

April 2023

Television



**The Power:
Amazon zaps
the patriarchy**

audio network 



● ALYUSHA CHAKRIN (VOCALIST - UK)

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From the CEO



Glamorous, star-studded and emotional, last month's packed RTS Programme Awards were all these and so much more. Thank you to

everyone who came and huge congratulations to all the nominees and winners.

It was wonderful to have Kate Winslet – a much-deserved winner for Channel 4's brilliant *I Am Ruth* – in the room alongside such other TV luminaries as Billie Piper and Claudia Winkleman. Not for the first time, the incomparable Tom Allen brought flair and humour to the proceedings.

Sarah Lancashire had everyone on their feet applauding, while Ade Adepitan left us with a lump in our throats. Thanks also to all the jurors. Once again, I am indebted to the immaculately attired Kenton Allen for chairing the awards.

Our April edition is packed with good reads. Don't miss Stewart Purvis's TV Diary as he wonders if there was more to the Gary Lineker controversy than we were led to believe.

TikTok and its majority Chinese ownership is very much a live, hot-button issue. Simon Bucks reports on how TV news has found it an essential tool for persuading Generation Z to watch its reports.

BBC One's new take on *Great Expectations* is dividing opinion. Everyone has their favourite screen adaptations of Dickens's novels. Matthew Bell and Steve Clarke highlight what they regard as the very best of Dickens on film and TV. Did anyone mention David Lean?

Finally, Simon Shaps reviews *Unscripted: The Epic Battle for a Hollywood Media Empire*, the story of Viacom. Simon came face-to-face with two of the protagonists, Sumner Redstone and Les Moonves.

Theresa Wise

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Hosted by Tom Allen, the awards were presented on 28 March at the JW Marriott Grosvenor House, London, in partnership with Audio Network

Do you need £5,000 for a history of television project?

The Shiers Trust can make a grant of up to £5,000 towards publishing work on any aspect of TV history

Grants will be given to assist in the completion of new or unfinished projects, work or literature specific to the objectives of the Trust.

George Shiers, a distinguished US television historian, was a long-standing member of the RTS. The Shiers Trust grant is in its 22nd year.

Application procedure

Applications are now invited and should be submitted to the Trustees by **30 April 2023** on the official application form. Applicants must read all the conditions

**[www.rts.org.uk/
shiers-trust-award](http://www.rts.org.uk/shiers-trust-award)**



TV diary

There's a weekend call-up for the Dad's Army of "BBC crisis" pundits. "Lineker-gate" is the 60th on the Wikipedia list of "BBC controversies", and Mark Damazer, Richard Ayre, Roger Mosey, Roger Bolton and I are on parade across the nation's various airwaves untangling "another fine mess".

The BBC's football pundits and most of the commentators have walked out over the suspension of Gary Lineker for allegedly breaching the BBC guidelines on tweeting.

As a pundit veteran of bigger crises, such as Hutton/WMD, Savile and Diana/Bashir – plus my regulatory involvement in the *Blue Peter* cat affair – I confidently predict on Sunday's *BBC Breakfast* and Sky News that a formal review will be part of the solution because the guidelines are "a bit of a mess".

■ **Come Monday morning, I'm up early for BBC Radio services in Wales and Northern Ireland – the nations' newsrooms don't like to miss out on reporting about the BBC on the BBC.**

When Tim Davie signals his retreat later that day, a review is part of it, but I hadn't foreseen the full scale of the climbdown. Asking Lineker to "step back" has led to the BBC having to pull back itself. Instead of him apologising, it is the BBC's DG doing it.

I'm curious why neither Davie's statement nor Lineker's includes what Davie says in an interview that, "during the review, Gary will abide by the editorial guidelines". I wonder if there is another element to this story that we don't know about.



Stewart Purvis wonders whether there's more to Lineker-gate than meets the eye – and runs into some relations of a woman accused of spying for the Soviet Union

■ Tuesday is rehearsal day for the latest spin-off from my retirement project, "the Hampstead Spies". I have worked out from MI5 files the addresses where a dozen KGB agents lived in London NW3 during the 1930s and 1940s.

I've created guided walks, talks and hopefully, eventually, a book. The latest talk is "Jennifer Hart and the Oxford 'spies'". I arrive at Burgh House in Hampstead to discover that Mrs Hart's son and daughter are in the audience.

We have a debate during and after the Q&A about their mother's role, and part on friendly enough terms.

■ **I am such a fan of good memorial services that, at ITN, I once pitched to Channel 4 for a series about them. I never got a reply. Thursday is my planning day for a memorial event in September for my old boss and mentor, Sir David Nicholas, who died aged 92 last June.**

David's son, James, and daughter, Helen, have invited me to help them create something distinctive to honour the man who developed so much of what is now the everyday in TV news and live special events.

James has some suitably innovative ideas for an event rather than a service. It is going to be a privilege to try to help him deliver them.

■ Broadcasting colleagues were surprised four years ago when I was appointed a non-executive director of Brentford Football Club. Then, they were in the lower reaches of the Championship but now they are in the top 10 of the Premier League. "I always thought you were Chelsea," said Greg Dyke. Like Greg, I had allowed my allegiance to wander (in his case to Manchester United) before returning back to base two miles from where I was born. Now, again like Greg, I've finished a stint on the Brentford board but remain a fan.

This Saturday, former ITN colleague Mervyn Hall is my guest and we look out in the Legends Lounge for *Channel 4 News* presenter Krishnan Guru-Murthy and *5 News's* political editor, Andy Bell. Add in the fans who Dawn Airey outed in her TV Diary last month and there's now a whole hive full of "TV bees".

Stewart Purvis Stewart Purvis is a former ITN CEO, Ofcom regulator and non-executive director of Channel 4.

COMFORT CLASSIC

Creator, writer and star of *Dinnerladies*, Victoria Wood, centre



BBC

Dinnerladies

If the great Victoria Wood had been born before the age of television, she would have been a playwright or, more likely, a novelist. Or maybe both.

It is not in any way to detract from the performances of the actors who delivered her lines, or her own assured although somewhat self-effacing performance, but, fundamentally, she was a writer.

And what a writer! She broke boundaries by putting women and self-consciousness about class, sex and body image at the heart of her comedy. Inevitably, *Dinnerladies* draws from this deep well of Woodland.

Rewatching the show, her one and only sitcom, it's striking how much she crams into the screenplay of a single episode. The script crackles, full to the

Steve Clarke rejoices in a sitcom jewel polished to perfection by an outstanding writer

brim with so many jokes that it's easy to miss some of them.

No wonder she said that she hoped people would watch the programme more than once. Only then would audiences be able to enjoy the full richness of this outstanding comedy, voted number 10 in a 2019 *Radio Times* poll of the best sitcoms of all time.

Sitcom is, of course, the hardest of the TV arts to get right. Recorded live in the studio before an audience, *Dinnerladies*, which ran from late 1998

to early 2000, looked effortless once it was edited. In fact, the show was recorded twice, on Friday and Saturday nights in order to incorporate Wood's rewrites. Thus, huge demands were made on the cast.

Wood wanted to do a workplace comedy, rather than one featuring a domestic setting – she hated those – and laboured to perfect every line.

Some of the *Dinnerladies* cast have spoken of the endless rewrites, Wood sometimes staying up until 4:00am on the day of recording until she was satisfied. "It was really full on – high pressure. I had to make it as good as it could be," she once recalled.

Typically, given Wood's devotion to the north in her humour, *Dinnerladies* was set in the kitchen of a Manchester factory canteen. She excelled at

making the mundane funny. What could be more fitting than locating her sitcom in a works canteen?

The series was commissioned by BBC One and the debut episode was watched by more than 12 million viewers, an extraordinary figure by today's standards and an indication of her huge popularity, nurtured by a succession of TV series, most notably *Victoria Wood – As Seen on TV*.

Unusually for a sitcom, she wrote every single episode, without the assistance of even a script editor. As noted, Wood was a perfectionist and a harsh critic of her own work. During the second and final season of *Dinnerladies* she suffered from a crisis of confidence in her writing, but overcame it.

Wood may have been used to having all the limelight in many of her previous TV incarnations and in her sell-out, one-woman stage tours but, once the cameras started rolling, *Dinnerladies* was a democratic series. She was one of a company of players, many of whom she had worked with for years, and she didn't hog the best lines.

Her character, Brenda "Bren" Furlong, is reliable and a shoulder to cry on for some of the other, more emotional canteen workers. She is drawn to one of the few men in the show, the wry canteen manager Tony Martin (Andrew Dunn). Over the course of the two series, their stuttering romance gradually develops.

Throughout, the acting is note perfect, whether it's a young Maxine Peake as the gormless Twinkle, Celia Imrie – the one southerner and middle-class character – as scatty human resources manager Philippa Moorcroft or Shobna Gulati as the naive Anita.

This being a Victoria Wood show, audiences would have felt short-changed had her comrade-in-arms Julie Walters not found her way into the kitchen. She brings an almost surreal edge to proceedings by playing Brenda's dissolute and penniless mother, who is reduced to living in a caravan behind a petrol station.

Sitcoms are an endangered species in today's high-production TV era. I would have liked to see how Victoria Wood, who died at the tragically young age of 62, might have approached a modern, big-budget comedy-drama. Thankfully, part of her legacy is the charming, albeit sometimes spikey, *Dinnerladies*. ■

***Dinnerladies* is on Sky Go, Now TV, ITVX and BritBox.**

Ear candy



Perhaps more than any other show on TV right now, *Succession* begs for psychoanalysis.

Jesse Armstrong's scathing satire of the super-rich follows Logan Roy, the tyrannical patriarch of a media dynasty, and his family's endless infighting for his throne. All of the characters, especially the siblings Kendall, Shiv, Roman and Connor, are dripping with dysfunction – "daddy issues" doesn't even begin to cover it. But so rich and layered is the writing that the roots of the dysfunction lie deep in the subtext.

Leave it to Sara Barron and Geoff Lloyd to unearth them. The American comic and her husband, a veteran radio and podcast presenter, host what is, for my money, the best *Succession* podcast on the market in *Firecrotch & Normcore*.

At the time of writing, they are gearing up for the fourth and last season of the drama by dropping hour-long discussions of each season to date.

The first, *Usury and Onanism: The SI Rewatch*, has all the keen insights we've come to expect. Not only do they ask the big questions, such as that concerning Roman's reliability as a narrator of his abusive backstory, they also leave time for minor, but telling, observations such as the sidewalk-hogging size of Kendall's umbrella ("because

sharing space with others is not for him," says Barron).

And then there's *Succession*'s gloriously caustic dialogue, which the hosts rightfully recognise as worthy of a close read. There's even a thorough deconstruction of a single line, which Barron calls "the great Tom and Shiv quote from season 1". When laying down the ground rules for his bachelor party ahead of their wedding, Tom, ever submissive, suggests to Shiv: "If I touch a boob, you touch a dick." "But is it like for like?" Lloyd wonders.

Firecrotch & Normcore, a reference to Roman's perverted nickname for Shiv and Tom, invites the comparison between the presenters and the fictional couple. There is a very slight similarity in their dynamic – Barron is bold and brash, Lloyd more mellow – but what the self-referential title actually hints at is their willingness to talk openly about themselves and their relationships, which makes for some hilarious digressions.

The Roys should take note. Although, when discussing season 1, episode 7 – which sees the Roys gather for a family therapy session – Lloyd accuses Barron of wanting to do the same with her own family. She seems to channel her inner Logan Roy with the reply: "You know why? 'Cos I would fucking win." ■

Harry Bennett

WORKING LIVES

Filming blue sharks



Big Wave Productions

Natural history film-maker

Emma Ross is in charge of Big Wave's expanding natural history slate, working with her team to originate, shape and deliver the Brighton-based production company's award-winning programmes. She has worked for the marine specialist, on and off, for 20-odd years and is currently director of natural history.

What does the job involve?

It runs all the way from the first spark of an idea, through to developing that idea, bringing in funding, to shooting the programme. I spend more time overseeing projects now, but I still get out of the office – I spent six weeks in Africa filming two shark shows for Discovery and National Geographic at the end of last year, which was a lot of fun.

What was your route into natural history filming?

I left university with a biology degree, did some work experience at Icon Films,

worked on a Desmond Morris series as a junior researcher and then was fortunate to get a staff job as a researcher at Anglia Television in Norwich on ITV's natural history series *Survival*.

What was your big breakthrough?

Secrets of the Crocodile Caves in Madagascar for *Survival*.

What qualities does a natural history film-maker need?

A passion for the natural world, a talent for visual story-making and the ability to translate complicated ideas into something that is exciting and entertaining.

People come to these shows because, above all else, they are entertaining – if they're entertaining, you can draw in a larger audience beyond those only interested in the natural world. Optimism, determination and doggedness help, too, because it usually takes time to get the shots you need.

Do you need specialist scientific knowledge?

A background in biology is useful but not essential. At Big Wave, we've been making wildlife and a lot of marine films for many years, so we have well-established relationships with scientists around the world. These days, they come to us with story ideas as well.

As a film-maker, are you allowed to interfere with the animal world?

We don't interfere, although our films often feature the work of scientists and that can involve deploying onboard cameras to the backs of animals that release after a set time, and tagging them with satellite trackers to find out new things about their world.

What do you take on location when filming?

A mosquito net, teabags and, when I'm on the water, a buff, hat, factor 50 and sea-sickness tablets.

What are the best and worst parts of the job?

The best are those magical moments when you film something that's never been seen before or you make a film that brings about real change; the worst, is the battle to secure the finance for a beloved project.

What show are you most proud of?

A moment I'm very proud of came from a programme for the BBC's flagship series *Natural World*, *Invasion of the Crocodiles*, which I produced and directed for Big Wave about saltwater crocs in Australia.

When shooting this film, we stumbled across a brand new piece of behaviour. We were shooting up a tidal river in the pitch dark, when our torches picked up the eye-shine of 40-plus crocodiles lined up at a dam with their mouths wide open.

As the river rose, we discovered why. Fish were jumping over the dam and straight into the crocodiles' snapping mouths. Nobody had reported it before. It was such luck but absolutely amazing.

What's the most amazing place you've been to?

Our team went to Venezuela to film the giant bird-eating spider, one of the largest arachnids in the world, for a series called *Bug Attack*. We took a small boat deep into the rainforest, where we stayed with an indigenous tribe called the Piaroa, who rely on the spiders for food.

Before we could film, we had to join the elders in a spider-hunting ceremony – the sun was rising over the tepui [mesa], it was breathtakingly beautiful – it's moments like that when you feel so privileged. We filmed the spiders and brought a couple home for dinner that night.

What did it taste like?

Lobster. You crack the legs open, which contain sweet white meat.

How has natural history documentary changed since you started?

Technology has had the biggest impact on what's possible with wildlife film-making – every decade it's reinventing itself. Now, we have extraordinary picture quality, tiny cameras, super-high speed, remote and night filming.

Has the type of programme changed, as well?

Yes, 25 years ago, we didn't talk about conservation in films, despite trying hard! Now, not only do we tell important conservation stories but the market demands it.

It should have come much sooner, but there was always a huge fear from the broadcasters that we would lose our audience. Wildlife has been going through a golden age, which I'm sure is a reaction to the state of our planet.



Filming a pair of goshawks

Big Wave Productions

How can natural history film-making become "greener"?

We were filming whale sharks on Christmas Island and trying to find accommodation was really hard because it was full of people making films about the annual land crab migration, when millions of red crabs march to the sea and spawn. The whale sharks had come to feed on this slick of red eggs.

You go to these locations and they are full of other crews, all filming the same thing. The biggest thing we could do as film-makers would be to release and share archive – we don't need to film the same thing again and again. If we made more archive shows and fewer originated shows, it wouldn't affect the content or storytelling.

Do you fly crews out from the UK less now?

Since Covid, working with local crews has increased hugely. We do it a lot now

and we weren't doing it before. It works really well, as do remote interviews.

What advice would you give to someone wanting to work in natural history?

Demonstrating in any way your passion and commitment will make you stand out. There are some brilliant MA courses in wildlife film-making; I have a National Film and Television School intern at the moment. If you want to be a camera operator, then you should

be filming as much as you can. Volunteer at the natural history festivals and be brave – talk to people.

Are there any places or animals you'd love to film?

Opportunities to film British wildlife are quite limited – it's hard to find an international audience. During lockdown, we made a beautiful film in southern England, *New Forest: The Crown's Hunting Ground*. We enjoyed it so much that I'd love to return and tell the story of the day-to-day dramas of the forest in a wildlife docu-soap.

Are you optimistic about the future of the planet?

I think you have to be optimistic, otherwise you couldn't carry on as a film-maker. You have to find ways, however small, to make a difference. ■

Emma Ross was interviewed by Matthew Bell.

The Power and the glory



Prime Video

Ria Zmitrowicz
as Roxy Monke
in *The Power*

Caroline Frost talks to the key creators behind Amazon’s adaptation of Naomi Alderman’s best-selling novel that foresees the end of male supremacy

“In many ways, what inspired *The Power* was my whole life,” is how author Naomi Alderman begins her roller-coaster tale. “I had just had a really bad break-up – one of those break-ups where you wake up every morning crying – and, having had this terrible break-up, I got on the Tube and saw a poster advertising a movie, which had a beautiful woman crying. I thought, ‘What would the world have to be for me to get on the Tube and see a film advertised with a beautiful man crying?’ She shrugs and smiles, without even having to say out loud what we’re both thinking – “and the rest is history”.

