

April 2017

Television



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the art of TV**

RTS Programme
Awards 2017



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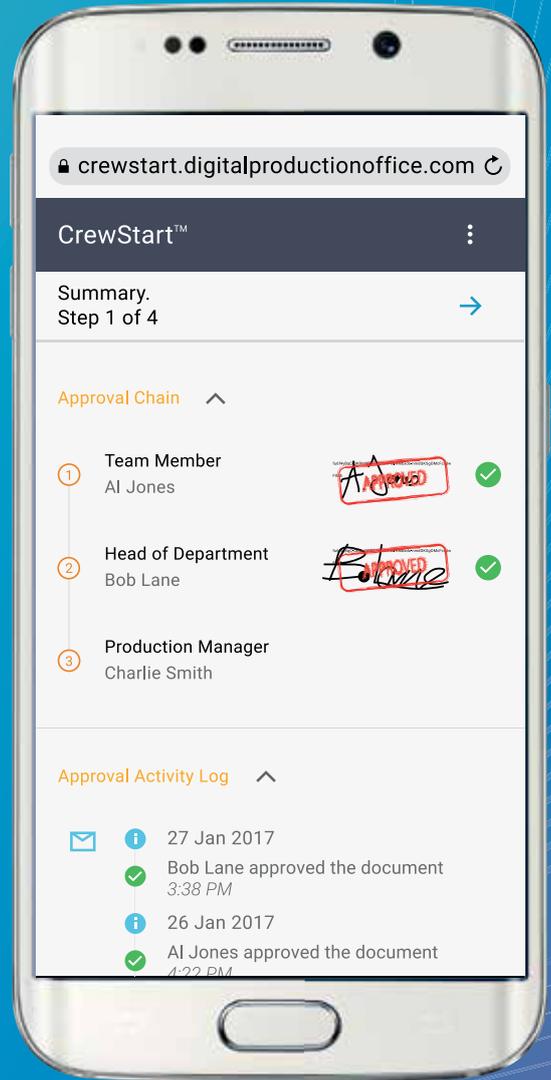
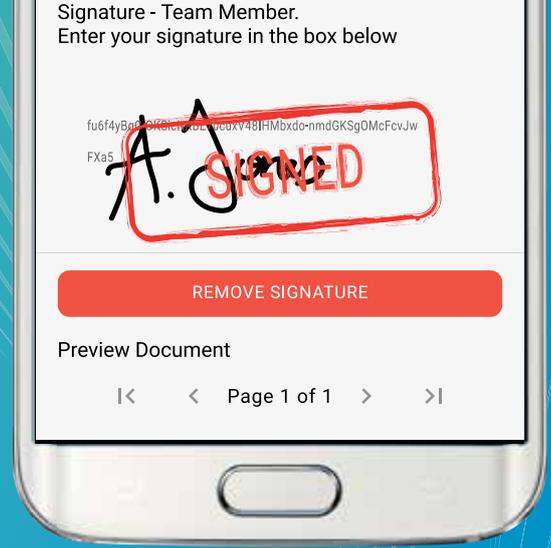
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From the CEO



It's been an awards-packed month at the Society. I was thrilled to be at the RTS West of England Awards on 19 March, just two days before the RTS Programme Awards, which were attended by a record-breaking 900 guests.

The RTS West of England Awards were held at the hugely atmospheric Bristol Old Vic and brilliantly hosted by *Countryfile's* Anita Rani. Those attending included Mark Linsey, Nick Knowles and Mark Millar, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and BBC's Andy Day and Naomi Wilkinson.

No prizes for guessing that Bristol's Natural History Unit, which is celebrating its 60th anniversary, did exceptionally well, taking three awards for the wonderful *Planet Earth II*.

Meanwhile, in London, the always-brilliant Sandi Toksvig hosted a fantastic evening at the RTS Programme Awards. A big thanks to Sandi for being such a tremendous host. I'd like to congratulate all the winners, in Bristol and in London.

It's also been a busy month for RTS events. I am seriously grateful to Sally Doganis for producing "*The Crown: Deconstructing the coronation*". A capacity crowd gained a valuable insight into Netflix's unique way of working. I am sure I'm not alone in saying that I could have listened all night to Peter Morgan talk about his experience of scripting *The Crown*. A full report is in this issue of *Television*.

This year's Baird Lecture, organised by RTS Midlands, "*Planet Earth II: The making of a natural history 'blockbuster'*", was given by Michael Gunton

at the University of Birmingham on 29 March. It was a real pleasure to be there and what a great venue!

Michael's illustrated talk gave his listeners the inside track on the BBC landmark documentary. He has overseen more than 140 wildlife films, so has few peers in this area of television production.

Finally, I'd like to draw your attention to one of our upcoming events, "Breaking barriers: How can the TV industry encourage more women into technology jobs?", on 26 April at London's Hospital Club. I hope to see you there.

Theresa Wise

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Hosted by Sandi Toksvig, the awards were presented on 21 March at the Grosvenor House Hotel, London, in partnership with Audio Network. The winners and nominees over eight pages

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Event reports from around the nations and regions

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RTS Cambridge Convention 2017



Save the date
13-15 September

www.rts.org.uk

National events

RTS EARLY EVENING EVENT

Monday 10 April

Where have all the disabled people gone?

Panelists: Adam Hills, presenter of *The Last Leg*; Rosie Jones, researcher and comedian; Shannon Murray, actor, writer and broadcaster; Deborah Williams, CEO, Creative Diversity Network. Chair: Ade Adepitan MBE. 6:30pm for 6:45pm start
Venue: Channel 4, 124 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2TX

■ Book online at www.rts.org.uk

RTS EARLY EVENING EVENT

Wednesday 26 April

Breaking barriers: How can the TV industry encourage more women into technology jobs?

Panelists: Dr Maggie Aderin-Pocock MBE, space scientist and science communicator; Sinead Greenaway, chief technology and operations officer, UKTV; Anna Patching, sound engineer, OB STV; Sara Putt, deputy chair, WFTV (UK). Chaired by Maggie Philbin OBE, CEO and co-founder, TeenTech. 6:30pm for 6:45pm start
Venue: The Hospital Club, 24 Endell Street, London WC2H 9HQ

■ Book online at www.rts.org.uk

RTS FUTURES

Thursday 27 April

You're hired! Nail the perfect CV

Experienced media recruitment consultants and TV professionals will talk you through the ideal structure and content, and the dos and don'ts, to really make your CV shine.

Using interactive examples, you will be guided through the process of identifying flaws in CVs, to help you analyse your own. Don't get left in the pile! 6:45pm for 7:00pm

Venue: Cavendish Conference Centre, 22 Duchess Mews, London W1G 9DT

■ Book online at www.rts.org.uk



RTS Futures: Thursday 27 April

RTS AWARDS

Friday 16 June

RTS Student Television Awards 2017

Venue: BFI Southbank, London SE1 8XT

■ Book online at www.rts.org.uk

RTS CONFERENCE

13-15 September

RTS Cambridge Convention 2017

Venue: West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge CB3 9DP and King's College, Cambridge CB2 1ST

■ Booking opens soon

Local events

BRISTOL

■ Belinda Biggam
■ belindabiggam@hotmail.com

DEVON & CORNWALL

■ Kingsley Marshall
■ Kingsley.Marshall@falmouth.ac.uk

EAST

■ Nikki O'Donnell
■ nikki.odonnell@bbc.co.uk

LONDON

Saturday 22 April

Update TV skills

Free, all-day training event, in partnership with BBC Academy, WFTV and Richmond, The

American International University in London. Tickets are free but numbers are limited, so the selection process involves an application form. Booking: www.rts.org.uk/event/update-tv-skills and follow the 'Register your interest' link to Eventbrite.

Topics include: multi-platform commissioning; production for portable devices; using social media; immersive TV; digital media workflow; CV workshop; and directing in a digital age. Individual sessions may change closer to the date. Registration from 9:00am; event starts at 9:45am.

Venue: Asa Briggs Hall, 7-17 Ansdell Street, London W8 5BN

■ Daniel Cherowbrier
■ daniel@cherowbrier.co.uk

MIDLANDS

■ Jayne Greene 07792 776585
■ jayne@ijmmedia.co.uk

NORTH EAST & THE BORDER

Wednesday 17 May

Young People's Media Festival 2017

Further information at: www.sunderland.ac.uk/rtsypmf. 6:00pm

Venue: Media Campus, University of Sunderland SR6 0DD

■ 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

Wednesday 26 April

The next generation of TV journalism

Venue: City of Glasgow College, City Campus, 190 Cathedral Street, Glasgow G40RF

Wednesday 17 May

RTS Scotland 2017 Awards

6:00pm for 6:30pm

Venue: Oran Mor, Byres Rd, Glasgow G12 8QX

■ Jane Muirhead 07718 087 108
■ scotlandchair@rts.org.uk

SOUTHERN

■ Gordon Cooper
■ gordonjcooper@gmail.com

THAMES VALLEY

Wednesday 17 May

NAB review 2017

7:00pm-9:00pm

Venue: Pincent's Manor Hotel, Calcot, Reading RG31 4UQ

■ Penny Westlake
■ info@rtstvc.org.uk

WALES

■ Hywel William 07980 007841
■ hywel@aim.uk.com

YORKSHIRE

Friday 7 July

Programme Awards 2017

7:00pm for 7:30pm

Venue: New Dock Hall, Royal Armouries, Leeds LS10 1LT

■ Lisa Holdsworth 07790 145280
■ lisa@allonewordproductions.co.uk



RTS
STUDENT
TELEVISION
AWARDS
2017

16 JUNE

1:00pm
BFI Southbank,
London SE1 8XT

www.rts.org.uk

TV diary

Waad al-Kateab discovers a different world when she visits London after filming the horror of Aleppo



I have just arrived in London from Turkey, where my family is now living after the fall of our beloved city, Aleppo. I am travelling with my husband, Hamza, and our first stop from Heathrow airport is the *Channel 4 News* office.

I am feeling excited but also apprehensive. One of the first people I meet in the newsroom is the presenter Jon Snow. When we are introduced, he bursts into tears. I feel emotional, too. These are the people who have made it possible to show the world my footage, the real stories and horrors of the people of Syria.

■ **Tonight it is the RTS Television Journalism Awards, the main reason I have come to London. The Hilton hotel on Park Lane is a far cry from what I am used to. Last year, I worked in a makeshift hospital, filming images of trauma, death, grief and courage. Now, I am dining with beautiful, well-dressed people in a room with very big chandeliers. It is a lot to take in. My films for *Channel 4 News* have been nominated for four awards. I am nervous but I hope we win.**

■ After my name is called, I walk up to the stage and wait for what seems like for ever as everyone in the room stands and applauds me. In my speech, I tell them: "There is a perished city called Aleppo. And all its

people are asking you to remember your humanity."

They all stand and clap again for a very long time. I am humble.

■ **After the excitement of last night, today I am relaxing with my husband in this beautiful city. We visit Buckingham Palace and go shopping on Oxford Street. It is hard to believe that one city can have so many shops and people.**

I can't wait to tell my friends and family back home about this experience. But all my friends have already heard the news that I won four awards and my Facebook page is full of congratulations and good wishes.

■ I am being interviewed on CNN by Christiane Amanpour and am introduced as "The woman who exposed the horrors of Aleppo". I feel emotionally torn, very sad that we lost our city, proud of what we all did to try and save it and its people, but also determined to keep telling the world what is happening.

The *Mail on Sunday* interviews me next in a hotel in London. It wrote at length about my plight while I was trapped in Aleppo in December. Now the paper wants to hear my story in person.

I feel exhausted reliving the suffering of the people caught up in the siege and the human toll of the Syrian war. But it is an important

story to tell. A photoshoot with the *Radio Times* follows.

■ **Today, because I am a self-taught film-maker, I am shadowing a *Channel 4 News* camera operator, who is filming outside Parliament. He is teaching me the technical understanding of filming and explaining depth of field.**

I also spend time with an editor in an edit suite and with the online team. There is so much to learn, but it is a calm and fun newsroom to work in.

■ I am there to learn from them, but it is the staff who are asking me many questions. I tell them about filming in the emergency room, with my doctor husband and my baby daughter sleeping at my side, on the day three young brothers were brought in after being hit by a bomb. The city was experiencing the heaviest bombardment in several days. One of the brothers died. No one expected to live much longer. And my camera never looked away.

Waad al-Kateab is a Syrian film-maker. At the RTS Television Journalism Awards, she was named Camera Operator of the Year and Young Talent of the Year and won the Independent Award (for The Last Flower Seller of Aleppo on Channel 4 News and, with Channel 4 News, News Coverage – International (for Inside Aleppo on Channel 4 News).

Content

Sanya Burgess asks why *University Challenge* is still thriving after more than half a century on air

Fingers on buzzers...



Famous for its split-screen display, eccentric student contestants, difficult questions and intimidating host, *University Challenge* has been an almost constant fixture on our screens for more than 50 years.

The programme has clocked up over 1,600 episodes and regularly pulls in audiences of 3 million. Its impressive reign continues into the online era, despite barely changing the format, its staging or the rules of the show.

What are the secrets of its extraordinary success? Is it the questions, the contestants, or the format?

First aired in 1962, *University Challenge* was then capable of drawing audiences of 11 million a week. Twenty-five years later, it was axed by ITV in 1987, when viewing figures fell to 1 million following relegation to an off-peak slot.

The show was relaunched by the BBC in 1994. Its scholarly and slightly eccentric presenter, Bamber Gascoigne, was dropped in favour of a more conventional TV anchor man. Jeremy Paxman has hosted ever since.

Following a dip in ratings a few years ago, *University Challenge* has bounced back and frequently tops the viewing figures for BBC Two.

Starter for 10, the best-selling novel and film starring James McAvoy and Benedict Cumberbatch, is testament to the enduring affection for the show.

Its author, David Nicholls, believes that the show remains popular thanks to the difficulty of the questions: "It's the antidote to the 'What's the capital of France?' school of quiz, where everyone has the satisfaction of getting the answer right. Instead of that satisfaction, you have this awe and amazement that there are people out there who know this stuff."

James Fox is the MD of Remarkable Television, producer of *Pointless*, which recently recorded its 1,000th episode. He hopes to emulate the longevity of *University Challenge*: "As a fellow quiz show producer, to be able to do that number of episodes, year in, year out, is no mean feat. The knowledge that you've got to test people on doesn't run out, but trying to create brilliantly crafted questions is a difficult thing. If, in 40 years, *Pointless* is still on, then we'd all be very proud."

Jack Waley-Cohen, questions editor on *Only Connect*, believes that the key to the show's long-running success lies with the contestants. "People love seeing people being really, really clever," says Waley-Cohen. He characterises the

tone of the show as "more inquisitorial" and "more of a hard-core, serious quiz show than *Only Connect*", whose own questions are some of TV's toughest.

