

PRESS RELEASE

ROYAL TELEVISION SOCIETY ANNOUNCES WINNERS FOR RTS PROGRAMME AWARDS 2021

- **Russell T Davies OBE presented with Outstanding Achievement Award**
 - **Michaela Coel sweeps three wins for *I May Destroy You***
 - **Inaugural Comedy Entertainment Award goes to *The Ranganation***

London, 16 March 2021 – The Royal Television Society (RTS), Britain’s leading forum for television and related media, has announced the winners for its RTS Programme Awards 2021, in partnership with Audio Network. Hosted by renowned British television and radio presenter Jonathan Ross, the prestigious awards were presented, and the winners and nominees celebrated, earlier this evening on the RTS website.

In addition to the 29 competitive categories, three further awards were presented this evening on behalf of the judges. The ‘Judges’ Award’ was presented to Anne Mensah, Vice President, Original Series at Netflix, for her talent and success throughout her career, and her unwavering commitment to reflecting society’s diversity on screen and actively championing diverse production talent to bring new stories and voices to television. For 2021, the ‘Outstanding Achievement Award’ was awarded to celebrated screenwriter Russell T Davies OBE, whose work over the last 20 years was described by the judges as taking “television drama to places it’s never been before, explored themes never explored before, and – more than anything - told stories never allowed before.” Finally, the ‘Special Award’ went to trade association PACT, for its incredible contribution and support to the UK television industry throughout 2020.

Across the competitive categories, the BBC took home 14 wins, three of which were for Michaela Coel’s *I May Destroy You*, which won in all three categories nominated. The ‘Breakthrough Award’ was presented to Mae Martin for Channel 4 and Netflix’s *Feel Good*. Mae Martin also took home the ‘Writer – Comedy’ award alongside co-writer Joe Hampson. Also in comedy, *The Ranganation* won the inaugural ‘Comedy Entertainment’ award, and hit series *The Young Offenders* garnered the win for ‘Scripted Comedy’.

BBC One’s *In My Skin* took home the coveted ‘Drama Series’ award, and ITV saw success including ‘Daytime Programme’ for *Loose Women* and ‘Entertainment’ for *The*

Masked Singer. Sky excelled in the sporting categories, with Michael Holding winning for ‘Sports Presenter, Commentator or Pundit’ and ‘Sports Programme’ being awarded to Sky Sports’ *England v West Indies 1st Test - Black Lives Matter*, which the judges described as “a remarkable piece of television.”

Chair of the Awards, Kenton Allen, said: “The incredible range of programming we have seen across all genres and categories in this uniquely challenging year has been exceptional and a terrific representation of the thriving and constantly innovating television industry we have in the UK. Although we were unable to celebrate as usual in person, we thank all of you for the continued support and send huge congratulations to the very well-deserved winners and nominees. We look forward to re-uniting, in the flesh and dressed to impress, for the RTS Awards 2022. It will be one hell of a reunion!”

Please see below the full list of winners and nominees:

Actor (Female)

WINNER – Michaela Coel - *I May Destroy You* (Various Artists/FALKNA for BBC One and HBO)

The judges described the winning performance as “nothing short of electrifying...somehow she brought the audience into her head, heart and skin”.

Nominees:

- Daisy Edgar-Jones - *Normal People* (Element Pictures for BBC Three)
- Glenda Jackson - *Elizabeth is Missing* (STV Studios for BBC One)

Actor (Male)

WINNER – Shaun Parkes - *Small Axe* (Turbine Studios and Lammas Park for BBC One)

The judges called the winning actor’s work in this programme “pitch perfect – so measured, so carefully crafted, so absolutely right.”

Nominees:

- Lennie James - *Save Me Too* (World Productions for Sky Atlantic)
- Paul Mescal - *Normal People* (Element Pictures for BBC Three)

Arts

WINNER – *Grayson's Art Club* (Swan Films for Channel 4)

“Refreshing, accessible and original,” said the judges, calling it “a truly joyous piece of work”.