Inspired by her heartbreak, Alderman began writing her book in 2011, with, latterly, some guidance from Margaret Atwood, creator of *The Handmaid’s Tale*, through a mentorship programme.

After it was published in 2016, it was

named one of 2017’s 10 best books by *The New York Times* and scooped the Baileys Women’s Prize for Fiction, which triggered a battle for adaptation rights. Six years later, following production delays caused by lockdown and casting changes that have included the departure of Leslie Mann and the arrival of Toni Collette, *The Power* is finally making it to the small screen. The nine-part series has been produced by Sister Pictures for Amazon.

Having made the widely acclaimed British medical drama *This Is Going to Hurt*, based on Adam Kay’s bestselling memoir, Sister’s co-founder and CCO, Jane Featherstone, has demonstrated a sure touch when it comes to spotting the potential of a good book.

Both Amazon’s deep pockets and Alderman’s hand on the creative tiller (she was an exec producer) are in evidence throughout the series. *The Power* is a portrait of a society where there has

been some undescribed social collapse. Individual stories take place across the world: the illegitimate daughter of a London gangster; an American teenager suffering at the hands of her abusive adoptive father; a high-school student with a social media obsession; and a US politician, Collette, who becomes a figurehead for revolution.

Where these stories unite is these young women’s discovery that they can impart powerful, sometimes fatal, electric shocks through their hands. At a stroke, patriarchy is turned on its head – for good and for... otherwise. The sci-fi premise is grounded in thought-provoking material and moving performances from its mostly young, mostly female, leads – including Ria Zmitrowicz and Auli’i Cravalho – as well as familiar faces John Leguizamo and Eddie Marsan.

Featherstone is quick to offer “speculative fiction” or “global thriller” as an

alternative description of the show, as she is keen to ensure it reaches audiences beyond sci-fi fans.

Alderman's input was key to the process: "I was involved all the way through," she says. "Everybody felt, 'This is a show with a lot going on' and 'We'd like Naomi to be here'. And I wanted to be there. You have these experts coming in with all their talent. And it moves fast. Writing the book felt like I was going uphill on my pedal



Toni Collette
as Margot
Cleary-Lopez

way, making sure those stories talk to each other and connect, so that they have resonance and relationships between them which are emotional. It has to work as a piece of emotional entertainment and not just as a thesis."

Despite all this, and the money being spent, she never had any doubts that she wanted Sister to produce *The Power*: "When taking on projects, I don't think of them as risky or not. I think other people interpret them in

these different stories?' I hope that, at the very least, it changes that."

Indeed, one of the reasons she responded to Sister's invitation to collaborate on the show was: "I thought, why not work with someone who's ambitious for other women?"

For sure, since its launch in 2015, Featherstone's company has made a mission of pushing under-represented voices. The CCO says: "Yes, it's absolutely about that, and about diversity



Auli'i Cravalho as
Jos Cleary-Lopez

Prime Video

bike. Then, [making the show] someone gave me a Ferrari."

Clearly, she feels nothing has been lost, only gained in the transfer from page to screen: "It's the process of taking it from ideas to an exciting, high-octane show. I work across genres anyway. I write novels but I also make video games.

"You can't just translate something directly – you have to find the ways to do what it is you're trying to do in the grammar of a new medium. And, when you're working with experts who know that medium, you learn a huge amount.

"It made me feel proud of my book. The show that we've ended up with is both a translation and an evolution of what I did in the book. It's grown."

That expansion is down to Sister's determination to create a show that can hold its own in a market full of big-budget sci-fi titles. For Featherstone, the biggest challenge was "the scale of it".

She says: "It's such an epic piece and [we have to] make sure we do service to all of the characters in a multi-stranded

that way; I just say, 'I really love this, I'm excited to make this.' It's instinct.

"I don't think this is risky, because it's so profoundly about human beings and the way we live. It's also funny, cheeky, inspiring, wish fulfilment... I just think it needs to be out there."

Alderman was warned that many people wanted to work on the show simply because they had loved reading her book. These included producer Tim Bricknell, who reveals: "An ex-girlfriend once told me I wasn't a feminist and it bugged me for years. I thought, 'Fuck it, I'm going to do this show.' A world where women are going to take the reins of power? What a kinder, more egalitarian place that would be. I found it really provocative and exciting."

While Alderman is heartened by the response to her book – and, hopefully, the show – she is aware that there is work still to be done. She says: "I sat down and watched the whole series in one go the other day. Then I turned on the TV and I thought, 'Why is the rest of the world like this? Why are there not women doing exciting roles in all

and championing voices. The statistics for female directors, writers and show-runners are still shocking and much lower than what they ought to be.

"In [Sister titles] *Flowers*, *The Bisexual*, *This Is Going to Hurt*, writers were given an opportunity to tell the stories they wouldn't tell.

"Because I've been doing it so long, I have some trust from some of the buyers, and they would let us do that. I can say, 'Don't worry, we've got that covered, we'll help nurture this person.' And that's a responsibility and a privilege."

Including another series of *The Power*? "Well, yes, hopefully."

It's what Alderman wants, too. She reflects: "Every generation moves us on a bit and we can look back to women who fought for the vote and education. There's still more to do. It's not solved. In my lifetime, I'll have plenty of material.

"As for *The Power*, there's a lot more story to tell, more to get into with these characters. It's all in the hands of the Amazon gods, but I definitely want to do more." ■

What the Dickens!



Carlton Film Distributors

1946: John Mills as the adult Pip with Valerie Hobson as Estella in David Lean's *Great Expectations*

The new BBC adaptation of *Great Expectations* is the latest in a long line of TV and film versions of the great writer's work. **Matthew Bell** and **Steve Clarke** pick some of their favourites

Great Expectations

Time and again, TV and film have returned to *Great Expectations*. Steven Knight's adaptation airing on BBC One – with Olivia Colman as the terrifying Miss Havisham and Johnny Harris as escaped convict Abel Magwitch – is, in one form or another, the 18th.

The BBC alone has contributed six, from Sunday teatime children's versions to high-end drama.

Sarah Phelps' acclaimed 2011 version with Gillian Anderson and Ray Winstone is barely a decade old.

All of them, though, doff their cap to David Lean's magisterial 1946 film.

Dickens's novel – arguably his greatest – contains far fewer grotesques and caricatures than normal in his works, and a memorable cast,

featuring many of post-war Britain's biggest names, give proper weight to the author's most rounded characters. John Mills is the adult Pip, learning about life, love and humility.

Alec Guinness plays his friend, Herbert Pocket. Martita Hunt is Miss Havisham. Her adopted daughter, the haughty Estella, is portrayed by Jean Simmons as a girl and, in later life, by Valerie Hobson. Finlay Currie is an imposing Magwitch, while Bernard Miles is noble, sweet-tempered Joe Gargery.

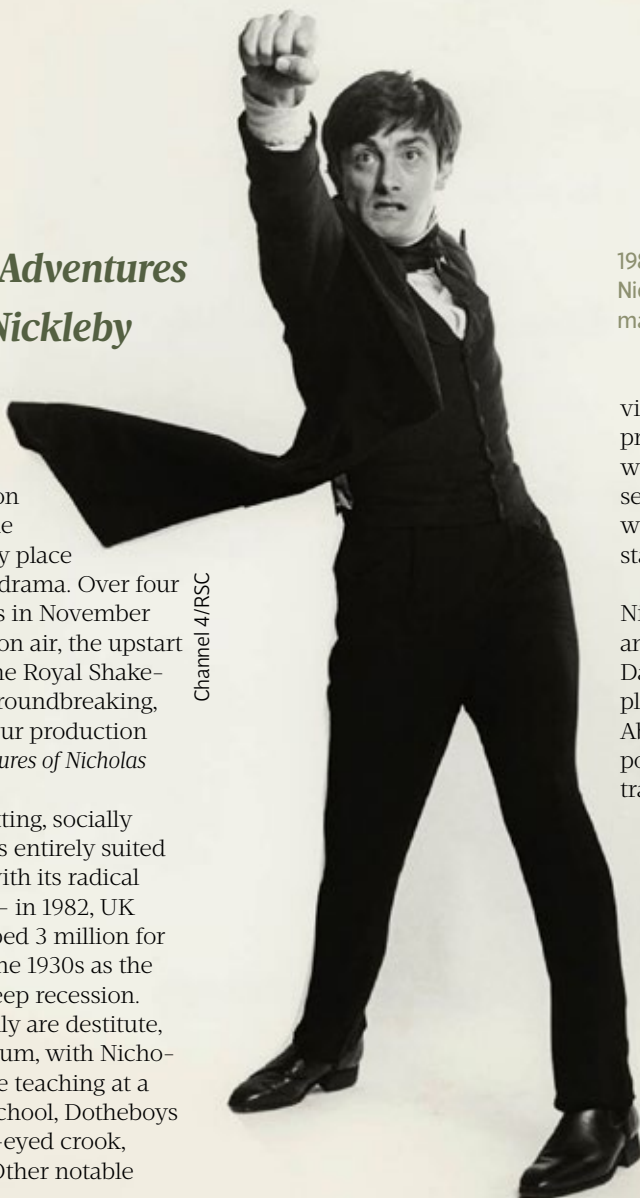
The opening scenes on the bleak Kent marshes are as atmospheric and beautiful as anything shot in cinema, before or since. Guy Green deservedly won the cinematography Oscar for his contribution to an intensely cinematic film. He and Lean provide a succession of unforgettable scenes. Pip's encounter with Magwitch in the churchyard,

The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby

Channel 4's first major drama commission served notice that the BBC was not the only place in town for weighty drama. Over four consecutive Sundays in November 1982, its first month on air, the upstart channel broadcast the Royal Shakespeare Company's groundbreaking, eight-and-a-half-hour production of *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*.

Dickens's hard-hitting, socially concerned novel was entirely suited to both Channel 4, with its radical bent, and the times – in 1982, UK unemployment topped 3 million for the first time since the 1930s as the country fell into a deep recession.

The Nickleby family are destitute, living in a London slum, with Nicholas earning a pittance teaching at a dreadful Yorkshire school, Dotheboys Hall, run by the one-eyed crook, Wackford Squeers. Other notable



Channel 4/RSC

1982: Roger Rees as Nicholas Nickleby is the linchpin of a marathon RSC performance

villains include Nicholas's uncle, the proto-Thatcherite Ralph, and the wealthy miser Arthur Gride... You can see why lefty playwright David Edgar wanted to adapt the novel, the RSC to stage it and Channel 4 to film it.

The cast includes Roger Rees as Nicholas, John Woodvine as Ralph and Alun Armstrong as Squeers. David Threlfall, later to find fame playing Frank Gallagher in Paul Abbott's comedy drama *Shameless*, is poor Smike, one of Dickens's most tragic characters.

If you think this all sounds a bit grim, don't be put off. As with almost all Dickens, it ends happily, and *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby* is a hugely entertaining roller-coaster ride. "We come out not merely delighted but strengthened, not just entertained but uplifted, not only affected but changed," was critic Bernard Levin's take on the production in *The Times*. He wasn't wrong. MB

shot like the best film noir; the ghoulish appearance of Miss Havisham in her eerie mausoleum of a house; Magwitch's moving revelation that he is Pip's benefactor; and the horror of the fire that kills Miss Havisham.

Lean changed the novel's ending in an otherwise faithful adaptation, offering a romantic but, arguably, better ending.

The director had already made *Brief Encounter* and went on to direct two of the best-ever British films, *The Bridge on the River Kwai* and *Lawrence of Arabia*, as well as another hugely influential Dickens adaptation, *Oliver Twist*, which is only absent from this feature to avoid it becoming overly obsessed with Lean.

Great Expectations, though, it is Lean's masterpiece – it is the greatest translation of Dickens from the page to the screen, TV or film. As Joe Gargery says, "What larks!" MB



1946: Magwitch in the marshes sets the scene for David Lean's *Great Expectations*

Prime Video

Little Dorrit

Nominated for two Oscars, Christine Edzard's ambitious two-part feature film was shot entirely in a London warehouse and featured a roll call of top-notch British acting talent. No time-consuming and expensive shoots. The grasp of period detail is astonishing, as are the other craft skills on display.

No surprise that Edzard, who wrote and directed the movie, went on to design costumes for numerous period dramas, not least the matchless *Wolf Hall*.

Alec Guinness plays William Dorrit, "father" of the debtors' prison, the Marshalsea, where he has resided for the past two decades; Dickens's own impecunious father, frequently in hock to creditors, had been imprisoned at the Marshalsea for owing £40, the same amount owed by gambler Edward Dorrit, brother to Amy, the story's eponymous heroine.

The huge cast includes Derek Jacobi as Arthur Clennam. He's a businessman whose endless goodness stands in contrast to William Dorrit's vanity.

Amy, who was born in the prison, lives with her father at the Marshalsea and is befriended by the saintly Clennam. She is played by the unknown actress, Sarah Pickering, who never starred in another film.



Curzon Film

1987: Alec Guinness (left) as William Dorrit in Christine Edzard's *Little Dorrit*

The cast also features Joan Greenwood, Patricia Hayes, Miriam Margolyes and Max Wall.

Taken together, the two films come in at just under six hours. Despite the long-running time, critics praised the film for the depth of its characterisation, visual elan and innovative use of music, including emotionally highly charged passages of Verdi operas, which it is easy to imagine Dickens adoring. SC

Bleak House

OK, so there was little in the way of fog but this innovative, award-winning 2005 adaptation for BBC One by the master of the TV literary serial, the great Andrew Davies, more than did justice to the most baroque of all of Dickens's great novels.

Some bookish folk consider *Bleak House* to be the greatest novel of all

The Muppet Christmas Carol

A *Christmas Carol* narrated by The Great Gonzo and Rizzo the Rat; Bob Cratchit and Tiny Tim played by frogs; and Michael Caine as Ebenezer Scrooge... it shouldn't work, but it does.

The 1992 film is both joyous and heartrending – only the most stony-hearted viewer could remain unmoved as sickly Tiny Tim, played by Kermit's nephew Robin, stoically faces up to his likely death.

It's hilarious, too, with lots of slapstick involving Rizzo, as well as magnificent comic rants from Miss Piggy (Mrs Cratchit) about Scrooge. And the humour – because *Muppet* movies are for adults, too – is frequently sophisticated, especially the meta and knowing voiceover from Gonzo and Rizzo.



Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures

1992: Miss Piggy crushes it as Mrs Cratchit

Caine loved the experience, wryly noting that puppeteers "compared with actors, are much nicer, gentler, kinder people".

The film takes a few liberties – old miser Jacob Marley is given a brother so that the duo can be played by cantankerous critics Waldorf and

Statler – but it's largely faithful to Dickens's novella, albeit with added song and dance numbers.

"Only an obtuse snob would not see the sweetness and good nature of *The Muppet Christmas Carol*," reckoned *Guardian* film critic Peter Bradshaw. Quite right. MB

2019: Inspired casting, light and pace in *The Personal History of David Copperfield*



Searchlight Pictures

time. It's certainly prolix, running to not far short of 400,000 words. To add to the complexity of a story that has at its heart a murder mystery and a sexual scandal, readers are faced with the perspectives of two different narrators.

While *Great Expectations* is a page-turner, *Bleak House* requires patience and stamina to read as the endless legal case, Jarndyce vs Jarndyce, goes on and on and on. Not so Davies's version, which zipped along, taking, it must be said, a few liberties with the original on the way.

The all-star cast might have been a bit too populist for some – Johnny Vegas as Krook alongside Gillian Anderson and Timothy West as the Dedlocks, and the wonderful Alun Armstrong as dogged Inspector Bucket – but the decision to schedule this 15-parter on BBC One in twice-weekly, 30-minute episodes immediately following *EastEnders* was inspired. An omnibus edition was shown on Sundays.

A Dickens for the pre-bingeing era. It looks great, too. SC

David Copperfield

For some film-makers, taking on Dickens's favourite and most overtly biographical novel would be a challenge too far. Not Dickens superfan Armando Iannucci, who had

already proved his cinematic chops with the hilarious, if sinister, black comedy *The Death of Stalin*.

The Personal History of David Copperfield (2019) to give the movie its full title, was co-written with Simon Blackwell, who had worked with Iannucci on *The Thick of It* and *In the Loop* and penned episodes of *Peep Show*. It was therefore no surprise that this take on our hero's slow but inevitable climb up the very slippery Victorian greasy pole

emphasised the comedic aspects of the novel.

Yes, there is darkness – poverty, humourlessness and Dickens's own seminal experience of the blacking factory reinvented as a scene in a satanic bottling factory, but it's the film's sheer pace – what one critic described as the “muscular forward gallop the story” – that sticks in the mind. That and the lightness, an almost magical realist approach to *David Copperfield*.

Iannucci's surreal imagination gets into top gear here – whether its Betsey Trotwood thwacking the donkeys off her field or her lodger, Mr Dick, dreamingly launching his kites to keep himself sane.

Yes, there were *longueurs*, but those who love Dickens know that, even in his greatest works, one sometimes wishes for a tad more economy.

