd Hilton for being such an informed chair. Quite a lot of *Poldark* fans stayed afterwards to talk to the panel privately.

It was a genuinely inspiring evening and is this month's cover story. I hope you enjoy Philip Bannister's charming cover illustration of Ross and Demelza as much as I did. *Poldark* returns to our screens later this year.

The RTS's other big event in April was "Big data or smart data? Data and the impact on TV advertising, commissioning and content". It could not have been more different.

A capacity crowd was given valuable

insights into the growing importance of analytics in television. I think it's fair to say that everyone who attended will have returned to their desks the next day armed with some information that they could act on.

Thanks to all of those who participated and to the producers of an impressive event, and to Torin Douglas for chairing with such professional poise.

Inside there is lots to read, but don't miss Stuart Kemp's piece on Channel 4's strategy to develop a critically successful and financially robust slate of films for Film4.

Maggie Brown's inside track on the vexed issue of sound quality in TV drama is another must-read.

Theresa Wise

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Cover picture: Philip Bannister

**Editor**  
Steve Clarke  
smclarke\_333@hotmail.com  
**Writer**  
Matthew Bell  
bell127@btinternet.com

**Production, design, advertising**  
Vernon Adams  
jay@podesta.demon.co.uk  
**Sub-editor**  
Sarah Bancroft  
smbancroft@me.com

**Royal Television Society**  
3 Dorset Rise  
London EC4Y 8EN  
T: 020 7822 2810  
E: info@rts.org.uk  
W: www.rts.org.uk

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## National events

### RTS AGM

Tuesday 24 May

#### Annual General Meeting

6:00pm start

Venue: RTS, 3 Dorset Rise, London EC4Y 8EN

### RTS AWARDS

Friday 3 June

#### RTS Student Television Awards 2016

Venue: BFI Southbank, London SE1 8XT

### RTS CONFERENCE

Tuesday 27 September

#### RTS London Conference 2016

Full stream ahead:

#### Commissioning, developing and producing TV content in the age of on-demand

Principal sponsor: NBCUniversal International

Keynote speaker: Steve Burke, CEO of NBCUniversal. He is joined by: RTS President Sir Peter Bazalgette; Ofcom CEO Sharon White; Kevin MacLellan, Chair of NBCUniversal International; Tom Mockridge, CEO of Virgin Media; and David Abraham, CEO of Channel 4.

With burgeoning new models of TV consumption, opportunities for content creators and distributors are both incredibly exciting and potentially hazardous.

How is the emergence of myriad new distribution platforms impacting on the commissioning and production landscape?

With new, entrepreneurial approaches to production, access to global funding and emerging trends in consumer behaviour – what are the real opportunities and challenges of creating programming for multiple platforms?

Venue: Kings Place, 90 York Way, London N1 9AG

### RTS MASTERCLASS DAY

Monday 14 November

#### RTS Student Programme Masterclasses

Venue: BFI Southbank, London SE1 8XT

### RTS MASTERCLASS DAY

Tuesday 15 November

#### RTS Craft Skills Masterclasses

Venue: BFI Southbank, London SE1 8XT

## Local events

### BRISTOL

Thursday 26 May

#### Life in the air: Why Bristol leads the world in natural-history film-making

Panellists: BBC NHU Executive Producer Tim Scoones; Series Producer James Brickell; and Producer Simon Bell.

Joint event with RTS Wales.

6:30pm for 7:00pm

Venue: BBC Bristol, Whiteladies Road, Bristol BS8 2LR

■ Belinda Biggam

■ belindabiggam@hotmail.com

### DEVON & CORNWALL

■ Kingsley Marshall

■ Kingsley.Marshall@falmouth.co.uk

### EAST ANGLIA

■ Contact TBC

### LONDON

Wednesday 18 May

#### London Assembly elections

Steven Barnett, Professor of Communications, School of Media, Arts and Design, University of Westminster, chairs an industry panel including Jim Grice, Head of News and Current Affairs, London Live. How well did the industry cover the London election and is the capital well served for news and current affairs? 6:30pm for 7:00pm

Venue: ITV London Studios, Upper Ground, London SE1 9LT

■ Daniel Cherowbrier

■ daniel@cherowbrier.co.uk

Royal Television Society

# Annual General Meeting 2016

The 87th Annual General Meeting of the RTS will be held on

**Tuesday 24 May 2016 at 6:00pm**

in the Board Room, RTS, 3 Dorset Rise, London EC4Y 8EN

### MIDLANDS

Thursday 7 July

#### RTS Midlands Conference 2016

More details soon

Venue: Spring Grove House, West Midlands Safari Park DY12 1LF

■ Jayne Greene 07792 776585

■ jayne@ijmmedia.co.uk

### NORTH EAST & THE BORDER

Wednesday 25 May

#### Networking evenings

The last Wednesday of the month, for anyone working in TV, film, computer games or digital production. 6:00pm onwards.

Venue: Tyneside Bar Café, Tyneside Cinema, 10 Pilgrim St, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 6QG

■ Jill Graham

■ jill.graham@blueyonder.co.uk

### NORTH WEST

■ Rachel Pinkney 07966 230639

■ rachelpinkney@yahoo.co.uk

### NORTHERN IRELAND

■ John Mitchell

■ mitch.mvbroadcast@btinternet.com

### REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

■ Charles Byrne (353) 87251 3092

■ byrnecc@iol.ie

### SCOTLAND

■ James Wilson 07899 761167

■ james.wilson@cityofglasgow-college.ac.uk

### SOUTHERN

■ Gordon Cooper

■ gordonjcooper@gmail.com

### THAMES VALLEY

Wednesday 15 June

#### Summer BBQ and lecture

More details soon

Venue: Pincents Manor, Calcot, Reading RG31 4UQ

■ Penny Westlake

■ info@rtstvc.org.uk

### WALES

■ Hywel Wiliam 07980 007841

■ hywel@aim.uk.com

### YORKSHIRE

Friday 24 June

#### RTS Yorkshire Programme Awards 2016

Hosted by *Emmerdale* stars Laura Norton and Mark Charnock

Venue: New Dock Hall, The Royal Armouries, Leeds LS10 1LE

■ Lisa Holdsworth 07790 145280

■ lisa@allonewordproductions.co.uk

# TV diary

The jet-lagged creator of *Flowers*, **Will Sharpe**, goes walkabout in New York – and gets mistaken for an Uber driver



This is not a normal week for me. In fact, it's a positively weird one. Three and a half years of work are culminating in a one-week TX of my sitcom *Flowers* and the premiere of the feature film *The Darkest Universe*, a second venture with my friend Tom Kingsley.

SeesoTV has offered to fly me out to New York for a press screening of *Flowers*. So I am on a plane. Some cashews arrive but the packet is quite hard to open. That's fine. I can handle it. Then I tear the packet with unexpected violence and there are cashews and nut powder all over myself, the aisle and the floor.

Either nobody has noticed or everyone is pretending not to have noticed. At the hotel, the staff think I am an Uber driver collecting a client.

The first two episodes air in the UK. I get a beer and sit on my own, texting with friends. Later, I walk around New York for about three hours. I know the Comedy Cellar will be sold out. I go there anyway. What am I doing in New York all of a sudden? What the fuck is going on?

■ I guest on a podcast and leave feeling that I've talked utter jet-lagged

nonsense. Why did I talk about an irrational belief that there could be sharks in the pool when I'm swimming? I do a phone interview.

The Seeso rep asks why I didn't mention the positive reviews in the UK. I say that I thought it would be weird for me to talk about it. She says: "Next time, just talk about it." I go to Schnippers and order a chicken sandwich and fries.

A neighbouring table likes the look of it: "Avocado, bacon, all the shit – next time!" I remember that the American for "crisps" is "chips" and that the showbiz for "nervous, confused and terrified" is "super-pumped and excited!"

The press screening seems to go well. A lady from *Variety* stays behind and asks how the reception was in the UK. I say, "Really good." The Seeso rep nods covertly with approval. I feel like Anne Hathaway at the end of *The Devil Wears Prada*.

Over dinner, a conservative Democrat and moderate Republican have a civilised debate about the difficult, elusive middle ground of US politics.

■ Back on a plane. I am convinced that it will crash. I make a plan of survival in the event of it crashing (swim around gathering the clothes and mobile phones of dead people).

I wonder whether hiding in an overhead locker increases the chances of survival. Maybe if I wrapped myself in the blanket?

■ I go to the Picturehouse to check *The Darkest Universe* DCP with Tom Kingsley and our DOP, Will Hanke. We catch up. We all have black coffee. It makes me nostalgic for the shoot.

On the *Flowers* side, a social-media plan is discussed and I go to meet Sarah Bates and Selina MacArthur, the Assistant Editor and Editor of *Flowers*. I perch in the corner of a room looking for potential out-takes to publicise the show.

More Seeso action, this time in London. They take Channel 4, Kudos and a bunch of us out. Phil Clarke, Head of Comedy at Channel 4, is not very good at chopsticks and starts jokily using his glasses and a straw instead.

■ Tonight, the cast and crew of *Flowers* will gather in a pub to watch the final episode together. Next week, I will stop smoking, eat healthily and go swimming. And there won't be any sharks. I go outside and feel guilty about still smoking. It's spring. There's a nice light. What am I doing? What the fuck is going on?

*Will Sharpe is a writer, actor and director.*



# The power of Poldark

## Anatomy of a hit

Reviving a much-loved drama series from a less competitive and less knowing TV era was never going to be easy. But everything fell into place for the team that resurrected the swashbuckling period romance *Poldark*, originally a big hit for BBC One in the mid-1970s.

Even the notoriously unpredictable Cornish weather played ball – and the show went on to spark a media sensation when the rebooted Ross Poldark took his top off.

Forty thousand *Radio Times* readers voted Poldark – played by the ridiculously buff Aidan Turner – scything shirtless as last year's best TV moment.

Perhaps more to the point, the eight-part revival gave BBC One another Sunday-night hit drama and helped the channel to reaffirm its dominance over ITV.

It might have been a very different story, according to those who made

### Content

The scythes, sex and sunsets fired viewers' imaginations.

**Steve Clarke** hears from an RTS panel how *Poldark* was rebooted

the show, when they spoke last month at the latest RTS "Anatomy of a hit" session.

"Generally, remaking an old series is not a good thing," admitted Damien Timmer, Managing Director of *Poldark* producer Mammoth Screen, famous for such other costume productions as *Wuthering Heights* and the keenly anticipated *Victoria*. "Just because *Poldark* was a success first time around would not be a reason to do it again," he added.

Why, then, did Mammoth decide to risk all and revive one of the BBC's defining TV shows of the terrestrial era, probed the evening's chair, Boyd Hilton. It was not as if today's TV schedules were light on either serial or period drama.

"Every six months, I said in one of our regular development meetings that 'we should do a big, sweeping romantic Cornish saga such as *Poldark*,'" Timmer remembered.

At the time, he had not seen the original BBC series (watched by around 15 million viewers) because he wasn't old enough and hadn't read any of Winston Graham's dozen *Poldark* novels.

Still, he had a strong sense of the stories' ingredients: crashing waves, sea fogs, smuggling and misty moors.

He must have also reckoned on the appeal of a cracking good love story set against a melodramatic background of costume-clad skulduggery and intrigue.

The next time that Timmer mentioned his notion of doing a show akin

to *Poldark*, instead of the usual blank looks from his staff, one of them, Producer Karen Thrussell, said “Why don’t we just do *Poldark*?”

“She’d never watched the TV series: Karen was too young. But, as a girl, she’d read every single novel and fallen in love with Ross Poldark in a really big way,” the Mammoth Managing Director explained. As things turned out, she wouldn’t be the only one to have a crush on Ross.

Despite his colleague’s infatuation, Timmer told the RTS that he still had mixed feelings over a *Poldark* reboot – though, by then, Mammoth had splashed cash on the rights.

He approached playwright and screenwriter Debbie Horsfield. She was an unusual choice to pen a script for a period drama based on someone else’s stories.

Her forte is contemporary family fare, often set in the industrial North of England, rather than the windswept moors of the South West; Horsfield is a native of Manchester and so, coincidentally, was Winston Graham.

Never before had the writer adapted someone else’s words; Horsfield always works on her own projects. These have included the influential BBC One series *Cutting It*. The show focused on the lives and loves of a group of Mancunian hairdressers. *Cutting It* ran for four series and was nominated for both RTS and Bafta awards.

So why did Horsfield make an exception for *Poldark*? “It came at a time when I was asking myself why has nobody ever asked me to do an adaptation? They think I only write contemporary, Northern-based family drama.”

Devouring the first two *Poldark* books on holiday, she was quickly smitten by the power of Graham’s storytelling.

Not that the ingredients of a gripping page-turner always match the essential elements of an episodic, peak-time TV drama. “I remember writing the first line of dialogue that is not in the book and feeling incredibly nervous,” said the screenwriter. “I asked myself: ‘Do I have the right to do this?’”

The fact that Graham’s tales are “epic and domestic” appealed to her:

JUST BECAUSE  
POLDARK WAS  
A SUCCESS FIRST  
TIME AROUND  
WOULD NOT BE  
A REASON TO  
DO IT AGAIN

“It’s epic in the sweep of storytelling and the geography, the landscape and its heightened passions, but actually ordinary and domestic, detailed and, hopefully, identifiable with.

“That’s what I love when I watch it. I look at those landscapes and yet I look at those little scenes where two people are arguing in a room. That’s real life set in a gorgeous landscape.”