He says that good teams and stand-out individuals within those teams help drive audience numbers.

One of those stand-out individuals is former contestant David Stainer. Now 38, a solicitor and living in Hertfordshire, he captained his team in one of the most controversial *University Challenge* finals.

Representing Oriel College, Oxford, in 1999, Stainer and his teammates were pipped to the crown by an Open University team with an average age of 46.

"As long as I can remember, it's always been the hardest show on television," says Stainer. He has competed in a number of televised quizzes, including *Only Connect*. He adds: "It's an exciting show. There's not much filler on it. You get a quick introduction, then, within a minute or two, the questions start being asked and they are asked at a fast pace."

The show's format, inspired by the US television student quiz show *College Bowl*, may be set in stone but, over the years, *University Challenge* has never been far away from the headlines.

In 1975, a protest held by Manchester



BBC

students competing against Downing College, Cambridge, had the former answering all the questions in a round by shouting “Che Guevara”, “Marx”, “Trotsky” or “Lenin”.

To this day, the show attracts extensive coverage in the mainstream press. This tends to be around certain contestants, such as the current series’ Eric Monkman, who has a habit of pulling unusual facial expressions.

In 2009, Gail Trimble – captain of the Corpus Christi, Oxford, team – was dubbed the “human Google”. And last year, the well-arched left eyebrow of Hannah Woods, captain of the 2016 winning team of Peterhouse, Cambridge, had two parody Twitter accounts set up in honour of her eyebrow.

Recently, the show attracted negative headlines after an episode that featured an all-white and all-male pair of teams.

Casting for the show is a long and exacting process. The emphasis is on the ability of contestants to answer the questions. Each university has its own process of selecting candidates to be shortlisted for auditions, which are held at ITV Studios, which inherited the show from Granada Television.

Giles Hutchings, 21, from Farnham in Surrey, was captain of the University of Warwick’s team in the most recent ▶

Six of the best questions



ITV

■ ‘Of unexcelled usefulness to historians, [its] intricate realism recorded with the restraint of a Jane Austen and the depth of reflection of a Proust.’ These words describe which 11th-Century novel, the work of the Japanese lady-in-waiting Murasaki Shikibu?

■ The lion, hens and roosters, wild asses, tortoises and the elephant are, in sequence, the first entities introduced in which orchestral suite of 14 movements, composed in 1886?

■ Pierre Janssen and Norman Lockyer are jointly credited with the detection, in 1868, of which gas as an unexpected line in the Sun’s spectrum? It was discovered on Earth in 1895 in the uranium mineral cleveite.

■ What seven-letter word links: an impure metal formed in the smelting of ores; a bright double star in the constellation Leo; and a Roman consul of the Punic wars, held as an example of a patriot who chose virtue over personal expediency?

■ Add together the number of letters in the surnames of the prime minister who came to office after the 1945 general election and his two successors. What prime number results?

■ What is the lowest positive integer to contain the letter ‘C’ when it is spelled out as a word in English?

Answers

- 1 The Tale of Genji/Genji Monogatari
- 2 Saint-Saëns’ The Carnival of the Animals
- 3 Helium
- 4 Regulus
- 5 19
- 6 Octillion, which is 10 to the 27 in American and modern British usage, or 10 to the 48, depending on country and context

▶ series of the show. He sat a one-hour test at his university, along with around 100 other applicants. Those who achieved the best scores were then interviewed and sorted into a team by the incumbent captain.

ITV Studios whittles down around 130 teams to 28 via further academic testing and interviews that establish whether the students would work well on television.

Hutchings believes that the producers make a genuine effort to create a diverse show. As a result, teams often try to attract women in the hope that this will improve the chances of ITV Studios placing them on the show.

An additional challenge for today's teams is the scrutiny they receive on social media – more than 80,000 people discuss *University Challenge* on Facebook alone.

Hutchings' teammate, Sophie Rudd, attracted attention following a particularly enthusiastic answer and overall strong performance. But she found herself at the centre of a Twitter storm when trolls began to torment her for being transgender.

Reportedly, more than 4,000 questions are commissioned for every

series, of which around 3,250 will make it to the screen. Following a decision to include more clues in questions, Peter Gwyn, the executive producer, has denied that the questions are getting easier.

I THINK THAT THERE HAS PROBABLY BEEN A SLOW TENDENCY FOR THE QUESTIONS TO GET MORE DIFFICULT OVER TIME

Stainer agrees. He argues that one reason for the show's longevity is because the quality and level of difficulty of the questions remains consistent.

"The question setters are quite skilled at adapting the questions over time to suit the way underlying

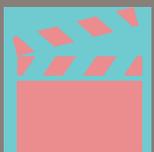
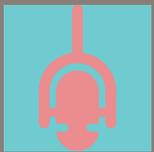
knowledge changes," he says. "The questions now are very, very different to during Bamber Gascoigne's time, but I suspect that they are also different to the early years of Paxman."

He credits those who produce the show with monitoring and adapting the questions to keep up with the rising competitiveness in the off-screen quizzing circuit. This, he says, has resulted in a better calibre of teams over the past 15 years.

"I remember that there was a period when, watching at home, I thought the questions had got rather obscure. But the producers always seem to realise that they need to sort it out and it goes back to the right level of difficulty," says Stainer. "I think that there has probably been a slow tendency for the questions to get more difficult over time."

Nonetheless, with a trophy and bragging rights in place of a cash prize, ultimately, the show is just for fun.

As contestant Giles Hutchings says, "I guess I just wanted to have the chance to go on and show off my useless knowledge. You can only put that to use on quiz shows, as it doesn't really help you with life in general."



RTS London Centre training day

Update TV skills

22 April Registration: 09:00am ■ Sessions start at 9:45am

Booking: www.rts.org.uk/event/update-tv-skills

And follow the link to Eventbrite ■ Venue: Asa Briggs Hall, 7-17 Ansdell Street, London W8 5BN

- Multiplatform commissioning
- Production for portable devices
- Using social media
- Immersive TV
- Digital media workflows
- CV workshop
- Directing in a digital age

Individual sessions are subject to change

RTS London is holding a free all-day training event in partnership with the BBC Academy, WFTV, and Richmond, The American International University in London. Registration is free and, because numbers are limited, tickets will be allocated following a selection process which starts with an application email. BBC Academy will oversee the fair allocation of places.



The Billen profile

Former ITV and BBC chief **Peter Fincham** has returned to his indie roots with *Expectation*. **Andrew Billen** checks the slate



Lisa Peacock

Great expectations

Ah, they remember it well. It was the autumn of 2015 and Peter Fincham, ITV's director of television, and Tim Hincks, President of Endemol Shine Group, were having breakfast together. At least, that's how Fincham recalls it. Hincks insists it was a drink after work. That detail doesn't matter. The news they shared, as Fincham explains, did.

"Tim said: 'Can I tell you a secret?' And I said: 'Yes.' He said: 'I resigned yesterday.' And I said: 'Can I tell you a secret?' So did I. By the purest of coincidences, we'd been to see our respective bosses and said, 'I want to leave.'"

In both cases, the resignations were kept from the industry until the following January, and neither actually left their jobs until March last year.

They then each took six months' gardening leave.

Over that summer, people would joke that they must be setting something up together and, as it wore on, Fincham and Hincks did indeed begin to talk seriously about the kind of production company, the kind of "creative company", they might start.

And here Fincham is, in a mews building in Notting Hill with *Expectation* over its front door, talking to me about his new life. And his eight years at ITV and, before that, his shorter spell at BBC One; and also of his early days at Talkback, where its founder, Griff Rhys Jones, insisted that, in show business, the "show" must be more important than the "business". This is a formula that Fincham, 30 years on, intends to stick to.

He is 60, but looks younger: slim, full head of hair, today in jeans,

expensive-looking blue jacket and a white shirt with its top two buttons undone. I interviewed him five years ago, when he was at ITV. He looks younger now.

He thinks that the DNAs of Talkback (*The Day Today*, Ricky Gervais, *Grand Designs*) and Endemol Shine (*Changing Rooms*, *Big Brother*, Charlie Brooker), will graft well to each other. If one was to make a guess, mine would be that, although they will stretch over most entertainment genres, comedy, under Nerys Evans from Channel 4, may provide their first hit.

Although Hincks and Fincham have never worked for the same employer, they are old friends. The name, *Expectation*, is a play on No Expectations, the amateur band (Fincham on keyboards, Hincks on guitar), that they have played in for years.

Their first investor is BBC >

I DON'T THINK THAT THE RIGHT WAY TO APPEAL TO THE ITV AUDIENCE WOULD BE TO TALK DOWN TO THEM

Peter's progress

Peter Fincham, Co-CEO (with Tim Hincks) of Expectation

Married to Clare Lewthwaite, former TV executive and charity chief; two sons, two daughters

Lives Notting Hill, London

Born 26 July 1956

Parents Arthur and Joan Fincham

Education Tonbridge School; Churchill College, Cambridge (BA English)

1986 Producer, Talkback Productions

1986 Managing Director, Talkback Productions

2003 Chief Executive, TalkbackThames

2005 Controller, BBC One

2008 Director of television, ITV

2016 Left ITV

Hits *The One Show*, *Broadchurch*, *Downton Abbey*

Flops *Red or Black?*, *Daybreak*

Hobbies Piano – rock (with No Expectations) and classical

Watching *The Bureau* (Amazon); *OJ: Made in America*, *Catastrophe*, *The Jump*

On working with Smith and Jones at Talkback 'I became more than the office boy but, initially, it was quite a small office'

On returning to independent production 'It's wanting to be on the field of play rather than in the stands watching the action'

› Worldwide, which has taken just under 25% of the company. Its head, Tim Davie, joined the BBC virtually the same week Fincham did in 2005. He can probably be counted a friend, too.

The key to their joint vision, Fincham insists, is that the company is led by its creative decisions.

He tells a story from his early days at Talkback about a meeting with a BBC executive, at which Fincham agreed to replace someone for a show's second season. He confessed to the executive that this would be awkward, since the person being dropped was a friend.

The response was anything but sympathetic: "He told me: 'Well, there's a lesson you've learnt – don't get too friendly with the animals.' And I thought, 'That's such a giveaway phrase.' That says: 'We're the zookeepers and they are the animals, the dumb animals.' Absolute nonsense. The animals are the people who the viewers watch, and like."

Now, it seems that Fincham was (what he would not call) an animal all along. Even for the decade he was a zookeeper at the BBC and ITV, he was always partly an "indie in exile".

"I was nearly eight years as a director at ITV. I think that was long enough. Some would say too long. I don't know. It's certainly long enough. Coming to the end of that, I was able to think, 'What do I want to do next?' I had a very clear sense that I did not want to move up the corporate ladder."

Nor did he want, as the current jargon has it, to "go plural", with board memberships here, consultancies there. He took inspiration from his father, a chartered accountant who, aged 61, threw in his lot with a client, Richard Forshaw, and helped turn the Dutton Forshaw car dealerships into an empire. Arthur Fincham died a few years ago, aged 101, but he always said that those 10 years were the best of his life.

Not that Arthur, who educated Peter at one of the most expensive schools in the country, Tonbridge, ever regarded TV as a proper career in the sense that his two lawyer sons had real jobs.

Peter had showed a worrying inclination towards La La Land since Cambridge, where he was the Footlights' musical director and pianist. After a few years in the wilderness, he joined Talkback, then a radio commercials house, set up by Footlights leading light Griff Rhys Jones.

One senior executive once claimed to me that Jones and Talkback's

co-founder, Mel Smith, initially treated Fincham "like an office boy". Yet Fincham loved those two decades – the informality, the days of make-do, and his own creative contributions.

Even after the company was sold to FremantleMedia in 2000, in a deal that made him a millionaire some times over, he stayed for five more years.

"When I left Talkback, yes, of course, it had changed and it had grown. It wasn't me and a couple of other people sitting around a table trying to keep warm, as 20 years earlier," he says. "It was more that I felt that I needed to do something else."

"I had very young children at the time. I was exhausted. I thought I would take a break and then start another independent company. Then, I got offered the job of controlling BBC One – impossible to turn down."

At Television Centre, he made it his task to make the channel "less miserable". The mission, with hits such as *How Do You Solve a Problem Like Maria?* and *Robin Hood*, went well, and then very badly wrong. Badly briefed at a press conference in 2007, he claimed a forthcoming documentary would show the Queen walking off in a huff from a portrait session with Annie Leibovitz. This was a great story and utterly untrue, as the press soon discovered.

The BBC press office phoned Fincham to warn him that a camera crew was intending to stake out his house – and that it was from BBC News. Being in the centre of a media storm was, understandably, "not much fun". In due course, he resigned.

Looking back, what he is proudest of at the BBC was sticking to his guns and inventing *The One Show* against some powerful vested interests with their own shows at 7:00pm. "I think you wouldn't easily imagine the BBC One schedule without it."

When he left, he thought (you guessed it) that he might start an indie, only this time Michael Grade, Executive Chairman of ITV, made him another offer he could hardly refuse: to be his director of television.

No controllership is an unalloyed success, and there is some evidence from the ratings, at least, that Fincham's creative renewal at ITV eventually ran out of puff. It was real enough, however, particularly in drama, where he commissioned two of the most notable dramas of recent times, *Downton Abbey* and *Broadchurch*.

He remembers reading Julian



Fellowes' script for the first *Downton* and thinking how, after the first episode of a drama, you are lucky to be invested in two characters – and here he was interested in 10, just from the script.

His decision to reinvent *ITV News at Ten* as a vehicle for a star anchorman and his expensively poached correspondents is, perhaps, a less happy memory. As we talk, we are into the third week of a grand experiment by Fincham's successor, Kevin Lygo, to supplant the news with a chat show.

He says he knows where I am going with this, and believes Tom Bradby offers "something different". He will not comment further, out of respect for his friend and rival Lygo – and out of self-respect, too. "I quite sincerely wish ITV the best of luck."

There is one view of his ITV reign, I say, that holds that he was just too snobbish to really understand his audience.

He looks genuinely hurt when he says: "Well, I'm sorry to hear people say that because I don't think it's the case at all. I don't think that the right way to appeal to the ITV audience would be to talk down to them, let's put it that way. But, you know, if

people say that, that's fine and I've moved on from that life."

These were happy years at ITV and the BBC, he insists. His four children by his wife, Clare, whom he met while she was at a commercials production company that shared a building with Talkback, were the right age to enjoy them. He took them to *The X Factor*. His oldest daughter danced with Bruce Forsyth. Along the way, he found time to learn the classical piano to Grade 8, pedalling off to his teacher on Saturday mornings, and ended up playing a duet in public with Myleene Klass.

