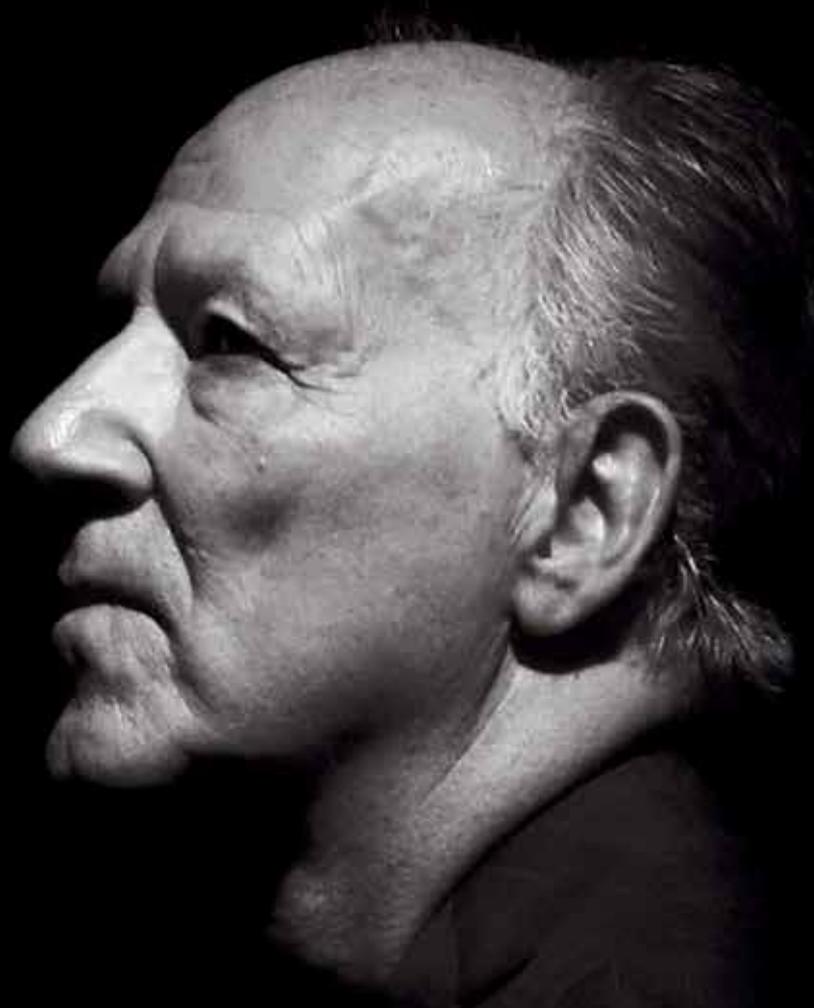


July/August 2019

# Television



## **Werner Herzog** **Interview with** **a legend**

David Harewood | Alex Scott | The South Bank Show

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## From the CEO



We have just enjoyed two outstanding national RTS events, the RTS Student Television Awards and a live *South Bank Show* special devoted to the

art of screenwriting. Many thanks to all of you who worked hard to make these happen. Congratulations to all the nominees and winners of the awards, and a special thank you to the hosts, the totally engaging Matt Edmondson and Mollie King.

Inside is a full report of the writers' evening, presented by Melvyn Bragg.

We had a full house as some of television's most successful storytellers shared their approaches to their craft. I am very grateful to the event's joint organisers, Directors Cut Productions, Sky Arts and Premier.

I am thrilled that Alex Scott found the time to write this edition's Our Friend column. The Women's World Cup really did capture and hold the public's imagination: England's semi-final against the US, shown on BBC One, delivered the year's highest peak-time TV audience, of 11.7 million people.

Our cover story is Pippa Shawley's brilliant interview with a genuine

creative icon, Werner Herzog. His new BBC *Arena* film, focusing on his relationship with Bruce Chatwin, is something to look forward to this autumn.

Don't miss Simon Shaps's incisive review of a new book that analyses the recent battle to own Sky, and Stewart Purvis's account of how the politics of Brexit are challenging news broadcasters and what impartiality means in a fragmenting political landscape.

Theresa Wise

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**Subscription rates**  
UK £115  
Overseas (surface) £146.11  
Overseas (airmail) £172.22  
Enquiries: publication@rts.org.uk

**Printing**  
ISSN 0308-454X  
Printer: FE Burman  
20 Crimscoot Street  
London SE1 5TP

**Legal notice**  
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Registered Charity 313 728

# TV diary

RTS bursary student **Lydia Noakes** seeks nocturnal inspiration as she prepares for a career in journalism



**M**y week starts the way it has done most Mondays for the past three years – sitting in a university library. There’s one big difference. At this time of year, there is a veil of calm. The underlying current of stress has dissipated. It’s a big change from the tensions of exam season a month ago.

Chairs stand unoccupied and academic books are tossed aside. I am finally on my last chapter. This one is entitled “The real world of television”.

■ It’s been three years since I joined the RTS bursary scheme. Since then, I’ve been navigating my way through the industry, learning to grow a thick skin and encountering unique opportunities.

Trying to find my way hasn’t always been easy. At times, it can feel like you’re a small fish in a shark tank. But being a member of the Royal Television Society gives me the safety net that anyone starting out on a career in TV desires so frantically.

My mantra is: “No matter who we are, we’re able to succeed with a helping hand.”

■ After being introduced to an opportunity by the RTS in 2018, I’m in Birmingham. I’m on my way to

the BBC to be assessed for a journalism apprenticeship.

I can’t believe it but I’ve managed to beat more than 5,000 applicants. The day consists of a group exercise, interview and written assessment. Looking around the room, I am reminded that now is an exciting time to be starting a career in the media industry.

■ Like many people with an over-active imagination, I have developed what I refer to as “creative insomnia”. It sounds like the title of a new Netflix drama aimed at Millennials like myself.

On my bedside table I place a notebook and a pen ready to write, cross out and generally work up any ideas that – if I’m lucky – might disturb my sleep. For the past year I’ve been producing a documentary looking at organ donation in the UK. The germ of the idea emerged from a 2:00am brainstorm.

■ I attend a meeting with True Vision’s creative director, Anna Hall. I have the RTS to thank for introducing me to Anna. Being matched with a mentor is possibly the best opportunity that comes with being a bursary student.