The casting is, to say the least, imaginative. Everyone will have their favourite. For me, Hugh Laurie as Mr Dick is a total joy. Also outstanding were Dev Patel as David, Peter Capaldi as Micawber and Tilda Swinton as the fierce Betsey Trotwood.

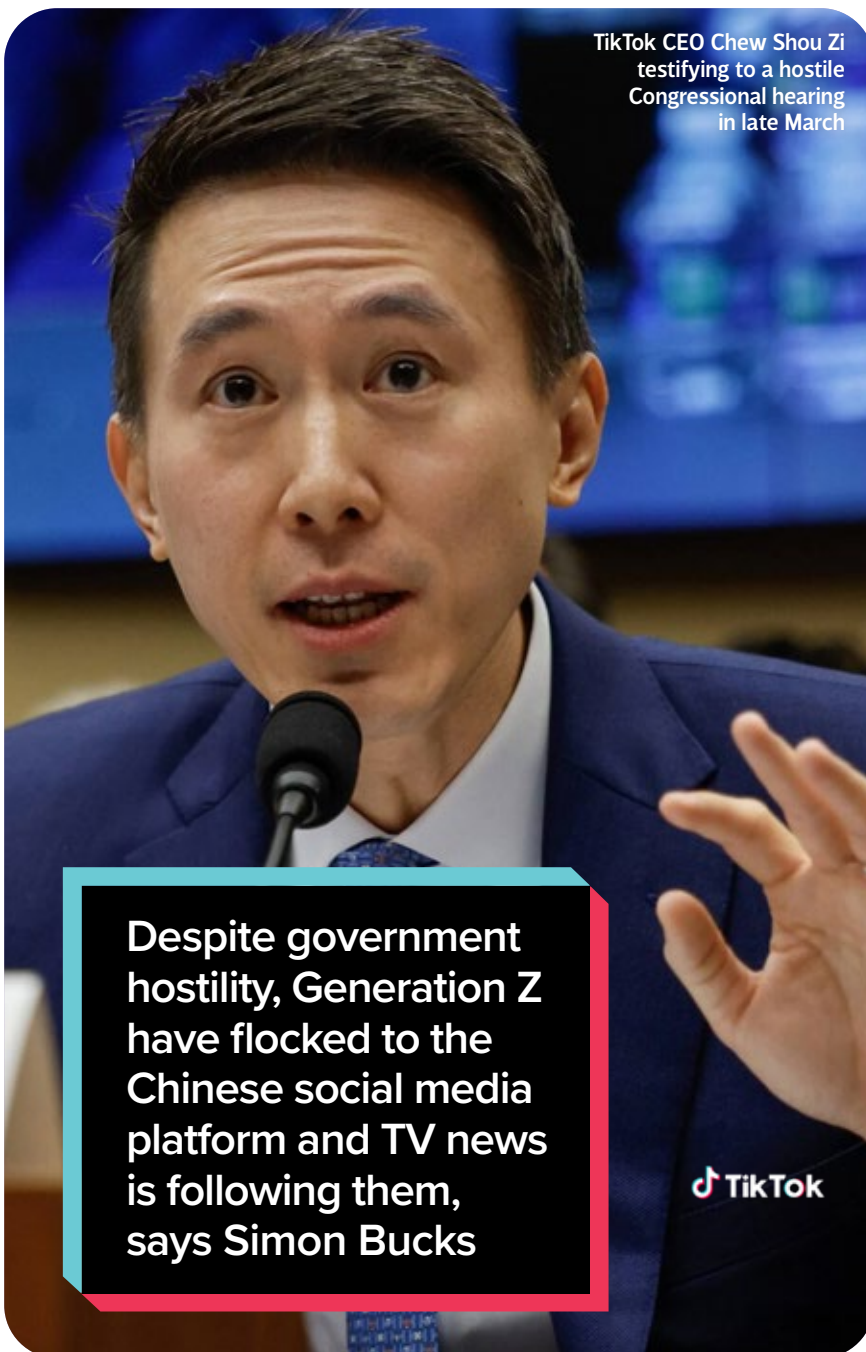
One can only hope that Iannucci will be given an opportunity to do another Dickens. What might he make of *Great Expectations*, the most perfect of all the novels? SC ■



2005: Gillian Anderson as Lady Honoria Dedlock in *Bleak House*

BBC

TV news exploits TikTok



TikTok CEO Chew Shou Zi testifying to a hostile Congressional hearing in late March

TikTok is the new social media kid on the block, but it's also stirring things up among broadcasters – and not simply because of its controversial Chinese ownership.

Fears that TikTok is mining our data and sending it to Beijing has created a tricky dilemma for media companies. The app has been banned from work devices by a number of governments, international bodies and companies and is under fire from the US Congress.

But what started as a home for teenage dancing, fluffy pets and visual jokes has also become the principal weapon in the battle to reach those traditional news-avoiders, Generation Z.

So far, most UK newsrooms have decided that any security risk is outweighed by the reward of engaging the country's 10 million 16- to 24-year-olds, who are watching everything from short clips to full-length reports and live output on the platform.

The BBC, while all but banning staff from using it on work phones, except for business purposes, seems to have concluded that 1 billion active monthly users can't be wrong. BBC News, initially lukewarm, is now enthusiastic about its 1.3 million followers. Director-General Tim Davie told an RTS event in December that TikTok is now bigger in video for UK Gen Z than the corporation.

"The existential problem for media companies is that under-25s behave differently," says Nic Newman, senior research associate at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism and author of a major report on TikTok in news. "They don't go to websites as much as millennials. If you want to reach them, TikTok and YouTube are your top two platforms."

News executives agree that, with little outlay, TikTok allows them to engage colossal numbers of young people who don't watch linear-TV. Plus, they argue, they can counterbalance the misinformation and fake news that floods all social platforms.

Channel 4 News has seen its following grow from 25,000 to almost 500,000 in 15 months. "From a public service perspective, its appeal is its huge reach," says digital editor Mike Deri Smith. *ITV News* tells a similar story: its following has risen from 137,000 to 1.8 million in the same period. "The growth has been exponential," confirms executive digital editor Matt Williams.

With thanks to Sky News

Sky News is the market leader among UK TV newsrooms (3.9 million followers), thanks to starting early and its huge supply of video. Alan Strange, output editor of digital, says TikTok is now the “hero” social platform, alongside YouTube, and, in some respects, outperforms the TV channel.

“It’s our biggest opportunity for growth,” agrees Geoff Marsh, chief digital officer at GB News (376,500 followers). “It’s spectacular. It’s gone from being an emerging platform that you’re keeping an eye on to something that needs to be a fundamental part of your planning.”

The catalyst for this media revolution seems to have been Ukraine. Liv Moloney, head of social media at *The Economist* (227,000 followers), argues: “It was a formative moment; a really human story but also the first smartphone war, with everyone on both sides filming everything they do.”

ITV’s Williams adds: “A lot of young people were seeing something like it for the first time. There was a huge thirst for explanation and information from trusted news sources.”

TikTok, like YouTube, serves only video – unlike Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, where videos cohabit with pictures, text and graphics.

It’s also utterly compulsive. The user swipes through an endless “for you” stream of vertical videos, selected by TikTok’s aggressively personalised algorithm. Other social media platforms gauge your interests from your “follows” and friends. TikTok calculates it from the videos you watch, like or share and your other behaviour on the app.

“It’s instantaneous,” notes Lucien Bowater, a digital and innovation educational technologist. “You literally look at a video and the algorithm decides what you will see next. It’s not the news that an editor thinks you deserve but the news you want.”

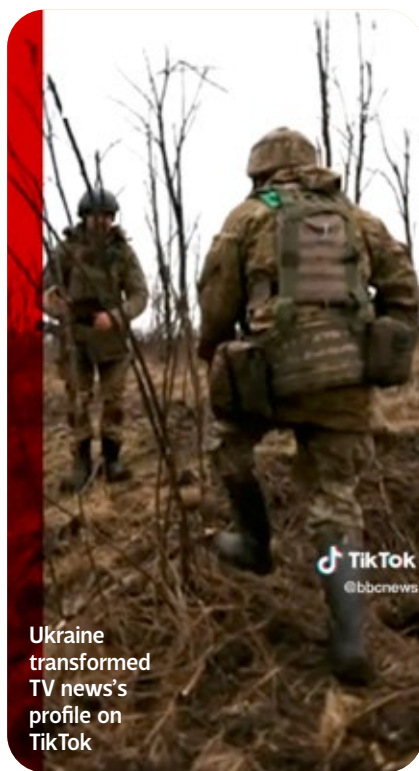
“It’s so addictive” adds Moloney. “You keep scrolling and you always get something that’s interesting.”

The key to TikTok success for newsrooms – more decisively than elsewhere – is to be first with the story. “If you are second or third, the algorithm will demote you,” advises Newman. “It’s brutal,” confirms Moloney at *The Economist*. “On Instagram, if you have 6 million followers, you are guaranteed a certain number of views. On TikTok, every video you post only does well on its own merit.”

A key debate concerns content

creation versus curation. Some argue that, to resonate with Gen-Z, you need original TikTok-style videos: short, punchy, zany. BBC News is recruiting TikTok specialists with this advert: “Growing the BBC News TikTok account to make it the biggest and best, both globally and in the UK, is one of News’s main priorities for 2023.”

**‘YOU LOOK AT
A VIDEO AND
THE ALGORITHM
DECIDES WHAT
YOU WILL
SEE NEXT’**



Other broadcasters have teams making vertical videos but say that repurposing their existing TV content also works. Channel 4’s Deri Smith believes that both are important: “Content made for the platform has the best chance of success but, equally, very strong newsgathering does well, too.”

Williams agrees: “We’d put up a Tom Bradby lead-in from *News at 10*, the purest form of storytelling in some ways, and it would do really well.”

A turning point was TikTok’s decision to raise the maximum video length from 60 seconds to 10 minutes,

allowing full-length TV reports. At Sky News, Strange is training star reporters such as Stuart Ramsay and economics specialist Ed Conway to tell their stories on TikTok. “There’s no one better to make stories relevant to the audience than the person on the frontline.” Sky even screens its rolling channel on TikTok, with pleasing results. Its live coverage of the late Queen’s funeral was watched by 16 million globally.

For commercial publishers, TikTok’s drawback is that it’s a walled garden: it doesn’t work like Twitter and Facebook, driving users to its own platforms, which it can monetise. Nor is there revenue from TikTok itself, though that is coming, apparently.

Digital news editors also complain about TikTok’s draconian “community guidelines”, which ban some news staples – for example, protest marches if they look potentially violent. According to Deri Smith, “Words such as death and sex can end the reach of a story.” There is an appeal process but it is slow to deliver a response.

Strange says Sky’s ultimate ambition is to drive the social audience to platforms it can monetise, whether that is TV, apps or the web. For others, the dramatic audience expansion is sufficient reward. “Our core digital strategy is reaching the audiences. We need to be there. It’s a shop window for *ITV News*,” says Williams.

For GB News, TikTok has widened its demographic, Geoff Marsh argues, “You can’t look at GB News on TikTok and say it’s only consumed by people over 50 who are right wing.”

The success of TikTok as the new, must-have platform for newsrooms, may be scuppered by the Chinese issue. Richard Sambrook, the former director of BBC News, argues: “For years, the tech platforms have been able to dictate the terms and media companies had to follow to build reach – particularly with younger audiences.

“But if there really are security risks, then it could be a turning point. Media organisations would be forced to push back harder and get guarantees around their relationship with TikTok and others.”

Would Western governments ever entirely ban TikTok? Nic Newman thinks not. “It would be very hard politically for them to remove something that is being used by 50% of under-25s.” And broadcasters won’t willingly give up a platform that delivers so many hard-to-reach eyeballs. ■

ITN's Corp message

In her first interview since taking over, ITN CEO **Rachel Corp** explains to **Steve Clarke** why 'bold, original content' is the company's stock-in-trade



War in Europe, economic instability and non-stop turbulence at Westminster, not to mention the impact of climate change – running a news organisation in 2023 is not for the faint-hearted. Yet Rachel Corp, CEO of ITN since last September, seems remarkably relaxed. And that's without adding to the mix

the challenge that mainstream media faces from digital giants.

It's budget day but you'd never know it as the news chief reflects on a fascinating career and the threats and opportunities that ITN confronts in an online era. Her working life has taken her from the killing fields of Kosovo via upheaval in Moscow, working for the BBC, to editing each of ITN's flagship news services, *Channel 4 News* excepted.

Prior to joining ITN as a trainee in

1995, she was a freelance presenter on Radio 4, filing stories from international hot spots for programmes such as *Woman's Hour*.

So, does she not miss the cut and thrust of being a news producer or reporter? "To a degree, but ITN is always about making engaging content and it's about being creative, so I don't feel too far away from that creativity. Our three newsrooms are still at the heart of what we do. I still chair an editorial meeting every morning at 10:00am.

"We have fantastic editors. I don't have to intervene and tell them what to do – just as I was allowed to when I was an editor."

Having said that, Corp says she is enjoying putting her energy into the other parts of ITN's activities, be it sports, education or the factual foundation that underpins ITN Productions. "It's all got that ITN ethos," she emphasises before adding: "Yes, of course my job is to grow the company, but it's still in areas I care very passionately about."

Like most media organisations, ITN took a hit from the pandemic as profits slumped. Some of ITN Productions' content had to be put on hold but it was able to continue making its much-sought-after documentaries about the British royal family – Channel 5 is a big customer.

ITN Productions' content ranges from fast-turnaround live specials, including the recent *Vanished: Where is Nicola Bulley?* to Tom Bradby's high-profile interview with Prince Harry. Clients include the UK broadcasters and US streamers, including Amazon Prime, Netflix and Peacock. It produced a record 1,115 hours in 2022. Corp wants to see even more business generated in the US and internationally.

On the other hand, ITN's core business – supplying news to ITV, Channels 4 and 5 – came into its own when the need for public service TV news became all too obvious during the lockdowns. These services all remained on air as staff learnt new ways of working.

Three years on, the CEO says that ITN's numbers have recovered, and the company is back to where it was pre-pandemic in terms of its profit trend. "I can't deny it's a challenge, but having that security in our news contracts is helpful."

Earlier this year, Channel 5 renewed its ITN contract for another five years. *ITV News* continues its award-winning form, not least for its Partygate coverage, which was responsible for a trio of

prizes at the RTS Television Journalism Awards in early March.

Moreover, following the Gary Lineker row and the fallout from questions over BBC Chair Richard Sharp's closeness to Boris Johnson, whom he is alleged to have helped procure an £800,000 loan, a recent poll commissioned by *The Observer* claimed that *ITV News* is now more trusted than the BBC's news output.

Corp describes ITN's stock-in-trade as "bold, original content". Perhaps nothing encapsulates this approach more than *ITV News's* dogged pursuit of Partygate and the succession of scoops delivered so confidently by UK editor Paul Brand.

"We are impartial, but we are there to hold authority to account. On Partygate, we'd obtained some evidence and wanted to ask the questions that needed asking," says the CEO. "Every time we had a new angle on the story, we all sat down and said to ourselves, 'Let's take [people] back to where we were at that time, what our viewers were experiencing and the restrictions that they were living under."

"It wasn't 'Westminster bubble, here's a good story against the Government', but 'Hang on, these are the people running the country'. We always talked to people out there in the constituencies to see how much they cared. Every time, people told us that they felt very strongly about what they were hearing."

Perhaps this is *ITV News's* advantage over its rivals, its ability to be less London-centric and to try and understand what people outside the capital are thinking. Corp is determined that ITN should provide journalism that audiences can genuinely relate to and which is accessible without being patronising in any way.

"We carried on with Partygate because people wanted us to and not because we had a particular agenda about the Prime Minister," she insists.

Equally important is to provide viewers with "eyewitness reports", an approach encapsulated by Robert Moore's RTS award-winning *Storming of the Capitol: The Inside Story* report covering the Washington riot in January 2021 in support of former President Trump. This kind of journalism is on the back foot in many TV newsrooms around the world due to economic pressures, but not at ITN.

"We've kept it as a priority. ITN doesn't rely on talking heads in a studio. It's vital to have people on the

ground. It's what British TV journalism does best. When Kabul fell, John Irvine was the only TV journalist there with the Taliban. Our audiences expect us to be at the heart of the action."

This kind of reporting costs money and times are hard. We know the BBC is cutting back on some of its journalism. Is Corp confident that ITN won't also have to make economies in these inflationary times? "We're used to

return, she joined ITN as a trainee and has never looked back.

Corp, who begins her day by listening to Radio 4's *Today*, was part of the launch team at *Channel 5 News*, where she ran the news desk and did some presenting. "That was fantastic – a real start-up culture, with all hands on deck. It was all about risk-taking and using your initiative, and pushing boundaries while still being part of



ITV News scoop: inside the storming of the Capitol



ITV News scoop: inside the Downing Street parties

All pictures: ITV

prioritising the stories that matter most. We've never been able to cover everything, so your day starts with deciding what's important."

Eyewitness reporting is something woven deeply into Corp's own career. At university in Leeds – she read history – she set up and ran the student radio station before, showing a high degree of initiative, hitching a ride to war-torn Bosnia, where, as a freelancer, she filed reports for Radio 4. On her

mainstream news, a great place to cut my teeth at ITN."