I ask whether being independently wealthy cushioned him from some of the pressures that other TV chiefs succumb to. I could not be more wrong – but, by asking the question, I discover, I think, the real reason that he left ITV.

"The answer is no, to be honest. If I had a show that I was nervous about, I would be just as nervous," he insists.

The disappointments would still hit him in the stomach? "Of course, they would. Oh God! Anything that you have high hopes for that doesn't quite work, I think it was always my inclination – and I hope that other people

wouldn't contradict this – was to blame myself."

He does, I say, seem happier than when I last interviewed him, even though the pretext of that piece was the renaissance of ITV. "I feel that the burdens of office didn't sit that comfortably on my shoulders. I always felt that I empathised too much with the people who made things."

He talks about renewing a series that was not quite right, against his better judgement, and seeing it fail all over again, because viewers no longer give second seasons second chances.

He also talks about cancelling programmes. One, *The Bill*, was made by his own former company, Talkback-Thames: "It was something I was responsible for. I was very, very conscious of the consequences of that, and it wasn't what I went into television to do, to execute that power. I'm perfectly happy to have laid that power down and let somebody else take it."

There are some events, it seems, of which a conscientious and decent television executive will retain perfect recall. My expectation is that *Expectation* will create rather more happy memories.



When TV is the tip of the iceberg

Like an entire generation of wildlife film-makers, Alastair Fothergill was drawn to television by David Attenborough. His 1979 series, *Life on Earth*, showed the young Fothergill that natural history programming was “a good way to be paid to be near animals”.

Fothergill, who was recently made a Fellow of the RTS, spent almost three decades at the BBC Natural History Unit (NHU). This included a five-year stint as head of department, when he landed several global hits, including *The Blue Planet*, *Planet Earth* and *Frozen Planet*.

He went on to found his own production company, Silverback Films, with his former NHU colleague Keith Scholey. His team is now working on Netflix’s first natural history series, *Our Planet*. “It’s by far the biggest thing I’ve ever done,” says Fothergill. “And the TV series, literally, is the tip of a massive iceberg.”

In addition to the eight-part series for the streaming service, Netflix and Silverback have partnered with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to create a

Natural history

Alastair Fothergill tells Pippa Shawley why his latest project, Netflix’s *Our Planet*, is his most ambitious documentary

“halo” of extra digital content, expanding on the environmental concerns raised in the TV series.

This extra dimension is appealing to Fothergill: “A lot of people talk about web activity and not a lot of people put any real money into it,” he says. “What’s exciting about this is that we have really significant investment in it.”

Originally, Fothergill hoped that the BBC would be interested in the series, which he sees as a continuation of the topics covered in *Planet Earth*. The BBC, however, was worried that the WWF’s involvement might breach its editorial policy guidelines.

He adds: “We’ve got Google and

Facebook very excited about this. That would’ve been hard to manage with the BBC. There’s no doubt that this was one of the advantages of working with Netflix.” Netflix, he suggests, is the perfect fit for the kind of high-budget, natural history series Silverback was set up to make.

Our Planet will explore the habitats of the earth, highlighting the value of those places to the world’s ecology. At the same time, the producers recognise that viewers don’t want to sit through an hour-long lecture on climate change.

“There’s an amazing conservation story out there about the value of habitats and why they’re important,” argues Fothergill. He says that the digital content around the series will go into more detail about the challenges in conserving these places.

While Fothergill won’t be drawn on how much the streaming service has put behind the series, he says that the budget compares “very well” with what the BBC would offer. *Our Planet* is Netflix’s second major British order, after Left Bank’s *The Crown*.

Fothergill has just returned from a



Since joining the BBC 30 years ago, Fothergill has seen the gender balance within his genre change completely. Women now hold jobs that were traditionally dominated by men. There is still some way to go, however. Men still significantly outnumber camerawomen. Fothergill is quick to champion the work of Sophie Darlington. She was a key part of the team on BBC One's *The Hunt*, recently nominated for an RTS Programme Award, and is now working on *Our Planet*.

Then, there is the fact that natural history is still dominated by the white middle class. Fothergill's plummy tones are indicative of his own background – he was educated at Harrow before going on to study at the universities of Durham and St Andrew's.

"There's no doubt that one of the things we need from people is what we call 'muddy-boots experience,'" he says. "You can have a first in zoology, but you've got to know how to behave around an elephant."

Natural history film-makers have often been criticised for presenting the world through rose-tinted spectacles, but Fothergill emphasises the importance of showing audiences what goes on outside their living rooms.

"How can you possibly care about the natural world if you've never seen it?" he asks.

While stunning photography is crucial to a hit series, it is important that a programme has more than beautiful shots of wildlife. Fothergill pushed for episodes about global warming and conservation in *Frozen Planet* and *The Hunt*, respectively.

"In the end, I'm not a journalist," he says. "My skill, if I have any skill, is delivering top, blue-chip, landmark natural history."

He believes that there are some essential elements to a good series: "In the UK, I think you have to recognise that the audience is very sophisticated. They've seen a lot of natural history." Each new programme, therefore, has to be bold, comprehensive and risk-taking.

And the show's premise needs to be simple: "If you can't explain the series in one line, you're dead in the water."

There is clearly still an appetite for Fothergill's brand of high-budget documentary. In his view, "What could be nicer after *Strictly* on a Sunday evening than to go into the beauties of the natural world, before a nice bloke takes his shirt off in *Poldark*? I mean, it's the dream evening, isn't it?"

month-long trip to Antarctica, where his team was filming Adélie penguins for a Disney theatrical release, the latest in a flow of projects for its wildlife strand, Disneynature.

Silverback currently has three films in production for Disney, as well as landmark series for both Netflix and the BBC, so it's a busy time for the 50-strong team.

The disquiet surrounding Brexit and the election of Trump is partly responsible for the popularity of BBC One's recent *Planet Earth II*, he believes.

It would not be the first time the genre has provided a welcome refuge from the news. On 11 September 2001, Fothergill was live on *The Gloria Hunniford Show*, promoting *Blue Planet*, when the second plane flew into the World Trade Center in New York. The series was due to air the following day. He recalls: "I was almost embarrassed to think it, but I did think, 'Oh, bloody hell, we've worked for five years and it's all gone up – literally – in smoke.'"

The BBC aired nothing but news coverage until 8:00pm the following evening, when 12 million people tuned

in to hear the soothing tones of David Attenborough. "The very fact that there were no people there, not even David Attenborough, was actually quite a good tonic," says Fothergill. "It was a way to escape."

Attenborough has been synonymous with British natural history programming for many decades, having presented wildlife programmes since the 1950s. Now aged 90, the veteran broadcaster is still in high demand. The issue of what will happen to natural history programming after he dies is one that has been discussed for many years.

"He is going to leave a massive, massive hole," says Fothergill, who has been fortunate enough to work with him on many occasions. But one of the benefits of owning a production company, he says, is being able to back new talent.

"Keith [Scholey] and I wanted to employ very good people, but also just pleasant people. Life's too short. You get to a stage in your life when you're just bored of dealing with idiots. You can manage that better when you've got your own company," he laughs.

Saad Mohseni, Chair and Chief Executive of the Moby television group, has been called the Afghan Rupert Murdoch, and, despite obvious differences in scale, the comparison is far from crazy.

There are many obvious echoes. With his siblings, Mohseni has built from nothing an international media group operating not just in Afghanistan but in Iran, Ethiopia, India and the Middle East, and which is increasingly targeting sub-Saharan Africa.

His flagship Afghan channel, Tolo – Dawn – is the biggest television station in Afghanistan and, overall, the company produces nearly 7,500 hours of content a year and dubs a further 4,000 hours into six languages.

The London-born Mohseni, who is 50, was brought up in Australia after his diplomat father was exiled following the Soviet invasion.

He has obvious drive and curiosity, and is willing to take risks and challenge taboos – particularly in Afghanistan – on the role of women on television and in society. Mohseni even set up his own football competition, the Afghan Premier League, and then televised it.



Moby

Profile

Saad Mohseni – Afghanistan’s first media mogul – tells Raymond Snoddy how he built his empire

modern media, which is playing a modest part in modernising his country. This year is the 12th season of *Afghan Star*, the local equivalent of *Pop Idol* or *The Voice*. Mohseni is delighted that, for the first time in such a conservative country, millions of Afghans have voted a woman into the final.

“You do have some battlefield losses but, in the bigger picture – what is happening to the country, the people – we have made a lot of progress since 2001,” says Mohseni.

He notes that showings of *Sesame Street* have attracted an “extraordinary” number of adults, watching with their children. From the show, adults learn about the importance of children going to school. “The impact of the sort of things we are doing will be incremental, but they will be real and, when combined with a whole series of other things, will help to change society – whether providing female role models in soap operas or as singers, doctors or reporters,” he argues.

He sees no conflict between making money and being an agent of modernisation. In India, for example, Moby has actively defended and promoted the rights of the LGBT community.

The Moby executive accepts that he

The Afghan Rupert

The most obvious link with Murdoch is that 21st Century Fox has a 48% stake in Moby, which has revenues of around \$80m, and is backing the group’s expansion in some of the world’s most challenging television territories.

A small story from a decade ago illustrates both the optimism and the darker side of Afghanistan.

An Irish-American journalist, Stephen Landrigan, decided in 2005 to put on the first production of Shakespeare – *Love’s Labour’s Lost* – in Dari, the Afghan dialect of Persian.

The open-air production in Kabul was a sensation. Mohseni couldn’t go due to work but his wife, Sarah, did.

“We gave it a lot of publicity. It was on our news. It was a great thing because it had these women performers,” says Mohseni. Later, the husband of one of the actresses was murdered because his wife had appeared on

stage with men. She, meanwhile, had to flee to Canada with her children.

Is that how it inevitably is in Afghanistan? “I am not saying that we have to make sacrifices but, unfortunately, it is never going to be smooth, and Afghanistan has many issues to deal with,” Mohseni concedes.

Moby and its staff are considered military targets by the Taliban and, in January 2016, seven production workers on the company’s news channel were killed and many seriously injured in a suicide bombing in Kabul.

Did it shake his resolve? “Not really,” says the Moby Chairman. “You become more determined to do what you need to do. Afterwards, you reflect on what you have done and ask whether we will ever emerge from any of this. When will we see the light at the end of the tunnel?”

Some light, at least, is being shed by

probably “pushed the envelope” too hard in the early days on women’s rights and attacks on corruption. The approach led to raids on the company’s offices and people being beaten up. His brother Zaid, a lawyer, who runs the operation in Afghanistan, was among those arrested.

Mohseni is based in Dubai but is in Afghanistan most weeks. “Once you get into the rhythm of things, it gets a lot easier,” he says, noting that the Western-educated President Ashraf Ghani is more liberal than his predecessor President Hamid Karzai.

Barbara Gibian, an American lawyer who worked in Afghanistan on a US programme that invests in small Afghan businesses, knows Mohseni well and describes him as charming, smart and full of himself.

“What they have done is really remarkable. They have persevered in

Puppeteers Sima Sultani (left) and Mansura Schirsad with the puppet 'Zari' in the Moby Group's Kabul studio



Murdoch

spite of a lot of difficulties. They have pushed the limits and, I think, have been very good for Afghan society and for women,” says Gibian.

Programmes that work well in Afghanistan include local versions of *Yes Minister*, *The Office* and *Deal or No Deal*.

Young men – and the average age of Afghans is 18 – like programmes such as *24* and *Homeland*, but soaps, particularly from Turkey and Korea, go down well throughout the region. “For men, it’s action. For women and families, its drama – divorces and break-ups every three minutes. It’s got to be a lot spicier in terms of the storyline,” says Mohseni – although, overall, a certain amount of covering up of flesh is required.

Moby is a media company created partly by accident. After the fall of the Taliban in 2001, Mohseni, who rose through the ranks at Australian stock-broker Bell Potter, and his siblings

were looking for opportunities in Afghanistan. They were able to launch the country’s first commercial radio station, playing Afghan and Western pop, in a country where music had, until recently, been banned.

A key figure in the growth of the company has been Tom Freston, the former Viacom CEO, who lived in Afghanistan in the 1970s. Mohseni calls Freston “the godfather” of the company.

It was Freston, who remains on the Moby board, who introduced Mohseni to Murdoch. And, extending the web of relationships, it was Mohseni who recommended Vice Media founder Shane Smith to Murdoch, who then bought a 5% stake in the news company. Now, Moby is in a joint venture with Vice and plans to launch a Vice service in Arabic this summer aimed at the Middle East.

Moby has linear channels but uses online and mobile to reach audiences.

Even in Afghanistan, people are increasingly using mobile devices.

In Iran, Moby gets hundreds of thousands of viewers via VPNs (virtual private networks – which allow users secure access to services over the internet) and a weekly show that has more than 1 million followers on Instagram.

Although linear television will remain important, Mohseni says that Moby is becoming increasingly platform agnostic. “What we have learned across the region is that we have to cut different versions for different platforms,” he explains. For an individual programme, this can mean 30 seconds for Instagram, two minutes for Facebook, a six-minute version for YouTube and then 30 minutes for satellite.

Mohseni believes that Moby has big opportunities in these developing markets and is convinced that a portfolio of media assets across a dozen countries, where advertising is growing rapidly from a low base, will bring a good return on investment.

“If you get it right, it could be amazing – but you have to be prepared to sweat,” says the Afghan Rupert Murdoch. And face some risks that few others would be happy to take.

Politics

Lisa Campbell profiles **Damian Collins**, an MP who is gaining fans in the TV sector

Five months into the role of Chair of the Culture, Media and Sport Committee of the House of Commons, and Damian Collins MP has consolidated a reputation as a well-informed politician with a decent grasp of key issues, ranging from fake news to the complexities of press regulation, post-Leveson.

His recent appearance at the Oxford Media Convention enhanced that reputation, with a speech stressing the seriousness of the fake news phenomenon. Collins launched his fake news inquiry in January. With submissions having closed in early March, it's the most pressing issue in his in-tray.

"He did very well to spot the controversies around fake news early on," says John Whittingdale, who was Secretary of State at the DCMS until Theresa May sacked him. He was himself Chair of the Culture, Media and Sport Committee for a decade from 2005. "It's exactly the kind of issue that the select committee is best placed to explore, as it allows you to draw from lots of different contributors that others can't, and to hold a public hearing."

So it was unsurprising that it dominated Collins's Oxford keynote – as well as much of the convention itself.

"We may be at a tipping point where fake news is crowding out legitimate news and you have to regard that as a challenge for democracy," he warned, highlighting how Donald Trump links the term to "anything he doesn't agree with".

The MP expressed his deep concern at the banning of CNN and the BBC from White House press conferences, stressing that this dangerous turn of events would "undermine confidence in the whole media industry".