Nominees:

- *African Renaissance: When Art Meets Power* (ClearStory for BBC Four)
- *Keith Haring: Street Art Boy* (BBC Studios for BBC Two)

Breakthrough Award

WINNER – Mae Martin - *Feel Good* (Objective Fiction and Objective Media Group Scotland for Channel 4 and Netflix)

“The winner,” said the judges, “is clearly a star in the making, bringing a fresh perspective and real originality to the screen.”

Nominees:

- Robert Softley Gale - *CripTales: Hamish* (BBC Studios for BBC Four)
- Big Zuu - *Big Zuu's Big Eats* (Boomerang for Dave)

Children's Programme

WINNER – *IRL with Team Charlene* (ITN Productions for ITV & CITV)

The judges said of the winning programme, “As a children's show it feels fresh, inclusive and hugely engaging.”

Nominees:

- *JoJo and Gran Gran/ It's Time to Go to the Hairdresser's* (BBC Children's In-House Productions in collaboration with A Productions for CBeebies)
- *FYI Investigates – Brazil: Children Caught in the Crossfire* (Fresh Start Media for Sky News and Sky Kids)

Comedy Entertainment

WINNER – *The Ranganation* (Zeppotron for BBC Two)

The judges remarked of the winning show, “It's genuinely funny, laugh-out loud event - the perfect showcase for the huge talent of its star.”

Nominees:

- *The Big Narstie Show* (Expectation/Dice Productions for Channel 4)
- *Charlie Brooker's Antiviral Wipe* (Broke and Bones/Endemol Shine Group for BBC Two)

Comedy Performance (Female)

WINNER – Gbemisola Ikumelo – *Famalam* (BBC Studios for BBC Three)

The judges said of the winning performance, “She’s supremely entertaining...she just has funny bones. When she’s on screen you simply can’t take your eyes off her.”

Nominees:

- Ruth Jones - *Gavin & Stacey Christmas Special* (Fulwell 73, Baby Cow and Tidy Productions for BBC One)
- Sophie Willan - *Alma’s Not Normal* (Expectation for BBC Two)

Comedy Performance (Male)

WINNER – Youssef Kerkour - *Home* (Jantaculum and Channel X for Channel 4)

“He has an amazing presence” said the judges of this performer. “His was a truly impactful performance.”

Nominees:

- Paul Chahidi - *This Country* (BBC Studios for BBC Three)
- O-T Fagbenle – *Maxxx* (Luti Media for Channel 4)

Daytime Programme

WINNER – *Loose Women* (ITV Studios - Daytime for ITV)

The winning show “makes a real connection with its audience – making them laugh, making them think,” said the judges.

Nominees:

- *The Bidding Room* (Ricochet for BBC One)
- *Junior Bake Off* (Love Productions for Channel 4)

Documentary Series

WINNER – *Once Upon a Time in Iraq* (KEO Films for BBC Two)

The judges described this series as “a gripping piece of television telling a story we thought we knew but actually didn’t, full of characters who confounded stereotypes.”

Nominees:

- *Hospital: Fighting Covid-19* (Label1 for BBC Two)
- *The School That Tried to End Racism* (Proper Content for Channel 4)

Drama Series

WINNER – *In My Skin* (Expectation for BBC Three and BBC One Wales)

“A fresh and exciting viewing experience, a piece of work executed with genuine creative vision,” said the judges of the winning series.

Nominees:

- *Save Me Too* (World Productions for Sky Atlantic)
- *I Hate Suzie* (Bad Wolf for Sky Atlantic)

Entertainment

WINNER – *The Masked Singer* (Bandicoot Scotland for ITV)

The judges described the winning show as “a smartly produced, joyful, silly, escapist family watch...and just what we all need right now.”

Nominees:

- *Beat the Chasers* (Potato for ITV)
- *Big Zuu’s Big Eats* (Boomerang for Dave)

Entertainment Performance

WINNER – Big Narstie & Mo Gilligan - *The Big Narstie Show* (Expectation/Dice Productions for Channel 4)

The judges said, “An infectious sense of fun is created. It’s like a party that you want to be at.”

Nominees:

- Rob Beckett & Romesh Ranganathan - *Rob & Romesh Vs* (CPL Productions for Sky One)
- Yung Filly - *Hot Property* (BBC Three In-House Productions for BBC Three)

Formatted Popular Factual

WINNER – Joe Lycett’s *Got Your Back* (Rumpus Media for Channel 4)

The judges described the winning series as “distinctive in style yet broad in appeal, all wrapped in a highly original format.”