Almost 30 years later, today's news environment is unrecognisable, and the priority is continuing ITN's onward march into digital, without diminishing the impact of the organisation's daily broadcast bulletins.

"When I edited *ITV News*, my emphasis was on original journalism that will have a lot of impact. When we have an original story, we'll build it up to make ►

► sure it's big enough to be a lead story and it will have a reaction piece after it.

"We're already thinking about the next day and where we're taking it. We don't just make an interesting feature and put it at the bottom of the programme."

Equally, it's vital to ensure that ITN makes a splash on YouTube and TikTok, as well as other social media platforms. The *ITV News* TikTok

digital-first approach and that has helped it gain more younger viewers."

Nevertheless, it is vital that, in a world where streaming is so important, public service broadcasting news is given prominence. Her first speech as CEO, last autumn, tackled this topic. "There is a concern, where broadcasters sit in a non-linear, streamed world, that needs addressing within licence renewal," says

makes swift progress and becomes law as a means of protecting the UK's unique broadcasting landscape."

She adds: "The details of how to ensure that audiences can easily access trustworthy, impartial and regulated information in a polarised digital environment must be key considerations as the bill develops."

Corp must be pleased that *ITV News* is, according to the previously



account has grown to 1.8 million followers, with over 100 million views for *ITV News* in March. *Channel 4 News* claims over 12 million social followers, netting over 60 million views per month.

Of course, much of the social media content from the company's newsrooms is aimed at young people. She stresses that this content has to be true to ITN's values: "We need to get content out quickly on the different platforms, particularly on those trickier stories such as Partygate. It's not all clickbait, rather, 'Here's an issue that matters, let's get it out there quickly.'"

"If you take something like Partygate or social housing, we always have a clear digital plan. It's important to get different bits out to different platforms. Big, original stories are still interesting to every age group, it just depends how you tell them and where. *Channel 4 News* now has a

**'IF EVERYTHING
YOU WATCH IS
DETERMINED BY
YOUR "LIKES",
THERE'S A
DANGER YOU'LL
END UP IN A
NEWS DESERT'**

Corp. "Where everything you watch is determined by your 'likes', there's a danger you'll end up in a news desert."

With a draft Media Bill finally published last month, the ITN CEO is cautiously optimistic: "I welcome the broad principles outlined in the draft Media Bill, which should result in PSBs' content being found more easily online. It is vital that the Media Bill

mentioned poll, more trusted than BBC News. But is there anything she envies about the coverage of her main British competitor? "I think, with my love of international news, that there's something about having people all over the world.

"On TV, sometimes I think that we make quick choices, so we do hit hard. I think *ITV News* and *Channel 4 News*'s TikTok coverage have been faster and slicker but, when the BBC catches up, it often has the resources to do things on a bigger scale.

"Also, it has been able to exploit podcasts very well because it doesn't need to commercialise them. A lot of podcasts make interesting content without making vast sums of money.

"Not having that commercial pressure when you do products like that would be very nice to have. I have a huge respect for the BBC, but I am very, very proud of what we do." ■

OUR FRIEND IN SCOTLAND

The SNP leadership fray, the BBC's centenary and a wave of locally shot drama raised the profile of TV in Scotland, contends **Stephen O'Donnell**

I'm still trying to process all the excitement of the past few weeks north of the border. Not only has the temperature climbed above 10°C for the first time this year, and, as incredible as

Scotland's historic 2-0 victory over the might of Spain was, one thing dominated the headlines – politics.

After the best part of 10 years of relative stability in the Scottish political landscape, Nicola Sturgeon sent newsrooms across Scotland into a frenzy by announcing her resignation as leader of the SNP and as Scotland's First Minister.

The surprise press conference on 15 February triggered a leadership contest within the SNP and sent shockwaves across the country. The whys and wherefores of Sturgeon's decision and of her impact and legacy have been debated ad nauseum but the tone and combativeness of the leadership campaign took commentators and the public by surprise.

As part of a series of hustings events for SNP members, STV hosted the first televised debate in the race to become First Minister. I'm always impressed by how news teams rally round for major news events.

I saw first-hand how *Scotland's Next First Minister*, a live 90-minute, peak-time debate, was devised and created in a matter of days by the STV News team. As has become the standard for STV debate shows, the format included a section in which each of the candidates, Kate Forbes, Humza Yousaf and Ash Regan, cross-examined their political opponents.

What followed was must-watch



STV

television – described by one commentator as a “yellow-on-yellow attack” – as the candidates clashed head on.

Clips from the programme were replayed across social media, polarising opinion. In subsequent coverage, the temperature of the debate simmered, and the SNP and Scottish Parliament went on to confirm Yousaf as the country's first Scottish Asian, first Muslim and youngest First Minister.

A few hundred metres along Govan Road from STV, BBC Scotland celebrated its centenary with a week of special programmes.

Huw Edwards presented the network *BBC News at Six* and *BBC News at Ten* live from Pacific Quay to mark 100 years since BBC Scotland (or 5SC

as it was) broadcast live from an attic on Glasgow's Bath Street.

At a time when the BBC, Channel 4 and public service broadcasting per se have come under intense scrutiny, I welcomed the long-awaited draft Media Bill. It appears to provide many of the measures PSBs have been seeking. The new regulatory framework gives protections as well as support to ensure that production in the nations and regions continues to grow.

In high-end TV and film, Scotland is continuing to move in the right direction. Scottish productions and talent featured prominently in this year's awards season. None more so than the Screen Scotland-backed *Aftersun*, directed by Edinburgh's Charlotte Wells; the film got a best actor Oscar nod plus a host of other awards and nominations.

Of late, both broadcast and streaming services have been awash with great Scottish drama: *The Rig* landed on Prime Video, *Mayflies* and *Guilt* series 2 on the iPlayer and *Andor*, the prequel to *Rogue One*, on Disney+.

Tetris had its UK premiere in Glasgow, ahead of its release on Apple TV+, and Glasgow-based crime drama *Six Four*, made by House Productions and starring *Grey's Anatomy*'s Kevin McKidd, premiered on ITVX and the STV Player.

This summer, look out for the long-awaited arrival of *Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny* and *The Flash*, both shot in Glasgow last year. So many reasons for optimism. Long may it continue. ■

Stephen O'Donnell is Chair of RTS Scotland and director of programme strategy and marketing at STV.



Sumner Redstone (centre) with companion Malia Andelin and executive Les Moonves

Getty Images

The real Succession

“Sumner’s constant demands on Brandon, not to mention his pursuit of some of the same women, contributed to a sometimes awkward relationship between grandfather and grandson.” (*Unscripted*, page 46)

Some 20 years ago, at an RTS dinner, I found myself sitting next to a billionaire entertainment mogul, a man few people would have recognised if they had passed him in the street, but whose influence over what we watched on television and in the cinema was huge.

The small, wizened mogul with the day-glo hair, ill-fitting suit and disfigured hand was Sumner Redstone, the heartbeat, although an increasingly faint and sickly one, of much of this unput-downable book. Today, the company he ran is called Paramount Global.

I have little recollection of what we talked about that evening – unlike my encounter at another RTS dinner with an Ofcom executive, whose opening gambit was to ask me to sketch out the competitive landscape across British television – other than feeling that he wasn’t particularly interested in who I was or what I had to say. Fair enough, you might argue.

But I do recall his behaviour that evening, which was decidedly odd. It is only now, reading this account of

The story of the family who created Viacom is far crazier than any fictional account of a media empire. **Simon Shaps** shares a riveting read

Redstone and the private chaos that surrounded him that it all makes sense.

It is probable that Redstone’s repeated disappearances throughout the evening were simply to check the closing prices on Wall Street. After all, he had a stock-market ticker installed in his bedroom. But perhaps it was to ring one of his many girlfriends or score a dose of Viagra or consult a lawyer or two.

It is a predictable cliché that any failing company, media or otherwise, complete with ageing, tyrannical founder and dysfunctional family, is “just like *Succession*”. Or, as the *Hollywood Reporter* says of *Unscripted*: “Addicted to *Succession*? Well, here’s the real thing.”

In fact, the conduct of the Redstones, and the other villain of the piece, the once untouchable CBS CEO Les Moonves, is much more extreme, far crazier, than the creators of *Succession* could ever have believed credible.

Thanks to James B Stewart and Rachel Abrams, we have that complete story in all of its shameful detail, complete with texts, emails and insider testimony.

It wasn’t just that the Redstone family were at war, with Sumner and Shari, his daughter and sometime successor, rarely on speaking terms until the last few weeks of his life. Employees at Viacom and CBS joked that the Redstones gave each other “subpoenas for Christmas”.

Unscripted: The Epic Battle for a Hollywood Media Empire is published by Cornerstone Press, priced £25. ISBN: 978-1529912845



It was the entourage of gold-diggers who worked their way into Redstone's affections only to fleece him for millions and risk upending the empire. And then there was the seemingly endless supply of young women brought to his home, sometimes daily, to satisfy his insatiable sexual appetite.

But, as Rachel Abrams, who also had a hand in the exposure of Harvey Weinstein by *The New York Times*, said in a recent interview, *Unscripted* is about something more than the sexual misbehaviour of Redstone and Moonves.

It is, in her memorable phrase, an account of the "collision of the #MeToo movement with corporate governance"; a major media company's failure to adapt to "modernity". The failure to adapt to "modernity" is her polite way of saying that the company could no longer get away with tolerating predatory, misogynistic behaviour by its most senior executives, any more than it could ignore the demise of Blockbuster – once a Viacom company – and the rise of Netflix and the streaming revolution.

When one CBS board member, Arnold Kopelson, was told about allegations that Moonves had abused his position to pressurise women for sex, he is said to have responded: "We all did that." Sadly, Kopelson may have been right, but not everyone at CBS was in a position to demand that a casting director give parts to an actor to buy her silence, which is what Moonves did to try and cover his tracks.

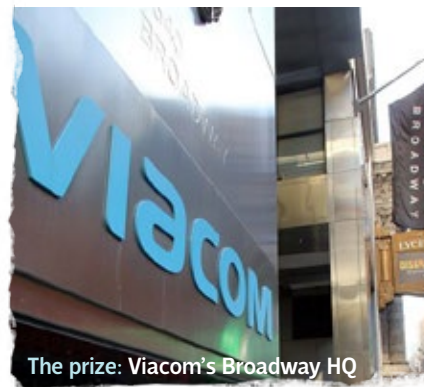
And not everyone would get away with telling incurious board members that he had barely been in contact with the actor's manager – who was demanding that Moonves make amends for his behaviour – when he had in fact exchanged more than 400 text messages with him.

With Redstone, he was simply too old and frail, too remote from the fray, to resort to subterfuge. As he entered his nineties, he was still, on paper at least, Executive Chair of Viacom. He was the figurehead of the empire he had built over decades from its beginnings as a small cinema chain and which included prize assets such as Paramount Pictures, the CBS Network, MTV, Comedy Central and Nickelodeon as well as the publisher Simon & Schuster.

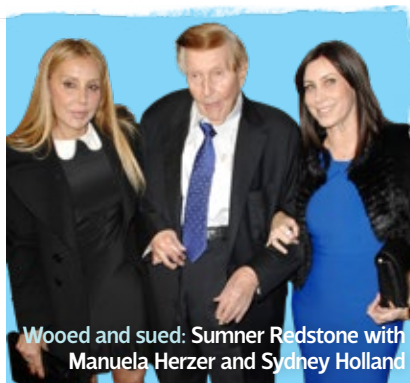
But at his home in Beverly Park, Los Angeles, where he counted Sylvester Stallone as a neighbour, he was the helpless victim of his libido – and two women in particular, Sydney Holland



The comeback kid: Shari Redstone



The prize: Viacom's Broadway HQ



Wooded and sued: Sumner Redstone with Manuela Herzer and Sydney Holland



Feared and fired: Les Moonves

and Manuela Herzer. They began as his lovers, then posed as his carers, and eventually milked him for millions.

One sunny California afternoon, they persuaded the declining Redstone to write them each cheques for \$45m. The two women also managed to turn Redstone against his family and friends, and particularly against his daughter, Shari.

In Redstone's dying days, Herzer and Holland were ousted, and Shari embarked on a campaign to recover some \$150m in property and gifts her father had bestowed on them. But that was just the start of her battles.

Viacom and CBS had been split by her father in 2006. But, with Viacom struggling under its CEO, Philippe Dauman, Shari was determined to reunite the two companies. That was opposed by Moonves, however, who feared that Viacom assets would drag CBS down.

Coincidentally, this was the moment that Moonves' misdemeanours came to light. Even then, the board, fearing the reaction on Wall Street, dared not oust "the man with the golden gut".

Enter Ronan Farrow, one of the architects of Weinstein's downfall, with his *New Yorker* investigation, who now turned his guns on Moonves, leaving CBS no alternative but to get rid of him. It should be noted that an outside lawyer called in by the CBS board some

time earlier had inexplicably cleared Moonves of any misconduct.

The moral of this tale, told in four acts by Stewart and Abrams, is that media companies, even in the wake of the jailing of Weinstein, the sacking of Moonves, and the rise of the #Me Too movement have some considerable way to go to clean out the stables.

At Viacom, it was seemingly unobjectionable for a senior executive to remark on seeing Shari, then Deputy Chair, in the offices with Sumner: "What is this, 'bring your daughter to work day'?"

And, of course, Shari's father was the last man in the organisation to object to that remark. After all, this was a man who competed with his grandson for girlfriends, who picked up women one day, showered them with gifts, including company stock, property, jewellery and cash, only to discard them the next, or very soon after.

As for Moonves, I met him, too, at the peak of his powers in his suite at CBS Television. I pitched him a couple of shows. He was mildly interested. He was courteous, even charming. But then, I wasn't a lone women, and he didn't reach for the lock on his door as I made to leave the office. ■

Simon Shaps is the founder of Simon Shaps Ltd.

Viacom /Shutterstock

David Crotty/Patrick McMullan/CBS

Messy lives in Margate

Freema Agyeman (Trish) and Lily Allen (Mel) in *Dreamland*

Sky

If there's one town that's been dubbed "up-and-coming" for the past few years, it's Margate. Now, it offers a vibrant setting for the vivacious family at the centre of *Dreamland*.

In keeping with the hallmark of Clelia Mountford and Sharon Horgan's production company, Merman, it's a sharply observed comedy-drama about the female experience in all its forms.

Making her TV debut, singer-songwriter Lily Allen leads the cast as Mel. She's the chaotic member of the family who returns to the Kent seaside town with a secret that could end the relationship between her and eldest sister Trish, played by Freema Agyeman (*Doctor Who*).

The six episodes are densely packed with family members' own stories: Trish is pregnant with doting partner Spence (Kiell Smith-Bynoe), following a run of miscarriages; Nan (Sheila Reid) is fending off health troubles; and mum (Frances Barber) is grappling with her sexuality.

Sister Leila (Aimee-Ffion Edwards)

The ups and downs of multigenerational female relationships are at the heart of Sky's comedy-drama *Dreamland*, says **Shilpa Ganatra**

finds herself attracted to a Margate newcomer who's not her usual type, while another sister, Clare (Gabby Best), tries to pursue a writing career.

The series began life in 2017 as *Morgana Robinson's Summer*, the Bafta-winning Sky short written by Sharon Horgan, and starring Robinson and Sheridan Smith.

Merman wanted to develop the short into a full series, recalls Mountford, but it took time to find the right stories to flesh out.

The production company organised a number of writers rooms to expand

Mel and Trish's world, "but we also had to be careful because we were doing [Apple TV+'s] *Bad Sisters* at the same time. Earlier rooms may have crossed over similar themes and ideas, and I was trying to keep a distance between the two," says Mountford.

Things fell into place when Emma Jane Unsworth came on board around September 2021 and took the family in a new direction. Best known as an author, she branched out into screenwriting when she adapted her second novel, *Animals*, for the 2019 Channel 4 series starring Alia Shawkat and Holliday Grainger.

Since then, she has penned an episode of *The Outlaws* with Stephen Merchant, and has two films in development this year. "Whenever I write, I think in terms of scenes, and I often act it out when I'm writing," says Unsworth. "The advantage of screen compared with novels is that there is a formula that you can learn – there's a maths to it – even though it's then fun to break those rules and be playful."

The premise of *Dreamland* fits nicely

with her previous work. She explains: “I’m always attracted to stories about messy women, even though I know that’s not a helpful way to describe normal women experiencing real situations. I’m especially attracted to intimate female relationships, be they best friends or sisters, or mothers and daughters. Also, I was keen to work with Merman as a company because I love what it does – it has always been on my radar.”

Unsworth helmed a writers room that also included Gabby Best (Clare in the show), Sharma Walfall, Sarah Kendall, Janet Awe of Merman and producer

television debut. “It wasn’t too daunting because she could get into the specifics of that character, bringing her own background, her own family relationships,” says Mountford. “Lily is naturally funny, but she wasn’t being asked to deliver sitcom zingers, so she felt more comfortable in that space.

“She’s a natural performer, but also it’s an ensemble show. It would have been harder for her to carry the whole thing and have most of the scenes, but we wrote to her strengths and what she was interested in doing.”

The first three weeks of filming, led by emerging director Ellie Heydon, took

families, familial expectations, gentrification or everyday racism.