Anna passionately believes that documentaries should make a difference and push boundaries. I agree wholeheartedly. She tells me about the programmes that True Vision is

working on. Its record on exposing human rights abuses is amazing. We agree to see each other again so we can discuss making my ideas a reality.

■ Like the rest of the nation, I’m hooked on *Killing Eve*. Villanelle, played to perfection by the awesome Jodie Comer, is shockingly wicked yet somehow disturbingly easy to relate to.

Not the best female role model but one of the all-time great TV villains.

Another favourite is *Gogglebox*. Such a simple idea and totally compelling. I shudder to think what comments would come from my sofa. Some of the expletives would have to be bleeped out.

■ Ping! My email goes off again. It’s the brilliant Anne Dawson from the RTS. She manages the bursary scheme and has the mammoth task of organising more than 100 students. Despite this, she seems to know every one of us as individuals.

This year alone, thanks to Anne, I’ve gained work experience and an apprenticeship.

This time, she asks if I’d like to write the TV Diary for *Television*. Without hesitation, I reply that I’d love to. The RTS has given me another fantastic opportunity!

*Lydia Noakes is a graduate broadcast journalist and RTS bursary recipient.*

# TV'S TOP FIVE GRISLY ENDS

**James Cordell** recalls  
some strange and  
outré demises

## 1 Stone me! *The Colour of Magic, Sky*

Power-hungry sorcerer Ymper Trymon was on the cusp of learning the final spell of a powerful tome, the *Octavo*. First, though, he needed to kill the world's worst wizard, Rincewind, by casting a spell to turn him into stone. The bumbling Rincewind deflected the spell skywards. A conceited Trymon then slipped on a banana peel and landed under his own spell, becoming TV's most surprised statue.



## 2 Exploding formicidae! *Rick and Morty, Cartoon Network/Netflix/Channel 4*

In the animated sitcom *Rick and Morty*, an intoxicated Rick laid a series of traps for superhero team the Vindicators, causing dissension in their ranks.

The half-ghost, half-human Alan Rails duly came to blows with Million Ants, a sentient colony of



ants. This ended with Supernova propelling the pair into a force field. In the commotion, Million Ants suddenly swarmed into Rail's mouth and expanded from inside his body, turning the hero into a fleshy balloon that exploded gorily. In the words of Sanchez: "Oof! Didn't see that comin'."

## 3 Mirror, mirror off the wall *Emmerdale, ITV*

After a crashing helicopter devastated the small village of Emmerdale, sisters Val Pollard and Diane Sugden were trapped in a hall of mirrors. In an uncharacteristically selfless act, Pollard let Sugden escape first. Pinned under rubble, she could see a large shard of glass directly above her. With death imminent, the fearless B&B owner lit her last cigarette and waited for the blade to fall.

## 4 Talk about a headache *Game of Thrones, HBO/Sky*

The Red Viper, Oberyn Martell, faced the murderer of his wife and children in a duel. After impaling the sadistic giant, Gregor Clegane (aka the Mountain), Martell rashly withdrew his spear so that the dying Clegane could confess to his crimes.

The Mountain took the opportunity to grab Martell and knock out his teeth. He then grasped the Viper's head and inserted his thumbs into the prince's eye sockets. Confessing his sins as he expired, the villain crushed Martell's skull to pulp.

## 5 The dog who waited *Futurama, Sky*

In the 31st century, Philip J Fry was offered the chance to clone the petrified 20th-century remains of his pet border terrier, Seymour Asses. Fry declined, knowing that Seymour had lived for 12 years after his master left him outside a pizza parlour and had probably forgotten him and lived a full life.

Then viewers saw a heart-breaking montage of the 12 years that Seymour sat waiting for Fry outside Panucci's Pizza. Seymour would not leave his post until he finally lay down and slept for the last time – one of TV animation's saddest deaths. ■



Pictures: Sky/ITV

# A verdict on TV

## Interview

Carole Solazzo  
hears Robert Rinder  
cast judgement on  
his own life

ITV

**P**eople say I used to do a serious job and now I just do television. But look at what television can do – look at its power and importance.”

Robert “Judge” Rinder was speaking about his career – from would-be actor to television presenter via the Bar and British Overseas Territories – with *Granada Reports* presenter Lucy Meacock at an RTS North West event at the Lowry in June. He has fronted the ITV daytime show *Judge Rinder*, in which he arbitrates over civil cases, since its launch in 2014.

Arguing that “life can switch on the throw of a die”, Rinder gave up on acting after he heard Benedict Cumberbatch at an audition deliver the same lines. So, he studied law and was called to the Bar at the tender age of 21.

As a barrister for the defence, Rinder worked on many high-profile criminal cases, such as the drive-by shooting of Letisha Shakespeare and Charlene Ellis in 2003. Later, “as poacher turned gamekeeper”, he was sent to the Turks and Caicos Islands, where he was involved in prosecuting corrupt

government officers. However, Rinder recalled how he would “wake up feeling bankrupt, depleted”, and eventually realised he was “desperately depressed”.

He began working on scripts with Storyvault Films, hoping to relaunch the successful 1970s and 1980s ITV series *Crown Court*, but couldn’t sell the idea. But it did lead to a meeting with ITV Studios’ (now) director of entertainment in the North, Tom McLennan, “a

corporate visionary”, and “within four or five months” he’d been commissioned to front *Judge Rinder*.

As “the beneficiary” of the “extraordinary creativity and emotional intelligence” of the “broad and diverse team” behind the show, Rinder said that, in the North West, “no one gets into that team by virtue of nepotism... but by merit”. They are “wholly indifferent to... first-class degrees. [What is important

## Remembering the Holocaust

Robert Rinder – who is set to make a two-part documentary with Wall to Wall for next year’s Holocaust Remembrance Day – described appearing in *Who Do You Think You Are?* as ‘without question, the most important privilege I’ve had in television’.

The BBC One series won a Bafta this year for a powerful episode in which Rinder traced the story of his grandfather Morris, who survived the Holocaust. He said the show was a ‘gift, not just for being able to tell that

story, but to tell it for my family’. Morris was rescued and sent to Windermere, which ‘made him proud to be English’. Rinder acknowledged a resonance with the current treatment of refugees: ‘This is an optimistic story,’ he said. ‘This is what Britain is at our best.’