Described as being a more liberal Tory than some, Collins's recommendations may prove more interventionist, and not rely purely on market forces.

As Whittingdale points out: "One



A man of influence

area where he differs from me is that I believe the market will provide the best solution. People will know where to go to read reliable reports and, if they go elsewhere, it's at their own risk. I think he sees a greater role for some kind of intervention."

One part of Collins's Oxford speech proved highly prescient. This was the idea of "controlling the money supply online", with advertisers needing to be able to control where exactly their messages appeared.

This would ensure that brands didn't

become tarnished by appearing on fake news sites and funding their activities, albeit unwittingly.

Collins stated: “Brands need to say that we won’t spend until we can clear up where it’s going... that’s the most potent weapon we have against fake news – if brands realise there is reputational damage if they appear next to illicit material.”

Fast forward nine days and Havas announced that it was pulling all its advertising spend from YouTube and its parent, Google – the first big global marketing company to do so.

And in a growing crisis for the tech company, members of the Commons’ Home Affairs Committee wrote to Google to express disappointment that the Government and major brands were still being placed alongside “inappropriate” content.

Given Collins’s background in advertising, it is little wonder that he is au fait with the intricacies of media buying and its influence. He joined M&C Saatchi in 1999, moving into issues-based marketing. In 2005, he headed up campaigns around political, social and economic issues, when he set up Influence Communications within the group.

His political career – which began in 2010, when he was elected as MP for Folkestone and Hythe – shows that he is equally passionate and knowledgeable about phone hacking, online bullying and football finance.

He was a member of the Culture, Media and Sport Committee from July 2010 to late 2012. In July 2014, Collins was appointed as Parliamentary Private Secretary (PPS) to the Foreign Secretary. He was previously PPS to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

His personal interest in the creative industries is also evident in the Conservative Arts and Creative Industries Network, which he launched the year before he was elected and which he now chairs.

The group brings together individuals who work in the arts and creative industries with the DCMS ministerial team and MPs and senior figures in the Conservative Party involved in developing policy in this area.

Those who have had close dealings with Collins describe him as measured and thoughtful. They note how his affability and cross-party support have helped him survive turbulent times in Westminster.

“He’s not one of those politicians on the make,” says one senior

broadcasting executive. “He is popular and this is absolutely essential for the select committee to work. Everyone has to get on with each other.”

Indeed, in a recent *Guardian* interview, Collins was dubbed “Mr Nice Guy”. Some have questioned whether this sport-loving family man, who likes nothing more than a walk in his local Kent countryside, has the ambitious streak needed to claw his way further up the political pole.

However, one senior news figure argues: “There are people who are good at climbing the greasy pole but



WE MAY BE AT A TIPPING POINT WHERE FAKE NEWS IS CROWDING OUT LEGITIMATE NEWS

they are not necessarily people who are going to be the most robust when it comes to outside organisations.

“My impression is that Damian is a man of principle and therefore should be able to stand up to those powers outside of government regulation.”

Collins was one of the “hostile MPs” who formed part of the select committee in 2012, when then-BBC Director-General George Entwistle was grilled about whether the corporation had tried to cover up Jimmy Savile’s serial sexual abuse.

It was Collins who seized upon Entwistle’s haziness over what he knew of *Newsnight*’s Savile investigation, subsequently pulled by the BBC.

“You sound like James Murdoch

now,” the MP asserted, comparing Entwistle to Murdoch, who appeared ignorant of phone hacking at the newspaper group he went on to run.

The expectation of many in the industry is that Collins will be similarly robust when it comes to the many other pressing items in his in-tray.

However, little is known about his views on some of the big broadcasting issues – whether it’s US ownership of ITV or Channel 4 privatisation.

David Abraham, CEO of Channel 4, says it is hard to get a sense of Collins’s leanings. “He’s extremely measured and balanced. His views are evidence-based,” he says.

This suggests that he is the ideal man to chair a committee whose role is to dispassionately weigh up options on both sides.

Likewise, those who have dealt with him, even on a fairly regular basis, say that he retains an air of professionalism at all times and gives little of himself away. One politician notes that he seems to keep his head down in TV circles – outside of his enthusiasm for sport, it is impossible to tell whether he’s a *Strictly* fan or prefers *Corrie* to *EastEnders*.

“He did come on a set visit to *The Crown*, which he seemed to thoroughly enjoy,” says Pact CEO John McVay.

Among the looming big issues is Sky: both Ofcom and the Secretary of State, Karen Bradley, are assessing its proposed takeover by 21st Century Fox.

“The other big issue – a huge issue that remains – is Section 40 of Leveson 2,” says Whittingdale. “The select committee has an important role in assessing the effectiveness of Ipso [the press regulator].”

For McVay, however, there is an even bigger issue: “Damian has to make sure the Government understands just how important it is to get the right solution around the European Commission’s Digital Single Market.

“If it’s allowed to progress, it could severely affect the UK’s earnings in Europe. Rights owners have been pressing government for some time. This is a business-critical issue and we need to act now.”

The indications are that Collins will act quickly, whatever the situation. Says Abraham: “There are questions still hanging over the conclusion of the Government’s review of options for Channel 4 – and I get the impression that he doesn’t like unanswered questions.”

Content

At an RTS event on *The Crown*, Peter Morgan revealed how he was liberated by writing for Netflix. **Steve Clarke** took notes

The era of global event television

When the history of TV in the early 21st Century is written, *The Crown*, Netflix's ravishing period drama recounting the reign of Elizabeth II, is likely to be regarded as a watershed moment.

The reasoning might go something like this: *The Crown* was the first genuinely cinematic, long-form TV show that audiences could watch how and when they wanted to, and it gave crucial impetus to Netflix's international ambitions. Critics loved it and awards juries kept voting for the drama.

But screenwriter Peter Morgan, who conceived and wrote the series, has a strikingly different take on *The Crown*'s importance to TV's evolution.

He predicts that, within 20 years, the scope and ambition of TV will have become so great that, by comparison, his baby will be "considered complete peanuts – low-budget nonsense".

If this sounds like false modesty,

or a joke, it didn't sound like that when, speaking at an RTS early-evening event, Morgan went on to suggest that *The Crown* was "only the first tiny step" on the road to some future streaming cornucopia. He explained that, if a show opened simultaneously in 190 countries on the same day (as *The Crown* did last November), "you don't have a regional or national audience to address any more. You're talking about global event television."

Many of these countries still lack high-speed broadband. Once they have it, the implications for content creators, producers and distributors will be huge. Tent-pole movies, such as *Bond* and *Star Wars*, would break out of the straitjacket of cinema screenings and become 10-hour epics.

"Storytelling will change, the size of television productions will change," the writer forecast, adding: "It really isn't like television any more. It's absolutely overwhelming. It's partly [because] the way in which we make it is not like television. And every time we get an



opportunity to make it like television, I keep saying: 'Please can we resist this.'"

Morgan is a specialist in writing compelling political dramas drawn from recent history and performed for stage and screen. His work includes: the Oscar-winning *The Queen*, which looked at how the monarchy failed to respond to the public mood following Diana's death; *The Audience* (a series of dramatised encounters between Elizabeth II and her prime ministers at their weekly private audiences); *The Deal* (detailing the fraught relationship between Tony Blair and Gordon Brown); and *Frost/Nixon*, a behind-the-scenes take on David Frost's famous interviews with disgraced President Nixon.

One can only wonder what Morgan might one day be inspired to write concerning the Trump presidency.

In the past, he's written for ITV, the BBC and Channel 4, but he told the packed RTS event that he was unprepared for the effect of being hired to fashion a screenplay for Netflix: "I feel liberated by them. That translates into



Claire Foy as Elizabeth II

Netflix

Filming the coronation

Martin Childs, production designer:

'We were refused permission to film at Westminster Abbey, so we used the next best thing, Ely Cathedral, and it proved to be a better thing.

'Ely is clean and you can empty it out... Westminster Abbey is full of obstacles. I'd have spent a lot of time covering things up there.'

Philip Martin, director: 'The coronation was one of the world's first big televised events and was something that was in the public consciousness.

'There were lots of images that people were familiar with. We had to deliver our version of it in a way that felt satisfying and also real to the story we were telling.

'We used existing archive and created fake archive and mixed the two. The coronation scenes required lots of technique, lots of direction and design. We wanted to create a seamless sense of being there.

'Peter's brilliant idea was that we tell the story through the Duke of Windsor watching the televising of the coronation from his home in Paris, and so tell it dramatically and emotionally.

'The Duke of Windsor hadn't got the crown, so you were exploring emotionally what it means to be crowned by the absence of it. It felt like such an interesting and original way to do it. There's one person, the Queen, who's coming at the job and wondering what it involves. And another person who's looking at it and thinking about what they lost.

'It was the combination of these two positions that created this bittersweet feeling, so it is not only a celebration but, in some way, a loss. That stopped it being syrupy and made it truthful.'

how I am writing. I feel completely supported and liberated.

'Every time I ring them up with an issue, their response is progressive and open-minded. There are so many times, when you deal with broadcasters, commissioners and script editors, that they crush you with their notes. This is almost like that brief era in Hollywood when they let film-makers run a studio.'

He added: 'I'm really committed to reaching final cut on every episode in complete partnership with the director on our own in an executive-free zone.

'Where else does that happen in any medium? It's heavenly. They don't micro-manage or interfere. They trust me. As soon as we mess up, they'll jump in, I promise.'

Fellow panellist, director Philip Martin, agreed that streaming services such as Netflix were rewriting the parameters of what film-makers can achieve.

'If you're doing a show for 9:00pm on Sunday, there's a format that you

have to park it into, whereas, with this, there's a freedom,' he said.

Morgan added: 'On a project that could easily be too traditional, there's something about Netflix's modernity that I found incredibly helpful.'

As the RTS audience learnt, when Left Bank, *The Crown's* producer, initiated the project it was anticipated that one of Britain's main broadcasters would be on board. 'We thought that the BBC or ITV would probably be part of it,' said Left Bank's Suzanne Mackie, executive producer on the show.

Left Bank was inspired by *The Audience*, directed by Stephen Daldry and starring Helen Mirren, to commission Morgan to write what became *The Crown*; Daldry would go on to direct the opening episode of *The Crown*.

A two-hour script was written, covering the events contained in *The Crown's* first two episodes: George VI's struggle with lung cancer and his eventual death, and the lead-up to the coronation of Elizabeth II, most noticeably the Princess's romance and >

Jennings on the Duke of Windsor



Alex Jennings
as the Duke
of Windsor

Alex Jennings, actor: ‘I became quite obsessed with him. I have to be careful about championing him, because people can have very strong views...

‘It’s really complicated. He had a fairly active First World War. His driver was killed in the car he happened not to be in at the time. He wanted to be more involved.

‘He was quite radical, politically, and a worry to the Establishment. In a way, he acted with huge integrity when he said, “Unless you can accommodate this woman, I’m off.”

‘As far as he was concerned, it was a huge passion... He then just floated for the rest of his life...

‘When Queen Mary was dying, he spent more time with her than his surviving brother and his sister did.’

Jennings added: ‘My approach is that I read everything that is available and watch footage and try and absorb that. With the help of Philip [director Philip Martin], I was forced to let go of all that.

‘When we were doing the flashbacks of the abdication speech – which I suppose is the most famous audio ever recorded – I kind of got that down pat. Philip encouraged me to let go of all that and not feel encumbered by trying to do an impersonation.

‘Things like the clothes help you [smiling] – I’m quite shallow, but then, so was he.’



John Lithgow as Winston Churchill

› marriage to the man who became Prince Philip.

When Netflix signed up, things really started moving. “We loved their boldness,” recalled Mackie. “They bought it in the room. We didn’t then know how it would be constructed. In the end, what you want as a producer is to walk in and feel that whoever is commissioning you shares your passion and vision. Netflix got it immediately.”

As luck would have it, the timing of Left Bank’s pitch was spot on, according to Morgan: “We happened to walk into Netflix just at the moment they were flush with confidence from having made *House of Cards*. They had a mandate to push internationally... Normally, people are very cautious but Netflix just went: ‘Let’s do it.’”

So what impact did the streaming giant’s decision to green-light *The Crown* have on how Morgan told the story, asked the evening’s host, Andrew Billen. Did having Netflix as the client

change the way he wrote? “They allowed me to completely loosen up,” Morgan replied. “Sometimes, I run three episodes, each one after the other, because statistics show that the average streamer is watching two and a half to three hours at a time.”

It therefore made sense to construct narratives across several episodes – although, he said, sometimes he couldn’t help himself and constructed self-contained, individual episodes.

“One thing I loathe is story arcs across a season,” he explained. “I love things that make no sense.”

As for doing another drama focused on the House of Windsor, Morgan revealed: “I have to declare that I am not a Queen lover. In *The Queen*, I particularly enjoyed writing the scenes between her and Tony Blair. “I just loved the private audience. As soon as you go beyond that closed door in the audience room... it’s just a dramatist’s dream. I felt very fortunate that I got there first.”



All pictures: Netflix

Casting for The Crown

Peter Morgan, writer: ‘Nina Gold was our casting director. She is wonderful... you tend not to argue with her.’

Suzanne Mackie, executive producer: ‘It had to start with the Queen.’

Peter Morgan: ‘Finding Claire Foy took a while because we saw quite a number of people. We met a number of Philips... then I saw Matt [Smith] and Claire together.’

Suzanne Mackie: ‘The most difficult one for us was John Lithgow. [who played Winston Churchill]. We received brilliant guidance from Nina Gold. I thought that we couldn’t cast an American as one of the most iconic characters from British history. But she was absolutely right to lead us towards that decision.’

Morgan on the monarchy

Peter Morgan: ‘Sometimes, when I watch *The Crown*, I start to get emotional. It’s not that I particularly care about this woman’s life or, indeed, her marriage.’

‘It is the fact that, through her, I am connected to my grandparents, my parents. She is the sinew that connects us all on the deepest, subconscious level.’

Morgan added: ‘Like most sensible people, certainly in the early 1990s, I thought this lot should be kicked out... but, if there were a referendum today on the future of the monarchy, I would vote to keep it.’

‘In the past couple of decades there’s been such a collective, catastrophic failure in the political class... The Queen brings stability. It depends on the monarch and we happen to have someone who’s pretty damn good.’

reliance on researchers: ‘I have a roomful of them... I map stuff out. I like to come up with the ideas for the episodes and then the researchers go away and come back with material. So I am never starting completely from scratch. I am starting with really fleshed-out ideas.’

One point on which Netflix and Morgan clashed was the release date. The streaming company was determined to release all 10 episodes to subscribers four days before the US presidential election.