“Sometimes, shows don’t quite sing and they’re almost remade in the edit. But this one came in with such a sense of itself that it was exciting from the moment we saw the rushes,” says Moody. “There was something special in the chemistry of the cast, the crackling editorial, and the recognisable dynamics between sisters, women and family.”

The series sits comfortably with Merman’s previous shows such as *Bad Sisters* and *This Way Up*. Has the appetite for female-led stories changed since the company was set up in 2014?



Dreamland Sky

Jane Bell. Mountford and Alex Moody, commissioning editor of Sky’s comedy output, were also part of the process.

“It was a collaborative writers room, and I wasn’t there to get in the way of the editorial, but to facilitate it,” says Moody. “My role was more of a sounding board. Part of it is to almost be the first audience member and ask the idiot’s questions, like ‘How did they get there?’ and ‘Why is she feeling like that at this stage?’. At other times, you’re checking it against the rest of your slate. You’re not saying, ‘Don’t do that’, but you are flagging when a storyline echoes another project.”

For Allen – whose performance in *2.22 A Ghost Story* earned her an Olivier award nomination for Best Actress last year – *Dreamland* was an ideal

place in Margate during last summer’s heatwave. As Heydon’s first series, “it was a big step up – it was an ambitious shoot for anyone”, says Moody. “It was location-driven, and shooting in a holiday destination at the height of summer was logistically challenging.”

The end of each day’s filming saw the cast on a mission to cool off, helped by dips in the sea. To keep the budget reasonable – given the peak accommodation prices for the production’s 70-odd cast and crew – the last three weeks were filmed in London, in locations that replicated Margate.

On screen, *Dreamland* strikes a critical tonal balance between comedy and drama, and between depth and levity. It makes observations about today’s society, whether that’s around blended

“We don’t have to have the conversation [about], ‘This is... a female-driven show and you need one of those’ at commissioning stage any more. That would have happened five years ago,” says Mountford.

“Now, it’s more about the story – it’s not a box-ticking exercise. But it is novel enough that people still comment on it – we don’t comment on male-driven shows, saying it’s an all-male cast, or a male director.

“Ideally, I’d love there to be a day when you just say, ‘This is a fantastic story with brilliant characters’. And the way to do that is to make more and more so it’s the norm.” ■

Dreamland starts on Sky and Now TV on 6 April.

Bad Wolf's flight of fantasy



An RTS Futures event revealed how the Welsh indie rose to the challenge of adapting *His Dark Materials*

Concept art for the climactic battle in *His Dark Materials*

Painting Practice/BBC

Fans of *His Dark Materials* have been going cold turkey since Philip Pullman's fantasy drama ended its third and apparently final series on BBC One in February. But, according to executive producer Jane Tranter, who was speaking at a sold-out RTS Futures event last month, further helpings could be served up.

"We've talked openly about the fact that we really want to do that – Philip is busy writing the third book in *The Book of Dust* series, which will finish the next section... of Lyra's story," said Tranter, the founder of Bad Wolf, which makes *His Dark Materials* for the BBC in the UK and HBO in the US. "We have to wait for him to finish that, and then we have to talk to the BBC and HBO, or anyone else, and see if they'll let us do it."

Earlier on in the evening, some of the drama's key figures discussed how they brought *His Dark Materials* to the screen. Dafne Keen, who plays Lyra, the heroine of Pullman's books, was unable to attend because of her commitments on the new *Star Wars* series, *The Acolyte*.

Tranter identified "two critical decisions": the first was hiring writer Jack Thorne to write series 1. "He was passionate about it, knew what he was talking about and had a brilliant take." The second was "getting Dan McCulloch on board, who then got everyone else of any importance to join".

McCulloch, one of many executive producers working on the series, said the key decision was to shoot *His Dark Materials*, as far as possible, on built sets in a studio, Bad Wolf Studios in Cardiff, rather than on location. "We wanted to

make it like something that you might make in the UK in the 1940s, where you create a studio aesthetic."

He recalled: "When you're casting a 12-year-old [Keen], then it's much better for her to be educated in a school here as well."

Spanish-British actor Keen was one of the first girls to audition for the part of Lyra. "She just had this attitude and it felt like she was interviewing us, as much as we were interviewing her," said McCulloch. "It turned out that she was extraordinarily nervous."

Writer and executive producer Francesca Gardiner, who joined the team for the second and third series, had been a fan of the Pullman trilogy since her teenage years. "I always approach [adapting] with trepidation, particularly when you are dealing with such an incredibly beloved text.... It

was a dream to be involved," she said.

An adaptor, she explained, cannot be "too precious with the words on a page.... It's a very different medium, television – it's so much more literal than literature. You have to find ways of staying true to the integrity of the creative vision while also allowing a certain amount of fluidity.

"That challenge only becomes more intense as you [progress] from book to book, because the decisions that you've made and the directions that you have taken in your TV show, then have knock-on effects."

Adapting Pullman throws up its own challenges – "particularly with the last book", she said. "It's so operatic in its scale; it's full of metaphor and archetype and so you have to figure out how to infuse the characters with the real human life that they need and the actors so brilliantly bring."

Production designer (and another of the show's executive producers) Joel Collins explained that filming environments were "as real as we could make them throughout the show", which meant "being in the studio and controlling the set". Green screen could therefore be used sparingly – so, when it was used, there was sufficient budget to make the visual effects "world class".

Representing Pullman's "daemons" – human souls in animal form who

painted out the puppeteers and puppets and added the daemons.

"Actually, we did investigate using real animals at one point – that would have been a disaster," said McCulloch. Tranter agreed: "The problem with

turned out to be me and a stuntman... and there's nothing more arresting than realising that you're so out of shape.

"We roughed that out physically [so that] I had an idea of the choreography and what [bears] could do." It was then



Concept art for the mulefas

Painting Practice/BBC

animals is that they behave like animals, not daemons, so it just doesn't work."

Senior VFX supervisor Russell Dodgson explained how he created the brutal fight between two polar bears, lorek and Iofur, in series 1: "When you make anything using visual effects techniques, I believe you use as wide a range of things as possible.... I really

over to the animators to create the polar bears."

McCulloch said: "Ultimately, we were trying to find a natural kind of feel to [the scene]." Collins added: "We did have a moment early on where we tried to anthropomorphise the animals a bit, just to try it out. What would it look like... if we made the bear a bit more human? And it failed."

"It was a terrible idea," agreed Tranter.

Were there any ideas that the books' author, Phillip Pullman, disapproved of? Only one, apparently. In series 3, for practical reasons, a decision had been made to do away with the seed-pod wheels that the mulefa creatures use to move. Pullman, though, was insistent, telling McCulloch, recalled the exec, that "they have to ride on wheels – it's about their symbiotic relationship with the environment".

Looking back over the past five years, Tranter admitted, "It's one of those classic things that, if you knew then what you know now, you probably would have fucked it up right royally."

Clearly, looking at the favourable critical response and strong audiences, she and her production team didn't. ■



Concept art for Cittàgazze, the city without adults

Painting Practice/BBC

accompany the characters in *His Dark Materials* – on- screen was a crucial challenge for the production. The solution was to use a variety of puppets (which the actors found much more appealing to perform with than the traditional tennis ball on a stick). During post-production, animators then

don't get stuck into the technical aspect of it because that's when you stifle creativity.

"My first instinct was, 'Let's just let two dudes wrestle', and then work out the set-up of the fight and the beats of it... it's all about speed, especially in television. So, in the end, the two dudes

Report by Matthew Bell. The RTS Futures event 'Anatomy of a hit: His Dark Materials' was held at the British Museum on 7 March. It was hosted by Rebecca Cooney, insights editor at Broadcast magazine, and produced by Bad Wolf.

Widening the lens of foreign news



BBC South Asia and Afghanistan correspondent Yogita Limaye reporting from Afghanistan in 2021

BBC

On the first anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Sir Lenny Henry Centre for Media Diversity and ITN held an invitation-only event to ask if the war had exposed a serious lack of diversity across newsrooms and what this meant for the journalism they produced?

At the start of the war, the *Los Angeles Times* wrote: “In the heat of war, a number of correspondents, consciously or not, framed suffering and displacement as acceptable for Arabs, Afghans and others over there — but not here, in Europe.”

There were frequent examples of racial prejudices and stereotypes permeating the language in the reports. Ukrainian victims were described as people “just like us”, and “having blond hair and blue eyes”.

Ukraine has reignited the debate over a lack of diversity in how TV war reporting is framed. **Marcus Ryder reports**

But there were also issues with the framing of the reporting, which were more subtle but possibly even more insidious, such as stories portraying the conflict as more dramatic because “Ukraine is not a ‘third-world’ country”. This was despite Ukraine then being ranked 133rd globally in terms of GDP per capita — below numerous African, Asian and South American countries. The fact that many countries on these continents are not “third-world countries” is not raised when conflicts from these places are reported.

While many of these early “mistakes”

were picked up — with some news organisations and individual journalists even offering mea culpas — the concern is that it has exposed a deeper problem in the way journalists frame and report the Ukraine war and foreign conflicts in general.

The fact is that only about 0.2% of British journalists for mainstream media organisations are black. When it comes to the ethnic backgrounds of UK foreign correspondents, figures are scant but, anecdotally, the picture appears to be even less diverse.

But does the race, gender, sexuality or disability of the people in front of and behind the camera affect the journalism that TV news organisations produce and how audiences connect with it?

These were the fundamental questions that ITN and the Sir Lenny Henry Centre for Media Diversity addressed in front of an audience that included

ITV director of news Michael Jermey, ITV head of diversity Ade Rawcliffe and the Chair of the Imperial War Museum, Matthew Westerman.

The discussion was chaired by *ITV News* senior correspondent Ronke Phillips and featured: Bafta-winning journalist Paul Kenyon, who has reported for the BBC; *ITV News* global security editor Rohit Kachroo; Channel 4 commissioning editor for news and current affairs Nevine Mabro; and BBC South Asia and Afghanistan correspondent Yogita Limaye, who joined online. I was also on the panel.

All acknowledged that there is a serious lack of diversity, which creates a serious problem. Kenyon, who was in Ukraine at the time of the Russian invasion and has reported from numerous conflict zones, set out the issue with stark candour: “There’s still an old-fashioned preserve of white, middle-class, public-school-educated journalists [in war reporting].” He added: “There’s a whole host of reasons for that, but this issue isn’t resolved by putting more people from ethnic minority backgrounds on screen alone. Behind the camera is where there’s a real issue.”

Limaye, on a Zoom link from India, responded by explaining that the teams she works with often have people from all over the world. Unsurprisingly, the governments and populations of the countries her team members come from often hold very different views of the conflicts that the teams cover.

For example, India abstained from voting to sanction Russia in a critical vote at the UN following Putin’s invasion of Ukraine.

It is this diversity of perspectives and values in the editorial process, rather than on-screen representation alone, that Kenyon and Limaye agreed is critical in accurately reporting on wars. This is something that we have all too often lacked. Kenyon talked about how he would frequently call colleagues in seemingly unrelated places, such as Ghana, to get their perspective on events.

The message that came across loud and clear during a spirited and occasionally humorous debate was that diversity is not just “nice to have” but creates better journalism and gives audiences a more rounded and more nuanced understanding of events. It helps challenge stereotypes and stops group think.

Mabro, an executive producer of the award-winning film *For Sama*, concerning a young mother’s harrowing experience of the Syrian war, talked about how commissioners often fail to understand the importance of diversity.

Using the example of *For Sama*, she explained how some executives had originally wanted it to be a love story,

something we always felt was there, an unsaid hierarchy for the value of life.”

There was undeniably a lot of good will in the room among both the panellists and audience members, but the question remains how do we transform that into action?

In my job at the Sir Lenny Henry Centre for Media Diversity, based at



ITV global security editor
Rohit Kachroo reporting
from Ukraine in 2023

playing to accepted narratives and tropes. Ultimately, this would have denied the female protagonist the power and agency she had in the film.

Possibly the most depressing – and yet simultaneously optimistic – moment in the discussion arose in a contribution from the audience, when ITN’s head of high risk, James Sladden, addressed the issue of the almost total lack of disabled reporters in war zones. He said that, despite the challenges, he saw no reason why there shouldn’t be more. Sladden encouraged newsrooms to talk to him to explore how they could make this happen.

Soberingly, *ITV News*’s Kachroo, who had returned from Ukraine the day before, said the lack of diversity in all its numerous forms had led the reporting on Ukraine to unearth something that is deep-rooted in newsroom culture. “It felt like the expression of

Birmingham City University, I recognise the importance of data to help drive change and shape policies.

If there was one policy recommendation that came out of the discussion, it would be for newsrooms to keep data on the protected characteristics of their foreign correspondents and war reporters, and those who work behind the camera. Currently, no UK broadcaster keeps these statistics.

And while the anecdotal evidence and lived experiences of people in the field, such as Kenyon and Kachroo, all point to a complete lack of diversity, rarely does anecdotal evidence shape effective policy remedies. Following this debate, what we should seek next are the hard facts. ■

Marcus Ryder is head of external consultancies at the Sir Lenny Henry Centre for Media Diversity at Birmingham City University.

RTS Programme Awards 2023

Hosted by **Tom Allen**, the awards were presented on 28 March at the JW Marriot Grosvenor House, London, in partnership with Audio Network

audionetwork 



The Traitors,
Entertainment
Performance and
Entertainment
Programme



Daisy May Cooper – *Am I Being Unreasonable?*, Comedy Performance – Female, Comedy Performance – Male and Breakthrough Award

BBC

Arts

The Evolution of Black British Music

Fan Studios & Motion Content Group for BET UK

‘The winning production captured the programme-makers’ enthusiasm for the subject matter quite brilliantly. It felt so completely authentic.’

Nominees:

► **The Ghost of Richard Harris**, Bright Yellow Films, Samson Films and Groove International for Sky Arts

► **This Is Joan Collins**, Salon Pictures for the BBC

Breakthrough Award

Lenny Rush – Am I Being Unreasonable?

Boffola Pictures and Lookout Point for the BBC

‘An exhilarating new talent... we can’t wait to see what’s next for this exciting new star.’

Nominees:

► **Nicôle Lecky – Mood**, Bonafide Films for BBC

► **Eddie Kadi – Sorry, I Didn’t Know**, Triforce Productions for ITV1



Derry Girls, Scripted Comedy and Writer – Comedy

Channel 4

Children’s Programme

Dodger

Universal International Studios for CBBC ‘Enjoyable and spectacularly well produced – in fact, a great all-round production.’

Nominees:

► **COP27: Six Ways to Save Our Planet**, Fresh Start Media for Sky Kids and Sky News

► **Corpse Talk**, Tiger Aspect Kids and Family for YouTube Originals

Comedy Drama

Brassic

Calamity Films for Sky Max

This show, said the judges, ‘manages to be both funny and moving, with great performances from a supremely authentic cast.’

Nominees:

► **Am I Being Unreasonable?**, Boffola Pictures and Lookout Point for BBC

► **Cheaters**, Clerkenwell Films for BBC



Sherwood, Drama Series and Supporting Actor – Male

BBC

Comedy Entertainment

Friday Night Live

Phil McIntyre Television and Boffola Pictures for Channel 4

The judges called the winning show 'bold, courageous, perfectly balanced and, above all, very funny'.

Nominees:

- ▶ **Joe Lycett vs David Beckham, A Got Your Back Special**, Rumpus Media and My Options Were Limited for Channel 4
- ▶ **Sorry, I Didn't Know**, Triforce Productions for ITV1

Comedy Performance – Female

Daisy May Cooper – Am I Being Unreasonable?

Boffola Pictures and Lookout Point for the BBC

The judges described the performance as 'exceptionally funny. No doubt about it, she's got funny bones.'

Nominees:

- ▶ **Leah Brotherhead – Hullraisers**, Fable Pictures for Channel 4
- ▶ **Rose Matafeo – Starstruck**, Avalon Television for BBC

Comedy Performance – Male

Lenny Rush – Am I Being Unreasonable?

Boffola Pictures and Lookout Point for the BBC

'A standout talent with comedic timing and style that's spot on in this piece,' said the judges.

Nominees:

- ▶ **Samson Kayo – Bloods**, Roughcut Television for Sky Comedy
- ▶ **Jon Pointing – Big Boys**, Roughcut Television for Channel 4

Daytime Programme

Loose Men

ITV Studios Daytime for ITV1

'The programme felt brave, ground-breaking and truly refreshing in so many different ways.'

Nominees:

- ▶ **Come Dine With Me: The Professionals**, MultiStory Media for Channel 4
- ▶ **Scam Interceptors**, BBC Studios Documentary Unit for BBC



BET UK

The Evolution of Black British Music, Arts



Channel 4

Friday Night Live, Comedy Entertainment



Richard Kendall

Tom Allen, Host



BBC

Lenny Rush – Am I Being Unreasonable?, Breakthrough Award and Comedy Performance – Male

Brassic, Comedy Drama



BSkyB

Dodger, Children's Programme



BBC

Loose Men, Daytime Programme



ITV

The State Funeral of HM The Queen Elizabeth II, Live Event



BBC



Richard Kendal

Judges' Award

Charlotte Moore

'In the BBC's centenary year, its chief content officer, Charlotte Moore, navigated the corporation's television output through a particularly difficult time for our nation. It was the year we began to emerge from the pandemic, with unprecedented political turmoil and the death of Her Majesty.