Nominees:

- *Long Lost Family: Born Without Trace* (Wall to Wall Media for ITV)
- *The Rap Game UK* (Naked (A Fremantle Label) for BBC Three)

History

WINNER – *Damilola: The Boy Next Door* (Acme Films for Channel 4)

The judges described the winning programme as “delivering real emotional resonance, a proper piece of history film-making but with a compelling personal approach”

Nominees:

- *Lost Home Movies of Nazi Germany* (Bright Button Productions for BBC Four)
- *The World's Biggest Murder Trial: Nuremberg* (Middlechild Productions for Channel 5)

Live Event

WINNER – *The Third Day: Autumn* (Sky Studios, Plan B Entertainment and Punchdrunk Entertainment for Sky Arts)

The judges described this production as “an astonishing feat, soaring in both its ambition and first class execution.”

Nominees:

- *ENO's Drive & Live: La Bohème* (Somethin' Else for Sky Arts)
- *Election 2019 Live: The Results* (ITV News for ITV)

Mini-Series

WINNER – *I May Destroy You* (Various Artists/FALKNA for BBC One and HBO)

“An incredible achievement, showing us something we rarely talk about but should. Its impact was huge,” said the judges of the winning programme.

Nominees:

- *Adult Material* (Fifty Fathoms for Channel 4)
- *Small Axe* (Turbine Studios and Lammas Park for BBC One)

Presenter

WINNER – Joe Lycett - *The Great British Sewing Bee* (Love Productions for BBC One)

“This presenter,” said the judges, “showed all the qualities the audience loves to see right now: warm, approachable and kind, with tremendous enthusiasm for the subject matter.”

Nominees:

- Yinka Bokinni - *Damilola: The Boy Next Door* (Acme Films for Channel 4)
- Grayson Perry - *Grayson's Art Club* (Swan Films for Channel 4)

RTS Channel of the Year

WINNER – BBC One

“The winning channel,” said the judges, “did, in 2020, what it does at its best. It became a place that the nation huddled around in a time of crisis...offering up an extraordinary range of quality programming, from bold new drama to innovative comedy and entertainment, plus outstanding news coverage.”

Nominees:

- ITV
- Sky Arts

Science & Natural History

WINNER – *The Surgeon's Cut* (BBC Studios Production for Netflix)

“The winning programme,” said the judges, “was beautifully made – sensitive and poignant, and offered an astonishing insight into a fascinating subject.”

Nominees:

- *Surviving the Virus: My Brother & Me* (Little Gem for BBC One)
- *Brain Surgeons: Between Life and Death* (Blast! Films for Channel 4)

Scripted Comedy

WINNER – *The Young Offenders* (Vico Films for BBC Three)

“Authentic, absurd and hilarious,” said the judges of this show.

Nominees:

- *Brassic* (Calamity Films for Sky One)
- *Sex Education* (Eleven Film for Netflix)

Single Documentary

WINNER – *Anton Ferdinand: Football, Racism & Me* (Wonder and New Era Global Productions for BBC One)

The winning programme was, in the words of the judges, “powerful and affecting, a revelatory piece that confronted the issue in a new way.”

Nominees:

- *Surviving Covid* (Sandpaper Films for Channel 4)
- *The Family Secret* (Candour Productions for Channel 4)

Single Drama

WINNER – *Elizabeth is Missing* (STV Studios for BBC One)

“The winning piece,” said the judges, “was a beautiful film full of layers, all built around an intensely emotional and compassionate central performance.”

Nominees:

- *Anthony* (LA Productions for BBC One)
- *Sitting in Limbo* (Left Bank Pictures for BBC One)

Soap and Continuing Drama

WINNER – *Casualty* (BBC Studios for BBC One)

“Still innovating, still pioneering in using new technology, and still pushing forward what this type of show can do and say,” commented the judges on the winning programme.