‘I said this would be a catastrophic mistake,’ recalled Morgan. ‘You are hoping to create water-cooler TV and you want us to come out before the biggest water-cooler moment on the planet? They just smiled and said: ‘Don’t worry, it’ll be fine.’ I said: ‘How can it be fine?’ They said: ‘Because you’re thinking analogue.’ They were absolutely right.’

Commentators used to call the kind of drama that Morgan specialises in ‘faction’. Today, audiences appear far more forgiving to film-makers who use recent history as a starting point to weave together a drama.

As a result, the term has fallen out of fashion. Inevitably, however, much has been written about how Morgan took liberties with aspects of the truth in the first 10 parts of *The Crown* (the second 10 are in production).

‘In terms of the verisimilitude and the accuracy, every time that I think I’ve made something up, it turns out... so much more accurate than I thought,’ he says. ‘I’ve always tried to get it to be truthful. You do your best and, occasionally, there are moments in between two fixed moments when you have to join the dots.’

‘I think the audience wants a dramatist to do that. They don’t just want a slavish recreation. They want an interpretation... and you will regret it if you don’t believe it.’

‘The Crown: Deconstructing the coronation’ was an RTS early-evening event held at the Ham Yard Hotel in central London on 14 March. The producer was Sally Doganis, with support from Allie Elwell.

While writing *The Audience* he was particularly taken by constructing the scenes between an inexperienced Elizabeth II and Winston Churchill. ‘I suddenly thought: ‘This is a wonderful relationship – a young girl in her mid-twenties and a man in his early seventies.’

‘They had so many delicious differences, yet they were thrown together. She’s very much at the beginning of her career, while he’s this extraordinary international statesman and yet he was in awe of her.’

Morgan told the RTS that, as a rule, it is unusual for the public to see Elizabeth as a young woman and Churchill as an old man, instead of the imperious wartime leader. He said: ‘There were so many interesting things – about his stroke, his frailty, the way in which he behaved towards her. He used her to prolong his time in office. I thought: ‘Oh, this is good.’

The screenwriter revealed his

OUR FRIEND IN THE NORTH EAST

You wait years for big news about TV in the regions. And then, in quick succession at the Nations and Regions Media

Festival in Salford, along come not one, but two major announcements about production outside London.

First, Sharon White from Ofcom talked about the challenging quotas she was imposing on the BBC in her new role as the corporation's regulator. These included more original programmes on TV and radio that better reflect the whole of the UK. More arts, music and children's production would be particularly welcome in the North East, home to successful CBBC brands such as *The Dumping Ground*.

White wants viewers outside London to feel better represented by the BBC – and that means more spend in the nations and regions. What's not to like?

Then came the bombshell from culture secretary Karen Bradley that she expects Channel 4 to relocate all (or at least a sizeable chunk) of its 800-plus staff from London.

She said that the move would bring the broadcaster back to its core mission as a “daring platform for unheard voices and untold stories from across the UK”.

She was unsympathetic to those who “recoil in horror at the very idea of media jobs being based outside the capital”. Bradley added: “A publicly owned broadcaster should have far more than 3% of its permanent staff outside London.”

Cue question from Kirsty Wark to Channel 4 executives in the audience about whether they are looking at house prices in the North. Chuckles and a noticeable whiff of *Schadenfreude* sweep the auditorium.

But does it matter where the

**Graeme Thompson
urges TV's decision
makers to be bold
as they demand a
stronger regional
presence**



commissioners are based? Might it be preferable to have production budgets spread more generously across the nations and regions, than to force executives to uproot from the capital or, more likely, spend eye-watering amounts of cash on rail fares?

If you are among the 7,000 people now working for broadcasters, suppliers and production companies in MediaCityUK, welcoming Channel 4 to Salford and responding to Ofcom's demands for additional out-of-London production at the BBC will be music to your ears.

If, on the other hand, you're in an area that struggles to maintain critical mass in TV production – an area such as the North East, for example – the relocation of all or part of a major channel to the North West will have little impact.

It is as difficult for producers to get

to Manchester from Sunderland as it is to get to King's Cross.

North East students and production crew paying for travel and accommodation to take up placement opportunities or contracts face the same challenges at MediaCity as they do in London.

So, instead of assuming that Channel 4 will end up in MediaCity, why not use the enforced move to transform the media economy of Birmingham or Leeds or Sunderland?

Production success stories outside of London have one thing in common: they're all the result of broadcaster intervention. BBC strategic development decisions have produced thriving media clusters in Cardiff, Bristol, Glasgow and, of course, Salford.

So why not a grand gesture in the direction of the North East, a once-booming television economy laid low by broadcaster decisions to pull everything to London? Back in the day, Tyne Tees and Border produced everything, from Catherine Cookson dramas to *The Tube*.

It was a bonkers decision by Channel 4's founding fathers in the early 1980s to transmit a live groundbreaking music show from Newcastle. The city is, after all, a long way from London – home to so much of the major music talent. Would bands and labels trek north to appear with Paula Yates and Jools Holland?

You know they did. *The Tube* was innovative in so many ways precisely because of its location, its tone and its audience. Innovation is high on the Secretary of State's wish list. Time, perhaps, for another foray from London into the welcoming arms of the North East?

Graeme Thompson is Pro Vice Chancellor at the University of Sunderland and Chair of the RTS Education Committee.

A fresh flavour for footie



Pedro Rodríguez of Chelsea, celebrating during match against Leicester in January, covered live by BT Sport

BT

BT Sport has brought the fun back into football – as any viewer could confirm after seeing Gary Lineker and his team of pundits cavorting around the studio when Sergi Roberto’s astonishing last-gasp goal for Barcelona cemented victory over Paris Saint-Germain in the Uefa Champions League last month.

“Sky has done a fabulous job on football,” said BT Consumer boss John Petter at an RTS early-evening event in March. “What we have been trying to do on BT Sport is to move away from the suited and booted, slightly American uber-professionalism that you have with Sky and to make BT Sport very entertaining and inclusive.”

Since its launch in August 2013, BT Sport has been widely praised, principally for its coverage of football and rugby union. The channel holds the rights to: a tranche of live Premier League and Scottish Premiership

Pay-TV

BT’s John Petter explains how BT Sport has recast the national game as entertainment. Matthew Bell reports

matches; the FA Cup (with the BBC); the Champions League and Europa League; various national European football leagues; and, for rugby, the English Premiership and European Rugby Champions Cup (the latter with Sky).

But are BT’s sports acquisitions running out of control? One day before the RTS event, BT extended its TV rights for the Champions League and Europa League until 2021 – but had to shoulder a 32% price hike.

Petter, who has been CEO of BT Consumer since September 2013, runs the company’s broadband, television, telephony and BT mobile services, a huge division that boasts an annual turnover of £5bn.

He defied BT’s £1.2bn splurge on European football rights in a wide-ranging and candid conversation with Sally Bundock, who presents *World Business Report* on the BBC News Channel. And he denied that the cost of the football deal would lead to a rise in broadband prices.

“The broadband marketplace is incredibly competitive,” Petter said. “A lot of people have asked me, ‘Are you going to rack up the broadband prices?’. Ultimately, I can’t, because I have to compete in broadband.”

Instead, he said, there were other income streams that he could draw on to defray the cost of the rights. These included rising advertising revenue and the “pubs and clubs market, which is actually very lucrative”.

He was also adamant that BT had >

BT under fire on service and infrastructure

On broadband roll-out, BT Consumer CEO John Petter said: 'The UK is, by most standards, a very connected country... Today, [only] about 5% of the UK doesn't have access to superfast broadband.'

'People are quite angry, and I totally understand that... We are investing [and] the network has already been built out to about 27 million premises, but only about 6 million people have adopted superfast broadband.'

On BT's customer service, Petter said: 'We have had some ground to make up. I came into a business [three years ago] where a lot of the customer service had been offshored, mostly to India....'

'We are doing three things. First,... we're spending proper money building a... website that makes it easy to [offer good] service instead of complex. Second,... we've been hiring thousands of people in the last 18 months.... And, third, I've made a public commitment that [we'll answer] 90% of calls in the UK, rather than overseas, by the end of spring.... The service is getting better; it has not improved enough, yet.'



John Petter

Paul Hampartsoumian

› not overpaid for rights that no other company – Sky included – seemed interested in acquiring at that price: "I think it's reasonable to assume that Sky was interested. I would have expected [Sky to bid] – it would have been a rational thing for it to do."

Petter added: "We've paid more, but I think we've got a lot more for it," noting that BT now had exclusive rights to the Champions League highlights, which will no longer be shown on ITV. He argued that "a lot of people clearly chose not to pay for BT Sport because the highlights were free".

The timing of Champions League fixtures is also changing, with games kicking off at 6:00pm and 8:00pm on match nights. Currently, all games start at 7:45pm. Petter explained that this would allow the company to boost revenues it receives from licensing pubs to air matches.

A further attraction for BT Sport was that four (instead of the current three) English teams were being given guaranteed entry into the group's competition stages.

BT Sport's coverage of the Champions League and Europa League – a mix of pay-TV and social media – is a departure from the usual football rights

Redacted image

DRAMA IS A
HIGH-RISK GAME
... WE WOULD
PROBABLY NEED
TO GO INTO
PARTNERSHIPS

model of pay-TV for live matches and free-to-air TV for highlights.

Sponsors have apparently expressed disquiet about the loss of exposure for their products on free-to-air TV now that BT holds the exclusive rights.

Petter, however, maintained that companies "can now reach a mass audience through social media". He cited the 12 million viewers who saw the 2016 Champions League and Europa League finals on BT Sport and YouTube.

BT is currently "talking to various parties to find the right partner" to show this season's Champions League and Europa League finals live and free on social media. Highlights of matches will also be broadcast free on social media.

"If you look at sports that have only been on pay-TV, over time, they have



BT limits its exposure to drama

not been nourished as a sport needs to be,” said Petter. “We need to have a mixture of free and pay, ultimately, for sport to continue to attract new viewers. He suggested that golf and, to an extent, cricket had found it harder to “prosper” on an exclusive diet of pay-TV. By contrast, “social media gives access to younger viewers”.

Outside of the two finals, however, Champions League and Europa League games will not be shown live on social media. “Having paid £1.2bn for them, you’d be out of your mind to do that,” said Petter.

Despite BT’s social-media focus, terrestrial TV may still get a look-in on the two European club competitions. Petter said that BT would look at sub-licensing deals – if the price was right: “There’s no obligation from Uefa to [sell] rights to public service broadcasters – we don’t have to and we don’t need to, because we can get to a mass audience through social media.

“[But] if there’s a great deal out there, I would [take it].”

The RTS early-evening event ‘In conversation with John Petter’ was held at the BT Tower in central London on 7 March. It was produced by Helen Scott.

The BT Consumer CEO discussed the company’s first steps into drama at the RTS early-evening event, but refused to be drawn on any plans for expansion.

Petter argued that ‘the business case for other content is more challenging than the business case for sport’.

Almost two years ago, BT struck a deal with AMC – the US cable network that brought iconic dramas *Mad Men* and *Breaking Bad* to TV – and has broadcast new series such as *Fear the Walking Dead* in the UK.

More new AMC drama is on the way, including *The Son*, starring Pierce Brosnan as a Texan oil tycoon, and *The Terror*, a historical drama executive-produced by Ridley Scott.

But Petter would not commit to an expansion of BT Vision’s drama slate: ‘I’m neither ruling in nor ruling out doing more – I’m going to be watching very closely the progress we make in the next year.’

If BT did invest more heavily in drama, however, it would not go it alone: ‘Drama is a high-risk game. It would be rash of me to say that we would go and do this entirely on our own. We would probably need to go into partnerships.’

A member of the audience asked whether, instead of ‘renting other people’s content’, BT would consider building its own production base on the lines of ITV Studios.

‘For that to work, you would need, as you have at ITV, global scale,’ responded Petter. ‘It would be naive to say that we could do that entirely on our own – ITV has bought in lots of other companies to make it possible.’

Event chair Sally Bundock questioned how much money BT would have to invest in drama, given that, earlier this year, the group announced losses of more than £500m, thanks to a huge accounting scandal at its Italian business. BT issued a profit warning and saw its share price tumble.

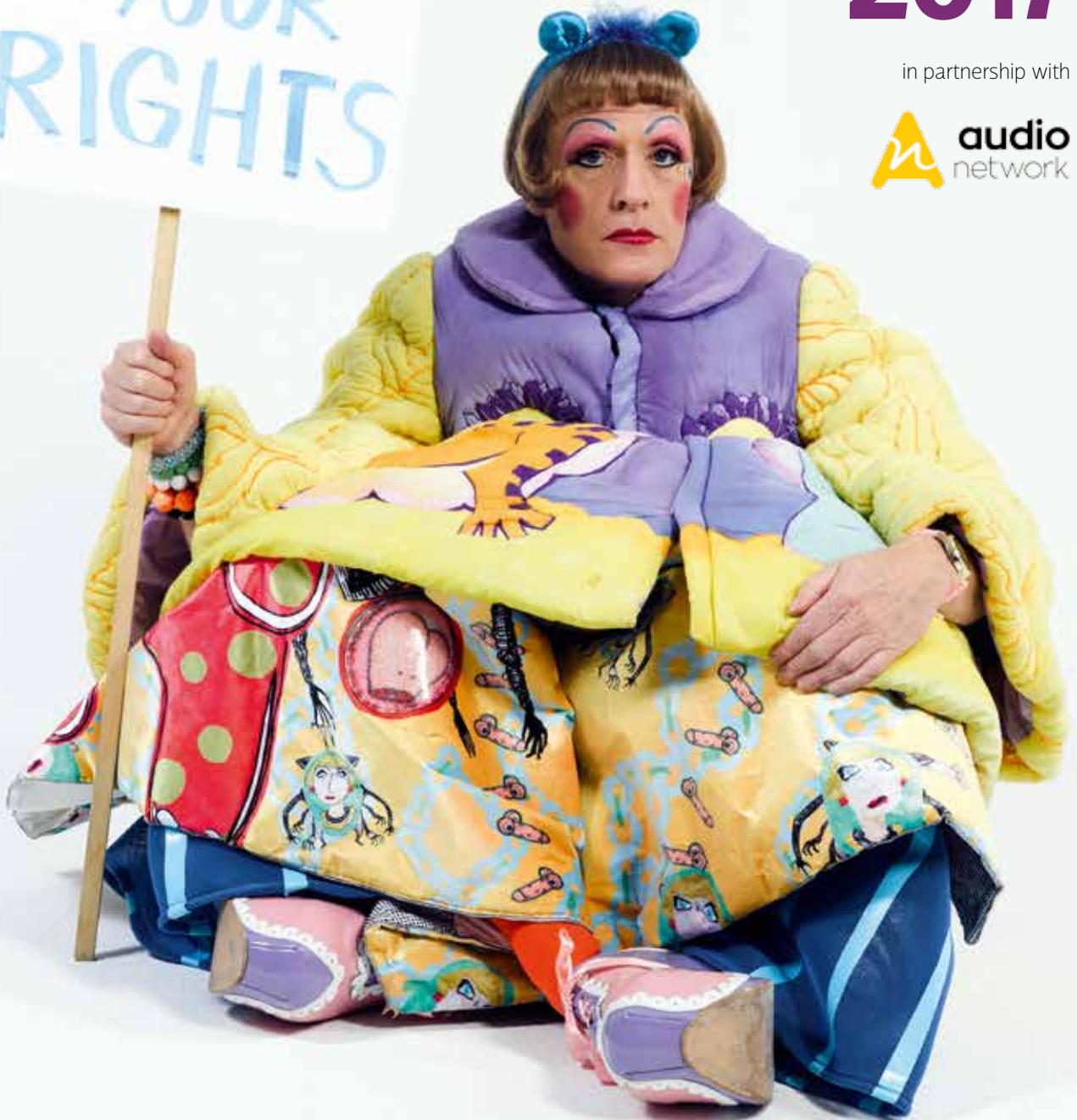
‘The problems in Italy were pretty serious, but they were confined to one part of the business,’ said Petter. ‘It was a very difficult problem to manage reputationally, but the other bits of the business have performed pretty well.’