Horsfield’s scripts aside, the key to *Poldark*’s unusual success was casting Aidan Turner as the central character.

Both Horsfield and Timmer had the actor in mind for the part of Ross Poldark – although neither had told the other.

“One day, Damien and I were driving over Bodmin Moor in the fog. He asked me who should play Poldark,” recalled Horsfield. “He muttered that he’d thought of Aidan. I said: ‘Oh my God, that’s who I think should play Ross, too.’ That’s never happened to me before.”

Horsfield had enjoyed seeing Turner in BBC Two’s *Desperate Romantics* and BBC Three’s *Being Human*. Having, by this time, written a lot of the *Poldark* scripts, she’d concluded that the actor’s style suited the Ross character.

“In both *Desperate Romantics* and *Being Human*, Aidan played an outsider,” she explained. “Ross is very much an outsider, too. He’s rebellious and reckless.

“Also, Aidan is very charismatic but has vulnerability. He is charming and lights up the screen.”

Timmer said that getting him to agree to play Poldark was straightforward. He had recently finished *The Hobbit* and was scouting for a big, meaty part.

“The thing about *Poldark* is, if you haven’t got the right Poldark, there is no point in making it. You have to have someone in your head who you think is up to it,” emphasised the man from Mammoth. “Aidan completely made it his own.”

Thanks to the series-defining scene of Poldark, naked from the waist up, engaged in some pre-industrialisation agricultural work (see box, right) the re-versioned show rapidly consolidated a loyal fan base.

Inevitably, the tabloids made much of the show’s supposed raunchiness. >

## Britain catches chest fever

‘Who’d thought that one photograph [the picture of a topless Poldark scything in a Cornish field] would go global and there wouldn’t be a day in six months when it wasn’t in the paper,’ said screenwriter Debbie Horsfield. ‘Normally, after a show has had its first episode, you’re kind of begging the press to show a bit of interest.

‘There wasn’t a day when there weren’t four or five articles in the papers. It was wonderful.’ Horsfield revealed that she had written the scything scene before Aidan Turner was cast as Ross.

‘It said in the script that he’s scything, he’s sweating and it’s a hot day. It’s taking place from Demelza’s (Ross’s future wife) point of view.

‘It’s the day after they’ve had sex for the first time. The script is very clear. She’s looking at him thinking “Oh my God, what did I do? What’s



going to happen now? Where do we go from here?’”

‘I don’t think any of us thought: “Wow, that’s going to be in every newspaper for the next year.”’

Mammoth MD Damien Timmer said he remembered watching the rushes of the scything sequence and it being ‘scary how naive I was’ about the impact they would have.

As for Season 2, Horsfield said that there would be no more topless outdoor scenes. The series was shot in Cornwall in the autumn when it was too cold to have anyone take their shirt off.

But event chair Boyd Hilton said that he had spoken to Turner, who had told him that some of the scenes in the second series were ‘going to cause a stir’.



Panelists (from left): Jack Farthing, Debbie Horsfield, Anne Dudley and Damien Timmer

## Farthing's fun: playing a villain

**Jack Farthing, who played George Warleggan:** 'I initially auditioned for Francis Poldark (Ross's cousin). [At the time] I thought that I was much more suited to that role. But now I feel completely connected to George. I feel like I am as horrible as he is [laughter from the audience].

'It's fun to play a villain. The most fun thing is that he feels real... George is only effective if you can believe in him. If you don't, he just becomes a psychopath and you distance yourself from him.

'I can justify everything that he does. You can understand why he behaves the way he does... his chips, his resentments and his vulnerabilities.

'As an actor, that's all you can ask for, so that you can find a way into the part.'

› But Horsfield denies her version of *Poldark* is a "bodice ripper".

"I remember people saying, 'Oh, it's a bodice ripper.' And I thought: 'Is it? How do you define bodice ripper?' Is it a bodice ripper when no bodices are actually ripped? There is a moment when Ross's hand goes into Demelza's dress...

"You see a couple of scenes in the bedroom, where Ross has no top on. That's about as raunchy as it gets. There are no full-blown sex scenes... To be honest, I think it is quite subtly done."

To prove her point, the RTS audience was shown a clip of Ross romancing Demelza. It is the scene (taken from the novel) in which he slowly unfastens the back of her gown and then begins to caress her naked back.

Horsfield said the sequence involved writing "one of the most detailed pieces of stage directions" she had ever scripted. It needed to be "highly charged and erotic, but we didn't need to see very much. It was all in the detail."

Costume Designer Marianne Agertoft tried to ban the scene – not for reasons of propriety but because 18th-century English dresses fastened from the front. "Marianne said: 'I can't do a dress that

opens down the back,'" recalled Horsfield. "There was a lot of toing and froing. I said: 'I totally get it, but in this instance the story trumps historical accuracy.' Marianne then made this beautiful dress – which laces up at the back."

Much of the original *Poldark* was filmed in the studio. Mammoth's revival needed to embrace higher production values because audiences' expectations of TV drama are now so much higher.

There is the Cornish landscape at its shimmering summer best. "You write in the script, 'breathtaking sunset', but you never think you're actually going to get it. But it was one breathtaking sunset after another," said Horsfield.

Interior and exterior scenes were shot at several West Country historic sites to help create an 18th-century vibe. These included Chavenage House in Gloucestershire and the Georgian streets of Corsham in Wiltshire.

The approach to the narrative was strictly 21st-century, however.

"The requirements of storytelling today are rather different to what they were in the 1970s," explained Horsfield, who has adapted all 10 episodes of



Paul Hampartsourmian

## The classic art of scoring *Poldark*



BBC

Season 2, which is expected to air this autumn. “It is required that you set out your stall and get your story rolling within the first page. Blame the remote control and 9 million channels for that.

“That is the reality. That’s what you’re working with. I am not complaining but, nowadays, you do tell stories in a different way.”

One factor that remains unchanged from the time when *Poldark* made its small-screen debut is the importance of working together as a team.

With this in mind, Horsfield made a point of always making herself available to the cast, by phone or via email, during filming. This enabled her to answer any script-related questions.

“What you realise is that the process is entirely collaborative. You cannot start thinking, ‘Oh my God, it’s all about me;’ she told the audience. “It’s not all about anyone, it’s all about all of us together. If we don’t all collaborate, we don’t actually have an end product.”

***‘Poldark: Anatomy of a hit’ was held at One Great George Street, central London, on 14 April. The producers were Sally Doganis and Barney Hooper.***

The Oscar-winning composer Anne Dudley wrote the music for *Poldark*. Many critics praised her score. *Variety* said it had ‘haunting and wonderfully romantic’ qualities.

Dudley told the RTS that composers come on board much later than the rest of the team. ‘You can’t start work until the film is edited,’ she said. ‘Generally, I’m working with a final cut.’

Screenwriter Debbie Horsfield wanted something similar to Vaughan Williams’s *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*: ‘I liked the lush romanticism of it but also the grittiness of the solo strings.’

‘All through *Poldark*, there’s a contrast between the solo violin played in a folk style without very much vibrato – very hard and uncompromising – and the orchestra,’ Dudley explained.

She added: ‘The violin represents the character of Ross Poldark who is at odds with his surroundings and his background.

‘He is born into the gentry but he identifies with the common people. He is always dissatisfied with what’s going on. The violin stands out against

the orchestra. That was my starting point. I then did a little research.’

Dudley listened to Cornish folk songs. She found their ‘rather modal style of English pastoral music’ inspiring. So the composer set out to invent ‘a world of music that is part of the Cornish tradition’.

She was determined that the title sequence should contain a proper theme. ‘That’s something you don’t always see on TV these days,’ regretted Dudley. ‘I wanted the title sequence to reflect the imagery of crashing waves and passion, something that takes you into that world. I tried to represent that with the piano. The theme is played on the violin in folk style. That is then taken over by the orchestra but the violin has the last word.’

She wrote on piano before making a demo, which key members of the production assessed.

Once this was approved, the orchestrations were written. Dudley then oversaw the studio recording.

‘The aim was to hide the music from the viewer while heightening the emotional content,’ she said.

## Audio

Difficulty hearing dialogue in TV drama is a recurring irritation for audiences. Is there a simple solution, asks **Maggie Brown**

**T**he recent controversy over poor-quality sound on the hit BBC One show *Happy Valley* has once again focused senior TV executives' minds on the problem of inaudible dialogue in drama.

Last month, BBC Controller of TV Channels Charlotte Moore pledged to tackle the "big issue" of sound. She added that it was "incredibly hard to get to the bottom of where things go wrong". She explained she had introduced a new set of best-practice guidelines to help avoid future problems with inadequate audio.

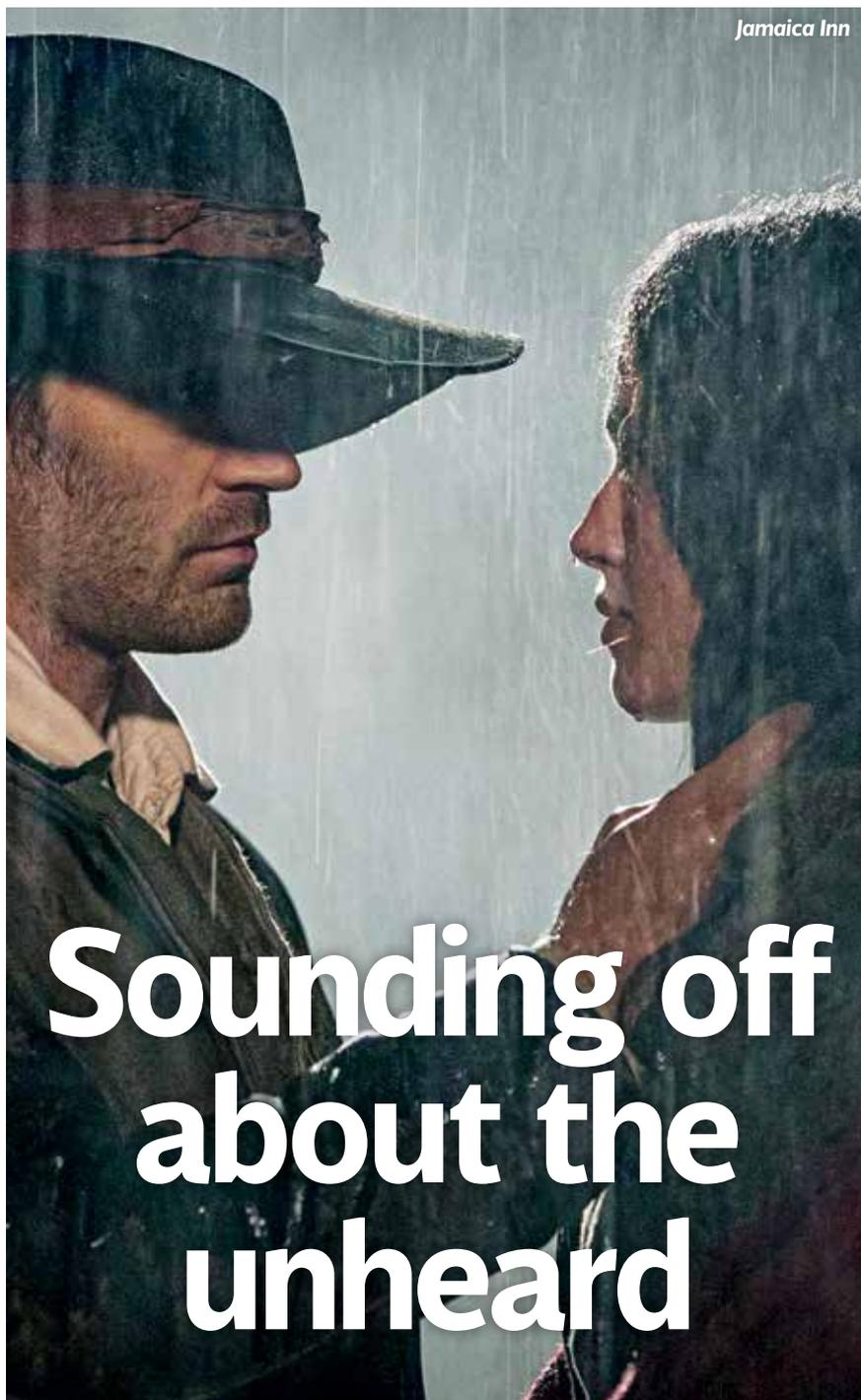
Complaints over muffled dialogue in high-profile TV dramas show that this is a regular source of irritation for viewers. Two years ago, another BBC One drama, *Jamaica Inn*, generated more than 2,000 complaints about mumbled conversations; its adaptor, Emma Frost, admitted that it "sounded like listening through mud".

In 2013, Director-General Tony Hall highlighted difficulties with hearing dialogue in drama as one of the issues he wanted to confront. "Actors muttering can be testing," he said. "I don't want to sound like a grumpy old man but I think muttering is something we could have a look at."

And, as far back as 2009, the then-BBC One Controller Jay Hunt launched an "audibility project", involving a 20,000-strong panel of viewers and listeners.

Why, then, do these difficulties persist? Are they endemic, or is it a problem literally built into flat-screen TVs – something highlighted by *Which?* magazine. "Modern TVs might have fantastic picture quality, but their sound is often disappointing, because new, slimline TVs have limited space for built-in speakers," it said in a consumer report.

Moore's explanation that, after



Episode 1 of *Happy Valley*, "we took everyone back to the edit suite to really make sure, to work very hard to make it crisper, and change these [sound] levels" appears to have irritated some sound specialists.