'It was also a year of great triumphs for BBC Television. There was thrilling sporting coverage, with the World Cup, the Women's Euros and the Birmingham Commonwealth Games; there was *The Responder* and *Sherwood*, an improvised episode of *Casualty*, a second *Frozen Planet* with Attenborough, and breakout new hit *The Traitors*; there was the BBC Three relaunch, the casting of a diverse *Doctor Who*, the *Platinum Party at the Palace* and the 50th year of *Newsround*. And all of this was planned, commissioned and produced under the challenging conditions of the pandemic.

'It was the year, too, in which Charlotte showed the BBC's commitment to television from the regions was real – *Morning Live* relocated to Manchester, the first BBC Comedy Festival landed in Newcastle, *MasterChef* announced a move to Birmingham, and Eurovision is heading for Liverpool. Programmes made in all corners of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, as well as England, filled the schedules.'

Documentary Series

Gazza

A Haviland Digital, Mark Stewart Productions and Western Edge Pictures production for BBC

‘What an amazing piece of work, which brought in layers and textures to deliver depth and intrigue.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Big Oil vs The World**, Mongoose Pictures/PBS Frontline for BBC
- ▶ **Jeremy Kyle Show: Death On Daytime**, Blast! Films for Channel 4

Drama Series

Sherwood

House Productions for BBC
Of the winning series, the judges said, ‘It had a dream cast and a beautifully elegant script... it felt incredibly original.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **The Responder**, Dancing Ledge Productions for BBC
- ▶ **Top Boy**, Cowboy Films, Easter Partisan Films, Dream Crew and SpringHill Entertainment for Netflix

Entertainment Programme

The Traitors

Studio Lambert Scotland for BBC
‘Authentic and compelling – the producers captured lightning in a bottle.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Joe Lycett’s Big Pride Party**, Rumpus Media and My Options Were Limited for Channel 4
- ▶ **The Lateish Show with Mo Gilligan**, Expectation TV and Momo G for Channel 4

Entertainment Performance

Claudia Winkleman – The Traitors

Studio Lambert Scotland for BBC
‘Outstanding. This was a performance of absolute mastery.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Jordan Stephens – Don’t Hate the Playaz**, Monkey Kingdom for ITV2
- ▶ **Mo Gilligan – The Lateish Show with Mo Gilligan**, Expectation TV and Momo G for Channel 4

Formatted Popular Factual

Gogglebox

Studio Lambert for Channel 4
‘It is endlessly compelling, creating talking points in every edition.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Idris Elba’s Fight School**, Workerbee and Green Door for BBC
- ▶ **The Repair Shop: A Royal Visit**, Ricochet for BBC



Channel 4

Gogglebox, Formatted Popular Factual



Richard Kendall

Sherwood, Drama Series and Supporting Actor – Male



BBC

Mood, Limited Series



BBC

Our Falklands War: A Frontline Story, History



**Kate Winslet – *I Am Ruth*,
Leading Actor – Female**

Richard Kendall

History

Our Falklands War: A Frontline Story

The Garden Productions for BBC
‘A story extremely well told and with a unique voice that made for brilliant film-making.’

Nominees:

▶ **Aids: *The Unheard Tapes***, Wall to Wall Media for BBC

▶ **Italia 90: *Four Weeks that Changed the World***, Blast! Films for Sky Documentaries

Leading Actor – Female

Kate Winslet – *I Am Ruth*

Me+You Productions in association with Juggle Productions for Channel 4
‘An astonishing and affecting performance underpinned by raw truth and painful honesty. A tour de force.’

Nominees:

▶ **Billie Piper – *I Hate Suzie Too***, Bad Wolf for Sky Atlantic

▶ **Monica Dolan – *The Thief, His Wife and the Canoe***, Story Films for ITV1



**Kit Connor – *Heartstopper*,
Leading Actor – Male**

Netflix



**Documentary
Series *Gazza***

BBC

Leading Actor – Male

Kit Connor – *Heartstopper*

A See-Saw Films Production for Netflix
‘The actor’s performance was profoundly affecting and impactful – a really big moment.’

Nominees:

▶ **Kane Robinson – *Top Boy***, Cowboy Films, Easter Partisan Films, Dream Crew and SpringHill Entertainment for Netflix

▶ **Chaske Spencer – *The English***, Drama Republic for BBC



***The Traitors*, Entertainment
Programme and Entertainment
Performance**

Richard Kendall

Limited Series

Mood

Bonafide Films for BBC
‘A thoroughly original and exciting series with so much to say.’

Nominees:

▶ **Anne**, World Productions for ITV1

▶ **Chloe**, Mam Tor Productions for BBC

Live Event

The State Funeral of HM The Queen Elizabeth II

BBC Studios Events Productions for BBC
‘There was really only one word to sum it up: perfect.’

Nominees:

▶ **Glastonbury 2022**, BBC Studios Music Productions for BBC

▶ **Platinum Party at the Palace**, BBC Studios Events Productions for BBC

Presenter

Ramita Navai – *Afghanistan: No Country for Women*

Quicksilver Media for ITV1

‘The presenter delivered truly compelling television, drawing viewers in with an astonishing depth of knowledge on the subject.’

Nominees:

▶ **Huw Edwards – *The State Funeral of HM The Queen Elizabeth II***, BBC Studios Events Productions for BBC

▶ **Martin Lewis – *The Martin Lewis Money Show Live***, MultiStory Media for ITV1

Science and the Natural World

The Green Planet

BBC Studios Natural History Unit with PBS, bilibili, ZDF, China Media Group, CCTV9, France Télévisions and the Open University for BBC and iPlayer

‘Mind-blowingly good – hugely ambitious editorially and technologically groundbreaking.’

Nominees:

▶ ***My Garden of a Thousand Bees***, Passion Planet; WNET Group; HHMI Tangled Bank Studios and Ammonite Films for Sky Nature

▶ ***My Dead Body***, 141 Productions for Channel 4

Scripted Comedy

Derry Girls

Hat Trick Productions for Channel 4

‘What an incredible show, so brilliantly done. It was thrilling to see it produced so perfectly.’

Nominees:

▶ ***Big Boys***, Roughcut Television for Channel 4

▶ ***Cunk On Earth***, Broke and Bones for BBC/Netflix

Single Documentary

The Tinder Swindler

A Raw Production with Gaspin Media and AGC Studios in association with VG for Netflix

‘The programme-makers made a stunning documentary feel like a great drama.’

Nominees:

▶ ***Dying to Divorce***, Dying to Divorce for Sky Documentaries

▶ ***Will Young: Losing My Twin Rupert***, Wall to Wall Media for Channel 4

Ade Adepitan – *Winter Paralympics 2022*, Sports Presenter, Commentator or Pundit

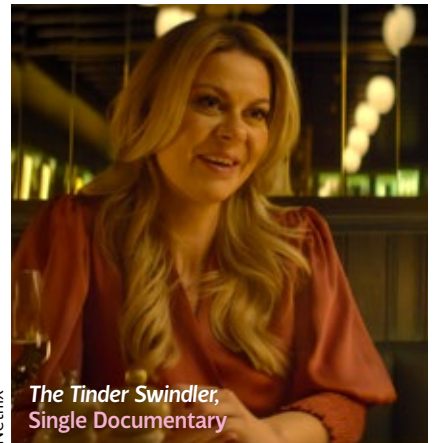


Richard Kendal



Lisa McGee – *Derry Girls*, Writer – Comedy and Scripted Comedy

Richard Kendal



***The Tinder Swindler*, Single Documentary**

Netflix



***The Green Planet*, Science and the Natural World**

BBC



BBC/ITV/HBO

Outstanding Achievement Award

Sarah Lancashire OBE

'Sarah Lancashire first caught the nation's attention on the evening of 23 January 1991, when Raquel Wolstenhulme made her first appearance in *Coronation Street*. Such was the impact of the checkout assistant in Weatherfield's local supermarket that Raquel soon became a barmaid and was pulling pints of Newton and Riddles in the Rovers Return.

'In many ways, *Coronation Street* was the perfect beginning for Sarah's career on television. She grew up just a few miles away from Granada's studios and, after training at London's Guildhall School of Music and Drama, she returned to live and work in the North, teaching at Salford University between theatre jobs.

'She knew the North – she knew its people, its speech rhythms. And she brought all of that to Raquel; she created a character that transcended the image of the bottle-blond

barmaid – she gave the audience someone they really believed in, had empathy with and felt they knew.

'Little wonder, then, that 20 million people tuned in for Raquel's last appearance in *Coronation Street*.

'Sarah followed *Coronation Street* with three seasons of the Sunday-night series *Where the Heart Is*, and then took on a great variety of roles in some of the most popular dramas on television. She starred opposite John Thaw in *The Glass*, and alongside Billy Connolly in *Gentleman's Relish*; there was *Clocking Off*, *Seeing Red*, *The Rotters' Club* and *Rose and Maloney*.



There was classic period drama, too: *Sons & Lovers*, *Oliver Twist* and *Wuthering Heights*.

'Sarah was strongly attracted to contemporary roles that really challenged her as an actor, parts that pushed her into difficult places – including real-life roles, like that of Rosemary Nicholls, mother of one of the Ipswich serial murder victims.

'In 2012, came the first series of *Last Tango in Halifax*, in which Sarah played Caroline – the school headteacher in a same-sex relationship with fellow teacher Kate, and a role for which Sarah won major critical acclaim. *Last Tango* was also Sarah's first work written by Sally Wainwright. They would go on to collaborate on the amazing *Happy Valley*, which Sally wrote specifically for her... the perfect alchemy of the right character for the right actor from the right creator.

'She inhabits each character she plays with utter integrity. She takes the audience into that character's reality and shows them the world from the character's point of view.

'And she does it supremely well, not only with outstanding talent and intelligence, but also with total commitment and dedication.'

Single Drama

Life and Death in the Warehouse

BBC Studios Drama Productions for the BBC

'Fast-paced storytelling matched with terrific performances, an exceptional piece of television.'

Nominees:

- ▶ **The House**, Nexus Studios for Netflix
- ▶ **Then Barbara Met Alan**, Dragonfly Film and Television and One Shoe Films for BBC

Soap and Continuing Drama

Casualty

BBC Studios Continuing Drama for BBC

'A new perspective from a long-established show.... This was powerful work, supremely well realised.'

Nominees:

- ▶ **EastEnders**, BBC Studios Continuing Drama for BBC
- ▶ **Hollyoaks**, Lime Pictures for Channel 4



Richard Kendall

Ambika Mod – This Is Going to Hurt, Supporting Actor – Female

Sports Presenter, Commentator or Pundit

Ade Adepitan – Winter Paralympics 2022

Whisper for Channel 4

'A broadcaster of genuine insight and charisma.'

Nominees:

- ▶ **Gabby Logan – Women's Euro 2022**, BBC Sport
- ▶ **Roy Keane – FIFA World Cup 2022**, ITV Sport for ITV1 and ITV4

Sports Programme

Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games

BBC Sport/Sunset+Vine for BBC

'Vibrant, authentic and fantastically diverse.'

Nominees:

- ▶ **Winter Paralympics: Today in Beijing**, Whisper for Channel 4
- ▶ **Women's Euro 2022**, Whisper and BBC Sport for BBC



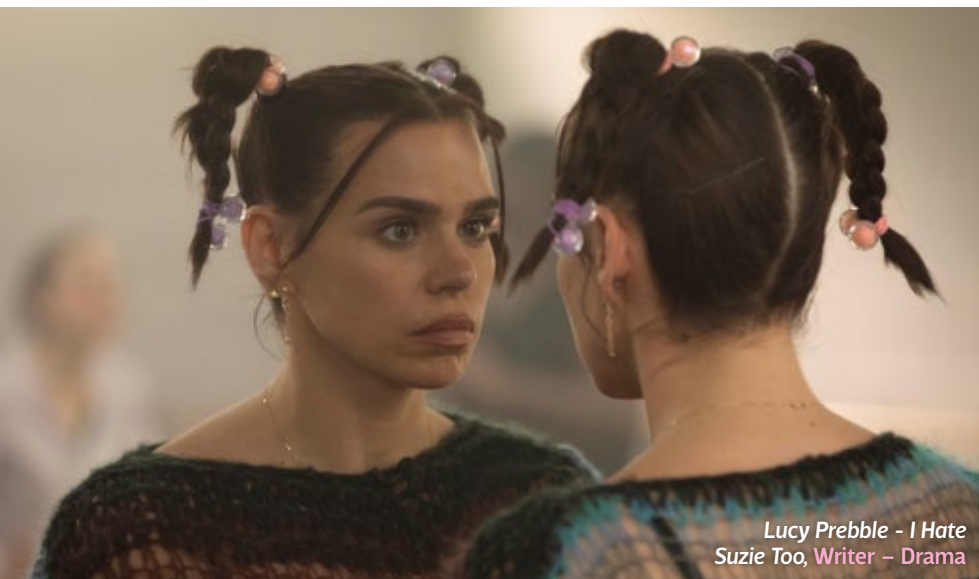
BBC

Casualty, Soap and Continuing Drama



ITV

Ramita Navai – Afghanistan: No Country for Women, Presenter



Lucy Prebble - *I Hate Suzie Too*, Writer - Drama

BSkyB

Supporting Actor – Female

Ambika Mod – *This Is Going to Hurt*

Sister in association with Terrible Productions for BBC One and AMC
‘It was pitch perfect, a study of a woman operating under extraordinary strain, laced with humour and charm.’

Nominees:

▶ **Saffron Hocking** – *Top Boy*, Cowboy Films, Easter Partisan Films, Dream Crew and SpringHill Entertainment for Netflix

▶ **Adelayo Adedayo** – *The Responder*, Dancing Ledge Productions for BBC

Supporting Actor – Male

Adeel Akhtar – *Sherwood*

House Productions for BBC

‘This actor gave a brilliantly elevated performance with a real lightness of touch.... He is evolving and growing all the time.’

Nominees:

▶ **Stephen Walters** – *Anne*, World Productions for ITV1

▶ **Stephen Merchant** – *Four Lives*, ITV Studios for BBC

Writer – Comedy

Lisa McGee – *Derry Girls*

Hat Trick Productions for Channel 4

‘Absolutely extraordinary – laugh-out-loud funny, but awe-inspiring, too.’

Nominees:

▶ **Jack Rooke** – *Big Boys*, Roughcut Television for Channel 4

▶ **Sam Leifer and Tom Basden** – *Plebs: Soldiers of Rome*, Rise Films for ITVX

Writer – Drama

Lucy Prebble – *I Hate Suzie Too*

Bad Wolf for Sky Atlantic

‘The script dazzles with energy and vibrancy – an exhilarating piece of work.’

Nominees:

▶ **Sharon Horgan** – *Bad Sisters*, Merman/ABC Signature in association with Apple for Apple TV+

▶ **Will Smith** – *Slow Horses*, See-Saw Films in association with Apple for Apple TV+ ■



Adeel Akhtar – *Sherwood*, Supporting Actor – Male

Richard Kendal



Life and Death in the Warehouse, Single Drama

Richard Kendal



Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, Sports Programme

BBC



Watch the full video of the RTS Programme Awards 2023 at: bit.ly/RTS-prog23

Scottish drama has been riding the crest of a wave recently with critically lauded shows such as *Guilt* and *Mayflies*. The latest – supernatural thriller *The Rig* – is literally in the waves, set on a fog-shrouded oil platform, where something very fishy is going on. The six-part Amazon Prime series was released in January and has already been renewed for a second season.

New writers, revealed its creator, David Macpherson, at an RTS Scotland event, are advised to “do something small and easy to make, but I... wanted to do something big and exciting... and something rooted in Scotland”.

The idea for *The Rig* came out of his father’s experiences working offshore around the world. “He used to come back with all these strange stories of this ‘other world,’” he recalled. “A lot of the things in the show are not quite as far from real life as you might think.”

Exec producer Derek Wax, MD of series producer Wild Mercury, met Macpherson in 2018, having been impressed by one of his scripts: “We asked him what he’d love to write and he came up with this extraordinary world, which felt different to anything I’d seen on TV.”

Wax was drawn to a script that didn’t offer “20 minutes in, the monster killing people – this was much more enigmatic... it’s a giant puzzle”.

The series juggles environmental concerns, geology and anthropology. Wax added: “What I loved about it was that it’s science fact as much as science fiction. It asks you to think about these big philosophical ideas.”

Amazon Prime came on board with development money, as did *Line of Duty* and *Bodyguard* director John



The Rig: Iain Glen, Martin Compston and Emily Hampshire

Prime Video

Eco-thrills and spills

RTS Scotland What’s that lurking at the bottom of the sea?
Matthew Bell discovers how *The Rig* was assembled

Strickland. “He draws out very raw, real and naturalistic performances from actors. He’s got a great ability to immerse you in a story and make you feel invested in the characters,” said Wax. “He also has the ability to deal with technical challenges, which we knew were going to be complex.”

The series was cast by Kelly Valentine Hendry and includes top-notch Scottish talent such as Iain Glen, Martin Compston and Mark Bonnar, as well as Canadian actor Emily Hampshire (Stevie in *Schitt’s Creek*).