Discussing the recent increase in anti-Semitism, Rinder quoted Maya Angelou on the necessity of everyone making a stand when witnessing wrong: ‘Without courage we cannot practise any other virtue with consistency.’



Judge Rinder

is] can you speak to people? [Can you] listen?"

Rinder offered anecdotes of "almost pantomimic" episodes, but insisted there is a serious aspect to the show: "I'm very proud... that it's enabled people to feel confident to bring their own cases to court." Of his participation in BBC One's *Strictly Come Dancing*, Rinder described it as "more than escapism – it's deliverance into joy".

Recently, Rinder has come almost full circle, using his expertise in criminal law to investigate true crime in ITV's *Judge Rinder's Crime Stories*. The episode about the 1988 murder of Helen McCourt, whose body has never been found, won the Current Affairs Programme prize at last year's RTS North West Awards.

Rinder added: "Nearly all new participants in the show are recommended by previous [contributors]," because they feel "this is a creative community you can trust." ■

*The RTS North West event 'An evening with Judge Rinder' was held at the Lowry Theatre, Salford, on 19 June and produced by Kate Broadhurst and Rachel Pinkney.*

# EAR CANDY



## Obsessed with... Killing Eve

Pippa Shawley savours the perfect podcast for summer listening

Once upon a time, not too long ago, big TV series would be discussed around the office watercooler. While ITV2's summer sizzler *Love Island* has gone some way to bringing that back, for television dramas the choice is now so vast that everyone is watching something different. And, thanks to TV on-demand, even if people are watching the same series, it's likely to be at a different pace.

Take *Killing Eve*. Viewers were chomping at the bit in anticipation of series 2, which aired in the US two months before it landed in the UK. Once it arrived, fans had the choice of binge-watching the whole series in one go via iPlayer, or savouring it over eight Saturday nights on BBC One.

Enter the podcast. Vice UK executive editor Zing Tsjeng and model Naomi

Shimada host *Obsessed with... Killing Eve*, the BBC's official companion podcast, produced by Chalk & Blade.

In each instalment, superfans Tsjeng and Shimada dissect an episode of the show, alongside guests including *Queer Eye's* Tan France and psychopathy consultant Mark Freestone.

There are also bonus episodes featuring interviews with stars of the show Kim Bodnia, who played Konstantin, and Henry Lloyd-Hughes, the actor behind the loathsome Aaron Peel.

The pair cover topics millennial women would discuss down the pub – if we still went to pubs instead of making DIY Aperol spritzers at home.

These range from Villanelle's wardrobe to how the show portrays sexual dynamics and queerness on mainstream TV, plus plenty of outrageous anecdotes of their own. ■

# WORKING LIVES

## Location manager for the National Trust



**T**he National Trust's filming and locations manager Lauren Taylor studied history and film at university before joining the charity as a marketing assistant and going on to join its film office. The film team liaises between National Trust properties and film and TV location managers on projects ranging from daytime shows to big-budget dramas.

They have assisted on several upcoming series including *Poldark* series 5, *The Crown* series 3, new Netflix show *Watchmen* and the BBC's latest

adaptation of *A Christmas Carol*, starring Tom Hardy, plus the *Downton Abbey* film.

Alongside the charity's head of filming and locations, Harvey Edgington, Taylor has co-authored *National Trust on Screen*, a guide to over 50 major shoots that have taken place around the country, due out next spring.

### **What does a filming and locations manager do?**

My job at the National Trust involves project managing, booking filming, and dealing with initial inquiries through to the actual shoot. There are three of us in the office and we manage everything

from still photos, to documentaries, to dramas, to films.

### **At what stage in production do you usually come on board?**

Sometimes people call up and they know where they want to go, or they might need help finding somewhere. They'll say, "we need a house that looks like Kensington Palace" or "we know we want to film at Chartwell because that's Churchill's house".

We suggest locations to fit their brief, then we arrange for recces. And we help the properties work out if they can definitely take on a project, because

*Pride and Prejudice*  
star Keira Knightley  
in the National Trust's  
Stourhead Gardens



Comcast

d'être – filming has to fit around that. These are not empty location houses, they are living, breathing visitor attractions.

#### **Is there anything you can't film at National Trust properties?**

As a charity, we have to be impartial. When it comes to documentaries, we don't do religion or politics. We can't do a party political broadcast or something for the Jehovah's Witnesses, for example. Our contracts say no nudity unless you discuss it with us first, but it's quite infrequent really. I've had an instance where there's been an actor naked in a scene and I was like, "OK, but he just can't turn around and face the land."

#### **What impact does filming have on National Trust properties?**

Big films and even TV dramas and factual shows such as *Countryfile* will bring more people in. A classic example is Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland*, filmed at Antony House in Cornwall. We'd never done a shoot there before, not even a documentary, and their numbers went from 20,000 to 100,000. What's great is that visitor numbers never go back to where they were before.

#### **How do you prepare properties for that sort of visitor growth?**

We'll warn them and say, "Look, this will probably be a big film", but you never really know. Sometimes it looks like it's going to be a big film and it isn't. At Antony House, they put in some more car parking spaces and had a big think about how they were going to manage that flow of people.

Generally, properties can absorb higher visitor numbers and a lot of the houses have timed tickets anyway.

#### **What could film and TV crews do to make your job easier?**

They need to understand that it is a historic space and not a studio. We're not being difficult or putting loads of restrictions in on purpose. We ask for those things because they're necessary and because we are a charity and we have all these priceless things.

We have 5 million members, we need to be seen to be looking after these places properly. They are of importance and they will be for hundreds of years to come. At the Trust, we don't think in terms of 10 years, we think in hundreds of years.

#### **What's the best thing about your job?**

It's great seeing all these places brought back to how they were in their heyday. In *Pride and Prejudice*, with Keira Knightley, the Netherfield ball scenes were filmed at Basildon Park, near Reading.

I was there the day they shot the arrival at the ball and the whole ball scene. There were 250 people in costume, six horses and carriages, and braziers outside lighting the way in. There was Donald Sutherland, Keira Knightley and Rosamund Pike – all these people there, dressed in their beautiful outfits and you just think, "My goodness, this is what it would have been like".