Chris Ashworth, 55, a veteran sound engineer, who worked on the BBC's acclaimed *War and Peace* and, most recently, Netflix's *The Crown*, says that the belief that sound can be fixed by simply changing the levels has astounded technicians.

He says: "I welcome the debate.

It is time to get away from the blame culture. A lot of my colleagues feel undervalued."

Another sound engineer adds: "The levels are not a problem. The whole nation can hear an actor mumbling. If you bring up the levels, the actor is still mumbling. There is an entire culture of denial at the BBC. Written guidelines, a set of training videos... are pointless."

Ashworth is a member of the Institute of Professional Sound, which has around 600 members working in television, film and theatre (see box on



**IF THE  
SPEECH IS  
MUMBLED...  
I WOULD  
REGARD IT  
AS THE DUTY  
OF A SOUND  
RECORDIST  
TO REPORT IT**

the cues, but not the lines, because “I want to understand what is being said and I am not over-familiar with the script.

“Actors who are cast and paid to do the job, turn their back or head, or speak quietly. Some directors like the fact that the audience is straining to hear what is said.”

If he found audibility problems, it was not his job to directly instruct actors: he marked the place in the script and told the director.

Diederick Santer, Joint Chief Executive of the drama producer Kudos, says that he sometimes has to resort to subtitles because the sound is so bad. He has poor hearing in his left ear.

A former Executive Producer of *EastEnders* and ITV’s *Grantchester*, he backs Moore’s assessment of what can go wrong.

“She is right... it is a complex combination of factors. Actors mumbling can be an issue, particularly on a show going for a naturalistic look. In real life, people do mumble.

“In real life, the people they are talking to say pardon, and it gets repeated more clearly. It is down to producers and sound recordists to police this.”

It can be, acknowledges another producer, disheartening for actors, when they are immersed in the part, to be told to do it again, enunciating their words more clearly. They need to bear in mind that the real audience, unlike in the theatre, is absent.

*Jamaica Inn* lost a third of its viewers following the outcry over hard-to-hear dialogue. Gabriel Byrne’s performance in *Quirke* was also criticised later the same year for the same fault.

Santer adds: “For sound professionals, recording on set is tricky.” The use of two or three cameras makes it challenging for boom operators who must stay out of shot: “They have to be creative to find places to put microphones. ▶

BBC

page 12). The IPS view is that Moore is – in this case – making a simple problem complicated.

Ashworth concedes, in fairness, that audibility is not just an issue for the BBC: it is industry wide and includes documentaries as well as drama.

Nevertheless, filming location drama often presents a unique set of challenges for sound engineers. There is the signal-to-noise ratio – the recorded dialogue against the background noise, including the sound of generators.

Take Ashworth’s experience of

working on *War and Peace*. The battle scenes, where lightweight equipment and short booms were used alongside hand-held cameras, presented singular problems. So, too, did Jim Broadbent’s scenes as the emotionally repressed Prince Nikolai facing the loss of his son Prince Andrei.

“We were using sets inside a very echoey Lithuanian warehouse. We contained it. We used clip-on mics,” Ashworth explains. Broadbent’s scenes were hailed as a triumph.

His method of working is to learn

› not in shot or casting shadows. Considerations of sound are almost always secondary to those of picture on set.”

He adds that radio mics, often resorted to as a solution, give the flattest of sound. This means that everyone sounds the same. Furthermore, they can pick up the rustling noises made by clothing.

Simon Bishop, Chair of the Institute of Professional Sound, agrees: “There is a huge lack of understanding by producers, younger people, about what makes a good soundtrack.

“On a TV or film set, everyone – actors, make-up, costume, lighting, camera operators, directors – are there to make the picture experience good. It may be that three out of a crew of anything from 25 to 125 are doing the sound.

“The camera is king. But, if the sound doesn’t work, you don’t have a programme. There is a complete imbalance.”

In post-production, it is down to the dialogue editor, says Santer, to make sure the best takes are used. They can swap in sound from other takes, mix and match to create the best dialogue track.

But “this is a slow and time-consuming job. And shows with tight deadlines or low budgets may not

## WHEEL IN A CRAPPY TELLY AND PLAY THE WHOLE THING IN THE WAY THAT REPLICATES THE EXPERIENCE AT HOME

have the resources to do it properly.” Automatic dialogue replacement is an option, where the sound recorded on the day is unusable.

“The problem is that the replacement isn’t always convincing... a mumbled or slurred line is uttered by mumbling or slurred lips, so the synch-perfect enunciation on to those lips can look and sound ridiculous.”

At the final mix, after adding in the music, “as you sit in the audio suite surrounded by big speakers, you can hear every chirp of bird song, every pluck of harp, every lip smack, it all sounds rich and lovely.

“What I do and a number of other producers and engineers do, is wheel in a crappy telly and play the whole thing in the way that replicates the experience at home... and not compel the audience to switch on subtitles, which I am so often forced to do by badly recorded and mixed shows.”

Perhaps the last word should go to Tom Harper, Director of *War and Peace*. He says that, while he respects the views of sound recordists, in his opinion and experience, if there are audibility problems, “they arise at the broadcast and TV reception point, as the soundtrack is played out on reduced bandwidth to two tiny speakers.”

## Dialogue that doesn’t lose the director’s ear

Simon Bishop, Chair of the Institute of Professional Sound, says: ‘A lot of this is a people problem. We need producers with balls, who will stand up to the director and actor and say: “This is incomprehensible.”

‘Most of the issues with sound recording could be solved before a frame is shot, if people made sensible decisions from the outset. I mean people taking responsibility beforehand.

‘Sound recordists know there are numerous actors who are mumblers, who have form. It is solvable. It is a British trait. We don’t like embarrassing confrontations.

‘If an actor chooses to mumble, I can make a perfectly accurate record of it. You will hear mumbling. If an actor has been told [by the director] to speak quietly, we can bring the level up.

‘But if the fundamental speech is mumbled it will be unclear, because it is unclear, and I would regard it as the



duty of a sound recordist to report it up the chain. I say that my Mum only gets to watch this once. If people can’t hear, they’ll turn off.

‘But what happens if they [directors and producers] don’t listen? Or the shooting timetable is being hurried along? Directors have many plates to spin. If the sound recordist keeps going back to the director, you can end up in a situation where you have lost the ear of the director, who doesn’t want

to hear negatives. There are definitely directors who choose to ignore sound technicians – the experts.

‘Modern production techniques also conspire to make the end result less good. Twenty years ago, shooting on film, rushes would be watched overnight by producers, and the sound [checked] through a loudspeaker.

‘If there was a problem, including background noise, they would pick it up. In 2016, the producer might watch on an iPad or even iPhone. That doesn’t lend a [proper] appraisal of the sound.

‘That said, 99% of all film and television sound is excellent. Programmes, from *Waking the Dead* to *The Hollow Crown* and *Wolf Hall*, all have beautiful sound.’

The Institute of Professional Sound changed its name in 2013 from the Institute of Broadcast Sound, which was founded in 1977 by BBC TV and Radio and ITV sound balancers.

## Film production

Can the new boss of Channel 4's Oscar-winning movie arm deliver a profit? Stuart Kemp investigates



12 Years a Slave

20th Century Fox

# Film4 ups the stakes

**W**hen Film4 chief David Kosse announced plans to stand down, the UK

film industry didn't, at first, take him seriously. And it wasn't just because the news broke on April Fool's Day.

Just a few weeks previously, Channel 4 CEO David Abraham had secured the green light from his board to significantly bolster the film unit's budget from £15m to £25m for 2016.

Subsequently, Abraham and Kosse had embarked on an industry charm offensive, extolling the virtues of working with more ambition and a fatter wallet. It was a clear endorsement of the more aggressive and commercially minded deal-making that Kosse, the former Universal Pictures International executive, had been hired, in November 2014, to deploy.

No wonder that the industry was surprised when it was announced that Kosse was planning to move on in June. He has been poached to run the international division at US

mini-studio STX Entertainment, but will work with Film4 on a consultancy basis until October.

"David has done a phenomenal job and, of course, it would have been lovely to have had him for another year or two," says Abraham.

The Channel 4 CEO moved swiftly to replace Kosse. He wanted to ensure there was no loss of momentum, and hired Cohen Media Group President Daniel Battsek.

The former Miramax Films President will start in July, initially with Battsek and Kosse working together. "Given his experience, seniority and ability, David has achieved what I wanted him to in terms of resetting the business

strategy," says Abraham. "The important thing now is that Daniel has taken the job on the basis that he supports the strategy and he wants to build upon it."

As Abraham had previously spearheaded an exhaustive [and expensive] eight-month executive search before hiring Kosse, the executive talent hunt still felt fresh, he says. Board-level discussions to bring in another experienced high-flyer were fast-tracked.

"With the new team and the strategy, David and I were looking at expanding the team at the top end, anyway," Abraham says. "With Daniel, we have someone who, from what I can tell, has been well received in the global industry and here in the UK as well."

UK-born Battsek, who has spent more than a decade in the US, says he has "retained strong ties with British film-makers". He regards joining Film4 as "almost like coming full circle".

He will arrive to a development slate boasting fresh projects from feted film-makers Lenny Abrahamson, Andrea Arnold, Yorgos Lanthimos, >

**DAVID ABRAHAM  
MOVED SWIFTLY  
TO REPLACE  
DAVID KOSSE  
... AND HIRED  
DANIEL BATTSEK**



Danny Boyle's follow-up to *Trainspotting* shoots this year

Channel 4 DVD

▶ Andrew Haigh, Steve McQueen, Clio Barnard and Mike Leigh, among many others.

His links on both sides of the Atlantic, just like Kosse's, are important to Film4's future role in what is a global-facing part of Channel 4's business.

"Film remains an important part of our remit and our history," notes Abraham. "We've made an important contribution to supporting independent British film-makers throughout our existence, going back to 1982.

"I've always had the ambition to find ways to sustainably increase our commitment to film, as long as we could find a path for it to be just that: sustainable."

It is not going to be easy, however, given film's high-risk status. "Bluntly, it was not well known in the industry that we were losing 50p in every pound on the activities of the division," reveals Abraham. "Up until recently, that [loss] was a valid part of the cross-subsidy model of Channel 4, which had to be paid for by the TV division."

Together, Kosse and Abraham investigated ways for the small but significant investments that Film4 has traditionally made in projects to provide a better upside from any future commercial success.

## A BRITISH BROADCASTER DEAL IS STILL ONE OF THE MOST VALUED AND LUCRATIVE PARTS OF ANY FILM'S BUDGET PACKAGE

"I could see a disparity between the amount of work Film4 was putting into developing films, getting them to a point where they could attract other investment and progress to production, versus the returns that were coming back to us," says Kosse.

"It was frustrating to me that other investors, who'd come in for a bigger share of the budget once some of the heavy lifting was already done, were making more money from our films than we were."

To this end, Kosse has struck a four-picture deal with FP Films, the production company set up by *The Inbetweeners'* creators Damon Beesley and Iain Morris, and the UK's Entertainment

Film Distributors (EFD). The aim is to develop, produce and finance four comedy features over the next two years with Film4 and EFD sharing all rights.

The £3.5m, big-screen version of the Beesley and Morris hit TV show is one of the few productions that Channel 4 fully bankrolled – even if, taste-wise, it wasn't entirely to Film4's liking. *The Inbetweeners* movie grossed more than £40m in the UK and spawned a sequel that grossed just shy of another £40m.

Kosse also sealed a 50/50 co-financing deal with Fox Searchlight for the race drama *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*, by *In Bruges* writer-director Martin McDonagh.

The agreement means that Film4 will benefit should Fox Searchlight's worldwide roll-out garner box-office gold. Produced by Graham Broadbent and Peter Czernin at Blueprint Pictures, the film is in production in North Carolina.

Being in business with Film4 is an attractive proposition for UK producers. A British broadcaster deal is still one of the most valued and lucrative parts of any film's budget package, even if Film4 is only involved at the development stage.

"Film4 remains an important partner on the project after partnering to develop it," emphasises producer

WE WERE  
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OF THE  
DIVISION



Asif Kapadia's acclaimed documentary *Amy*

Channel 4

Stephen Cornwell of UK- and US-based The Ink Factory. He worked with Film4 on the development of Ang Lee's *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk*, produced by The Ink Factory.

Film4's latest movies have a lot to live up to. Three Film4 projects took home Oscars shortly before Kosse's announcement: Brie Larson picked up Best Actress for Abrahamson's *Room*, Asif Kapadia's *Amy* was voted Best Documentary Feature, and Alex Garland's sci-fi drama, *Ex Machina*, won for Best Visual Effects.

"You can see from the success that we had in this year's awards season that Film4 has a vital role to play in developing and nurturing film production in the UK," says Kosse. "But it also enables home-grown talent to compete on the world stage and to make films that reach global audiences."

Meanwhile, Andrea Arnold's *American Honey* will be flying the flag for Film4

– and, more importantly, female filmmakers – in competition at the Cannes Film Festival. At the same time, Danny Boyle's *Trainspotting 2* and Paddy Considine's *Journeyman* begin filming.

"The number of Oscars that we have won over the past 15 to 20 years versus the BBC/ITV demonstrates that something very special is going on creatively here. That reinforces the overall position of Channel 4 in the cultural industries," Abraham says. "I am very positive about what is coming next."

"Our new strategy is about saying: 'Let's be more ambitious to make it self-sufficient'. And should Film4 be in the happy position of being in profit in the future, I would expect that to be immediately drawn into future budgets for the division."