Nominees:

- *Coronation Street* (ITV Studios for ITV)
- *Holby City* (BBC Studios for BBC One)

Sports Presenter, Commentator or Pundit

WINNER – Michael Holding - *England v West Indies* (Sky Sports for Sky Sports Cricket)

“The winner,” the judges commented, “captured the mood of the event perfectly, bringing a personal perspective to bear on a moment of huge significance.”

Nominees:

- Bryan Habana - *2019 Rugby World Cup Final* (ITV Sport for ITV)
- Gabby Logan - *London Marathon 2020* (BBC Sport for BBC One and BBC Two)

Sports Programme

WINNER – *England v West Indies 1st Test - Black Lives Matter* (Sky Sports for Sky Sports Cricket)

Of the winning programme, the judges said, “This was a remarkable piece of television – editorially superb and technically exceptional.”

Nominees:

- *London Marathon 2020* (BBC Sport for BBC One and BBC Two)
- *The Open for the Ages* (IMG for The R&A and Sky Sports)

Writer – Comedy

WINNER – Mae Martin and Joe Hampson - *Feel Good* (Objective Fiction and Objective Media Group Scotland for Channel 4 and Netflix)

The judges commented, “This writing was engaging, warm and truthful, but also landed the humour with real skill.”

Nominees:

- Peter Foott - *The Young Offenders* (Vico Films for BBC Three)
- Writing Team – *Ghosts* (Monumental Television for BBC One)

Writer – Drama

WINNER – Michaela Coel - *I May Destroy You* (Various Artists/FALKNA for BBC One and HBO)

Commenting on this writer’s work, the judges remarked, “It’ll be discussed for years to come...it’s brave, poignant and highly original.”

Nominees:

- Steve McQueen and Alastair Siddons - *Small Axe* (Turbine Studios and Lammas Park for BBC One)
- Lucy Prebble - *I Hate Suzie* (Bad Wolf for Sky Atlantic)

Judges’ Award

WINNER – Anne Mensah

The judges said: “The recipient of this prestigious honour is a senior commissioner who has already experienced outstanding success at both the BBC and Sky, and has now brought her own distinctive style, taste and judgement to new drama programming at Netflix.

*Anne Mensah began her commissioning career at the BBC where she developed and commissioned an impressive array of drama hits across the portfolio of channels – shows like *Wallander* starring Kenneth Branagh, *Single Father* starring David Tennant, and the highly popular *Waterloo Road*. She became Head of Drama at Sky in 2011, and soon turned Sky into a powerhouse of high-quality British-produced drama. Critically acclaimed shows like *Fortitude*, *Patrick Melrose*, *Save Me* and *Chernobyl* showed the world that Sky had become a major player in big drama, and Anne Mensah was the rising star to watch.*

*In 2018 she announced that she was joining Netflix, and within the first year her impact was felt immediately. As the Vice President for UK Original Series, Anne’s slate includes established hits like *The Crown*, *Sex Education* and *After Life* – but in a short time she’s built a UK-based drama commissioning team with the aim of capturing authentic British voices in high production value British-produced shows. In December, when the industry was grounded at the lowest point of the pandemic, Netflix announced seven major new original scripted series commissioned by*

Anne and her team – a truly significant boost to British drama production. With close to one hundred Netflix productions filmed in Britain over the last two years, the UK is now the second biggest producing territory for the streamer after the US.

Alongside Anne’s uncanny ability to sniff out a hit, is her unwavering commitment to reflecting society’s diversity on the screen. And her commitment is real - she actively champions diverse production talent to bring new stories and voices to television...now giving them a global platform to showcase their work to the world. Speak to anyone who’s been commissioned by Anne, and they’ll also testify to how excellent she is to work with – collaborative, thoughtful, and in possession of that quality sometimes rare in commissioners...humility.”

Outstanding Achievement Award

WINNER – Russell T Davies OBE

The judges said: “This is presented to a screenwriter whose work over the last twenty years has taken television drama to places it’s never been before, explored themes never explored before, and – more than anything - told stories never allowed before. That writer is Russell T Davies.