It's a chance to see these places as they were used for entertaining, for parties, for breakfast. Now, they're not so much museums, but obviously they're not as lively as they were then.

#### **What are some common misconceptions about your job?**

People think we get to meet the stars, but we don't. We see them, but no one bothers them because they're doing their job.

People also think it must be quite glamorous and it isn't really. It's a lot of slog. There's a lot of thinking about where the trucks are going to park and talking to all sorts of people. I once had to ring a vicar and ask if we could dig a grave in his graveyard, which was odd!

#### **What kind of challenges are unique to your job?**

Sometimes the outdoors can be as complicated as the historic buildings. On a show such as *Poldark*, for example, we were joined by Natural England, which advises us on what can and can't be done on Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

Bats are a big thing, they get everywhere, such as at Woodchester Park when we did *The Crown*. There is a scene where Prince Philip is in a boat-house over a lake and falls out of the window. It's a very important habitat for lesser horseshoe bats. We had to get a bat ecologist down to come and advise what times of the day they could actually film.

In those situations, you've got to see if you can get hold of the bat person. Can they come out at the right time? If they can't, then we haven't got the advice we need and can't proceed. ■

*Interview by Pippa Shawley.*

it's quite a lot of work for them. Once it's all happening, we attend the recesses and generally act as liaison between the properties and the location managers. We also set the location fees and all the boring logistical stuff such as contracts.

Our main challenge is trying to make things work in very important, delicate, historical places that have to be left as they're found. If it's going to be too risky then we just don't do it, because it's not worth it.

Our main priority, as an organisation, is looking after these places and opening them to the public. That's our raison

---

# Auteur Author Actor

## Interview

**Werner Herzog** tells **Pippa Shawley** how he met **Bruce Chatwin**, the subject of his latest film – and why lock picking is an essential skill

**F**or a straight-talking man, it's hard to define Werner Herzog. "Legend" is perhaps the easiest way to describe the 76-year-old, at least based on the reverential whispers that run around Sheffield's Crucible Theatre ahead of his appearance at the city's annual DocFest. Best known as the writer, director and producer of more than 60 films, Bavarian-born Herzog is also an author, actor and opera director.

Herzog's vision is unique – his 1982 film *Fitzcarraldo* saw him persuade his crew to haul a 340-ton steamship over a Peruvian mountain; in *Grizzly Man* he used footage shot by Timothy Treadwell to document his experience of living with bears, including the audio of Treadwell being eaten alive by one; he pulled a gun on his notoriously difficult protagonist Klaus Kinski during production of *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*; and ate his own shoe after losing a bet for Les Blank's short film *Werner Herzog Eats His Shoe*.

Herzog's work rate is enviable, particularly for someone who claims he doesn't have a career. He insists he

isn't a workaholic. He's made three films in the past 12 months: *Meeting Gorbachev*, featuring a series of interviews with the last leader of the Soviet Union; *Family Romance, LLC*, a surreal drama about a Japanese firm that loans actors to serve as surrogate figures, such as absent fathers and funeral corpses; and *Nomad: In the Footsteps of Bruce Chatwin*, the BBC *Arena* film that he's in Sheffield to promote.

"I work in a very leisurely fashion, but [with] concentrated, short days of shooting, very little time editing," Herzog explains over coffee (black, with sugar). He doesn't shoot coverage (different shots and angles of the same scene that can be used in post-production) "which everybody spends endless days [doing]". On average, he spends just nine days editing a film. A screenplay takes him a week to write.

An icon of cinema, he's often asked for his tips to young film-makers: "I try to encourage them to become self-reliant, and stick to their own culture and stick to their own vision," he explains. "Today, you can make a narrative feature film in theatrical quality for under \$20,000."



Werner Herzog, with Bruce Chatwin's rucksack during the making of *Nomad*

BBC

The auteur also runs the Rogue Film School, where he spends time listening to students' ideas and helping them overcome obstacles. "The only two things that I literally teach are lock picking and the forging of documents. Nothing else."

He can still use those skills today: "[If] I'm crossing the Alps, for example, and there's a lot of chalets, holiday homes that are only occupied for five weeks during the entire year, I would open them with tiny surgical tools, silently and without any damage... and sleep in the bed when there is a rain-storm out there."

When it comes to planning his work, Herzog has no problem compartmentalising his ideas, nor in finding new ones. "Normally, projects come with great vehemence at me, very often uninvited burglars in the middle of the night." He doesn't carry a battered notebook around to save these ideas because "when somebody is coming wildly, swinging at you in the middle of the night, you better deal with that one first."

His latest film, *Nomad: In the Footsteps of Bruce Chatwin*, was commissioned by

## 'PROJECTS COME [LIKE] BURGLARS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT'

BBC Arts' Mark Bell to mark 30 years since the death of the renowned travel writer and novelist. Chatwin was a close friend of Herzog's. The pair worked together on *Cobra Verde*, Herzog's film adaptation of Chatwin's novel *The Viceroy of Ouidah*. The novel was one of only six books published by Chatwin before he died with Aids, aged just 48. He is perhaps best known for his debut, *In Patagonia*, and his 1987 work, *The Songlines*.

"It's a pity that he didn't have enough time in his life to do much more," Herzog laments.

Chatwin wrote about his friend in his essay *Gone to Ghana*: "He was, I discovered, a compendium of contradictions: immensely tough yet vulnerable, affectionate and remote, austere and sensual, not particularly well adjusted to the strains of everyday life but functioning

efficiently under extreme conditions."

Herzog remembers being stunned by Chatwin's ability to tell stories non-stop. "And I mean non-stop, until the day was over, deep into the night, then a few hours' sleep.