When it comes to how serious the business of film is to Channel 4 and the broadcaster's remit, Film4 isn't fooling around.

## Film4 projects

### Out now and coming soon

**High-Rise** (Ben Wheatley) cast: Tom Hiddleston, Jeremy Irons, Sienna Miller, Elizabeth Moss

**Our Kind of Traitor** (Susanna White) cast: Ewan McGregor, Damian Lewis

**Trespass Against Us** (Adam Smith) cast: Michael Fassbender, Brendan Gleeson

**Free Fire** (Ben Wheatley) cast: Brie Larson, Cillian Murphy

**Una** (Benedict Andrews) cast: Tobias Menzies, Rooney Mara

**American Honey** (Andrea Arnold) cast: Shia LaBeouf, Sasha Lane

**The Oath** (Baltasar Kormakur)

**Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk** (Ang Lee) cast: Kristen Stewart, Garrett Hedlund, Vin Diesel

**How To Talk To Girls at Parties** (John Cameron Mitchell) cast: Elle Fanning, Nicole Kidman, Ruth Wilson, Matt Lucas

### In pre-production or shooting

**Journeyman** (Paddy Considine) cast: Jodie Whittaker, Paddy Considine

**Old Boys** (Toby MacDonald)

**Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri** (Martin McDonagh) cast: Woody Harrelson, Frances McDormand, Sam Rockwell

**Trainspotting 2** (Danny Boyle) cast: Ewan McGregor, Robert Carlyle, Jonny Lee Miller, Ewen Bremner, Kelly Macdonald

**Dark River** (Clio Barnard)

### Recent Oscar winners

Steve McQueen's *12 Years a Slave*; Danny Boyle's *Slumdog Millionaire*; Lenny Abrahamson's *Room*; Alex Garland's *Ex Machina*; Asif Kapadia's *Amy*; Phyllida Lloyd's *The Iron Lady*

### Critical acclaim

Mike Leigh's *Mr Turner*; Chris Morris' *Four Lions*; Shane Meadows' *This Is England*; Clio Barnard's *The Selfish Giant*; David Mackenzie's *Starred Up*; and Jonathan Glazer's *Under the Skin*

### Recent releases

Todd Haynes' *Carol*; Sarah Gavron's *Suffragette*; Justin Kurzel's *Macbeth*; Yorgos Lanthimos' *The Lobster*; Andrew Haigh's *45 Years*; and Paolo Sorrentino's *Youth*



# Who should keep the BBC honest?

**T**here is no need to hire Nostradamus to predict what BBC governance will look like in the future. What had been the most likely outcome became a racing certainty after the publication of the Clementi report in March. It should be officially confirmed when culture secretary John Whittingdale publishes the white paper on the renewal of the BBC's Royal Charter, due later this month.

As Sir David Clementi, the former Chair of Prudential, made clear in his consultation paper, there were only three possible models for future BBC governance and regulation.

One could persevere with the BBC Trust while reforming the body to reflect the experience of its 10 years of existence. Or a specially tailored regulator could be created just for the BBC – Ofbeeb. The third option would see full regulatory oversight of the BBC shift to Ofcom, a move that would be balanced by a heavyweight, unitary BBC board.

Clementi's basic choice could hardly have been clearer – though serious practical and conceptual issues still need to be addressed and resolved.

In effect, the report marked the death knell of the BBC Trust: it argued

## Regulation

### Do Government proposals for BBC governance threaten its independence? **Raymond Snoddy** takes soundings

that regulatory oversight of the BBC should pass wholly to Ofcom and that the BBC should have a unitary board, with a majority of its directors being non-executive.

The primary responsibility for protecting the interests of the licence-fee payers should lie with the BBC board.

Clementi decided that the Trust model was flawed because it conflated governance and regulation. Even if reformed, it would still leave two boards within one organisation, leading to confused responsibilities.

He rejected an Ofbeeb because the history of single regulators for one organisation had not been good.

Whittingdale welcomed Clementi's work. Perhaps not untypically, he then added a rather incendiary comment. He

said he envisaged that only two or three members of a 13-strong unitary board would be BBC employees. All the non-executives would be appointed by the government – something that Clementi pointedly did not recommend.

Rona Fairhead, Chair of the BBC Trust, says: "It seems clear that the move is towards a unitary board, which is what we argued for, and a strong regulator with bespoke powers, which is what we asked for, and it looks as if that will be Ofcom."

She emphasises, however, the need for clarity about the lines of accountability in future governance arrangements. Moreover, relationships need to be based on trust and respect.

"You need to ensure that audiences are properly represented and that governance is, and is seen to be, independent of vested interests and government, and that it works in a transparent regulatory framework," says Fairhead.

Richard Tait, a former senior member of the BBC Trust, believes that Clementi's report in its entirety represents a reasonable compromise.

"I have argued in the past that it might be better to have a separate, bespoke regulator, but I know a lost cause when I see one," concedes Tait.

"Ofcom has shown itself to be a good regulator. If it staffs up with the

right people, I don't think there is any reason for people to be too nervous about it being the BBC regulator," he adds.

Phil Harding, a former senior BBC executive, believes that, overall, a unitary board makes sense. Regulation by Ofcom is "fine" – although he, too, would have preferred an independent regulator.

"What I am concerned about [if the Government accepts Clementi] is: who will safeguard the public interest? Ofcom is obviously going to do a job of regulation in dealing with complaints, but is Ofcom really the right body to decide what the BBC should be doing in the public interest?" he asks.

It would be difficult for BBC non-executive directors to look after the public interest, because they would be the ones drawing up the plans and, therefore, would be "too close to the action", argues Harding.

The Ofcom solution to BBC regulation faces at least one practical drawback – the inevitable and considerable increase in its workload.

Ofcom Chief Executive Sharon White points out that the BBC has to deal with around 350,000 complaints a year, compared with the 25,000 that Ofcom receives concerning the UK's other broadcasters.

Clementi made it clear, however, that editorial complaints should, initially, go to the BBC in a "broadcaster-first" policy. Only appeals against BBC adjudications should go to Ofcom.

Despite that, Colette Bowe, the former Chair of Ofcom, is concerned that the extra workload might unbalance Ofcom. On top of its increased regulatory responsibilities, there would be the work involved in contributing to the debate over what the BBC should be.

"I thought that there should be a second body, but I have come off that idea. I think the unitary board is going to have to do it and Ofcom will have to do its job," argues Bowe. "But let's be clear: regulation is not governance and the governance of the BBC is going to have to be massively strengthened."

The biggest outstanding controversy is over who appoints the non-executives to the new, all-powerful unitary board.

In contrast to the Whittingdale approach, Clementi advocated that the BBC should be able to appoint non-executives, apart from those representing the nations and English regions.

As in the past, they would initially be chosen by a committee made up of a

civil servant from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, an independent assessor and the BBC Chair.

Recommended names would then go to ministers. If the government of the day wished to appoint the Chair and Deputy Chair, the Commissioner for Public Appointments should be involved in selecting candidates.

The controversy was intensified recently, when the outgoing Commissioner for Public Appointments, Sir David Normington, alleged that Government ministers had increased their efforts to have Conservative sympathisers appointed to public bodies since the general election.

Sir Michael Lyons, former Chair of the BBC Trust, accepts that if the Government merely oversees the process, then that is not very different from what has happened previously.

"However, we now have enough from David Normington to know that this is a government that you simply cannot trust with even that process. Ministers want their own followers [on public bodies] – how are they going to resist that on the BBC?" asks Lyons.

Harding, who believes that BBC non-executives should not be part of the public-appointments process, often works abroad with broadcasters in developing countries, where he emphasises the difference between state and public broadcasting.

"If we end up with a BBC in which the non-executives are appointed by the government, I do not know how I can go abroad and say the BBC is a public broadcasting organisation," he says. "They could look at me and say: 'No, it's a state broadcaster.'"

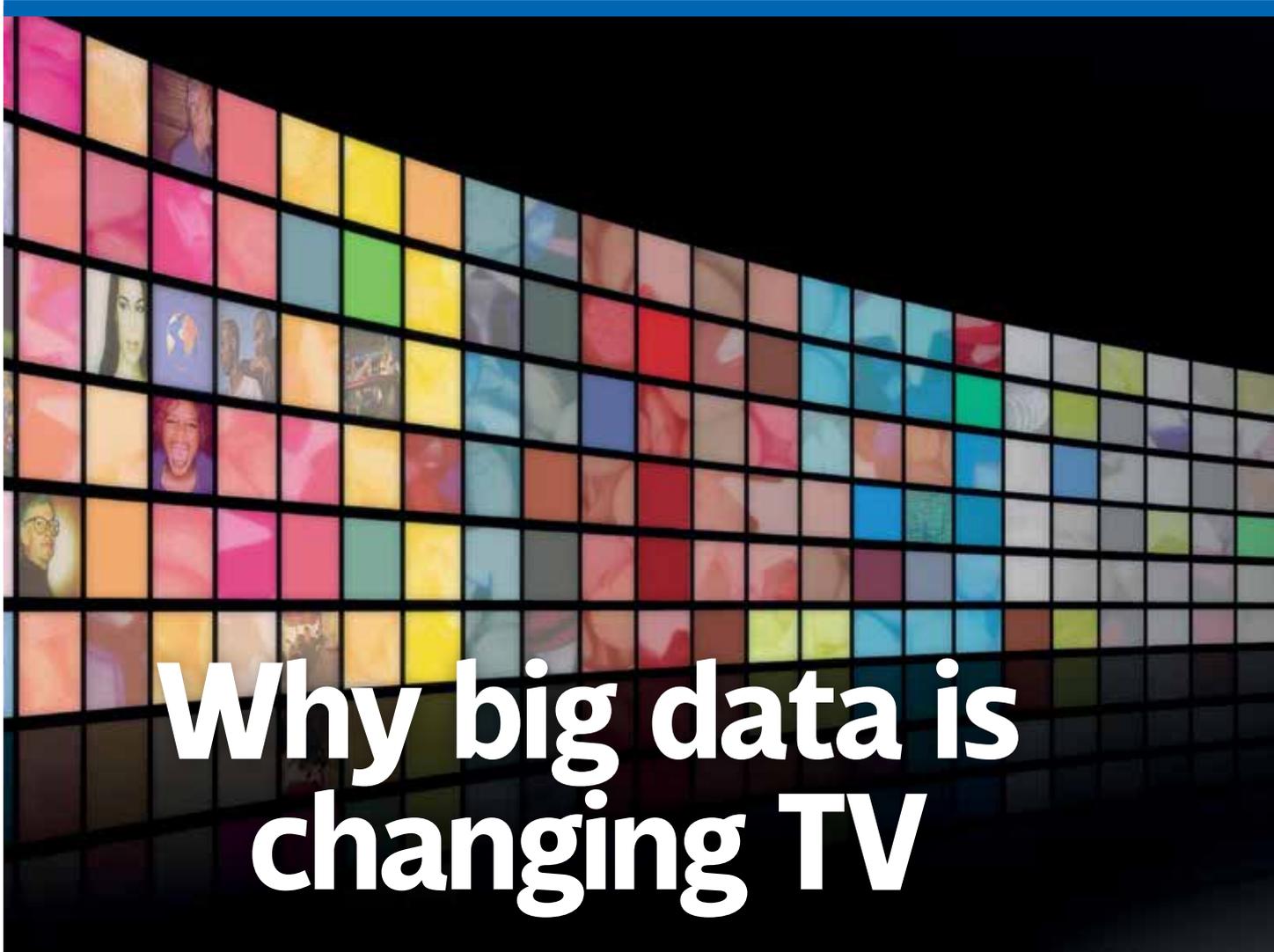
Tait, a former Editor-in-Chief of ITN, says he is nervous about the new BBC board being too influenced by political appointments. "It was catastrophic for the BBC in the Thatcher years, when there were too many governors of a similar view," he warns.

Bowe has a different perspective. She argues that Ofcom directors are all appointed by government and no one suggests that Ofcom doesn't act in the public interest.

"I was appointed by a Labour Government to chair Ofcom and I don't think anyone commented once on who appointed me or what my politics were," she says. "The idea that, if you are appointed by the government, you lose your independence is not right," she insists. "You have to judge people by what they do."

I DON'T THINK THERE IS ANY REASON FOR PEOPLE TO BE TOO NERVOUS ABOUT OFCOM BEING THE BBC REGULATOR

MINISTERS WANT THEIR OWN FOLLOWERS [ON PUBLIC BODIES] – HOW ARE THEY GOING TO RESIST THAT ON THE BBC?



# Why big data is changing TV

**B**ig data, with Netflix at the forefront, is transforming the way that TV is commissioned and watched, but not as radically or quickly as many in the broadcasting industry believe. Its impact, for the moment, remains most keenly felt in advertising.

This was the conclusion of a sold-out RTS early-evening event, “Big data or smart data? Data and the impact on TV advertising, commissioning and content”. Chaired by the former BBC Media Correspondent Torin Douglas, the RTS panel – composed of both broadcasting and advertising experts – explained the appeal of big data.

In a TV context, big data is the digital trail left by viewers as they flick from channel to channel. This information is invaluable for broadcasters and advertisers alike: it reveals the audience’s likes and dislikes and allows broadcasters to target their content more accurately. However, when it comes to informing the creative process, it is still in its infancy.

## Audience information

Netflix is not alone in using analytics to understand how audiences respond to video content.

**Matthew Bell reports**

Unfortunately, the term “big data”, while widely used, is not the only name in town. “We tend to talk about ‘insight’ now, rather than ‘big data,’” said Sky Media Deputy Managing Director Jamie West.