‘Is this a company that is prepared to make bold moves? We bought [mobile phone network] EE and got into sport – people didn’t expect us to do those things. So, we can [do] bold things, but there has to be a business case.’

MEN!
SIT DOWN
FOR
YOUR
RIGHTS

RTS Programme Awards 2017

in partnership with



Hosted by **Sandi Toksvig**, the awards were presented on 21 March at the Grosvenor House Hotel, London

Actor – Female

Sophie Okonedo – *Undercover*

BBC Studios in co-production with BBC America for BBC One
'A riveting performance, she brought strength, a raw vulnerability and humanity in every scene.'

Nominees:

Jodie Comer – *Thirteen*, BBC Studios in co-production with BBC America for BBC Three

Julie Walters – *National Treasure*, The Forge for Channel 4

Actor – Male

Robbie Coltrane – *National Treasure*

The Forge for Channel 4
'Outstanding, the very definition of creative risk-taking.'

Nominees:

Adeel Akhtar – *Murdered by My Father*, BBC Studios for BBC Three

James Nesbitt – *The Secret*, Hat Trick Productions for ITV

Arts

Grayson Perry: *All Man*

Swan Films for Channel 4
'Intelligent and moving... the greatest example of an unpatronising, empathetic and compassionate programme.'

Nominees:

Bricks!, BBC Studios for BBC Four

One Night in 2012: *An Imagine Special*, BBC Studios/Rogan Productions for BBC One

Breakthrough

Phoebe Waller-Bridge – *Fleabag*

Two Brothers Pictures for BBC Three
'A creative risk-taker who succeeds at being both compelling and truly distinctive; genuinely moving their genre forward and clearly destined to be one of the great stars of the future.'

Nominees:

Nadiya Hussain – *The Chronicles of Nadiya*, Love Productions for BBC One

Phillip Wood – *Chasing Dad: A Lifelong Addiction*, Rare Day for BBC Three

Presenter: **Grayson Perry**
– **Grayson Perry: *All Man***

Children's Programme

CBeebies *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

CBeebies Production for CBeebies
'Setting new standards in television for young viewers. Hugely ambitious but with plenty of fun.'

Nominees:

Lily's *Driftwood Bay*, Sixteen South for Nick Jr

My Life: *The Boy on the Bicycle*, Drummer TV for CBBC

Comedy Performance

Asim Chaudhry – *People Just Do Nothing*

Roughcut Television for BBC Three
'Contemporary and relevant, with beautiful layers of detail.'

Nominees:

Sharon Horgan and Rob Delaney – *Catastrophe*, An Avalon Television production with co-producers Birdbath Productions and Merman for Channel 4

Steve Coogan – *Alan Partridge's Scissored Isle*, Baby Cow Productions for Sky Atlantic

Daytime Programme

Find it, Fix it, Flog It

HCA Entertainment and Yeti Media for Channel 4

'Based in reality but with plenty of take-out for the viewer... a stand-out success in the category.'

Nominees:

Matron, *Medicine and Me: 70 Years of the NHS*, BBC Studios Northern Ireland for BBC One

The Question Jury, Monkey Kingdom for Channel 4

Documentary Series

Exodus: *Our Journey to Europe*

KEO Films for BBC Two
'An ambitious undertaking from concept to execution, which delivered a unique and evocative insight that we had never seen before.'

Nominees:

Inside *Obama's White House*, Brook Lapping Productions in association with Les Films d'Ici 2 for BBC Two in co-production with Al Jazeera America and Arte France

The Murder Detectives, Films of Record for Channel 4

Lifetime Achievement **Julie Walters**



Richard Kendall

'The recipient is one of the truly great stars of the stage and big screen, but it's for her outstanding work in a glittering career on TV that we honour her tonight.'

'Her work alongside Victoria Wood in *Victoria Wood – As Seen on TV* is rightly regarded as some of the best comedy ever on British television.'

'But this performer's celebrated comedy skills mask her extraordinary dramatic range. Her work on TV has included BBC Shakespeare; appearing in two series of Alan Bennett's monologues *Talking Heads*; playing the anti-permissive-society campaigner Mary Whitehouse; an Emmy Award-winning depiction of the former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Mo Mowlam; and a truly unforgettable performance as the reforming headteacher Marie Stubbs in the drama *Ahead of the Class* in 2005.'

'In 1982, she played Angie Todd in Alan Bleasdale's groundbreaking series *Boys from the Blackstuff*. It was a performance that's seared into the memory of everyone who saw it.'

'This actor brings two elements to all her dramatic work – it is profoundly touching, and it feels true. Look at any of her work over three decades, and those characteristics are there in every piece: *Pat and Margaret*, *Murder*, *GBH*, *A Short Stay in Switzerland*, *The Wife of Bath*, *Indian Summers* and *National Treasure*.'

Drama Series

Happy Valley

Red Production Company for BBC One
'A series that manages to be real and deeply human, with subtle, compassionate writing and exceptional performances across the board.'

Nominees:

Line of Duty 3, World Productions for BBC Two

The Durrells, Sid Gentle Films/ Masterpiece/BBC Worldwide for ITV

Entertainment

Ant and Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway

ITV Studios and Mitre Television for ITV
'Beautifully executed series – a thrilling and extravagant weekly treat.'

Nominees:

Strictly Come Dancing, BBC Studios for BBC One

Taskmaster, Avalon Television for UKTV and Dave

Entertainment Performance

Adam Hills, Alex Brooker and Josh Widdicombe – The Last Leg

Open Mike Productions for Channel 4
'Witty, highly engaging and never less than extraordinary.'

Nominees:

Anthony McPartlin and Declan Donnelly – I'm a Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here!, ITV Studios for ITV

Romesh Ranganathan – Asian Provocateur: Mum's American Dream, Rumpus Media in association with Green Bee Productions for BBC Three

History

The Aberfan Young Wives' Club

Shiver Cymru for ITV
'Popular history at its best – sensitive, rigorous and authentic. It also managed to be profoundly moving, taking viewers right to the emotional heart of the story.'

Nominees:

Challenger Disaster: Lost Tapes, 1895 Films for National Geographic

Saddam goes to Hollywood, Mentorn for Channel 4

Live Event

Stand up to Cancer

Princess Productions for Channel 4
'Genuinely innovative... an event that reinvented its genre.'

Nominees:

The Centenary of the Battle of the Somme, BBC Studios for BBC One and BBC Two

The Sound of Music Live!, ITV Studios Entertainment for ITV



Host Sandi Toksvig with award winner Osi Umenviora

Paul Hampartsoumian

Mini-Series

National Treasure

The Forge for Channel 4
'Brilliant writing and stunningly crafted direction.'

Nominees:

London Spy, Working Title for BBC Two
Thirteen, BBC Studios in co-production with BBC America for BBC Three

Popular Factual and Features

Employable Me

Optomen for BBC Two
'Told contributors' stories in an intelligent and highly respectful manner.'

Nominees:

First Dates, Twenty Twenty Television for Channel 4

SAS: Who Dares Wins, Minnow Films for Channel 4

Presenter

Grayson Perry – Grayson Perry All Man

Swan Films for Channel 4
'He has his own unique style; strong and moving, with an astonishing depth and a real sense of ownership of his subject.'

Nominees:

Sir David Attenborough – Attenborough and the Giant Dinosaur, BBC Natural History Unit and PBS for BBC One

Richard Ayoade – Travel Man: 48 Hours in Vienna, North One Television for Channel 4

RTS Channel of the Year

BBC Three

'Individual and daring. Its new slate challenges the perceptions of standard programmes, and the quality bar is set extremely high.'

Nominees:

BBC One
Channel 4



Watch the ceremony online

www.rts.org.uk/ProgAwards17



All pictures: Richard Kendal

1 Actor – Female:
Sophie Okonedo – *Undercover*

4 Science and Natural History:
First Contact: Lost Tribe of the Amazon

7 Arts:
Grayson Perry: All Man

2 Documentary Series:
Exodus: Our Journey to Europe

5 Sports Programme:
Rio Paralympics

8 Daytime Programme:
Find it, Fix it, Flog It

3 Children's Programme:
CBeebies A Midsummer Night's Dream

6 Single Drama:
Murdered by My Father

9 Entertainment:
Ant and Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway >



Breakthrough: Phoebe Waller-Bridge – *Fleabag*

BBC

Science and Natural History

First Contact: *Lost Tribe of the Amazon*
Ronachan Films and Pacha Films for Channel 4

‘A real first for this genre, with unforgettable, revelatory footage. The narrative never shied away from big ethical questions.’

Nominees:

The Hunt: The Hardest Challenge, Silverback Films co-produced with the BBC, BBC Worldwide, BBC America, The Open University, CCTV9 and NDR Naturfilm for BBC One

The Secret Life of 4, 5 & 6 Year Olds, RDF Television for Channel 4

Scripted Comedy

People Just Do Nothing

Roughcut Television for BBC Three
‘Extremely funny – honest, contemporary and unlike anything else.’

Nominees:

Catastrophe, An Avalon Television production with co-producers Birdbath Productions and Merman for Channel 4

The Windsors, Noho Film and TV for Channel 4

Single Documentary

The Murder of Sadie Hartley

Raw Cut TV for ITV
‘Brave programming. A work of real scale and ambition and a piece of outstanding film-making.’

Nominees:

Hillsborough, VeryMuchSo Productions for BBC Two

The Forgotten Children, Wild Pictures for ITV

Single Drama

Murdered by My Father

BBC Studios for BBC Three
‘This was a beautiful piece of work with some fantastic performances at its centre.’

Nominees:

A Midsummer Night’s Dream, BBC Wales and BBC Studios for BBC One

Reg, LA Productions for BBC One

Soap and Continuing Drama

Emmerdale

ITV Studios for ITV
‘The cast, crew and production team pulled off an ambitious and extraordinary conceit this year, with wonderful production values and highly watchable, unpredictable, rewarding storytelling.’

Nominees:

EastEnders, BBC Studios for BBC One

Hollyoaks, Lime Pictures for Channel 4

Sports Presenter, Commentator or Pundit

Osi Umenyiora – Race to Super Bowl 50, NFL This Week, The NFL Show

Whisper Films for BBC Two
‘Charismatic, knowledgeable, versatile and passionate about sport, with an understanding of how to appeal to both seasoned devotees and new fans alike.’

Nominees:

Clare Balding – *Rio Paralympics*, Sunset +Vine for Channel 4

Nasser Hussain, Sky Sports

Sports Programme

Rio Paralympics

Sunset+Vine for Channel 4
‘They hooked us with brilliant storytelling and the most fantastic sporting content. The coverage continues to break new ground all the time.’

Nominees:

England vs Pakistan T20 International, Sky Sports

The Open, ETP for Sky Sports

Writer – Comedy

Phoebe Waller-Bridge – *Fleabag*

Two Brothers Pictures for BBC Three
‘Writing that became a standard-setter for new comedy – brutally honest, painful and revealing... but, ultimately, exquisitely funny.’

Nominees:

Stefan Golaszewski – *Mum*, Big Talk Productions in association with The Money Men for BBC Two

Graham Linehan, Sharon Horgan, Helen Linehan, Holly Walsh – *Motherland*, Delightful Industries and Merman for BBC Two

Delightful Industries and Merman for BBC Two

Writer – Drama

Sally Wainwright – *Happy Valley*

Red Production Company for BBC One
‘Quite simply a masterclass in writing. Just perfect and entirely authentic.’

Nominees:

Jed Mercurio – *Line of Duty 3*, World Productions for BBC Two

Jack Thorne – *National Treasure*, The Forge for Channel 4



1 Entertainment Performance:
Adam Hills, Alex Brooker and Josh
Widdicombe – *The Last Leg*

4 History: *The Aberfan Young Wives' Club*

7 Science and Natural History:
First Contact: Lost Tribe of the Amazon

2 Mini-Series:
National Treasure

5 Drama Series:
Happy Valley

8 Scripted Comedy:
People Just Do Nothing

3 RTS Channel of the Year:
BBC Three

6 Live Event:
Stand up to Cancer

9 Popular Factual and Features:
Employable Me

All pictures: Richard Kendal





Drama Series:
Happy Valley

BBC

'Sally Wainwright is a writer of outstanding distinction, having created some of the finest dramatic television on British screens of the past few years.

'She cut her teeth as a writer working at Granada in the early 1990s alongside others such as Paul Abbott, Russell T Davies and Kay Mellor, honing her craft during five years writing for *Coronation Street*. She describes that time as a formative period in her career, teaching her the lesson that creating truly great stories is always hard work.

'Sally's Yorkshire roots, and her unerring ability to write the rhythms and cadences of a Northern accent, are frequently evident in her work. Suburban Leeds was the setting for the first major series she created, *At Home with the*



RTS

Braithwaites, in 2000. It became a big hit for ITV.

'Since then, viewers have sought out her work on television in their millions. Over the past decade and a half, her output has been prolific: *Jane Hall*, *Bonkers*, *Sparkhouse*, *Scott and Bailey*, *The Amazing Mrs Pritchard*, *Unforgiven*, *The Last Witch*, *Last Tango in Halifax*, *Happy Valley* and her television film about the Brontë sisters, *To Walk Invisible*

– all drew big ratings and critical acclaim.

'So what is it about Sally's writing that seems to engage so directly with audiences? One actor who works with her regularly said that it's her ability to balance character and plot so brilliantly, where other writers might sacrifice one for the other.

'Another actor identified her unquestionable skill for allowing strong female characters to define themselves so fully in her work.