*Russell is one of the greatest dramatists of his generation, a writer who – as he put it himself – writes about “the big stuff...the stuff that makes you laugh, the stuff that makes you cry”. And perhaps it’s the epic nature of what happens to the characters in his shows that’s made his work so loved by critics and audiences alike...most recently, of course, with the sublime *It’s A Sin* on Channel 4.*

*Russell grew up in Swansea in a house full of books, but it was what came out of the television in the corner of the living room that intrigued him most. As a young teenager, he devoured a wonderful mix of Seventies television dramas – *Play for Today*, *I Claudius*, *Rock Follies*, the works of Dennis Potter. Oh, and one more show, every Saturday teatime on BBC One...but more of that later.*

*His passions propelled him to the West Glamorgan Youth Theatre, where he fell in love with the craft of communicating stories to an audience. Youth Theatre took over his life, and it was here that he first began writing short plays of his own. After university he knew that theatre – or even better, television – was what he wanted to pursue. The BBC turned him down three times for their graduate traineeship, but by chance he managed to land a job on the children’s show *Why Don’t You?* produced by BBC Wales. He was on the right path...and from that moment on, he never looked back.*

*His early work in children’s television included a turn as a storyteller on *Play School* and writing jokes for the *Chuckle Brothers*; I’d love to know which jokes – maybe he’ll tell us one later? He directed, wrote and produced all kinds of children’s television at the BBC. In the early Nineties Russell moved to Granada Television as a writer on *Children’s Ward*. He became producer of the show and wrote an episode about a teenage boy with HIV, contracted through a blood transfusion. A later episode, also written by Russell, centred around the grooming of children by paedophiles in online chat rooms. This was on *Children’s ITV*, at four thirty in the afternoon in 1994. It won him his first Children’s BAFTA. It was –*

and still is – brave, ground breaking television...early period Russell T Davies, and a taste of things to come.

Living in Manchester during the Nineties led Russell to his breakthrough work, Queer As Folk, in 1999. He was writing mainstream shows for Granada by day - and by night immersing himself in the city's exploding gay culture. At its epi-centre was Canal Street...on Canal Street the lights were bright, the music was great, and the bars were full of vivid characters - each with a story of how their lives had brought them to that place. Why was no one putting these characters on television, or telling their stories, he wondered?

Russell realised that if anyone was to do so, it should be him.

Queer as Folk put a hidden truth on television: young British men leading gay lives, lives that were raucous and messy, difficult and loud, loving and glorious. Quite incredibly, we'd never seen this on television before in the three decades since homosexuality had been de-criminalised. For a dramatist, it was unexplored, rich, open territory. Territory Russell made his own.

Working alongside his long time producing partner Nicola Shindler, Russell followed Queer as Folk with Bob and Rose in 2001 – the story of a gay man who marries a straight woman and has a child with her. The following year brought an exploration of themes around faith in The Second Coming starring Christopher Eccleston, a work described by Russell's contemporary Paul Abbott as "a television masterpiece".

In 2004 Russell wrote Casanova, a revisiting of the notorious lover's memoirs starring David Tennant...and its debut on BBC Three broke the channel record for first run drama. And it was at this time that Russell realised an ambition that he'd harboured for years, all based on an obsession that went right the way back to that childhood living room in Swansea: he got the chance to reinvent Doctor Who. He'd been handed the keys to the televisual sweet shop.

For five years from 2005, the colossal machine that Doctor Who became more or less took over Russell's life... As showrunner and chief writer he re-imagined it for a new century and a sophisticated new audience, building epic stories around big, technical characters - adding special effects and production values that set new standards for fantasy drama. He allowed his imagination to run riot. But more than anything, he brought warmth and heart to Doctor Who, refashioning the show as a drama for the whole family to watch on Saturday teatime – and even in primetime on Christmas Day. With spin off shows like Torchwood and The Sarah Jane Adventures running alongside it, Doctor Who became a global hit that continues to enthrall audiences to this day

Russell returned to writing about gay themes in his next major work - Cucumber, for Channel 4, and then in 2016 he adapted and produced what he called "the gayest ever Midsummer Night's Dream" for BBC One. Two years later came the multi-award winning A Very English Scandal, which explored the passions, secrets and betrayals in the relationship between Liberal Party leader Jeremy Thorpe and Norman Scott through the Sixties and Seventies.