“It was a convenient phrase five or six years ago, but I don’t think it has too much use now,” said Mark Connolly, Media Performance and Investment Director at the advertising agency Havas Media Group. “[The issue is] what you do with [big data], rather than what you call it.”

And big data is not the only kind of data available to the media industry. “There are lots of different types of data that are useful for decision-making,” said Laura Chittick, Senior Manager at Accenture Digital Video.

Sources include Barb (Broadcasters’ Audience Research Board), which has provided the official viewing figures for UK television audiences, using a panel of 5,100 of households, since 1981.

“Barb is also great, because you know exactly who’s doing what in which household and for what demographic. The combination of both [types of data] is really powerful,” said Chittick. It would seem that Barb ratings are not ready for the scrap heap any time soon.

“Data can help you to understand what audiences are doing,” continued Chittick, providing “insight into consumption and behaviours”. She argued that “average video consumption per user per session” was a key measurement. “You want that to go up because you want to build loyalty and video viewership.”



## Sky changes face of TV ads

Big data has been mined most deeply in the advertising field. At this RTS early-evening event, Sky Media's Jamie West discussed how the pay-TV company has used analytics to offer more to advertisers.

In January 2014, Sky launched AdSmart. This allows advertisers to show different commercials to homes watching the same television programme. The 'addressable TV' product is based on 940 attributes or data points. These can be combined to create unique buying audiences for advertisers.

Using publicly available information to identify groups or demographics, AdSmart enables advertisers to target households to drive more effective advertising outcomes. For us, it was about making TV advertising more relevant to more brands,' said West.

'When we serve a relevant ad to a household, channel switching reduces by 33% over the ad break – that, for me, means that, if you serve relevant ads, you get a more engaged audience,' he added.

In autumn 2015, Sky AdVance came on to the market. This allows advertisers to deliver multi-platform campaigns across different screens, so that audiences see the right ad at the right time, in the right sequence and on the right screen. At the heart of Sky AdVance is big data, which is gathered from more than 3 million Sky households, providing second-by-second viewing data.

West also revealed that Sky is building data visualisation tools 'to delineate the effects of an advertising campaign. Agencies and advertisers will be able to press a button and see how their campaigns are performing.'

Havas Media Group's Mark Connolly argued that 'big data is changing media consumption – clients are spending less money but are prepared to pay higher prices for the media they buy because they can individually control how much value every single impression or TV ad spot [offers].'

## THERE IS A NEED FOR GUT INSTINCT... WHERE BIG DATA SHOULD BE UTILISED IS TO HIGHLIGHT OPPORTUNITIES

Chittick added that the "frequency with which people come back to watch content" is also important.

Big data, though, reveals more than viewers' TV consumption; it also provides information on their willingness to pay for content and stick with ads, rather than changing channels during commercial breaks.

"People will pay for different types of [TV] bundles and put up with different types of advertising. You can learn about what each individual will do," explained Chittick.

"We use a huge number of data touch points [information from interaction with customers] to help improve our customer experience, said Sky Media's West. "This is both in terms of how we make decisions on content that we acquire or create and how we promote and schedule that content, through to how we promote product upgrades."

So-called "addressable TV" enables Sky Media (see box, right) to take personalised advertising a stage further. It allows advertisers to target TV audiences and serve ads to different households that fit certain geographic, demographic and behavioural characteristics.

"Personalisation runs all the way through our business from the call centre to commissioning, to advertising," added West, who is responsible for the development of emerging advertising opportunities at Sky.

Sky's big data is gathered from more than 3 million Sky households. Customers give (or refuse) their consent for Sky to use this data when they first subscribe. At any point during their >

# QUESTION & ANSWER

**Q** Barb is the ratings currency for broadcasters and advertisers, but what Sky is offering is a lot more useful. When are we going to be able to use your information?

**A** **Jamie West, Sky Media Deputy Managing Director:** Barb is the gold standard and hugely accurate at measuring audiences



Torin Douglas

Paul Hampartsoumian

at scale. I passionately believe that Barb, as a panel, will be there for the long term....

In terms of how we share data with partners, we are open to conversations. We do make elements of our panel open to third parties, but it is a conversation about how you [get] that data.

What's the value exchange? We've invested millions of pounds in building a panel and millions of pounds maintaining that panel. It's not something we're going to give away for free....

Be absolutely clear, what we are not doing is giving any personal, identifiable data. We're giving aggregated, anonymised data.

**Q** Do you think that Barb is here to stay?

**A** **Mark Connolly, Media Performance and Investment**

**Director, Havas Media Group:** Yes, because of the independent nature of it.

**Q** Is big data just for big corporates?

**A** **Mark Connolly:** I don't buy into that.... [The key is] to use data intelligently.

**A** **Laura Chittick, Senior Manager, Accenture Digital Video:** Operationally, it could be easier [to be small]. A lot of the corporates that we work with face challenges in terms of the silos they themselves create and the way they work.

**Q** How expensive is it to have access to big data? Is that beyond small companies?

**A** **Laura Chittick:** I don't think so these days. You've got a bunch of different data sources. Depending on what you want to do with it, you don't have to industrialise it into big-data platforms.... It doesn't have to be a huge technology investment.

**A** **Mark Connolly:** Big data can be whatever you want it to be.... It doesn't have to be expensive: [the cost] depends on what you actually want to do with that data.

**Q** Is there a danger that data will kill creativity? Is there still a place in TV for gut instinct?

**A** **Mark Connolly:** Yes, 100% there's a need for gut instinct.... Where big data should be utilised is to highlight opportunities but... to have that human interaction... is absolutely necessary, both on the media-execution side and also the creative side.

**A** **Pedro Cosa Fernández, Deputy Head of Analytics, Channel 4:** We've been trying to use data to make decisions more on a research and development basis. [The question] "Would you watch [the programme] again?" is something that a machine can't really [answer].

**A** **Laura Chittick:** The curation and editorial [decisions] that people love about broadcasting brands will remain a differentiator. I watch BBC Four because I love the programmes that people create on it....

That brand attachment is going to stay and that is what broadcasters are really good at.

► contract customers can withdraw their consent.

"The data gives us a huge insight into who's watching, the type of audience, what is working and what is not working," said West.

Pedro Cosa Fernández, Channel 4's Deputy Head of Analytics, would love to get his hands on this type of data. "It's something that we would like to have, but we do not have the commercial relationship with our viewers [that Sky has]," he explained.

As a linear TV broadcaster, Channel 4 does not have "the one-to-one relationship with viewers that pay-channels have [with their subscribers]. We're missing the data that goes with [subscriptions]," continued Cosa, who is responsible for digital audience analysis at Channel 4.

The broadcaster's own big data is derived from the usage of its on-demand player, All 4, but does not include how audiences watch Channel 4's linear channels.

"That TV data can be got from set-top boxes that Sky, Virgin, Freesat or YouView have, but we don't have," added Cosa.

Douglas asked Cosa whether he thought Channel 4 had a right to this data. "Yes," he replied. "And we've had discussions about it."

"The ownership and control of data is often overlooked," argued Havas Media Group's Connolly. He explained that "personally identifiable information" from viewers had to be regulated and made anonymous. "It's too easy to get hold of data and use it in the wrong ways."

Big data is widely used to provide personalised advertising but, asked Douglas: "How close are we to a proper personalised offer [of content] to viewers?"

"We have a big programme around recommendations," said Cosa. "As a public service broadcaster, it's really important to not just maximise our revenue and number of views but to also meet our public service remit, which is about enabling [viewers] to discover new shows."

Going further and using big data to influence TV content and commissioning, admitted Cosa, threw up many challenges, not least because of the potential conflict between the science of big data and the art of programme-making.

For the moment, Channel 4 is experimenting with its video-on-demand



Panelists (from left):  
Laura Chittick, Jamie  
West, Mark Connolly and  
Pedro Cosa Fernández

Paul Hampartsoumian

data. “All 4 now has original commissions that are especially made for online rather than linear channels,” said Cosa. “That is where the data is used, and we’re trying to use this as a platform where we can explore and apply data in a more free way.”

Chittick agreed with Cosa that commissioning was “a harder area” in which to apply data. She said that, typically, programme-makers found it difficult to assimilate large sets of data and work with analytics teams.

The way forward, she suggested, was to “bring these two together in a multi-disciplinary team”.

Using data in TV is not a new phenomenon, said Douglas, pointing out that TV shows had long been commissioned, recommissioned or chopped on the basis of audience research. What had changed, he suggested, was that now “there’s an awful lot more data and [broadcasters] can do more with it”.

US streaming giant Netflix, Douglas pointed out, had taken advantage of the vast amount of big data at its fingertips. It had based its content acquisition and development on a detailed analysis of the viewing habits of its worldwide subscriber base. “Is this a game changer?” he asked.

“Yes,” replied Connolly. “Netflix develops content that is based on big data. If it knows that this data has been analysed really well, it commissions content that is based around this.”

He added: “It is challenging and

changing the dynamics of the TV market. There is no doubt that TV viewing is having to change because of Netflix and Amazon Prime.”

Sky Media’s West denied that over-the-top (OTT) TV was a threat to Sky. “In the UK, what we’re seeing more of are OTT services being bought in addition to Sky or other pay-TV services,” he argued. “Speaking to my peers at Virgin, they are seeing similar things – Netflix is additive, rather than cannibalising the existing pay-TV market.”

West, however, conceded that the

## IT'S TOO EASY TO GET HOLD OF DATA AND USE IT IN THE WRONG WAYS

OTT companies were having an impact on content commissioning. Netflix’s series about the British royal family, *The Crown*, which will air in the UK from November, is reputed to have cost £100m to make.

“The amount of money that the global content business can spend on a programme or event is so vastly different to a business with even the budgets of Sky,” he said. “We haven’t got the power to compete with Netflix on a particular show.”

Doubts about Netflix’s claim that it commissions hit series such as *House of Cards* on the basis of data analysis persist, largely because the company refuses to release ratings information.

“It doesn’t share the data to [prove] that, but, to be fair, it keeps coming up with hit series after hit series,” said Connolly.

“How do we know they are hit series?” asked Douglas. “Because Netflix tells us so,” replied Connolly.

Douglas refused to take that at face value: “A lot of people say it’s hype. It is more than hype, but Netflix doesn’t share its viewing figures. It doesn’t make a profit. How do we know what’s going on at Netflix?”

The extent to which the streaming service uses big data to create content is disputed. Channel 4’s Cosa reckoned Netflix uses data “more for validation than [content] creation. It knows its customer base and it can validate its investment and look at the potential of acquiring content.”

Programme-makers, he added, understand that using big data to inform content “is going to be big in the future”, but currently it is used more in scheduling than for taking creative decisions.

**‘Big data or smart data? Data and the impact on TV advertising, commissioning and content’ was held at The Hospital Club in central London on 19 April. It was produced by Vicky Fairclough.**

# A television giant

**T**he three duties of the broadcaster are to the subject, to the audience and to the craft.” Huw Wheldon’s achievements and words live on, 30 years after his death. I doubt that there is a BBC Director-General since his day who hasn’t used the great Wheldon incantation about public service broadcasting and its duty “to make the popular good and make the good popular”.

Wheldon himself was never DG – his most senior job was as Managing Director of BBC Television – but the people who did get the top job have seldom achieved his creative impact or his quotability.

It’s a struggle to remember soaring oratory from John Birt, successful though he was as a strategic leader. Greg Dyke, meanwhile, is best known for his blokeish “cut the crap”.

So this book by Huw’s son, Wynn, is to be welcomed for introducing a new generation to the Wheldon story and for its insight into a man whose approach to broadcasting is still much needed today.

Corporate apparatchiks and regulators, in particular, should note: “No real programme was ever made by a committee. You insure yourself against failure by having a committee, but you also insure against triumph.”

The Wheldon era in the BBC began when he became a presenter in the 1950s and blossomed with his management roles in the 1960s and 1970s.

It is right to be wary about claimed golden ages or the great man theory of television history. The fact is that this was a time when society was being transformed. Broadcasting was not immune to these forces and its own revolution was enabled partly by the pace of technical change.

But Wynn Wheldon is convincing in his portrayal of the stature of an individual who was at the heart of the coming of age of British television. His father’s life story is one that subsequent generations can barely imagine.

Huw took part in D-Day and he was awarded a Military Cross for his bravery. The citation said: “His fine display of courage and coolness was an

*Kicking the Bar: The life and legacy of broadcaster Huw Wheldon* by Wynn Wheldon is published by Unbound, priced £20.00



## Book review

### Roger Mosey hopes Huw Wheldon’s story will inspire today’s programme-makers to aim higher

outstanding example to his men.” Wheldon, however, wrote to his father: “When bravery was required I have, in most cases, shirked it, being miserably frail. Still, there it is.” He was one of the first British soldiers to see the horrors of Belsen. He never spoke about it.

This was a character also shaped by his Welsh ancestry. Some of his ideas are an echo of his grandfather, a noted Nonconformist preacher. In 1885, he was speaking of “men inspired with the ideal of duty, of justice, of undefiled affection, of great aims and great deeds” and the “infinite possibility of usefulness, work, art and beauty”. This inevitably suggests a torch being passed to the descendant who championed public service.

Huw became the presenter of the influential arts programme *Monitor*, although he did not uncritically worship creativity. “I hate all picture

**PROGRAMMES THAT ARE CALCULATED RATHER THAN MADE... ARE SLUMS OF THE SPIRIT AND SLUMS OF THE MIND**

galleries, without exception,” he wrote. “This afternoon, I went to the Louvre. I loathed it... I don’t like any artists. None at all. Late extra: except Rembrandt.”