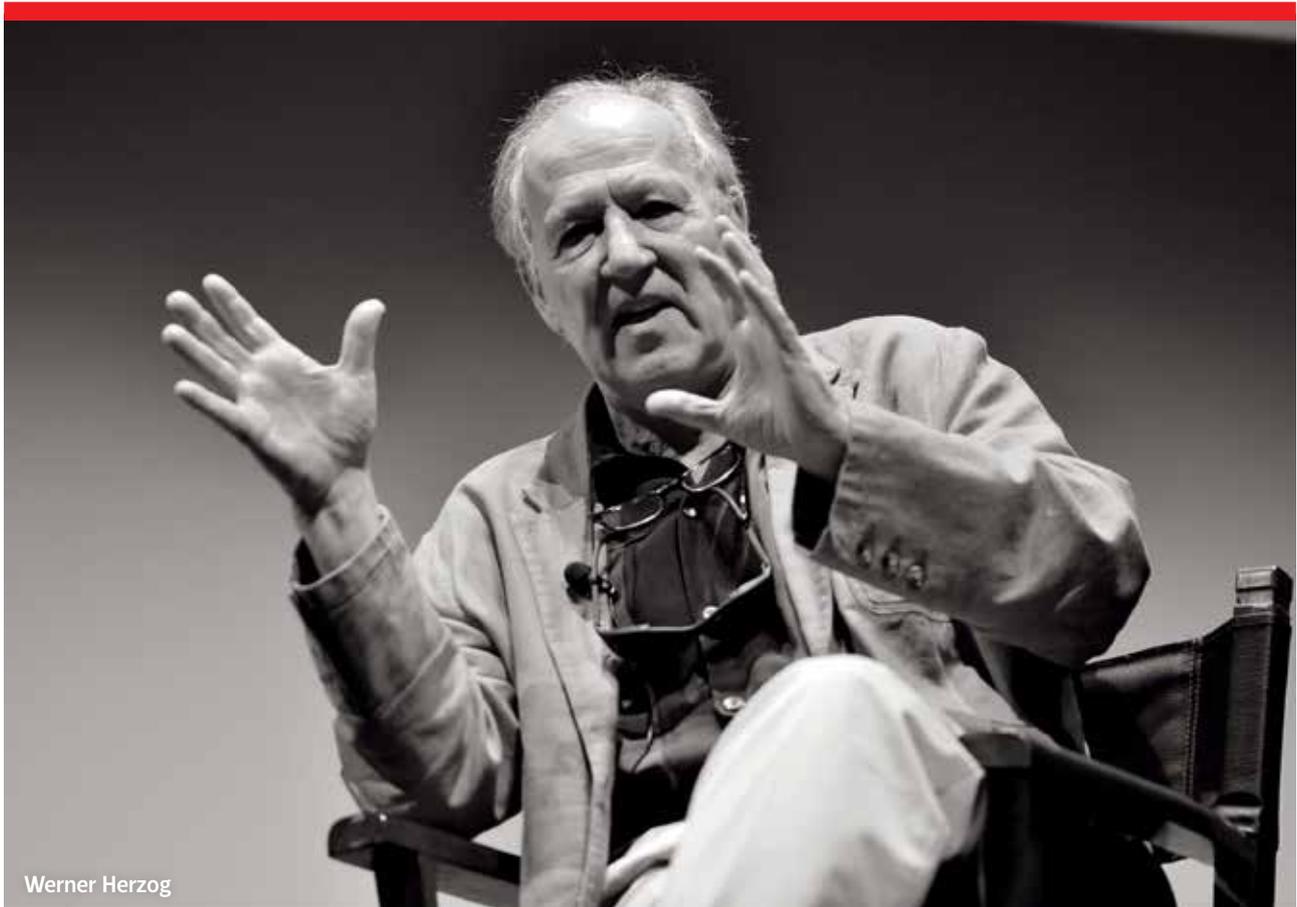
"We would meet at breakfast and he would continue the half-finished sentence from the evening before."

The pair met in Australia, where Herzog was preparing his feature film *When the Green Ants Dream*, and Chatwin was researching his book *The Songlines*, about the country's aboriginal people.

"I think both of us were searching for each other," says Herzog. "It was like two critical masses heated up to [make] something much bigger."

*Nomad* sees Herzog follow in his friend's footsteps, as he travels to the Australian Outback, Patagonia and the Black Mountains in Wales, carrying Chatwin's rucksack, which was given to him after the writer's death.

It was a deeply personal journey for Herzog, who visited Chatwin just days before he died. Towards the end of the documentary, the film-maker talks about the moment his friend told him he was too weak to carry his rucksack. >



Werner Herzog

Alberto Rodriguez/WireImage

› Herzog offered to carry it for him. It is a moving scene for the viewer, but Herzog insists that it isn't emotional.

"When you say emotional, I immediately think about TV sentimentality, these men crying when they think about difficult times," says Herzog in his signature German drawl. "It's rampant, I can't stand it."

For any particular reason? "It's just an abomination, that's it."

Herzog avoids this sentimentality by being laconic, "as I was when Bruce was dying.... He was literally only a skeleton and glowing eyes," he remembers. "The first thing he said to me was, 'Werner, I'm dying.'"

"And I said to him, matter of fact, 'Bruce, I can see that.' So it was not a tearful sort of sentimental encounter with someone who was close to me and seeing him die. It was laconic and not sentimental."

The resulting film is not a straightforward biography of Bruce Chatwin, but is inspired by their friendship, shared worldview and the mutual interest in nomadic peoples that originally brought them together in Australia.

The pair also bonded over their common belief in the power of making long journeys on foot.

"He was also the only person with whom I could have a one-to-one

## 'SENTIMENTALITY IS RAMPANT... IT IS AN ABOMINATION'

conversation on what I would call the sacramental aspect of walking," wrote Chatwin. "He and I share a belief that walking is not simply therapeutic for oneself but is a poetic activity that can cure the world of its ills."

What would Chatwin have made of the 21st century? Herzog thinks for a long time. "I have not thought about this but, of course, he would have been a writer with 20, 30 books finished by today.... We can only speculate, but we know we would have much, much more great literature."

Today, Herzog lives with his wife, Lena, a photographer, in Los Angeles. It's a surprising choice for someone who eschews conventional film-making and many aspects of modern life. He doesn't have a mobile phone, isn't on social media and chooses reading and cooking over watching television.

"I've always been curious about the world, and living in Los Angeles has something grandiose about it because it's certainly the city with the most

substance in the US, if not the entire world."

It's not often you hear the city where Barbie dolls were invented and the coroner's office has a gift shop named *Skeletons in the Closet* talked about in this way. But Herzog argues that LA is the nerve centre of this century's technological advances.

"I'm not speaking of the glitz and glamour of Hollywood," he explains. "Everything that had relevance in the last half century or so, even longer, originated there, including the internet, video games... [and] stupidities like aerobic studios.... Almost everything of real importance comes from California."