The potential consequences of the rising tide of populism in Britain were examined in Years and Years in 2019. Russell time-travelled the Lyons family of Manchester fifteen years into the future, landing them in an era of mind-bending new technology against a backdrop of political and economic turmoil. And then in 2021 came It's A Sin, Russell's empathetic rewind to the arrival of AIDS in the Eighties...a timely story about how a mysterious new virus unleashed great waves of fear, denial and death. For a younger generation of gay viewers in particular, it was a genuine eye-opener – did this really happen like this? An older generation remembered..."yes, I'm afraid it did."

It's A Sin, in some ways, is the ultimate Russell T Davies drama – a story of characters looking for their truth, and dealing with the consequences. As Lucy Mangan in The Guardian wrote, "He creates real, flawed, entirely credible bundles of humanity and makes it clear, without even momentary preachiness, how much they have to lose."

That's what Russell does. He unflinchingly writes about the truth of real life, gives his characters wit and authenticity and his shows undeniable integrity, then defends them to the hilt. As he once said, "If it's true, then it's true. And you can never back down from that"."

Special Award

WINNER – PACT

The judges said: "Now as we all know, this year has been a profoundly challenging one for our industry. But right from the earliest signs of the pandemic, one organisation swung into action. PACT is the body that represents Britain's independent production sector – and in those first days of lockdown, it took a new mission: to somehow find a way for television to be produced safely again, when everything seemed to make that feel impossible. The very survival of the whole independent production sector hung in the balance.

Quickly, PACT helped on two fronts. To producers, they offered regular briefings designed to share safety information between companies. Straight away the focus was on finding a way back to safe programme-making.

On the second front, PACT was on political manoeuvres. A senior team led the industry's working group on production insurance, and lobbied the Government to create the Film and Television Production Restart Scheme. In July, the Government announced half a billion pounds of immediate funding - which meant that the industry could turn the lights back on. It was a real win for Britain's television production industry - due in large part to the successful lobbying by PACT.

Taken together, these measures ensured production was able to resume in the summer. A full scale catastrophe for our industry had been avoided. In recognition of this, the RTS is presenting a Special Award to mark the work of John McVay, Sara Geater, Max Rumney, Hakan Kousetta and their team for the exceptional work this year."

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About The Royal Television Society:

From glamorous award ceremonies to lively debates, the RTS embraces all aspects of television, and is open to anyone with an interest in the medium.

As an educational charity, we encourage and celebrate work in television and its related fields, from finding out how the nation's favourite shows are made in our Anatomy of a Hit series, to celebrating burgeoning talent at our annual Student Awards.

The industry's most talented individuals give us an insight into the work that goes into making cutting edge contemporary TV. From Government ministers and CEOs to workshops with great runners, our events look at every part of the business.

Our annual Television Journalism, Programme, Craft and Design, and Student Awards celebrate achievements across the broadcasting industry.

Each year, we offer Television Production and Technology bursaries to help those from less affluent backgrounds get a foothold in the industry, and Masterclass sessions bring together students, academics and industry heads.

Global television leaders gather to discuss what the future holds for television at our London Conference or the RTS Cambridge Convention.

Alongside our engaged community of around 5,000 full members, the Society is supported by Britain and the world's biggest broadcasters, producers and consultants, including Principal Patrons BBC, Channel 4, ITV and Sky.

Originally founded as the Television Society in 1927, the Society was granted its Royal title in 1966 and HRH The Prince of Wales became Patron of the RTS in 1997.

Today, 15 regional and national groups curate lively events and awards around the UK and Ireland, from Glasgow to Galway.

RTS Futures, which is aimed at those in their first two years of employment, organises an exciting roster of discussion, training and social occasions. Recent events have included workshops on learning how to format shows and how to survive as a freelancer, and expert panels explaining how to be the best researcher and how to make it on-screen.

About Audio Network:

Audio Network provides original, high-quality music for broadcasters, brands, creators and music fans everywhere. Discover music from world-renowned and emerging artists and composers, recorded at some of the world's finest studios – including over 150 sessions each year at Abbey Road Studios.

We provide simple and transparent licensing, allowing creators to use music on multiple platforms, everywhere, forever.

In 2019, Audio Network was acquired by eOne, a talent-driven independent studio specialising in entertainment content, and part of global play and entertainment company Hasbro.