The production took a studio in Leith and – with the help of lots of steel, wind machines, water and CGI – turned it into an oil rig lying hundreds of miles off

the Scottish coast. “It was a big set spread over what is a very big studio,” said production designer Rob Harris. The built set includes the rig’s control room, accommodation block, engine rooms and a helipad. “Even if the [set] was enhanced or extended [by CGI] the actors were working in a real environment,” Harris added.

Nevertheless, the built set only makes up 20% of what viewers see; the rest is effects, whether water, fire or smoke.

“It was a huge challenge,” explains visual effects supervisor Stephen Coren. “The trickiest thing of all was maintaining it, so it looked the same across the entire series... sewing together sets and CGI, and making it all feel realistic.

“David [Macpherson]

wrote us every challenge in the book – the only thing he didn’t give us was a car chase, because you couldn’t put one out there.”

At *The Rig*’s premiere in Scotland, Macpherson sat with his dad. “He had helped me with the script and getting that realism all the way through it. Being able to do that with him was a very meaningful and proud moment for me.

“It’s only because he did that job for all those years in that very hard and dangerous environment that I’m able to do this job. It was great to be able to watch it with him.” ■

The RTS Scotland online event was held on 29 March, hosted by broadcaster Paul English, and supported by ScreenSkills.

The centre's preview screening of new BBC comedy-drama *Rain Dogs* sold out the Watershed in Bristol last month. Having already aired on HBO in the US to great reviews, the Bristol-made series is due to air on BBC One in early April.

From the brilliant new voice of author Cash Carraway, *Rain Dogs* follows a dysfunctional family on the fringes of society attempting to go straight in a crooked world. Costello Jones (Daisy May Cooper) is a devoted mother who wants more for her young daughter, Iris (newcomer Fleur Tashjian).

As she hustles to survive, Costello leans on Selby (Jack Farthing), Iris's pseudo father (and Costello's pseudo soul-mate) and Gloria (Ronke Adékoluẹjo), a loyal yet chaotic godmother and best friend.

In a Q&A that followed the screening with producer Ciara McIlvenny and cast members Farthing (*Chloe*) and Adékoluẹjo (*Alex Rider*), McIlvenny praised Bristol as a "film-friendly place. It felt like the people wanted us to be here; we had a brilliant crew and it was really easy."

On Carraway's writing, she said: "It was such an original



Rain Dogs: Daisy May Cooper and Fleur Tashjian

BBC

Bristol has its Dogs day

piece of writing, pulling stereotypes apart, and making it look and feel authentic was very important to all of us."

Discussing her character, Adékoluẹjo described Gloria as "impulsive, chaotic with a very short attention span – I was pretty terrified at first to play her – but they are all amazing characters, who are complicated and layered".

Farthing, who portrays a privileged gay man said:

"Selby is a miracle of a character to play; it's exciting as he is slowly revealed. Beneath it all, he's bursting with love, but he can't express it properly."

Fleur Tashjian makes her TV debut as Costello's 11-year-old daughter. She was "ferociously mature, wise and open-hearted" as an actor who "easily made the leap into this *Rain Dogs* world", added Farthing.

Rain Dogs is made by award-winning production company Sid Gentle Films (*Killing Eve*) from its new development and production arm, Sid Wild, which is based in Bristol at The Bottle Yard Studios

It is the first title to come out of Sid Wild and was filmed at The Bottle Yard and on location across the city with assistance from Bristol Film Office.

Suzy Lambert

RTS launches new round of bursaries

The Society has launched its bursary schemes for 2023 and will be accepting applications until 29 June.

Following a record year in 2022 for both the number of applications and bursaries awarded, the RTS hopes to award up to 35 scholarships to individuals studying television production or related subjects and 10 more for the

Digital Innovation Bursary.

The schemes are aimed at increasing diversity and inclusivity in TV's workforce. All bursaries are awarded to talented students from lower-income backgrounds studying an undergraduate degree or HND Level 5 or 6.

Madison Jennings, a 2022 RTS bursary recipient, added: "The RTS bursary scheme has helped me massively.

The financial aspect allowed me to say yes to more opportunities and allowed me to live comfortably at university. The networking side gave me access to so many inspirational people."

The RTS runs three main schemes: the TV Production and Journalism Bursary; the Digital Innovation Bursary; and the Steve Hewlett Scholarship. New last year was the

Beryl Vertue Scholarship. It supports an exceptional candidate with an interest in producing and is funded by Hartwood Films, which is run by the daughters of the late TV producer.

The bursary schemes attract widespread industry support in the form of donations to fund bursaries and in-kind support, such as mentoring. The donors are: All3Media, STV, the Steve Hewlett Memorial Fund, Hartwood Films, ITV Daytime and YouView.

Matthew Bell

Networking isn't a dirty word," insisted RTS North West Chair and executive producer at Manchester drama indie Rope Ladder Fiction Cameron Roach. He was speaking at the start of an inspiring late-March Student Networking Day.

"People assume that to network you have to be gregarious," he continued. "That is not the case."

Keen to encourage students in their careers by providing them with the "soft skills" to make connections, opportunities to practise them and an understanding of how the industry works and the entry-level jobs available, Roach emphasised that "to build a long-term, stable career, you've got to love TV, and be able to talk passionately about those shows you want to work on".

The day kicked off with a panel discussion, whose participants illustrated the many different ways into TV: a job as a newsroom production secretary (Pam Cavanaugh, joint creative director at Purple Productions); starting in radio (Claire Burgess, a producer at Wall to Wall); and creating a football fan YouTube channel while still an undergraduate (Erin Hughes, a freelance researcher at BBC Sport).

"Many graduates start off as a runner," according to freelance shooting producer Leasha Waddingham, where key skills include "being proactive... trying to think one step ahead for what is needed on the shoot".

"Think about the whole picture... and add extra value," added Cavanaugh. "Be interested in the content – there might be editorial thoughts you can add."

Picking up on that point, Burgess advised the audience not to be a victim of "imposter syndrome... no matter what your experience



Waterloo Road: co-produced by Rope Ladder Fiction

BBC

'You've got to love TV'

RTS North West Carole Solazzo reports from a hugely successful student conference and networking day in Salford

is, it's valid... you've earned the right to be there."

For a job on the first rung of the ladder, Waddingham estimated an employer will consider upwards of 100 CVs, initially "spending just 15 seconds on each". Which is why Cavanaugh

advised: "Send links to content that you're proud of."

But you can't beat "getting a foot in the door", she said. "[Ask] if there is any chance I can come in and meet you for five minutes?" The answer will sometimes be "No", but, said development researcher Simone Ziel on the "Top tips" panel, rejection can be positive. "[Ask yourself] what can I improve on... Get feedback, and apply it."

When searching for jobs,

Roach, who chaired the "Anatomy of a show" panel, urged students to "understand the ecosystem [of TV show buyers].... The first port of call of those independent production companies and studios is development."

"Development is the lifeblood of TV," said Dympna Jackson, Purple joint creative director. "[It's] a real buzz getting an idea from a piece of paper on to the screen."

Agreeing with Roach that it's "a myth that you need to be hugely experienced in TV to come up with an idea", David Leach, development producer at MultiStory Media, said "working with a new and vibrant team helps me come up with ideas.... I translate

those into TV programme [formats] and stitch them into pitch documents."

Rope Ladder development editor Yasmin Ali encouraged people not to box themselves in: "Approach different departments, whether that's hair and make-up, sound or camera.... Explore."

"Peer-to-peer networking is also important," said Roach, "because you will grow up with contemporaries who will become significant players."

The day offered opportunities to network with industry professionals, and masterclasses about crafting storylines, development, production management and working in a virtual studio. ■

The event at MediaCity UK, Salford, was organised by RTS North West and Nancy Porter, University of Salford, in partnership with Dock10.

'NETWORKING IS NOT A DIRTY WORD'

Students and staff from three universities were treated to a screening and Q&A with the RTS- and Bafta-award-winning director Phil Grabsky last month. The rapt audience were shown Grabsky's multiple-award-winning feature documentary *My Childhood, My Country: 20 Years in Afghanistan*, before being treated to a 90-minute discussion.

My Childhood, My Country won the Documentary prize at the RTS Southern Awards in 2022 and then the Bafta for Best Single Documentary.

The director explained how the film was a follow-up to two previous documentaries following Mir, initially a boy of seven, into his twenties.

Grabsky revealed how he had first travelled to Afghanistan in 2002, armed with a Sony PDP150 camera, and started shooting around the destroyed Buddha statues in Bamiyan. Unsure initially how the local people would react, he found them to be open and accommodating, and soon settled on Mir as the subject for the film.

Shooting in a war zone proved tense and dangerous at times – as well as the threat from within, US helicopter pilots took an interest, too.

In the course of a wide-ranging discussion, the film-maker talked about how – after the second film came out, which covered 10 years of Mir's life – he was initially



Mir in Phil Grabsky's film *My Childhood, My Country*

Seventh Art Productions

20 years in the making

unable to find any backers to continue the project. It was only the intervention of a commissioning editor from Germany that persuaded him to carry on filming alongside his Afghan co-director, Shoaib Sharifi.

Grabsky reflected that progress had been made in Afghanistan – symbolised in the film by Mir's chosen modes of transport, from horse to bicycle to motorbike to car – but the situation always remained perilous.

Mir's decision to move his wife and children to Kabul in search of work, against a backdrop of suicide bombings

and a resurgent Taliban, provides a tense finale to the film.

Discussing the ethical responsibilities of film-makers, Grabsky said: "As soon as you point a camera at someone, you are interfering with their lives." He revealed that he made payments to contributors and left gifts for the girls at a local school.

When Mir expressed an interest in working in TV, Grabsky's team introduced him to a Kabul-based news network and Mir became a cameraman. This added a real sense of jeopardy to the production as journalists

become targets and Mir only narrowly escapes a bombing.

Grabsky also discussed the other work of his Brighton-based production company, Seventh Art. Its Exhibition on Screen brand makes films that offer a cinematic immersion in fine art and recently released the well-reviewed *Mary Cassatt: Painting the Modern Woman*.

"*My Childhood, My Country*: A screening and Q&A with director Phil Grabsky" was held at Solent University, Southampton, on 2 March, and hosted by RTS Southern Secretary Stuart Ray.
Stuart Ray

East aims to boost production

At the end of March, in Cambridge, RTS East assembled an expert panel to talk to local production companies and freelancers about boosting production in the region.

Brian Woods, director of True Vision, which now has a base in Cambridge as well as

London and Leeds, explained the importance of relationships and access, which he said has helped to sustain regular commissions.

Chris Curley, the new nations and regions manager at Pact, revealed that he is looking to give the East of England its own identity

within the producers alliance, separate from the Midlands.

Sarah Joyce, head of unscripted and children's TV at ScreenSkills, discussed training funds and opportunities in the region.

RTS East and Pact are planning to host meetings every three months,

alternating between Cambridge and Norwich.

As a region, the East has had little support from broadcasters and few TV commissions for its local production base.

The aim is to win more commissions across the region, and one of the clear messages from the event was that producers need more face-to-face meetings.

Charlie Gauvain

Following the huge success of its “The Big Connection” unscripted TV session last October, ScreenSkills, again in partnership with RTS Scotland, hosted another event last month, this time on scripted television.

The “speed-networking” format, where industry professionals visited tables with seven minutes to speak to attendees, was used again at the packed-out event at BBC Studios in Glasgow.

Tony Wood, CEO of Buccaneer Media, spoke about his decision to expand the company to Scotland: “Television is controlled by London and that seemed to me to be a shame. So, on the spur of the moment, I agreed with Screen Scotland to set up a production company here.

“What became clear to me is that the Scottish voice [is] big, bold, original, loud and interconnected. It’s brilliant and I want to explore that.”

Kyrie MacTavish, training manager for the Starz historical drama series *Outlander*, gave advice to those looking to break into the television



Dougray Scott in *Crime*, made by Buccaneer Media

BritBox

How to get a start in drama

RTS Scotland Beth Watt reports on two events aimed at industry newcomers

industry: “Actually write something. Pitch something. Meet like-minded people – there are a lot of like-minded

people in the room today.”

She added: “I remember I would say, ‘I’ll do anything for free’, and it was hard for

me to get a foot in the door. Now, when people say that to me, I understand, because it is difficult to point someone in a direction. You have to come to me and say what you want to do.”

Alastair Brown, a recent film and TV graduate, was looking to make the “next step” in his career.

He said: “My goal, ultimately, is to write for high-end television, scripted drama and also film.”

Speaking about his experience at the event, he said:

“It’s been fantastic. This is a great opportunity, hearing from professionals across the board and finding out who I should be trying to contact.

“Also, meeting like-minded people. At the end of the day, we are all trying to achieve the same thing. I’m glad I came.”

Kate Efomi, ScreenSkills representative for Scotland, reflecting on the success of the night, said: “It’s wonderful. We have again, as with the unscripted event, had production companies asking to come along and we have had to say there isn’t any space.”

It’s all about location, location, location

A few days earlier, ScreenSkills hosted the online seminar ‘Roles in locations management’, also in partnership with RTS Scotland. This was the latest in a series of workshops under the Select Sessions employability training scheme banner.

Attendees heard from a panel of professionals at different stages of their careers.

Location manager Ashley McKee joined the industry as a teenager. Speaking about the challenges of the job, she stated that it can

resemble a ‘traveling circus’ at times, adding: ‘You’re always putting out a fire somewhere. You can be the most organised person ever and there will be something completely out of your control.’

McKee, who recently worked on the BBC Scotland sitcom *The Scotts*, said: ‘Maybe there is a vehicle parked where you wanted to put your camera truck – it is about how you deal with these situations. You need to remain calm.’

Location assistant Steph



Mayflies

BBC

Ariño (BBC One drama *Mayflies*), spoke about her motivation: ‘I love my job... You build relationships with everyone, it’s almost like a family.’

Location manager Gavin Luna (BBC One series *Guilt*

and *Shetland*) gave some encouragement on getting into the industry: ‘If you’re hard-working, show initiative and have an aptitude for problem-solving, then people will remember you.’

A1 access for BBC archive

RTS
London

Digitisation and now the Cloud have made the BBC's treasures more accessible, for both programme-makers and the general public.

An RTS London event last month heard that the BBC TV archive – the largest broadcast archive in the world – contains more than half a million unique programmes and that 85% have been digitised.

Claire Coss, head of product, library and curatorial services, BBC Archives Technology & Services, is based at the BBC Archive Centre in Perivale, west London. She explained that for many years BBC archive teams have helped content-makers “to reuse and reimagine the content we hold”.

The pandemic, though, gave a real impetus to work to digitise the BBC's content. Two virtual Glastonbury

festivals were produced, drawing on performances archived over the years. “iPlayer has more box sets than ever before,” Coss added.

The success of the BBC's centenary year was due, in part, to its digitised archive. Using Archive Search – which gives access to 90% of the corporation's archive – BBC Creative made the promo, *This Is Our BBC*. By searching for the words “we're in it together”, for example, it came up with a clip of *EastEnders* icon Pat Butcher saying the phrase in her own inimitable style.

Now, Coss continued: “Our aim is to make our collections even more accessible for our content-makers, but also our audiences.”

The archive has been made available to the public, with more than 33,000 clips of stories from around the UK,



BBC

dating back to the late 1940s, uploaded to BBC Rewind, which was launched last July. One clip from *BBC Look North*, about the sport of putting ferrets down trousers, was seen 3 million times in just one month, Coss revealed.

This year, the archive's 15 million physical items are being moved from Perivale to a storage facility in Kent.

“Our role is really evolving now, from custodians of the physical assets on the shelves to the curators of the digital content,” said Coss. Coming up, she continued, is the 60th

anniversary of *Doctor Who*, which will have a strong archive input.

Executive product manager, BBC AT&S, Lynne Dent explained the digitisation process and Mark Glanville, senior architect, BBC, AT&S, outlined how the BBC is moving its archive into the Cloud.

“Unlocking the BBC archive” was held at the Everyman King's Cross. It was chaired by Brendan Mallon, head of product and services, BBC AT&S and produced by Carol Owens. **Matthew Bell**

TV and film need skilled workers now

Technology
Centre

Marlow Film Studios and the RTS Technology Centre brought together educators, policymakers and industry luminaries at the National Film and Television School in Beaconsfield to discuss the training and education needed to retain the UK film and TV industry's world-leading position.

The March conference, “Buckinghamshire: delivering world-leading education



Marlow Film Studios

pathways for film and television”, was initiated by the CEO of Marlow Film Studios, Robert Laycock.

It heard that the industry has grown 15 times faster than the economy at large, bringing with it unparalleled

opportunities for highly skilled, well-paid and life-enhancing jobs. Buckinghamshire has become one of the key UK destinations for major high-end TV and film production.

By 2025, the industry is projected to need 20,000 more skilled workers. But Gareth Ellis-Unwin, a producer of the Oscar-winning *The King's Speech*, contended that these are needed now to maintain industry growth.

There was no lack of appetite to rise to the challenge from educators. Jenny Craig, CEO of Buckinghamshire College Group, leads a college turning out more than 400 media students each year at High Wycombe. She said

connections with industry were in the DNA of further education, but it was important for this to be funded and affordable, with industry playing its part in curriculum input and work placements.