'As well as writing, Sally has assumed greater creative control of her work by executive producing and now directing some of her pieces, too. She has clearly earned her status as one of the most significant creatives working in British television drama today.'



1 Single Documentary:
The Murder of Sadie Hartley

4 Single Drama:
Murdered by My Father

7 Actor – Female:
Sophie Okonedo – *Undercover*

2 Soap and Continuing Drama:
Emmerdale

5 Sports Presenter, Commentator or
Pundit: Osi Umenyiora

8 Comedy Performance: Asim Chaudhry –
People Just Do Nothing

3 Writer – Comedy:
Phoebe Waller-Bridge – *Fleabag*

6 Sports Programme:
Rio Paralympics

9 Actor – Male:
Robbie Coltrane – *National Treasure*

Pictures: Richard Kendal/BBC/Channel 4

The secrets of Two Doors Down



Elaine C Smith

BBC

In a wonderfully funny “Anatomy of a hit” session, *Two Doors Down* star Elaine C Smith shared the secrets of the BBC Two sitcom’s success at City of Glasgow College.

Smith is best known for her

work on shows such as *Rab C Nesbitt* and *Burda Eye View*, and was named the 2016 RTS Scotland On-Screen Personality for the latter.

She plays Christine O’Neal in *Two Doors Down*, which features a suburban Scottish

couple and their insufferable neighbours.

At the RTS Scotland event in mid-March, Smith said that, while she loved appearing in *Two Doors Down*, it was tiring work. Cast members were on set for 10 hours a

day and slept through their lunch breaks. Despite this, when Smith saw the finished episodes, she said that she knew it has all been worth it, admitting: “We’re a bunch of moany bastards.”

She attributed the show’s success to its writers, Simon Carlyle and Gregor Sharp: “Simon and Greg capture not only the madness in people, but the tragedy as well.”

Members of the audience asked Smith about her work as an actor and writer. She advised young people wanting to make it in the industry to get their experience wherever they could: “I basically took every job that came along. I wasn’t snobby.”

Smith added: “I’ve said this to my daughter – write the parts you want to play; imagine them. Don’t sit around waiting for men to write them for you.”

Rebecca Robertson

Two hundred people joined presenters Sally Taylor and Fred Dinenage for the Southern Centre Annual Professional and Student Awards at Winchester Guildhall in early March.

They were gathered to celebrate the professional work of ITV Meridian, BBC South, eight indies and student productions from five southern universities.

The variety and standard of both professional and student entries was high. Indies performed well, with Lambent Productions picking up the Best Factual Series award for *The Special Needs Employment Agency*, as well as Best Single Documentary.

Lambent scores at Southern Awards

Ricochet won the Best Factual Entertainment award, Woodcut Media took Best Post-Production and Best Graphics, and Bournemouth University’s Red Balloon Productions secured the Best Online prize.

Honours were spread evenly between the region’s broadcasters. *ITV Meridian East* won Best Regional Programme and Meridian’s political reporter, Phil Hornby, was named Best Regional

Journalist. At the BBC, David Fenton won Best Special Feature Journalist with a half-hour report on the crisis at Southern Health; other awards won by the BBC included one for regional current affairs programme *Inside Out South*, Best Newcomer, Best VJ and Best Camera.

All the student nominees demonstrated high standards. The University for the Creative Arts Farnham triumphed in Drama (with *Bleach*), as well

as the Factual (*Harvest of a New Life*) and Short Feature (*Nymphs*) categories.

The Arts University Bournemouth picked up the Comedy award for *The Village Fate* and Bournemouth University won the Animation prize with *Naughty Princess*.

The Southern Centre continues to play a pivotal role in bringing together professional and student talent within the region.

It is able to do so thanks to support from Southampton Solent University, Bournemouth University and the Arts University Bournemouth, as well as BBC South and ITV Meridian.

Gordon Cooper

■ Yorkshire celebrated its home-grown soap, *Emmerdale*, with a day of masterclasses and talks at Leeds College of Music in early March.

Emmerdale has been a mainstay of TV production in the Yorkshire region for more than 40 years. It has just had one of its most successful years, winning a raft of awards, including the recent RTS award for Soap and Continuing Drama, and critical acclaim for several episodes.

A panel of *Emmerdale*'s finest talked about ITV's ratings-grabbing "super soap week", which also involved *Coronation Street*, last October. The week of extraordinary episodes saw *Emmerdale* film its biggest stunt and use non-linear storytelling to dramatise a huge car crash from multiple points of view.

Series producer Iain MacLeod said that the stunt needed to have both an emotional and visual impact on the audience. Writer Maxine Alderton talked about the genesis of the story and the need to ensure it provided character stories for the months that followed.



Emmerdale

ITV

Super soap celebration

Director Duncan Foster discussed the technical challenges, including filming in a submerged car on the Pine-wood underwater stage.

Head of design Gillian Slight explained how the design team met the script demands, including refurbishing a stretch of race track at Longcross Studios to look like a busy road.

Nader Mabadi, who scheduled and budgeted the super soap week, which attracted

audiences of more than 7 million every night, paid tribute to the *Emmerdale* team and how they pulled together to make the shows.

Earlier in the day, RTS Yorkshire held a series of craft workshops for 270 students and recent graduates.

Jess Taylor, Sue Preston and Mary Gallagher, from *Emmerdale*'s make-up and costume department, shared their tricks of the trade. The story and writing workshop

took the attendees from story conference to production scheduling with the help of Alderton, Mabadi and story editor Eva Lake.

Scott McPherson demonstrated the use of sugar glass in the props and design workshop.

Students were also able to try out cameras and sound equipment in the workshop run by Matt Rook and Tim Wybrow.

Lisa Holdsworth

Plaudits for Scottish students

■ Eric Romero (pictured) won two of the four categories on offer at the RTS Scotland Student Television Awards in March. The Edinburgh Napier University student was awarded the Drama prize for *Lethe*.

'This was the category that [enthusiased] the judges. One said the reason he enjoyed judging the student awards so much was because, every year, he'd come across gems like these,' said Henry Eagles, the chair of the judges.

Romero also won the

Comedy and Entertainment award for *Native Immigration*, a mockumentary that boasted 'high production values'.

Ben Cresswell, Tuomas Kytöniemi and Athos Tsiopani, from Edinburgh College of Art, took the Animation award for *Gnome*, which had an 'accomplished mix' of stop-motion animation and CGI.

University of Stirling students Jamie Sutherland, Kate Galbraith, Calum McIntosh and Sean Hayman took the Factual prize for *The Cornerman*, about

Coatbridge boxing trainer Rab Bannan. The judges said that it demonstrated 'good access to interesting interviewees'.

Craft Excellence Awards were also given at the ceremony at Pacific Quay, Glasgow. The winners, all from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, were: James McAlpine (Camera) and Marsaili Stewart-Skinner (Sound), both for *Greylag*; and Aurora Gibson (Production Design), for *Reaper*.

Matthew Bell and Rhiannon Ramsay



Paul Reich



Channel 4 promo *We Are the Superhumans*

Channel 4

A night at the trailers

Three leading TV creatives discussed the art of the promo, and revealed what it takes to entice viewers to the screen, at a packed RTS London event in early March.

To demonstrate how far the TV promo has come, the continuity announcer and presenter Gavin Inskip, who chaired “Building a buzz: what makes a good promo” at ITV Studios, showed a BBC One trailer from 1980. This featured nothing more than clips from the night’s schedule of shows starring Larry Grayson, Paul Daniels and Michael Parkinson.

In contrast, Channel 4’s three-minute promo for the Rio Paralympics last year – one of a number of clips shown during the evening – featured a big band, dancers and hundreds of athletes, all of whom had a disability.

“That’s an extraordinary film, which sets a benchmark for what promos can be when there’s money,

ambition and time,” said Matt Berry, group business director of Channel 4’s in-house agency, 4Creative. He went on: “That film did a great job of lionising the Paralympics and people with disability, but we also had a hard selling job to do, which was: ‘Watch the Paralympics.’”

Channel 4’s promo for the latest series of its winter sports show, *The Jump*, sent up the celebrity competitors. “*The Jump* is as close to ITV as we get on Channel 4,” said Berry, “in terms of super-mainstream entertainment.”

The promo shows the programme’s contestants flying above snow-capped mountains, without wings.

When an owl tells them that human flight is “aerodynamically impossible”, they crash to earth. “The truth is, people watch the show because they like to see celebrities taking a hit,” said Berry, “so the proposition in this [promo] was that pride comes before a fall.”

Charles Mathieson, creative director of ITV2, ITV4 and ITVBe, brought promos for dating reality show *Love Island* and US cartoon *Family Guy* to the RTS London event.

The objective of the former was to “build on the gamesmanship and rivalries” that are a big part of the show. Shot in South Africa, it shows would-be contestants resorting to cheating as they race across a beach to claim their place on the show.

The promo for *Family Guy*, formerly a BBC Three show, had a simple aim. “Everyone knows what *Family Guy* is, so it was about hammering home that it’s on ITV2 now,” explained Mathieson. “We wanted that show all over our brand.”

Scott Russell, UKTV creative director, showed a couple of “brand spots”, designed to promote its factual channel, Really, as the home of serious storytelling.

Both were women talking straight to camera and telling

harrowing, but uplifting, stories: the first featured a woman kidnapped by serial killers Fred and Rosemary West; the second, a transgender beauty contestant. “Emotion is your most powerful tool,” argued Russell.

He also showed a promo for Dave satire show *Unspun with Matt Forde*, which featured a series of “politician lookalikes”, including Donald Trump, Theresa May and Jeremy Corbyn.

Promo-makers do not, of course, have total creative freedom – the channel, the production company and the talent in the show all have a say, too. “It’s their baby, so you’ve got to be respectful,” said Russell.

And, not all jobs are as attractive as the ones showcased at the RTS event. “The worst brief,” reckoned Mathieson, is a promo for “the seventh or eight series – [when] there’s no budget”.

Matthew Bell

Phil Barnes produced the event.

Wokoma's Crazyhead performance lauded

E4's comedy-horror *Crazyhead* won three prizes at the RTS West of England Awards in mid-March. The series, which was based at Bristol's Bottle Yard Studios and made by Urban Myth Films, won: Best On-screen Performance for Susan Wokoma; Sound for the Aquarium Sound Team; and Design, Titles and Trails for Liquid TV.

Sherlock: The Abominable Bride went one better and scooped four prizes at the sold-out ceremony, held at the Bristol Old Vic. The Hartswood Films production took: Best Drama; Director, for Douglas Mackinnon; Cinematography, for Suzie Lavelle; and Composer, for David Arnold and Michael Price.

Jago: A Life Underwater, a film about an 80-year-old sea nomad called Rohani, set against the spectacular backdrop of the Togian Islands in Indonesia, won four awards: Best Documentary, Cinematography, Grading and Sound.

BBC Studios' Natural History Unit (NHU) also had a successful evening, securing three awards for *Planet Earth II*. The BBC One series won Best Natural History Programme; Editing for the stunning *Cities* episode; and Best Director in the non-scripted category for Fredi Devas.

Wildlife cameraman Vianet Djenguët won the On-screen Talent award for BBC Two's *Natural World: My Congo*, which was produced by the NHU and Thirteen Productions.

In news, *ITV News West Country* picked up two awards: Ashna Hurynag received the Flying Futures Talent award, while Caron



Channel 4

Susan Wokoma in *Crazyhead*

Bell won the News Reporter award.

Inside Out (BBC West) took the News Coverage prize for its *Inside Amazon* report, which, judges said, featured "gutsy journalism against a household name".

Channel 4's *Heroes of Helmand: The British Army's Great Escape* (Testimony Films) was named Best Factual programme, while BBC Studios' *DIY SOS: Million Pound Build for Children in Need* triumphed in the Factual Entertainment category.

Drummer TV won the Children's award for CBBC's *My Life: The Boy on the Bicycle*, which took young viewers

on a tour around a refugee camp in Jordan.

BBC Bristol received a special award in recognition of its impact and influence in the region.

Centre Chair Lynn Barlow said that the city's media industries employed nearly 4,000 people, and that there were more than 130 independent production and post-production companies, which brought in almost £140m to the local economy.

The awards were supported by post-production house Evolutions Bristol and hosted by the presenter of BBC One's *Countryfile*, Anita Rani.

Matthew Bell

Belfast event offers help to young talent

■ Northern Ireland Centre welcomed a top-notch panel of local talent for its sold-out RTS Futures event, "Get your foot in the door", in late February.

The panellists at UTV Studios, Belfast, were: Stellify Media MD Kieran Doherty; Terry Brennan, head of news and programmes at UTV; Leon McGeown Fee, production manager on Disney teen series *The Lodge*; novelist Colin Bateman; and Michael Lennox, who directed the Oscar-nominated short *Boogaloo and Graham*.

The panelists each recalled how they broke into the media industry and offered a wealth of advice to an audience of young people hoping to follow them.

McGeown Fee encouraged the audience to immerse themselves in their passions and to collaborate with their peers to make the creative process happen.

"The resources, drive and creativity are in this room. Talk to each other, use each other," she said.

Bateman, who wrote the crime novel *Divorcing Jack* and adapted it for the big screen, suggested: "Find that one person who likes what you do. Don't give up!"

Brennan encouraged those starting work experience placements to not be shy of speaking up during meetings and to take the opportunity to share ideas whenever appropriate.

And, after landing a job, McGeown Fee had this advice: "A runner who can read a room will be remembered – make yourself casually memorable."

Sarah McKnight



Donald McLean

Baird's projection systems, culminating in the demonstration of live, closed-circuit colour television in 1938 at London's Dominion Theatre. This was hailed at the time as the peak of excellence in TV.

The central components of that system now reside in the Science Museum. Paul held five patents in television systems.

In late 1938, Paul left the Baird Company to become assistant wireless engineer to the postmaster general of Hong Kong within the Colonial Service, eventually being incarcerated as a civilian prisoner of war by the Japanese.

After the war, Paul spent the rest of his long career managing and delivering electrical services for remote communities in the Far East, mostly in British North Borneo. He returned to the UK in the 1990s, retiring at 80.

He recently featured on the BBC Four documentary *Television's Opening Night: How the Box was Born*, which was broadcast in November 2016, and was subsequently interviewed on *Newsnight*.

Paul was born on 21 July 1911 in north London, the only son of Vernon James Reveley. He died on 12 March 2017 in King's Lynn and is survived by one daughter.

Donald McLean

The last surviving direct link with the pioneering work of John Logie Baird died on 12 March.

Up until his death in his 106th year, Paul Vernon Reveley possessed an exceptional ability to recall his direct contribution to historic television events throughout the 1930s with an accuracy that exceeded anything in print.