Wynn makes much of his father’s sense of being an outsider – Welsh and non-Oxbridge. This may be a little overdone. Huw’s father had gone to Cambridge and had a distinguished career in education and government, ending up with a knighthood.

Huw, himself, went to the London School of Economics in the great era of Harold Laski. When we come across him in middle life, he seems very much at home in the agreeable surroundings of Kew, with the Attenboroughs round the corner, and then moving to Richmond Hill.

Although usually a Liberal, he voted for Churchill in 1945 and Thatcher in 1979. Later, we’re told that he informed a programme producer that his favourite walk was not, as they’d hoped, in rural Wales, but from the LSE to the Garrick Club, “of which he was an enthusiastic member”.

What comes out strongly is his belief in excellence across the genres and that dumbing down, as we would now call it, is not what mass audiences want: quality matters as much in entertainment as in Shakespeare.

There is a contemporary echo in his belief that “programmes that are calculated rather than made... are slums of the spirit and slums of the mind”. Let us hope this prompts a twinge of guilt in the people who commissioned recent shockers on all channels.

Filial biographies have their strengths, and this one captures well the love within a family and the pride in the achievements when dad is a national figure. But there are gaps, too. Wynn doesn’t find out what his educationalist grandfather did: “I have never been really clear what a registrar was or is.”

Nor does he have any knowledge of the mechanics of television (“I continue to be baffled by the mystery of how pictures and sounds scuttle through the air”) and he’s hazy about the even more impenetrable workings of the BBC.

When his father first gets a production job, an unpursued aside tells us that

he was already working as a television presenter on a show featuring talented children. The editor/presenter/impresario role on *Monitor*, with its stellar filmmakers – from Ken Russell to John Schlesinger – is rather better articulated.

Later, we don't get much understanding of what Huw's management roles entailed or even their titles. When the dopey BBC governors don't promote him to DG, we're not told what job he actually got.

That is probably because there are three things going on in this book. There is a biography, which is good in parts. There is a portrait of a family, which is often touching. And then there are some musings about father and son relationships, or about life in general, which edge towards the banal. "We endlessly recreate the past," writes Wynn. "The concerns of the present are immediate, and the past must continuously be brought into line. This is the job of the historian, and the reason why there is always work for him. He has no choice."

Wynn's choices are, at times, unfortunate: a marvellous story about his father in the war is interrupted by his own experience as a hunt saboteur. Wheldon Jnr is also keen to tell us about his snorting of cocaine in a toilet in Washington (de rigueur, apparently) and precisely when he lost his virginity. Readers may sympathise with Huw, who once threw a flowerpot at Wynn when he was angry with him.

This also points to the questions that linger after reading this book. We glimpse aspects of Huw's character more through others. It is his daughter who speaks of his occasional "towering and terrifying anger", and it is Robin Day who mentions "his shortcomings, such as talking too much and enjoying being a personality too much".

But Wynn's recollections of his kindness are convincing, and there is much to enjoy in the tales that are told. There is, ultimately, no doubt about Huw's greatness as a broadcaster and as a man. His is a story that can and should inspire our industry today.

**Roger Mosey is Master of Selwyn College, Cambridge, and a former BBC executive.**



BBC



# Culture on demand

Just over 10 years ago, Sky took control of the struggling Artsworld channel and subsequently re-branded it Sky Arts. A decade on, it is the home of *The South Bank Show* and is renowned for its star-studded programmes. These shows have included Jon Hamm and Daniel Radcliffe in *A Young Doctor's Notebook*, and Joseph Fiennes as Michael Jackson in the forthcoming one-off, half-hour comedy drama *Elizabeth, Michael & Marlon*. Not forgetting the pan-European search for the best new photographer in *Master of Photography*, due later this year, and fronted by Isabella Rossellini.

A year ago, Sky Arts Director Phil Edgar-Jones oversaw the reduction from two to one arts channels and an improved slot higher up the Sky EPG.

The jovial Scot, who was Creative Director of the company that made *Big*

*Brother* and the BBC Two show *Celebrity Art School* – Remarkable Television – says the net result of these changes has been successful.

He explains the rationale: “There didn’t seem to me to be much logic to

having two channels, in the modern age, when people consume things more on demand.”

Unusually, cutting two channels to one gave him more money overall (Sky does not reveal budgets). A new, dedicated, on-demand section was also created. This saw the consumption of Sky Arts content rise by 108% in the period July 2015 to April 2016, compared with the same period a year earlier, says Edgar-Jones.

“What it told us, and this was something that I knew, is that arts are interesting subject matter in many ways... Few people like *all* the arts,” he adds. “They tend to come and cherry-pick the things they’re interested in.

“Your opera fan doesn’t necessarily go on to watch country music and vice versa, so on-demand works well. There’s a classical tab, a rock-music tab, a ballet tab, and so on. If people

NOT ALL ARTS IS ACCESSIBLE... IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE, BECAUSE THERE ARE SMALL, PASSIONATE AUDIENCES FOR VERY NICHE THINGS

## Arts programming

# Phil Edgar-Jones convinces Tara Conlan that Sky Arts is making a bigger splash as it scales up across Europe

Phil Edgar-Jones

Sky

like a particular genre or artist, they can find it much more easily.”

He continues: “A lot of people with Sky Arts will sit on the sofa on a Saturday and create their own schedule for the week. It’s the kind of content that, if you’re serious about it, you’ll find space in your evening or weekend to watch all you can.”

One of the benefits of Sky taking full control of Sky Italia and Sky Deutschland has been the creation of the Milan-based Sky Arts Production Hub – a cross-border collaboration that has given birth to documentary series *Artists in Love* and *Mystery of the Lost Caravaggio*.

Edgar-Jones explains: “Once the three Skys joined up, one of the first initiatives to get us working together was Sky Arts. We wanted to establish a way of working, so that we could scale things up a bit. We didn’t want to

end up with some awful Euro-porridge that didn’t work.

“So we drew a Venn diagram and worked out where we were different and where we were all the same. It’s been brilliant for me. We get together once a month and talk about content.”

His German colleagues are visiting the Sky Arts office in west London when we speak.

Pretty much everything that the hub has made so far has come from Italy, but Edgar-Jones says “they’ve started to engage more with UK producers to collaborate with some Italian directors for the next raft of content we’re developing”.

Some Sky Arts shows are too parochial to cross borders. There was a documentary on Shane MacGowan’s teeth and one on The Jam. “They don’t have the resonance in Italy or Germany, so they wouldn’t necessarily take it,” admits Edgar-Jones. Equally, he “would draw the line at obscure German gardens”.

The appeal of Italian renaissance art is much broader. Sky Arts has an Italian season coming up, which its boss says “is stunning... and is probably bigger than we could have done ourselves. That’s the advantage of it. Some of it won’t work and some of it will.”

*Playhouse Presents*, a series of single, studio-based plays, is a prime example of Sky Arts’ originality. It gives people behind the scenes and in front of the camera the chance to “do something that no one would commission elsewhere”, claims Edgar-Jones.

Emma Thompson, David Tennant, Idris Elba, Hamm and Radcliffe are among the stars who have played roles in *Playhouse Presents* since the strand began in 2012.

“I think people genuinely enjoy working for Sky Arts,” says Edgar-Jones, partly because of the freedom they are given. However, he concedes: “It’s difficult to get commissioned, as we’re very picky. I would love to do everything, but you have to make difficult choices sometimes. We get contacted a lot by incredible people who want to come and work with us, and that’s nice.”

Forthcoming *Playhouse Presents* episodes revolve around urban myths. One is about Bob Dylan visiting a house in London that he thinks is the home of Dave Stewart of The Eurythmics, but which turns out to belong to a different Dave. Another concerns Cary Grant and LSD.

Meanwhile, the new series of the Melvyn Bragg-fronted *South Bank Show* includes interviews with Russell T Davies, poet Jackie Kay and Jamaican musicians Sly & Robbie.

No one doubts that Sky Arts aims to be viewer-friendly as well as ambitious. “The word ‘arts’ can be challenging for some people,” admits Edgar-Jones. “You’ve got to think: not all art is accessible and, in a way, it doesn’t have to be, because there are small, passionate audiences for very niche things.”

But, he says, “The real ambition is to create work that can have a life outside the channel. It’s not just being a television channel.”

This is a reference to *Beyond the Fence*, a musical created using algorithms, which ran at the London Arts Theatre this spring.

Edgar-Jones calls it “a collaboration of science and data... these are things that we are doing that have real-world resonance, not just for TV.”

Despite this, recording live performances – such as Simon Rattle conducting at The Barbican – is important, too. And not only for audiences to enjoy, but for the historical record.

“Imagine that you could have filmed Beethoven recording his own symphonies.... It’s important to preserve some things for the future in digital form. Sky Arts should be the home of genius,” he declares, pointing to a recent collaboration with Enda Walsh on his theatrical opera *The Last Hotel*, which allowed the playwright to play with form.

Cutbacks at the BBC have inevitably hit BBC Four, regarded as Sky Arts’ biggest rival – though, as Edgar-Jones points out, “We’re pretty much the only dedicated arts channel”.

He praises the BBC’s arts coverage – “Its Shakespeare season looks fantastic, it has the Proms, it has Radio 3” – but adds: “I’d like the BBC to do more arts. The more successful it is, the better it is for everyone.”

Although churn is up slightly, according to Sky’s latest figures, the kind of audiences that Sky Arts brings in are important for the overall brand.

“Each of the channels here has its job to do and reaches a slightly different audience,” says Edgar-Jones. “Certainly, all the evidence suggests that Sky Arts is a highly valued part of the portfolio. Not by everyone who subscribes to Sky, but there’s a significant audience watching the channel who value the fact that it’s there.”



Ready-to-wear TV at NAB

# Net TV sets the pace

“**T**he television set and viewing of our childhood are gone.” So said Google’s President of Global Partnerships, Daniel Alegre, in his closing keynote to the broadcast equipment trade show NAB, adding: “A newer, better TV is rising from the ashes.”

While Alegre was referring to the rise of globally popular online content creators such as PewDiePie, the focus of the Las Vegas event was on the disruptive potential of internet technologies, higher picture resolutions and panoramic video streams.

Broadcasters such as CBS Sports, Rogers Media and Swisscom are starting to introduce premium Ultra-HDTV services, concentrating on live sports and entertainment. BT Sport, perhaps the world’s most experienced Ultra-HDTV live broadcaster, plans to ramp up its output – including its entire portfolio of English Premier League matches from next season – in anticipation of Sky’s introduction of its Sky Q Ultra-HDTV set-top box this year.

## NAB review

Streaming services are pushing ahead of broadcasters to supply bigger, better pictures, reports **Adrian Pennington**

The bulk of new production technology at NAB was aimed squarely at Ultra-HDTV, in particular its 4K standard, which has four times the resolution of HDTV. Panasonic and Grass Valley unveiled 4K cameras, but the pick was probably, Sony’s HDC-4800. It offers a whopping 480 frames per second for 4K slow-motion. It also allows an operator to zoom in and extract an HD cut-out from the 4K image.

Sony has also produced a 4K version of its XDcam, a system popular for news reporting.

For drama, the focus is on enhancing the 4K image all the way through to the screen, with a wider colour gamut and better contrast achieved by retaining higher dynamic range (HDR) data captured by cameras. All new Netflix and Amazon commissions will use HDR.

Monitoring video for HDR content on-set has been extremely tricky, but the new Shogun Inferno from Australian manufacturer Atomos changes that. The £1,665 unit can record and play back 4K video at 60fps and supports 10 stops of dynamic range.

“HDR leaves even the most experienced video professional excited like a kid in a candy store – never before have you actually been able to monitor and shoot what you are actually seeing,” claimed CEO Jeremy Young.

Sony’s Oled monitor, already the most widely used for grading HDR content, has been joined by a larger, 55-inch model. The new Trimaster EL PVM-X550 can display four separate pictures in HDR HDTV for use in post-production houses or outside-broadcast trucks.

## Ultra-HDTV: The next wave

Just a few years ago, 4K, an Ultra-HDTV format with four times the resolution of HDTV, looked like a giant technological leap with no supporting business case.

But even before it has spread beyond being a niche production standard, its successor is waiting in the wings: 8K has 16 times the resolution of HDTV and is on course to begin domestic transmission in Japan by 2020.

German play-out specialist Cinegy focused on 8K at NAB. 'Most people don't even have 4K televisions yet,' admitted CEO Jan Weigner. 'But, given the slew of 8K sets at the Consumer Electronics Show earlier this year, 8K

matters, and the production buzz around it will just get louder.'

Cinegy's compression technology is capable of handling multiple video streams in 8K and even 16K. 'With our Daniel2, you can acquire, produce and broadcast in 8K today using off-the-shelf equipment. In fact, you can produce in 16K if you want to,' said Weigner.

Canon showcased a series of 8K lenses and reference displays, and will initially target stadiums and the digital signage market. 'This is technology that we've have been working on for 10 years, primarily for [Japanese broadcaster] NHK,' said Canon Senior Fellow



Hitachi already supports 8K shooting

Larry Thorpe. 'Some of our lenses will be in Rio [capturing Olympics content for NHK].... We'll be there when people are ready for 8K.'

Ikegami and Hitachi both presented 8K broadcast cameras, already available commercially, while Panasonic demoed an 8K display.