It's hard to disagree. In fact, it's hard to disagree with much Herzog says, although it's tricky to tell if that's because he's right about everything, or if it's the effect of his hypnotic, heavily accented intonations that have bewitched viewers for almost 60 years. ■

**Arena: Nomad – In the Footsteps of Bruce Chatwin will air on BBC Two this autumn. It was written, directed and narrated by Werner Herzog and commissioned for BBC Two and Arena by Mark Bell. The executive producer for BBC Studios was Richard Bright.**

# OUR FRIEND IN FRANCE

**B**eing at the Fifa Women's World Cup in France as a BBC TV pundit this year was amazing and very different to when I was a player.

My job was mostly to provide game analysis at the matches in the tournament where the major teams were playing, especially England and the title holders, the US.

That meant travelling up and down France to attend 16 of the 52 matches and, of course, watching all the other games. That way, I stayed in touch with the tournament. Plus, I did some extra filming for events, including the World Cup legends match and in a recording studio with French rapper JXSE.

So for the whole of the World Cup I was running full-on, but I wouldn't have wanted to be doing anything else. It was particularly good to experience the atmosphere in the bars and cafés with people from all countries before and after the games.

You don't get to see that as a player and yet that's what makes these tournaments so special.

Being a football pundit is the best job ever after having been a player, but it's a totally different kind of pleasure. When I went to the Men's World Cup in Russia last year with the BBC, it was my first time as a pundit at a tournament and I loved it. Just talking football was great fun. Since then, I've been working regularly for the BBC and for Sky Sports at international matches and Premier League games.

Now it's normal to have women as

**Alex Scott, a BBC TV commentator at the Women's World Cup, relishes how football is empowering women**



pundits on the men's game and vice versa. In France, I often had the ex-Manchester United and Aston Villa player Dion Dublin next to me.

The thing about being a pundit is that you can't just turn up and talk. I do plenty of research – although, of course, I already knew the teams and many of the top players in the Women's World Cup because I only stopped playing as a professional in 2018. I'd spent 16 years playing the game, mostly for Arsenal but also for three years in America.

Being able to walk into the US team hotel to find out how everyone felt before a game gave me some real insights for my role as a pundit. Plus, I was a teammate to many of the

England Lionesses at the last World Cup. I had lots of background stories about the squad.

I played in three World Cups, starting in China in 2007. I was so proud singing the national anthem back then and incredibly excited because it was the first time our women had qualified for this tournament in 12 years.

The media suddenly took an interest when we reached the quarter-finals that year, and the BBC showed the game live rather than highlights. Sadly, we got thumped by the Americans.

Everyone thought we were crap, but that wasn't true because, eight years later, I played in the England team that won the bronze medal. This raised the profile of the women's game hugely.

You can't really compare playing in a World Cup to talking about it. But this year I was part of the amazing amount of media coverage that the women's game received. I'm recognised more than ever now. I was in loads of selfies taken by fans in France. Everyone was so encouraging, wishing me luck because the fans know that part of my job is to promote the women's game.

Having the Lionesses on TV so often has inspired many women and not just in sport. I did a talk at a conference last month to a group of women in finance. They told me how the Women's World Cup was so empowering for them, too. It's amazing for women footballers to do that. ■

**Alex Scott MBE made 140 appearances for England and represented Great Britain at the 2012 Olympics.**



**Stewart Purvis** argues that our fragmented politics is challenging news broadcasters, especially the BBC, as never before

# Is Brexit killing impartiality?

**I**n May 2018, the top two UK parties, as measured in opinion polls and real votes cast in elections, were Labour and the Conservatives. A year later, they had been displaced by the Brexit Party and the Liberal Democrats.

One man's journey during just three of those 12 months helps to illustrate this wacky new world of UK politics. In March 2019, he left one party to help create another, which started with one name, changed to a different one and then changed back. He then joined a third party, saying that he should probably have gone with it in the first place.

You probably have run out of sympathy for Chuka Umunna and his voyage from Labour to the Liberal Democrats via the Independent Group aka Change UK. But spare a thought for broadcasters trying to observe the regulatory requirement for “due impartiality” in these unusual times.

The Ofcom “Digest of evidence of past electoral support and current support”, sent to broadcasters before the European elections to help them make their judgements, contained no mention of the eventual winner, the Brexit Party, which had only just been created.

One respected political observer,

Rafael Behr of the *Guardian*, says the Brexit referendum has turned out to be “a meltdown in the reactor core at the heart of British politics”. Some of the fallout from the continuing fragmentation of British politics has landed on the BBC.

“If BBC News continues to distort and withhold information from viewers there will be trouble,” tweeted *Telegraph* columnist Allison Pearson. “Oh my... has it come to this?” replied BBC correspondent Rory Cellan-Jones. A BBC News executive accused two predecessors who were reviewing the current output of “making a few bob to

supplement their pensions as armchair generals”.

The *Observer* asked: “Is BBC News broken?” The first of its contributors began: “Our national broadcaster has been defeated by Brexit.” Then came the *Our Next Prime Minister* debate, summed up by the *Guardian*’s Jonathan Freedland as “a painful hour delivered via a format that featured too much crosstalk and too little cross-examination”.

How exactly did it “come to this” and what’s to be done?

It was as far back as a decade and a half ago that the BBC got its first warning that a UK referendum on the EU would mean trouble for the corporation.

In 2005, an independent panel of outside experts, chaired by Lord Wilson of Dinton, the former cabinet secretary Richard Wilson, was appointed by the then-governors. The panel predicted that “a referendum period makes unconventional demands on broadcasters in that balance consists of giving equal treatment to the Yes and No campaigns, rather than to government and opposition spokespeople”.

The experts forecast that the referendum would “free voters from party affiliations, introduce non-politicians to the political arena and divide the loyalty of parliamentarians”.

The particular referendum they were referring to never actually happened. As it turned out, Britain didn’t need to vote in 2006 on a constitution for Europe because electors in France and the Netherlands stopped the proposed treaty in its tracks.

But when, in 2016, the UK finally did get the chance to vote on Europe the panel’s 2005 prediction that a referendum would “free voters from party affiliations” was immediately validated. Voters now seem to find it easier to identify as leavers or remainers rather than Conservative or Labour.