In conversation, Paul could transport you to that pioneering television era, providing first-hand accounts of his work as the engineer who

had spent the longest time working directly for Baird. His near-perfect recall meant that discussion with him was an uncanny experience.

Paul had been not only the oldest, but the longest-standing member of the RTS, with his Fellow status approved in December 1937. He started work for Baird in February 1932 in his 21st year, after graduating in "light-current electrical engineering".

His first role was in supporting Baird's second major live TV outside broadcast. This, the 1932 Derby, was

both a vision/sound simulcast using BBC transmitters, as well as being linked by cable to a paying audience in the Metropole Cinema, where Paul had built, installed and operated the special video projection system.

When the Baird Company was acquired by Gaumont-British, Baird employed Paul and a few other Baird Company engineers to support him in developing new television systems.

As the senior engineer, Paul was central to the design and demonstration of

ONLINE at the RTS

■ If you were at last month's Programme Awards, you might have spotted members of the digital team tweeting the results, sharing snaps from the blue carpet on Instagram or interviewing the winners. If you weren't there, you can watch video clips on Twitter (@RTS_Media) and Facebook (www.facebook.com/royaltelevisionociety), or watch the extended highlights (www.rts.org.uk/ProgAwards17).

■ Phoebe Waller-Bridge was one of the biggest stars of the night, taking home the prizes for Breakthrough artist and Writer – Comedy. She explains how she turned *Fleabag* from a one-woman theatre show into an award-winning sitcom for BBC Three (www.rts.org.uk/PhoebeWB).

■ Nadiya Hussain was also nominated for the Breakthrough award for her work on BBC

One's *The Chronicles of Nadiya*. Hussain baked her way into the nation's heart when she won *The Great British Bake Off* in 2015. She told Ed Gove how the programme helped her overcome her anxiety – once, she couldn't go on the Tube, now she travels around the country to make her own cookery shows (www.rts.org.uk/Nadiya).

■ Writer Jack Thorne seems to be working non-stop at the

moment, from scripting the stage play *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* to adapting Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy for the BBC. We spoke to the writer ahead of the Programme Awards, at which he was nominated for his work on Channel 4 drama *National Treasure*, to find out how he finds the time to get all the work done (www.rts.org.uk/JackThorne).

Pippa Shawley

Belfast Metropolitan College won three of the top prizes at the RTS Northern Ireland Student Television Awards in late March.

Conor Dempsey, Marc Downey, Adam Irwin, Joel McReynolds, James Mallaghan and Mark Rainey, from Belfast Metropolitan College scooped the Comedy and Entertainment award with *Mo Chara*.

Dempsey, McReynolds, Mallaghan and Rainey also took the Short Feature prize with *Kings Park Primary School*.

Fellow students Ryan Fitzsimmons, Ciaran Mooney, Ryan Sewell and Michael Turner won in Factual with *The Shipyard Poet*.

Students from Ulster University secured the other two awards. Matt Boyd and Rachel Hynds took the Drama award with *Recode*, and Sam Hudson, Michael McCrea, Aodhán McNicholl, Rebekah Quinn and Bobby Strain won in Animation with *Adrift*.

"We are now in the fourth year of the RTS NI Student Awards and each year we are delighted to see the standard of entries get better and better," said Steve Carson, Chair of the Northern Ireland Centre.

"These awards offer the opportunity for talented



Stephen Farry MLA (left) and David McConnell (right) with some of the winning students

Simon Graham

Belfast College scoops three top film awards

media students from across Northern Ireland to showcase their work to some of the creative industry's biggest names."

More than 100 guests joined the host, BBC producer Jacqui Berkeley, and guest speaker, BBC TV and radio presenter Stephen

Nolan, at the Black Box in Belfast for the ceremony.

Seán Murray, who won the Postgraduate Craft Skills Camerawork prize at the national RTS Student Television Awards last year, was also in attendance.

The RTS NI Student Awards were supported by the

Department for Communities as part of its Creativity Month 2017, which celebrates the creative industries in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland Assembly member Stephen Farry and David McConnell from the department were at the ceremony.

Matthew Bell

Southern students call in the experts

■ The eighth annual Southern Centre "Meet the professionals" event took place at Bournemouth University in late March.

One hundred and sixty southern-based students from several universities met 17 industry professionals to discuss current TV issues, opportunities and career development.

The professionals at the event included those

working in traditional broadcast TV, independent production, visual content production for BBC Radio 1, television archive sales, post-production, local-TV, and freelance writing and directing.

Three of the professionals were themselves students last year and all provided positive insights into creative industry working practices.

Tashi Hanlon from Vice

UK said that she valued the support and responsibility she had been given, and that she enjoyed working with a predominantly young workforce.

In featuring professionals from different stages of their career, the event was able to demonstrate the diverse range of opportunities open to those starting out with production expertise.

Some people had

developed programme management skills, others had formed their own companies and one had created an entirely new corporate role for himself by developing an original idea with vlogging.

At the end of the event, students came away with a useful route map to help them negotiate a changing industry.

Gordon Cooper

OFF MESSAGE

Time flies when you're having fun. So it was at last month's RTS Programme Awards, when a record crowd of some 900 guests celebrated British television at its very best.

Not for the first time, the diminutive and sharply hilarious Sandi Toksvig proved why she is the perfect host for awards ceremonies.

With more than 25 prizes to hand out, it could have been, well, a bit of a marathon, but the Radio 4 panel-show stalwart made time whizz by.

Her best gag of the evening? We were spoilt for choice but, recalling how she'd landed the RTS gig, Toksvig remarked: "The world has moved on when the least controversial choice is the foreign lesbian."

If Toksvig is this good on Channel 4's *Bake Off* reboot, then Love Productions and Jay Hunt will have plenty to celebrate.

■ **Talking of Channel 4, seasoned observers of UK broadcasting were hardly surprised when David Abraham recently announced his impending departure from Horseferry Road.**

But could Abraham be the last Channel 4 boss to be based in London? Culture secretary Karen Bradley seems determined to relocate the broadcaster outside the metropolis – to Birmingham or to a city in the North of England. Some might argue that basing Channel 4 beyond the capital is a small price to pay for preserving the station's business

model and removing the threat of privatisation.

In any case, the flat whites are as good in Salford as they are in Soho – and almost as expensive.

■ Netflix's flagship series, *The Crown*, is famous for having a budget on a scale that drama commissioners such as Piers Wenger and Polly Hill can only dream of.

But it seems that, in certain key areas of production, economies were made. As the show's executive producer Suzanne Mackie told the RTS last month, the "holy oil" used for anointing the new queen at the coronation service was bought at high-street favourite Tesco Express.

Before Richard Dimbleby starts spinning in his grave, it should be stressed that the brand used for this most solemn of royal rituals was Tesco's Finest.

■ **News of the make-up of the new BBC board makes for intriguing reading. Conspicuous by their absence from the body are those two battling boys who have their eyes firmly fixed on Tony Hall's job, James Harding and James Purnell. Charlotte Moore was another missing BBC high achiever.**

In their places were: Anne Bulford, Hall's low-profile deputy; new nations and regions boss Ken MacQuarrie; and the popular Tim Davie, leader of BBC Worldwide.

Good to see the impressive former Paralympian Tanni Grey-Thompson round the table – and the return of the cerebral journalist Ian Hargreaves to the centre of decision-making.

As one of the founding members of Ofcom and a former head of BBC news and current affairs, with a brief stint as editor of the *Independent* under his belt, Hargreaves is a genuine journalistic heavyweight.

Veteran Steve Morrison is another fascinating appointment. As Greg Dyke once knew to his cost, Morrison is not someone who can't get a word in edgeways.

■ No one should ever underestimate TV drama doyennes Jane Tranter and Julie Gardner.

Now that Access Entertainment, led by Danny Cohen, is taking a stake in the pair's Welsh-based Bad Wolf indie, rivals need to take note.

Access clearly knows where to spend its money wisely. Remember, the company has already invested in Tessa Ross's House Productions.

Meanwhile, could Cohen be a dark-horse candidate to succeed David Abraham?

The former BBC man was once head of E4 and is highly regarded for his creative credentials.

■ **And, finally, let's return to the RTS's Programme Awards. It's fair to say that Sandi Toksvig did not have a total monopoly on all the night's best jokes. The winner of best Comedy Performance, Asim Chaudhry, star and creator of BBC Three mockumentary *People Just Do Nothing*, had his own inimitable take on the RTS.**

Clutching his award, he thanked the "Royal Tandoori Society".

Now that's what Off Message calls a take-away.



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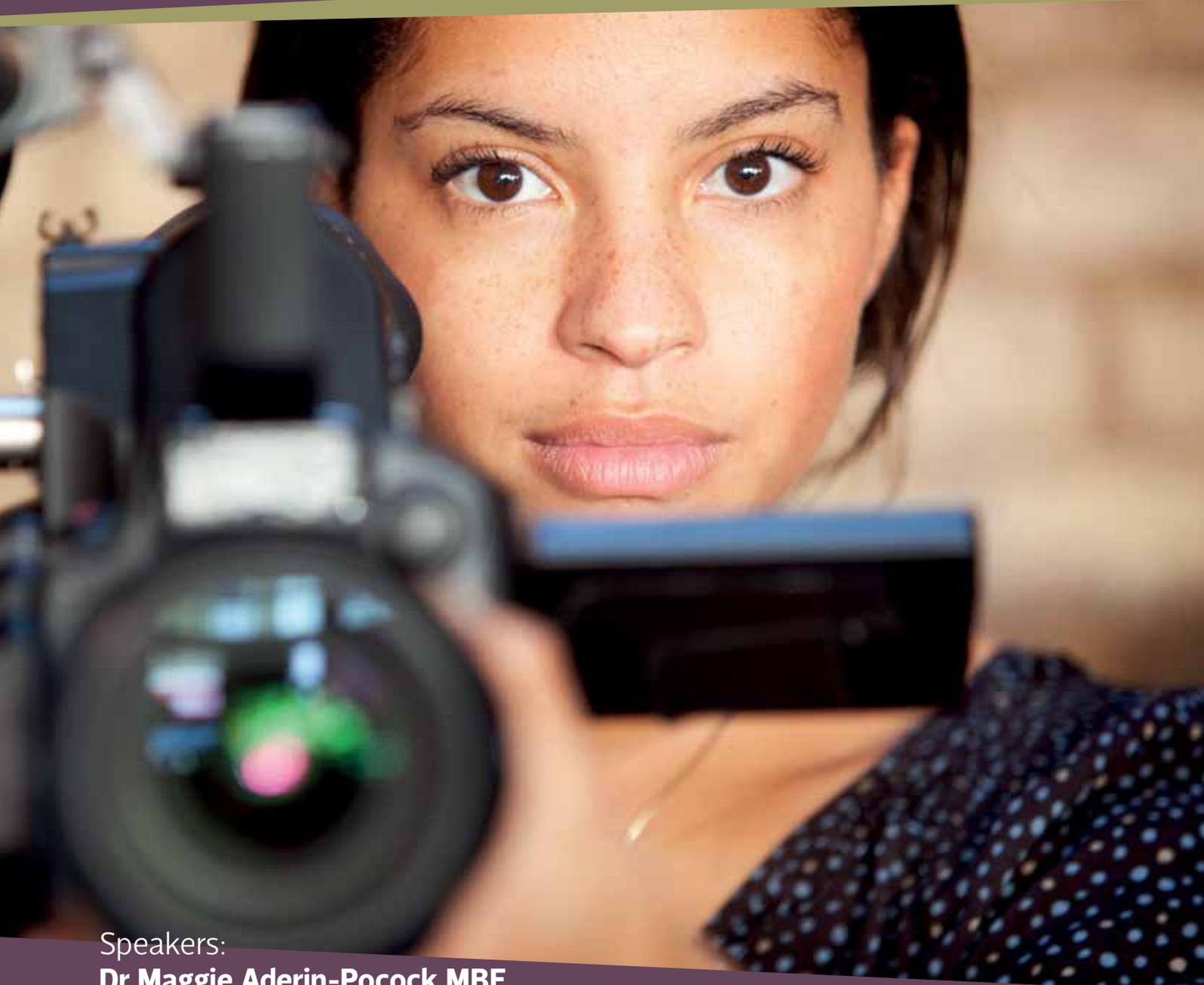
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Who's who at the RTS	<p>Patron HRH The Prince of Wales</p> <p>Vice-Presidents David Abraham Dawn Airey Sir David Attenborough OM CH CVO CBE FRS Baroness Floella Benjamin OBE Dame Colette Bowe OBE Lord Bragg of Wigton John Cresswell Adam Crozier Mike Darcey Greg Dyke Lord Hall of Birkenhead Lorraine Heggessey Ashley Highfield Armando Iannucci OBE Ian Jones Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon OBE Rt Hon Baroness Jowell of Brixton DBE PC David Lynn Sir Trevor McDonald OBE Ken MacQuarrie Gavin Patterson Trevor Phillips OBE Stewart Purvis CBE Sir Howard Stringer</p>	<p>Chair of RTS Trustees Tom Mockridge</p> <p>Honorary Secretary David Lowen</p> <p>Honorary Treasurer Mike Green</p> <p>BOARD OF TRUSTEES Lynn Barlow Tim Davie Mike Green David Lowen Graham McWilliam Tom Mockridge Simon Pitts Jane Turton Rob Woodward</p> <p>EXECUTIVE Chief Executive Theresa Wise</p>	<p>CENTRES COUNCIL Lynn Barlow Charles Byrne Steve Carson Dan Cherowbrier Isabel Clarke Alex Connock Gordon Cooper Tim Hartley Kingsley Marshall Jane Muirhead Nikki O'Donnell Fiona Thompson Graeme Thompson Penny Westlake</p> <p>SPECIALIST GROUP CHAIRS Archives Dale Grayson</p> <p>Diversity Marcus Ryder</p> <p>Early Evening Events Dan Brooke</p> <p>Education Graeme Thompson</p> <p>RTS Futures Donna Taberer</p>	<p>History Don McLean</p> <p>IBC Conference Liaison Terry Marsh</p> <p>RTS Technology Bursaries Simon Pitts</p> <p>AWARDS COMMITTEE CHAIRS Awards & Fellowship Policy David Lowen</p> <p>Television Journalism Awards Stewart Purvis CBE</p> <p>Programme Awards Alex Mahon</p> <p>Student Television Awards Phil Edgar-Jones</p>
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Breaking barriers

- *How can the TV industry encourage*
- *more women into technology jobs?*



Speakers:

Dr Maggie Aderin-Pocock MBE

Sinead Greenaway,

Chief Technology and Operations Officer, UKTV

Kate Kinninmont MBE,

Chief Executive, Women in Film and TV (UK)

Anna Patching,

Sound Engineer, OBstv

Chair: **Maggie Philbin OBE,**

CEO and Co-Founder, TeenTech

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