National government also has a role, and Lord (Ed) Vaizey gave an insightful account of his time as culture minister during the Cameron Government. He noted the importance of tax credits in making the UK an attractive destination for production.

Amanda Nevill, former CEO of the BFI, reminded delegates that a collaborative approach between all parts of industry, education, training and government is key.

Tim Marshall

Stirling and Edinburgh dominate awards

RTS Scotland The universities of Edinburgh and Stirling were the big winners at the RTS Scotland Student Television Awards last month. Edinburgh took home the Entertainment and Comedy Drama and Drama prizes, while Stirling triumphed in the Animation and Factual categories. Both institutions also won two Craft Skills awards.

Sarah Stables from New College Lanarkshire's Cumbernauld Campus took the other prize, the Craft Skills: Writing award, for *Falsehood*. "We were blown away by the incredible talent displayed by students," said Stephen O'Donnell, Chair of RTS Scotland. "The fact that the quality of the work submitted to us seems to get better and better every year

RTS Scotland Student Television Awards winners

Animation - *The Tortoise and the Square* - Gregor Forbes, University of Stirling

Drama - **SMALL** - Jonathan Payne, Sophie MacDonald, Laura Wiggett, Tyler Tappin, Alex Choudhary, Anita Klementiev, Finn O'Neill, Liam Maclean and Michael Payne, University of Edinburgh

Entertainment and Comedy Drama - *The Dead Cat Strategy* - Laura Wiggett, Dylan-Starr Adams, Martha Roseweir, Zhuoxuan Liu and Hervé Girdardin, University of Edinburgh

Factual - *A League of Their Own* - Ryan Anderson, Niall Cluness,

Lauren Hollinsworth and Lorenzo Franchitti, University of Stirling

Craft Skills: Camera - *Moving Mountains* - Ryan Bensen, University of Stirling

Craft Skills: Editing - *A League of Their Own* - Lauren Hollinsworth, University of Stirling

Craft Skills: Production Design - *The Dead Cat Strategy* - Laura Wiggett, University of Edinburgh

Craft Skills: Sound - **SMALL** - Tyler Tappin and Alex Choudhary, University of Edinburgh

Craft Skills: Writing - *Falsehood* - Sarah Stables, New College Lanarkshire - Cumbernauld Campus

is an encouraging sign that the future of TV production in Scotland is in very good hands."

The ceremony was hosted

by STV News entertainment reporter Laura Boyd at Saint Luke's in the East End of Glasgow on 23 March.

Matthew Bell

Salford University cleans up

RTS North West Students from the University of Salford achieved a clean sweep of the awards on offer at the RTS North West Student Television Awards, winning the Animation, Drama, Entertainment and Comedy, and Factual categories.

The ceremony was held at The Alan Hotel in Manchester on 23 March.

RTS North West Student Television Awards winners

Animation - *Wild Rides* - Ines Vukobrat and Paloma Angelim, University of Salford

Drama - *Sausage and Chips* - Aleshya Easen, Alex Williams, Reagan Rudlinton and Rebecca Randall, University of Salford

Entertainment and Comedy - *Double Yellows* - Joseph Macaulay, Callum Atherton, Phoenix Thompson, Archie McWilliams and team, University of Salford

Factual - *The Game* - Erin Hughes, Meg Jones, Miles Taylor, Jacob Teagle and Amber Barratt, University of Salford

Real Lads bags two wins



RTS Northern Ireland Chair Fiona Campbell, with double winner Aidan Rafferty and UTV's Sarah McKinley

Justin Kernaghan

RTS Northern Ireland Student Television Awards winners

Animation - *Sleeper* - Josh McAvoy, Eva Robinson, Sinéad Burns and Cathal Daniel Murphy, Ulster University, Belfast

Comedy and Entertainment - *Real Lads of Lockdown* - Aidan Rafferty, Eve Drumm, Keelan Sexton, Gareth Rodgers, Ruairi Craig and Aaron Crilly, Ulster University, Belfast

Drama - *A Hollow Tree* - Cathal Fitzpatrick, Ulster University at Magee

Factual - *The Lone Sailor* - Malachy O'Hanlon, Ulster University at Magee - **Technical Difficulties** - Aisling Skillen, Andrew Ballentine, Lynn Porter, Oisín McCoy and Olga Weyrich, Queen's University Belfast

Craft Skills: Writing - *Real Lads of Lockdown* - Aidan Rafferty, Ulster University, Belfast

Northern Ireland Ulster University, Belfast, student Aidan Rafferty was a double winner at the RTS Northern Ireland Student Television Awards. He was part of the team that won the Comedy and Entertainment award for *Real Lads of Lockdown* - and the writer/director also took home the Craft Skills: Writing prize.

The judges said the film

"wasn't afraid to touch on the more serious aspects of the pandemic, while providing lots of laugh-out-loud moments - a great balance of comedy and pathos".

Ulster University, Belfast, also triumphed in the Animation category with *Sleeper*, while Ulster University at Magee student Cathal Fitzpatrick bagged the Drama prize with *A Hollow Tree*.

Two Factual prizes were awarded: to Ulster University at Magee's Malachy O'Hanlon for *The Lone Sailor* and to a team from Queen's University Belfast for *Technical Difficulties*.

The ceremony was hosted by UTV journalist Sarah McKinley. Jannine Waddell, MD of Waddell Media, delivered the Joe McKinney Memorial Keynote Speech.

Matthew Bell



Andrew Downes/Exposure

tells the extraordinary story of the Antrim hurler.

The ceremony was held on 28 March at The Galmont Hotel in Galway, and hosted by TG4 presenter Caitlín Nic Aoidh and RTÉ journalist Cormac Ó hEadhra.

The awards were supported by Irish broadcasters TG4, Virgin Media, Sky and RTÉ, and sponsored by Screen Ireland, Coimisiún na Meán, and Screen Producers Ireland.

Oscar winner honoured

Republic of Ireland Matthew Bell reports on the centre's Programme Awards in Galway and Student Awards at RTÉ in Dublin

Belfast actor James Martin was awarded the Outstanding Newcomer prize at the RTS Republic of Ireland Awards (Gradaim RTS) in late March. Martin starred in the Oscar-winning short film *An Irish Goodbye* in which he played the bereaved brother Lorcan.

Gogglebox Ireland, shown on Virgin Media Television, was

named the Factual Entertainment winner for the second year running.

The Drama prize went to another Virgin Media show (a co-commission with ITV), *Redemption*, a crime series set in Dublin starring Paula Malcomson.

RTÉ took home most of the gongs, including for Entertainment (*Callan Kicks the Year*), Factual Series (*Crimes and*

Confessions), Factual Single (*Speechless*) and Specialist Factual (*A Note for Nature*) awards. The national broadcaster also won the News and Current Affairs award for an investigation into a financial fraud – *The Accountant, the Con, the Lies*.

The Sport prize went to the *Terence McNaughton* interview episode of the TG4 series *Laochra Gael*, which

RTS Republic of Ireland Television Awards winners

Drama - *Redemption* - Metropolitan Films and Tall Story Pictures for Virgin Media

Entertainment - *Callan Kicks the Year* - Wonky Chair Media for RTÉ

Factual Entertainment - *Gogglebox Ireland* - Kite Entertainment for Virgin Media

Factual Series - *Crimes and Confessions* - RTÉ

Factual Single - *Speechless* - Fire-brand Productions for RTÉ

Specialist Factual - *A Note for Nature* - Crossing the Line Films for RTÉ One

Outstanding Newcomer - James Martin

News and Current Affairs - *RTÉ Investigates: The Accountant, the Con, the Lies* - RTÉ

Sport - *Terence McNaughton* - Nemeton TV for TG4

Children's - *Storybud* - Kite Entertainment for RTÉ

Animation - *The Ghastly Ghoul* - Dream Logic Animation Studios and Lupus Films for RTÉ

National Film School triumphs

The National Film School at IADT almost achieved a clean sweep of the principal prizes, with its students taking home the Animation, Drama and Factual awards.

It also won all four Craft Skills awards: Camera, Fiachra Gallagher Lawson for *Bestial Ones*; Editing, Meghan O'Shaughnessy for *They Killed Us for Existing*; and Sound, Rory Sweeney, and Writing, Conor Bradley, for *Sons of Róisín*.



Winners from the National Film School at IADT

George Adjaye

The Technological University Dublin won the Entertainment and Comedy Drama category.

"Despite the difficulties of the past few years, and the restrictions of the Covid

lockdown, once again the students have astonished us with the originality, resourcefulness, wit and verve of their work," said RTS Republic of Ireland Chair Agnes Cogan.

RTS Republic of Ireland Student Television Awards winners

Animation - *The Small Makings of a Storm* - National Film School at IADT

Drama - *Bestial Ones* - National Film School at IADT

Entertainment and Comedy - *Madame Machine Monday* - Technological University Dublin

Factual - *They Killed Us for Existing* - National Film School at IADT

Craft Skills: Camera - *Bestial Ones* - Fiachra Gallagher Lawson, National Film School at IADT

Craft Skills: Editing - *They Killed Us for Existing* - Meghan O'Shaughnessy, National Film School at IADT

Craft Skills: Sound - *Sons of Róisín* - Rory Sweeney, National Film School at IADT

Craft Skills: Writing - *Sons of Róisín* - Conor Bradley, National Film School at IADT



The RTS in the nations and regions: rts.org.uk/region

Falmouth's home town triumph

Devon and Cornwall

Esme Wallace took home three prizes from the RTS Devon and Cornwall Student Television Awards last month.

The Falmouth University student won the Entertainment and Comedy Drama prize with *Migraine*, which the judges said was “very artistic and confident in its style, [with] music and sound effects used to really good effect”. Wallace also nabbed two Craft Skills awards for Camera and Sound.

Students from Falmouth University won two of the other main awards. *Blanka's Story*, which the judges said had a “beautifully hand-drawn style, with a lovely, well-thought-out colour palette, textures and lighting”, took the Animation prize. Anna Burrlein and Isaac Artus won the Craft Skills: Writing award for the film.

Falmouth students Mila Lewis and Sommer Parry won the Factual prize. The judges said *Our Language* had: “lovely set-ups and actuality



Esme Wallace won three awards for *Migraine*

Falmouth University

from the start, with so much learning in there.... It was unfiltered, but very caring.”

The Drama prize went to a team of students from the University of Plymouth for *Bury The Eagle*. Christian Attree won the Craft Skills: Editing award for the film.

The awards were hosted by David Potts from ITV2 reality show *Kavos Weekender* at the Poly in Falmouth on 13 March.

Matthew Bell

RTS Devon and Cornwall Student Television Awards winners

Animation-Blanka's Story• Marta Gensler, Anna Burrlein, Cordelia Chown, Isaac Artus and team, Falmouth University

Drama-Bury The Eagle• Christian Attree, Jack Baker, Thomas Fitzgibbon, Harvey Andrews, Alex Fulcher, Nera Braccia, Mike Jarwood, Rosie Kinzel and Dan Oxley, University of Plymouth

Entertainment and Comedy Drama-Migraine• Esme Wallace, Falmouth University

Factual-Our Language• Mila Lewis and Sommer Parry, Falmouth University

Craft Skills: Camera-Migraine• Esme Wallace, Falmouth University

Craft Skills: Editing-Bury The Eagle• Christian Attree, University of Plymouth

Craft Skills: Production Design-Sold with Furniture• May Tyler, University of Plymouth

Craft Skills: Sound-Migraine• Esme Wallace, Falmouth University

Craft Skills: Writing-Blanka's Story• Anna Burrlein and Isaac Artus, Falmouth University

Norwich students enjoy night out in Cambridge

East Centre

Students from Norwich University of the Arts won two of the four prizes on offer at the RTS East Student Awards in March at a ceremony hosted by *BBC Look East* reporter Mousumi Bakshi at Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge.

The Drama award was awarded to *She Hears Crying* and the Factual prize went to *Under the Blanket*, both made by teams of students from Norwich University of the Arts.

She Hears Crying was praised by the judges for a “strong central performance and engaging narrative”, while *Under the Blanket* was “very engaging, with huge twists and great use of flashbacks”.

University of Hertfordshire students took the Animation prize with *Rise*, while Anglia Ruskin University scored a home victory with *Therapy* in the Entertainment and Comedy Drama category.

Matthew Bell



Norwich University of the Arts students with the Drama award

Phil Mynott

RTS East Student Television Awards winners

Animation-Rise• Bhavesh Raghupat, Paulina Zochowska and Rebecca Johnson, University of Hertfordshire

Drama-She Hears Crying• George Irwin, Billy Bramwell, Nadia Jackson and Corey

Scanlon, Norwich University of the Arts

Entertainment and Comedy Drama-Therapy• Martha Wallam, Kai Wissler and Chloe Kelly, Anglia Ruskin University

Factual-Under the Blanket• Tanicha Toro-Oloto, Raphaela Dowding-Green, Valerie Safira and Anthony White, Norwich University of the Arts

Students from a sixth-form college, the Islington-based London Screen Academy, won the Drama prize at the RTS London Student Television Awards last month.

Bird, about a 14-year-old girl coming to terms with the loss of her father, featured “strong, naturalistic performances from a young ensemble cast”, said the judges. “Competition in this category was the strongest of all.”

The Animation award went to *Carrot* by Zoe Wang and Jamie Jiang from Kingston School of Art. The judges described *Carrot*, which addresses family abuse and trauma, as a “delightful film that seamlessly combines stop-motion models and 2D drawings... as thought-provoking as it is engaging”.

A team of film-makers from London South Bank University lifted the Entertainment and Comedy Drama award with *Tell Tyler*, which the judges said was “tonally spot-on, with strong character performances, genuine



Animation winner *Carrot*

Kingston School of Art

Serious films lift prizes

laugh-out-loud moments and a good line in sight gags”.

The Factual prize went to Kingston School of Art’s Miranda Peyton Jones for *Jeremy, My Father*, a film about the suicide of her father, a

classical composer. “[It] cleverly employs animation and stop-motion techniques to tell the difficult story... and allows the grief of the narrator its own place,” said the judges.

Nominees and their

lecturers attended the ceremony, which was hosted by TV magician Harry De Cruz from the Magic Circle and live-streamed on the RTS London YouTube channel.

Matthew Bell

RTS London Student Television Awards winners

Animation-*Carrot*-Zoe Wang and Jamie Jiang, Kingston School of Art
Drama-*Bird*-Maya Kotecha, Grace St George, Liam Bitton, Malise Rowland, Saul Samba, Aron Akin and team, London Screen Academy

Entertainment and Comedy Drama-*Tell Tyler*-Frankie Gommon, Jenny Richards, Jamie Oliver Lai and Joseph Elsen, London South Bank University

Factual-*Jeremy, My Father*-Miranda Peyton Jones, Kingston School of Art

Craft Skills: Camera-*Pulp* by Rind-Alfie Thompson, University of Westminster

Craft Skills: Editing-*A Heist Film*-

Marcus Perry, University of Greenwich

Craft Skills: Production Design-*Unexpected Delivery*-Olivia Rosa-Alscher, Regent’s University London

Craft Skills: Sound-*The House in the Middle of the Sea*-Fran Christie, Middlesex University London

Craft Skills: Writing-*Sidetracking*-Marco De Rosso, Middlesex University London

The UPSIDE

Not only the lonely’s favourite copper

Approaching national treasure status, step forward the peerless Sarah Lancashire, winner of the Outstanding Achievement Award at last month’s star-studded RTS Programme Awards.

Eight years ago, she bagged the Actor award for playing every one’s favourite TV cop, Catherine Cawood, in series 1 of *Happy Valley*.

In her acceptance speech, Sarah reminded the audience that TV, every day, provides company for millions.

She recalled an encounter years earlier at a checkout queue while doing some Christmas Eve shopping. “I bet you think what you do doesn’t matter,” an elderly lady told the star. “Tomorrow, I’ll be spending Christmas Day alone but I will have the TV for company.”

Charlotte enjoys a good night for gongs

The BBC’s content chief, Charlotte Moore, received the prestigious Judges’ Award the same night, providing some very welcome positive news for DG Tim Davie, who was at the top table alongside ITV’s new Chair, Andrew Cosslett, making his debut at an RTS awards ceremony.

The BBC pocketed 17 of

the night’s 30 awards. In her acceptance speech, Charlotte said the BBC’s job was “to back the very best of British creativity” and urged programme-makers to “be ever more fearless”.

Follow your passion or your parents?

In an emotional evening one of the biggest cheers was for Ade Adepitan, winner in the Sports Presenter, Commentator or Pundit category, for his coverage of last year’s Winter Paralympics for Channel 4.

Close to tears, Ade dedicated his award to his parents. Back in the 1980s, they had wanted him to go to university instead of pursuing a career as a Paralympian, but he dashed their hopes. “I put

them through so much,” he remembered. “I only wish they were here today to see me receive this award.”

The pros and cons of BBC balance

The Upside is impressed that erstwhile RTS Chair John Hardie is to review the BBC’s policy on social media and how freelance contributors use the likes of Twitter.

As CEO of ITN for almost a decade, he is an inspired choice to tackle the treacherous issue of impartiality following the Lineker row. He comes to the task free of any past associations with the BBC, having worked at Disney before ITN.

The Upside looks forward to his report, due by summer.



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