## IP: Change is gonna come

The use of internet-based protocols (IP) and generic computing resources may not be the most glamorous topic, but it is now a fundamental driver of every development in TV production and distribution.

Familiar broadcast tech brands are having to replace entire product lines of bespoke hardware with software that runs on commodity components.

'Last year [2015] was the worst year in the market that I've ever experienced in this industry,' declared Snell Advanced Media CEO Tim Thorsteinson at the company's press event. 'Customers are driving us to be interoperable. Adoption



Tim Thorsteinson

of IP technology is new, and there's fear around that.'

Nonetheless, its software-based play-out systems have seen four quarters of

growth and it has released Go!, a system for remotely editing news and sports over the internet.

Video editing specialist Avid announced that it had allied with software company Adobe to tackle a perception that its proprietary systems are more closed than interoperable. Users of Avid's work-share platform, MediaCentral, can now access material built with Adobe's Premiere Pro application.

'The industry is littered with siloed, disconnected products that haven't changed,' argued Avid CEO Louis Hernandez. 'We're the most open, extensible company here.'

## Virtual reality: 360° video streaming

YouTube's introduction of live-streamed panoramic videos was timed to coincide with NAB, where virtual-reality (VR) products were trending. Anyone with a compatible 360° camera and the ability to upload video at between 10Mb/s and 20Mb/s can now broadcast on the Google-owned platform.

Camera choice ranges from the \$60,000 Nokia Ozo, which now includes live VR broadcasting capability, to the \$500 ALLie Cam, which is the first to enable live-streamed 360° video on YouTube.

The momentum behind VR and, in particular, its application in live sports,

is building. GoPro unveiled a six-camera Omni rig, complete with software to automatically stitch the cameras' video feeds into an immersive image, for \$5,000. The company also launched its own 'broadcast-quality', live-streaming service – LiveVR. This will soon be used by the MotoGP and MotoAmerica racing competitions.

NextVR trotted out what it billed as the first VR outside-broadcast truck, while Adobe updated its Premiere Pro editing software to make it easier to work with 360° media.

'Television has always been a window into the world, but VR is really



GoPro Omni

about transporting you into the world,' said Fabrice Lorenceau, Co-founder of broadcast VR firm LiveLike. 'Here, you can get the best ticket, choose your own experience, jump to a specific camera, and go to the best seat in the house.'

# OUR FRIEND IN THE BIG APPLE

About six months ago, I made a leap. I moved from west London to a place where the streets are covered with blood. Where's that? NYC's famed Meatpacking District, although the description is not too dissimilar to a moment in time at Channel 5.

While my career has moved from broadcast to still imagery, I remain a super-fan of *Coronation Street*. But I do have a new soap addiction – *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*. Sunday night on E! is a double dose of the *Dashes/I am Cait* and *The Royals*; two very current, modern-day soap operas that are a sign of our times, where you are famous for only being famous.

Despite the on-screen promotional backing between Verizon and Time Warner Cable, TWC is my carrier of choice. Its on-demand services are rich, intuitive and easy to use. I have been able to binge-watch *Gotham* – a beautifully produced and compelling back story to Batman.

But my prime source of entertainment has become the US presidential election. It has been fascinating to watch, although I haven't worked out whether it's a black comedy, drama or serious news.

I am constantly assured that I am witnessing the most sophisticated democracy in the world at work. It is just a pity that some of the presidential hopefuls are quite so offensive.

However, I hope I am going to be a resident of the US when the first Potus is a woman – that will be something to celebrate.

One of the joys of being CEO of Getty Images is that our staff photographers and thousands of contributors have access to all the world's

Celebrity soaps, ice hockey, Bruce Springsteen and Donald Trump. Dawn Airey is embracing New York life



Yahoo!

significant news events, sport and entertainment.

Any night, I have the pleasure of having a front-row seat. I have become a fan of ice hockey. I attended my first NY Islanders game, standing with award-winning sport photographer Bruce Bennett as he worked.

That night, instantly, he knew which pictures were best. "These are the key photos that capture the moment, the anxiety," he said. Immediately, I understood what separates the pros in an age when everyone has a camera in their pocket.

I was able to see another legendary American, Bruce "The Boss"

Springsteen, in concert with our rock-star entertainment photographer, Kevin Mazur. Kevin is magnetic. Everyone knows him – the celebrities, the managers, the crew – and everyone loves him.

Seeing him work highlighted the fact that our photographers are true creative geniuses. They have the access, timing, talent and spirit to get the best out of their subjects late into the night. And then do it again the following day.

For example, to cover an event such as the Oscars, it takes an entire team more than 1,000 man hours to produce more than 80,000 images (including 360° and video clips).

The level of creativity our experts bring to their work is stunning. It extends beyond our photographers, though. While hundreds of thousands of image-makers are out shooting, a team of visual trends experts are busy understanding the cultural factors that influence photography. They use their insights and our in-house data to predict what kind of images our customers will need next.

Which brings me back to Mr Trump. Even before he announced his candidacy, our trends team noticed a rise in the way "fringe" ideas were becoming more widely embraced by the mainstream. Our own data also illustrated this. Over a five-year span, among our top-selling images, they found the keyword "attitude" had risen 42%, "individuality" 76% and "creativity" a whopping 134%.

Will Trump win? That's the billion-dollar question.

If he does, I don't know what that will mean for my new home. But I do know we'll be there, to capture the moments for the world to see.

**Dawn Airey is CEO of Getty Images.**

London Centre threw the spotlight on lighting in early May, with an event illuminated by three of the craft's top practitioners. The panel discussed their careers, current technology and how to say "no" to directors, as well as offering advice on breaking into the industry.

As a child, cinematographer Stuart Harris spent his lunch money on *Sight and Sound* magazine and admission to the latest art-film releases. Following school, he became a mail boy, before working as a runner on Roger Corman's 1964 film *The Masque of the Red Death* and then as a clapper loader.

Harris established himself as a cinematographer and moved between shooting commercials, music videos and films, including David Hare's *Wetherby*. He is currently Acting Head of Cinematography at the National Film and Television School.

"My career hasn't gone feature, feature, feature. I wanted to get into areas where there was more imagination. I'm not putting down feature films, but the thing about a feature is that it locks you into a style," said Harris.

Bernie Davis has been lighting outside broadcasts since 1987, winning RTS awards for two BBC programmes: *Masterworks – Six Pieces of Britain: The Tallis Fantasia* in 1999 and *Songs of Praise* in 2005. He now lights *The Proms* for the BBC and *National Theatre Live*, the plays broadcast to cinemas around the world.

John Colley worked as an electrician in Canada until moving to the UK. Determined to make it in movies, he helped out on short films before establishing himself as a gaffer (the electrician in charge of lighting).



The Proms – Doctor Who 50th Anniversary Concert

BBC

## Lighting does much more than illuminate

His films include David Cronenberg's *Eastern Promises* and Jonathan Glazer's *Under the Skin*. Since 2014, Colley has been General Manager at equipment supplier Arri Rental UK.

At the London event, which was chaired by digital producer Muki Kulhan (BBC One's *The Voice UK*), Colley discussed Arri's latest energy-efficient LED lights. "When I was working as a gaffer I didn't believe LEDs were practical," he said. "But the virtues of LED light are an absolute game-changer now. They've [mastered] a lot of the problems."

The first casualty of the advances in LEDs, said Colley, "is going to be the smaller tungsten lights. Harris, however, argued that although "certain LEDs are fantastic, I don't see that everything else is going to get thrown away

just yet. There is a thing called 'quality of light'. We need to spend a lot of money on LEDs to get them right."

The lighting experts discussed how to persuade directors to accept their advice. "I nag them three times and, if three times it's 'no', then it is no," said Harris.

"You have to find a way to make [directors] think that it was their idea," suggested Colley. Davis agreed, adding that, if this fails, "Make it look good despite their lack of taste."

The experts also offered advice on how to get a start in lighting. "Keep at it. Make short films. Watch all the films you can, but don't think it starts with Star Wars – go way back. And don't give in," said Harris.

"Immerse yourselves in lighting," added Davis. "Go to art galleries and look at paint-

ings. [See] the way the Dutch painters used light to convey images and give depth."

Lucky breaks, though, are important, Davis admitted, and offered a personal example. Following a wave of BBC redundancies, he recalled, "all these experienced people left outside broadcasts, leaving lot of plum jobs. I became *The Proms* Lighting Director."

Looking to the future, Davis said: "I get fed up with people telling me that cameras are getting so sensitive that we won't need lighting soon. It's so shortsighted, because lighting gives mood and direction. If lighting was [only] about illumination, I wouldn't bother doing it."

"Lighting from every angle" was held at ITV London Studios on 4 May and produced by Rosemary Smith.

**Matthew Bell**

# Ireland honours student film

The prizes were shared around the country's top colleges at the RTS Republic of Ireland Student Television Awards on 23 March.

An audience of more than 100 attended the event, which was held at RTÉ Television Centre in Dublin. The awards were presented by the Controller of RTÉ Two, Bill Malone.

The Animation award was won by Elif Boyacioglu, Lynn O'Reilly and Francesca Saunders, from the Irish School of Animation, Ballyfermot College of Further Education, for *The Teacup*, a "well-paced, creative, and magical production", said the judges.

Dundalk Institute of Technology students Oluwafemi Adenaiya, Aine McEaney, Maximilian Cope and Linda Alao took home the Comedy and Entertainment award for *Squarepusher – My Red Hot Car*.



RTÉ's Bill Malone with the winners of the Drama award

The judges described the music video as "a fun, rapid-paced piece".

John O'Rourke, Rachel Whelan, Marie Mathews and Sean Carroll from The School of Media, Dublin Institute of Technology, won the Drama award for *Battle Scars*, which highlights the problem of

bullying at school. "This was a well-developed piece, with good attention to all the disciplines of media production," said the judges.

Dublin Institute of Technology students also won the Factual Award for *Grey Area*, which was made by Jon Barton, Louise O'Gallagher,

Tommy Flavin and Killian Sundermann. The judges admired the "realist shots and atmospheric score" that worked well in a film about an embalmer and undertaker.

The award in the Open category went to Dave Fox and Naomi Fagan, from the National Film School, IADT, Dun Laoghaire, for *Lunchtime Blues*, which "creatively turned a normal event in the life of a school into a sophisticated comedy drama".

Chair of the awards jury Marie Penston complimented the students and tutors on the "very high standard" of entries, adding that the experience would help students in their future careers.

There was an increase in entries, with two colleges – Dundalk Institute of Technology and Colaiste Dhúlaigh College of Further Education – entering for the first time. **Charles Byrne**



Conn McKermott (right) receives his award

Queen's University Belfast took home three of the four awards from the RTS Northern Ireland Student Awards, which were held the night before the Republic of Ireland event.

The university won the Drama award with *The Mountain*, by Connor Brennan and

Rebecca Kelly; Comedy and Entertainment for *Summit*, by Gerard Donnelly and Nathan Somerville; and Factual with Conn McKermott's film, *I Call to the Living and Mourn the Dead*.

Dualta Donnelly from Ulster University won the Animation award for *Echoes*.

## Queen's University shines at Northern Ireland Awards

More than 100 guests attended the ceremony at the Black Box in Belfast. They were joined by their host, local BBC presenter Tara Mills, and keynote speaker Brooke Allen, who reports from Stormont for BBC News.

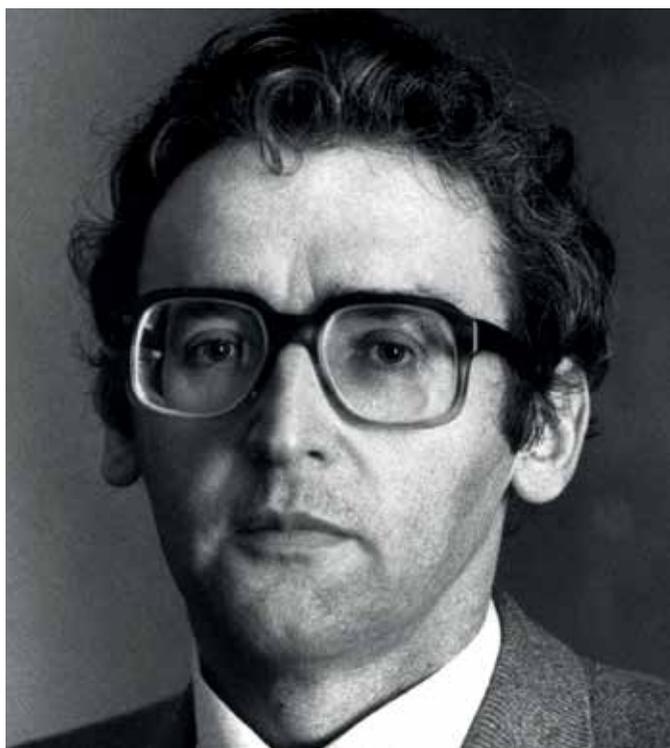
"These awards offer the opportunity for talented media students from across Northern Ireland to showcase their work to some of the creative industry's biggest names," said RTS Centre Chair Michael Wilson.

The awards were backed by the Northern Ireland departments of Culture, Arts and

Leisure (DCAL) and Employment and Learning. "The creative industries are one of the major growth areas of Northern Ireland's economy and this event highlights the creative talent of our students," said the Minister for Employment and Learning, Stephen Farry.

The RTS awards were part of DCAL's 'Creativity Month'. "We are celebrating the [students'] entrepreneurial endeavours while acknowledging that education plays a crucial part in shaping their skill base," added the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, Carál Ní Chuilín.