The impact of the BBC’s 2016 referendum coverage on its reputation was significant. As part of an action plan after the critical report in 2005, the coverage of Europe had been improved by the appointment of a Europe editor, currently the award-winning Katya Adler. The unconscious Europhile mindset had been replaced by a commitment to “deliver to audiences impartial and independent reporting of the campaign, providing them with fair coverage and rigorous scrutiny of the policies and campaigns of all relevant parties and campaign groups”.

Given their past distrust of the BBC’s

## ‘DEAR BBC, YOU MUST GET THE DETAIL RIGHT’

coverage, the Leave campaign was always going to be cynical and sceptical about this conversion – and remains so to this day. What was more surprising and significant was that the Remain campaigners also turned against the BBC, particularly once they knew they had lost the referendum.

Craig Oliver, who, as David Cameron’s director of communications, oversaw the Remain campaign, said the problem was that the BBC searched for “the perfect symmetry in coverage of Leave and Remain” at the expense of challenging protagonists on the basis of facts.

Others on his side constantly asked why the BBC was not challenging more often the claim that £350m would be released for the NHS. The BBC said it had challenged it, but it didn’t have an iconic moment such as Tom Bradby’s ITV confrontation with Boris Johnson in the back of the very bus that bore the claim.

The complainants no longer seemed to trust the corporation. “False equivalence” became their battle cry when leavers were offered the chance to rebut what remainers saw as accepted facts and consensus opinions.

Anti-Brexit campaigner Gina Miller now believes that “it seems to have got much worse since the EU referendum, this idea at the BBC that you have got to give equal weight to both sides, even if one side is telling a lie”.

Professor Steven Barnett, a long-time supporter of the BBC, was so unhappy with some of its analysis of the Euro elections that he recently tweeted: “Dear BBC News, this is precisely the kind of detail that your reporters are consistently getting wrong and you *must* get right”.

The BBC’s current view, as stressed

## ‘BROADCASTERS HAVE MORE FREEDOM THAN EVER [BUT] THEY DON’T ALWAYS TAKE IT’

in its recent European election guidelines, is that “the election needs to be seen both through the prism of Brexit and through the distinctions of party”.

The corporation has found it difficult to reflect or refract all the political colours of the UK in 2019, and its chief political advisor, Ric Bailey, says there is a “tension between the binary nature of issues such as Brexit and the fragmentation of party political loyalties”.

At the start of my 50 years in broadcasting, the election-time rules were just plain wrong. A committee decided how many election broadcasts each party should have and that became the formula for news coverage. Parties would ring up after each bulletin and argue about every extra 30 seconds they claimed the other side had got. In 1992, I announced that ITN would “throw away the stopwatch” and decide the news coverage on news values alone.

Others followed but broadcasters found it difficult to break away from the equation “equal time equals balance equals due impartiality”. It doesn’t and shouldn’t. The old rules have fallen away and broadcasters have more freedom than ever to interpret how to achieve due impartiality during and outside elections. They don’t always take it.

At the time of the 2016 referendum the BBC insisted that “news judgments continue to drive editorial decision-making in news-based programmes”. The BBC – and, indeed, all broadcasters – have to keep asserting the primacy of this doctrine over a time-based formula and be bolder in defending it.

The head of BBC newsgathering, Jonathan Munro, told the Radio 4 programme *Feedback* last month that the BBC was now reviewing its approach to election coverage, particularly in the light of the increased use of social media. He called it “an evolution rather than a moment of change”.

There are bound to be different views inside the BBC about the speed of that evolution, but innovations such as Reality Check and *Brexitcast* show that there are new ways in which audiences can check facts and taste the many and varied flavours of UK politics. Broadcasters need to seize these or face more hostility as Brexit continues to dominate the news agenda. ■

**Stewart Purvis was formerly CEO of ITN and an Ofcom content regulator. He is a non-executive director of Channel 4 and writes here in a personal capacity.**



*Line of Duty*

## Screenwriting

**Melvyn Bragg** hosted a special event at which top writers revealed their *modi operandi*. **Matthew Bell** reports

**V**eteran arts programme *The South Bank Show* has celebrated the best of TV drama from its earliest days. In the very first series it aired a film on Dennis Potter. Since then, Andrew Davies, Paul Abbott, Jimmy McGovern and Sally Wainwright have all featured.

“There’s nothing patronising about why we started with television drama. I’d been going to the theatre quite a bit and I discovered again and again that it wasn’t as good as what I was seeing on television – it wasn’t as well written, directed or acted,” said the show’s editor and presenter, Melvyn Bragg, who famously conducted the last-ever TV interview with a terminally ill Potter.

“Television drama has been at the centre of this country’s cultural conversation for over half a century and

rarely more so than now – and that’s to do with the quality of the writing.”

Bragg was speaking at a special live edition of *The South Bank Show*, featuring four of the UK’s leading TV writers – Jed Mercurio (writer and creator of hit police corruption thriller *Line of Duty*); Steve Pemberton and Reece Shearsmith (black comedy anthology *Inside No 9*); and Heidi Thomas (period drama *Call the Midwife*).

The RTS early-evening event was held at the end of June, a few weeks in advance of *The South Bank Show*’s new run on Sky Arts, and looked at the work of these four writers, plus Jack Thorne (*National Treasure*). He was unable to attend the RTS event as it clashed with the opening night of his new play, *The End of History...*, at the Royal Court.

*The South Bank Show* first aired on ITV



in 1978, moving to Sky Arts in 2012. Bragg, who has been at the helm throughout, asked the panel about the importance of storytelling.

Thomas argued that “people need stories for distraction, inspiration and sometimes they just need them to pass an hour that would otherwise be painful for them”.

Pemberton said: “Narrative is everywhere – you watch a football match and that has an incredible narrative to it. [There’s the] Women’s World Cup at the moment or the Tory party leadership contest – you want to know what happens next.

“You will find narrative in everything and we try to serve that up to an audience that might be curious to see what happens next, and see if we can entertain them along the way.”

Telling stories, suggested his writing partner, Shearsmith, is getting harder “because everyone is so sophisticated”. He explained: “Attention spans are so short that you’ve got to be pithy in hooking people into your story.”

Thomas had no truck with “people who often charge a lot of money for teaching screenwriting but who’ve never written for the screen. They sell a

prescription, essentially, and I’ve never found that to be of any assistance.