**Matthew Bell**



ITV

# Ray Fitzwalter

## 1944-2016

The *World in Action* investigative journalist who took on judges, ministers and regulators

**R**ay Fitzwalter, who died on 4 April, aged 72, was one of the most important investigative television journalists of his generation.

At Granada Television, Fitzwalter was part of a group of talented programme-makers who ensured that ITV was in the vanguard of airing influential and popular current-affairs shows.

As Editor of the trail-blazing ITV flagship *World in Action*, Fitzwalter was a thorn in the side of corrupt businessmen and politicians. The peak-time show (initially shown on Monday nights) was launched in 1963.

In common with many TV journalists of his era, Fitzwalter joined Granada straight from newspapers.

He was a working-class Northerner and proud of it. He was born in Bury, Lancashire, the son of a factory worker and a seamstress. He passed the 11-plus early, aged nine.

After attending the local grammar school and reading economics at the London School of Economics, Fitzwalter joined the *Bradford Telegraph & Argus*. There, he developed his flair for rooting out rot in high places and proved that he was a journalist of rare integrity.

In 1969, Fitzwalter was voted Young Journalist of the Year by publisher IPC for his investigative reporting. One of his scoops was exposing a crooked Bradford estate agent. The man was also the paper's biggest advertiser.

At the *Argus*, he wrote his first articles on what became known as the Poulson affair, focusing on corrupt property developer John Poulson and his associates.

Fitzwalter joined Granada in 1970. Under the guidance of Controller of Programmes David Plowright, he attracted controversy for his film exposing Poulson and his cronies, *The Friends and Influence of John L Poulson*.

The Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), the regulator empowered to approve all ITV programmes before transmission, banned the show. It was later revealed that four members of the IBA board were linked to people mentioned in the film.

ITV responded to the ban by showing a blank screen instead of the programme. Eventually, a revised version was broadcast, entitled *The Rise and Fall of John Poulson*. Poulson was subsequently sentenced to seven years in prison.

In 1976, Fitzwalter became Editor of *World in Action*, a post he held for 11 years. As John Birt, the ex-Granada producer who became BBC Director-General, wrote in his autobiography, *The Harder Path*, "The doughty, puritan, plain-speaking Ray Fitzwalter would prove a brilliant upholder of the *World in Action* flame."

On his watch, the programme won 35 national and international prizes,

including three awards from the RTS.

Fitzwalter's populist touch led him to make a *World in Action* programme in 1984 that challenged Matthew Parris, at the time a Conservative MP, to live on unemployment benefit of £26.80 a week. Parris found the experience humiliating.

Four years later, Fitzwalter turned to the BBC in a *World in Action* film, *The Taming of the BBC*, criticising PM Margaret Thatcher's influence on appointing BBC governors sympathetic to her world view. Thatcher reportedly saw Fitzwalter and his team as "just a lot of Trotskyites".

In 1987, he became Granada's Head of Current Affairs. Among the programmes he executive produced was the 1990 drama documentary *Who Bombed Birmingham?* about the 1974 Birmingham pub bombings. This helped to expose one of the biggest miscarriages of justice in recent British legal history.

By the early 1990s, Fitzwalter found himself at odds with the cost-cutting Granada regime of

Gerry Robinson and Charles Allen. He resigned and became an independent producer.

In 2008, Fitzwalter published the acclaimed history *The Dream That Died: The Rise & Fall of ITV*. Not

everyone agreed with its thesis that ITV had abandoned its public-service roots, but no one could doubt the passion that informed the book.

Fitzwalter was made a Fellow of the RTS in 1993. He is survived by his wife, Luise, his children and six grandchildren.

**Steve Clarke**



ITV

# Butler enthralled Dublin audience

**V**eteran broadcaster Pat Butler looked back over his long TV career at a Republic of Ireland Centre event at RTÉ in early April.

At “Telling it as it is: voicing the voiceless”, Butler discussed many of the series that he had been involved in researching and presenting, often for RTÉ’s Irish language current-affairs output.

Among the clips at the event was one from the 1997 RTÉ dramatised documentary, *Ballyseedy*, which Butler created.

The film took him five years to research and write, and tells the story of an atrocity in 1923 during the Irish Civil War.

Other excerpts included programmes from RTÉ current-affairs strand *Today Tonight*, presented by Butler, on the turmoil in the Middle East in 1988 and – closer to home – an investigation into the murder of two elderly patients at a Dublin psychiatric hospital.

Known for his work as a television presenter, reporter and producer, Butler has been involved in the Irish broadcasting industry for the past 36 years.

Other programmes that the strong advocate of public service broadcasting has worked on for RTÉ include Irish-language current-affairs programme *Féach*, documentary series *Léargas*



Pat Butler speaking at the Republic of Ireland event

and kids show *Youngline*. Butler has received recognition for his work over the years at the Irish-language Gradam Chumarsáide an

Oireachtais awards, the Celtic Media Awards and the Irish Film and Television Academy Awards.

**Charles Byrne**

# Students learn from Southern experts



That's Solent Editor Charlotte Briere-Edney offers advice

Victor Vilela

■ Some 180 media students from across the south of England heard sound advice from TV executives at Southern Centre’s “Meet the Professionals” event at Bournemouth University in March.

Two hours of informal networking was preceded by a session on current TV issues and opportunities in the industry for the students.

The subjects covered included: television on

mobile media; the launch of youth brand Vice’s first European TV channel, Vice-land, later this year; and how such moves will have an impact on production techniques.

Students were keen to know if they would be heard when they pitched ideas to broadcasters. The advice from ITV’s Factual Commissioner, Sat Panesar’s was that they should know everything about their subject area and have total conviction about the film that they were pitching.

Panesar added that broadcasters needed to know that the person could deliver, so they were unlikely to give a commission to a student, but, if an idea was really good, they might link the student with a production company or an ITV in-house team.

Station Editor and news presenter Charlotte Briere-Edney, from local-TV channel That’s Solent, stressed how valuable experience

could be gained at smaller companies, telling the audience that she had done everything from changing a light bulb to appearing on screen.

Nineteen TV professionals from ITV, BBC, Vice Media, a range of indies and a local-TV provider offered advice at the event, which is in its seventh year. The students at the event came from Bournemouth University, Southampton Solent University, Winchester University, Highbury College and the Arts University Bournemouth.

**Gordon Cooper**

## Correction

■ Natalie Rolley is not a director of Celtic Prop Hire, as we incorrectly reported in *Television’s* November 2015 issue (page 34). The business is, in fact, operated by Siân Bundy as a sole trader.

# Scotland lifts roof on BBC celebrity show

■ The team behind *Holiday of My Lifetime with Len Goodman* revealed the secrets of their award-winning show at an RTS Scotland event in March.

The BBC One series, which is made by Glasgow indie Raise the Roof Productions, was named Best Daytime Programme at last year's RTS Scotland Awards.

In the show, *Strictly Come Dancing* judge Goodman returns celebrities to the site of their childhood holidays. Over two series, the likes of Nicholas Parsons and Ann

Widdecombe have revisited Studland in Dorset and the Lake District, respectively.

The RTS Scotland Awards judges praised the show for "brilliant casting" and the "fantastic use of archive and nice interweaving of social history with fun".

Executive Producer Deborah Dunnett and Creative Director Andrew Jackson outlined the programme's development at the event, which was held at STV's Glasgow studios. The format draws on both the power of



Raise the Roof team: Burnett, Dunnett, Wharton and Jackson

childhood holiday memories and the talent of its presenter, Goodman, they said.

Production Manager Kathryn Burnett and Series Producer Jonny Wharton explained how they plan and shoot the multi-episode series, and look after the on-screen talent.

Reaction at the event was

positive, with the RTS Scotland audience welcoming the opportunity to find out how a series is stitched together. "You don't often find out what happens behind the scenes, and the planning and research that goes into it," said one attendee.

**Rachael McAlonan and Rhiannon Melrose**



The London panel: Godwin, Dereza, Putt, Eminue and Winstanley

# London offers a helping hand

RTS London ran its popular "Getting in and getting on" event in late April at ITV's London Studios, giving those new to TV – and those looking to climb the ladder – a chance to learn from experts. Chaired by journalist Nadine Dereza, the panel consisted of Joe Godwin, Director of the BBC Academy and BBC Birmingham; Jude Winstanley, the founder of online jobs board The Unit

List; Arit Eminue, Director of training body DiVA; and Sara Putt of film and TV crew agency Sara Putt Associates.

The panellists agreed that apprenticeships are now a good alternative to degrees.

Godwin said that BBC recruitment was now less London-centric and "companies are looking for talent, passion and hunger to succeed – keep making stuff, and putting it on YouTube".

Eminue agreed, adding

## ONLINE at the RTS

■ Ed Gove met Casting Director Andy Pryor, who has worked on *Doctor Foster* and *Call the Midwife*, to discuss his job at [www.rts.org.uk/andypryor](http://www.rts.org.uk/andypryor). Pryor also cast Pearl Mackie as the new *Doctor Who* companion, Bill, and gave us an exclusive look into the casting process at [www.rts.org.uk/pearlmackie](http://www.rts.org.uk/pearlmackie)

■ The highlights package from 'Poldark: Anatomy of a Hit' was our most-viewed video of the month, presumably thanks to the number of people wanting to check whether Executive

Producer Damien Timmer really questioned whether Aidan Turner was good-looking enough to play Ross Poldark. You can watch the highlights at [www.rts.org.uk/poldark](http://www.rts.org.uk/poldark) or the full event at [www.rts.org.uk/poldarkinfull](http://www.rts.org.uk/poldarkinfull)

■ With *Game of Thrones* back on Sky Atlantic, we looked at what has happened to the actors whose characters met grisly ends. Former cast members have gone on to star in Hollywood films, launch theatre companies and even receive an RTS award nomination. [www.rts.org.uk/gameofthrones](http://www.rts.org.uk/gameofthrones)

that, while people write that they are passionate about TV in their CVs, the key was being able to show, not tell.

Winstanley said that freelancing can build experience and contacts, but that new starters should not work for free. Putt agreed, stating that, although an agent may appear a luxury, many freelancers

struggle to run the business side of their careers.

An audience member asked how to become a presenter. Godwin said that it was difficult and dependent on a showreel and "talent, talent, talent and luck". He added that the best way to learn was to watch lots of TV.

**Stuart Headlam**

# OFF MESSAGE

**S**o who will now defend the BBC in its hour of need? These are extraordinarily tense and unsettling times for the corporation. None of the white paper “leaks” makes reassuring reading for Tony Hall – or, frankly, for those who believe an independent BBC of scale is vital to the health of Britain’s creative economy.

Meanwhile, Hall and his team have a growing number of big shoes to fill. More high-profile exits are being predicted following the announcement that Mark Freeland is quitting.

In April, the BBC lost its drama chief, its head of natural history and, with Freeland’s exit, its most senior comedy production executive.

At this rate, the number of head honchos heading out of New Broadcasting House will have reached double figures by mid-summer.

■ **But, wait, here’s somebody prepared to speak out on behalf of beleaguered Auntie.**

“Everyone with half a brain is concerned about the BBC. I moved here because of the nature of this institution, which is singularly the most valuable brand that Britain has,” opined US scripted colossus Caryn Mandabach, speaking at the launch of *Peaky Blinders*, which is produced by her company.

**She added: “To make it dependent on whimsical words such as ‘transparency’ is actually cutting at the heart of storytelling.”**

**Mandabach should know. Her credits include also *The Cosby Show*, *Roseanna* and *Nurse Jackie*.**

**But there is a caveat to her support for the Beeb. She thinks the BBC should stop making whodunnits and stick entirely with character-based dramas. Perhaps she’s been lunching with John Whittingdale.**

■ We’ve all read that one idea apparently emanating from the culture secretary is to force BBC Worldwide to sell its 50% stake in UKTV.

Clearly, there would be no shortage of potential buyers. The suitors would almost certainly include UKTV’s joint owner, the ambitious Scripps.

UKTV recently announced that its share of commercial impacts is ahead of Channel 5’s portfolio of channels and Sky’s own branded channels.

This, of course, makes Worldwide’s stake more valuable still.

■ **Staying with UKTV, earlier this year, the company surprised everyone by moving into live sport. It acquired the rights to boxer David Haye’s comeback fight.**

Expect more sport’s coverage from UKTV. Darts is understood to be one event that the channel provider is eyeing up. It could turn out to be

**another bull’s eye for the Hammer-smith-based company.**

■ Tony Garnett is one of our greatest producers. Recently, Susanna White, Director of the BBC’s award-winning *Bleak House* and *Parade’s End*, singled him out as her mentor. She is not alone.

Soon we will be able to learn more about his extraordinary life (both his parents died while he was a child and Garnett was raised by an aunt and uncle) when his memoir, *The Day the Music Died – A Life Behind the Lens*, is published next month.

Off Message is getting an order in pronto.

■ **Certain cynics are convinced that Rupert Murdoch’s papers would never print a bad word concerning Sky.**

**Well, they’d better think again. Reviewing Sky 1 thriller *The Five*, *The Sunday Times*’s TV critic AA Gill lived up to his acerbic reputation by writing the following: “*The Five* is Sky’s big suspense drama. The real suspense surrounds when Sky is going to manage to make something that is a destination TV moment, and originates in Britain, and doesn’t look like old stars cashing in.”**

Ouch. Let’s hope that at least one of the, ahem, starry new dramas announced last month by Sky leads Gill to revise his opinion.



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