“For me, it’s not about structure: it’s about texture – you go by the feel of the thing. It’s like running a cloth through my hands, feeling my way [through the story].”

Thomas added that the best advice she’d come across was from Charlie Chaplin, who said: “I have never written down to my audience.”

There was agreement on the panel that, despite their trade, there’s more to good drama than the writing alone.

“It’s no accident that we have the same three leads [*Line of Duty*’s Adrian Dunbar, Vicky McClure and Martin Compston] – they’re really good actors, but also get on really well with each other,” said Mercurio. “If that hadn’t happened, one of them would have been killed off in a completely unexpected way to propel the story forward.”

He continued: “In *Bodyguard*, Richard Madden and Keeley Hawes were both actors I’d worked with before. It’s hard to film television drama – you need people who aren’t nuts or lazy.”

Thomas said: “Writers don’t always have control over whether people stay >

**‘IF I WROTE [ONLY] ABOUT WHAT I KNEW IT WOULD BE REALLY BORING’**

## Adapting the classics for TV

Heidi Thomas, whose adaptations include *Madame Bovary*, *Cranford* and *Little Women* for BBC One, identified two ‘terrors’: ‘You can’t let the book down and you can’t let the readership down. People expect certain things of... a book that they know well.

‘With *Little Women*, I don’t know how I had the nerve. I loved the book so much that I couldn’t resist the offer to adapt [it] but I knew there were 10 million women worldwide who would bay for my blood if I got it wrong, and that took a lot of the pleasure away.’

With adaptations, she said, ‘I use the same skills and approach, certainly to storytelling. To take a novel... and turn it into a piece of screen drama is like taking a 1930s dance dress and turning it into a trouser suit – it’s a different genre. You have to dismantle and reconstruct it.

‘It’s about, “How do we introduce these characters? How do we get into [their] world?”... That’s the same whether you’re creating original material or working with something written years ago.’



From left: Reece Shearsmith, Jed Mercurio, Melvyn Bragg, Heidi Thomas and Steve Pemberton

Paul Hampartsoumian

## How to inspire a creative child

In his youth, Reece Shearsmith was struck by the BBC's *Play for Today*, the dramas of Alan Bennett and Victoria Wood, 'comedy that had a bite to it'.

'There was something different about watching an Alan Bennett play on TV: the language felt richer somehow, and it appealed to me because it was a voice that was around me in the north – I am from Hull.

'With Victoria's stuff, it resonated [with me because] it was a northern voice. But there was also a savagery to it, hidden between the [lines].'

Heidi Thomas recalled that 'there was a serendipity about television – suddenly, my mother would say, "There's a film on this afternoon" and we'd drop everything and watch *National Velvet* or something.

'I remember being fetched out of bed [to watch]... *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* with Charles Laughton – I was only seven or eight – and my mother made me watch the whole film. I sobbed through everything... utterly harrowing,

most unsuitable for a child, but I loved it... It completely enervated me and I think it made me realise that stories do not always resolve in the way that you want... That's always stayed with me.'

'I watched a lot of TV as a kid,' said Jed Mercurio. I guess it was my only real access to the arts – I went to a very ordinary school, didn't really do drama or have much access to creative things... TV was my only exposure to storytelling, apart from occasionally going to the cinema.'

US shows figured more than the BBC's,

**'IT MADE ME REALISE THAT STORIES DO NOT ALWAYS RESOLVE IN THE WAY THAT YOU WANT'**

which 'were all a bit middle-class. It was like watching a play, which is people talking about the past; it's just dull – have a car chase instead. As a 12-year-old boy, I wanted the Americans giving us that.'

Steve Pemberton watched TV 'avidly, especially in the summer holidays, when TV was yours as a kid. In the evening, there was the one remote control on the side of dad's chair and you watched what the family watched.

'But in the summer holidays, it was curtains closed and you had *Laurel and Hardy* on, *The Banana Splits*, *The Flashing Blade*.

'And then there were late-night horror movies on BBC Two on a tiny TV when we shouldn't have been allowed to see them.

'Watching *The Wicker Man* and *Don't Look Now* as probably a 12- or 13-year-old boy, both of which... have these horrific endings that you can't process as you're watching them, has stayed with me... Something that ties a nice, neat bow at the end is too easily forgotten.'



Inside No 9

BBC

or not. Writing *Call the Midwife* for nine years has been an exercise in forbearance – young ladies come on the show and, three years later, they decide it's time to go to Hollywood.

"Every time it's like a stab through the heart but I've now learned that this refreshes the brand and the company, bringing in new characters and stories."

Bragg asked if dramatists should write about what they know. "I started writing very young and I didn't know much, so I would have got to a dead end quite quickly if I'd only written about what I knew," answered Thomas.

"I've led quite a tedious existence – if I wrote [only] about what I knew it would be really boring," she joked.

Mercurio was a hospital doctor before turning to writing. His first drama, 1994's BBC One series *Cardiac Arrest*, was firmly rooted in that experience. *Cardiac Arrest*, which ran for three series, was a darkly comic programme, unafraid to show the reality of working in an NHS hospital.

He said he was reacting against the "sanitised version of what was going on in hospitals" in shows such as *Casualty* – a "juggernaut [that will] be on long after the world is dust".

Mercurio was keen to capture the "gallows humour" and challenge the "earnest way" in which people talked in medical dramas: "The way medical dramas tend to work is that someone

comes into hospital with a medical problem and then, remarkably, they find someone who gives a shit about their personal problems and then gives them [advice]. In real life, that just does not happen – you go in with a personal problem and, 'Who gives a toss?'

"The way to challenge that earnestness was through humour."

Pemberton agreed: "Humour is something that any drama should have and drama is something that any comedy should have – you don't separate them in your mind."

He came to writing via acting. "For us, it was a question of how we give ourselves the roles that no one else is giving us," he said. "Gradually, over time, I think the writer has stepped forth and improved."

Pemberton and Shearsmith's first TV writing credits (with Jeremy Dyson and Mark Gatiss) came on BBC Two comedy series *The League of Gentlemen*, in 1999. "The first things that we wrote were about [government job scheme] Restart rooms, really bad theatre companies and strange northern towns, where you couldn't wait to get out but somehow you couldn't escape.

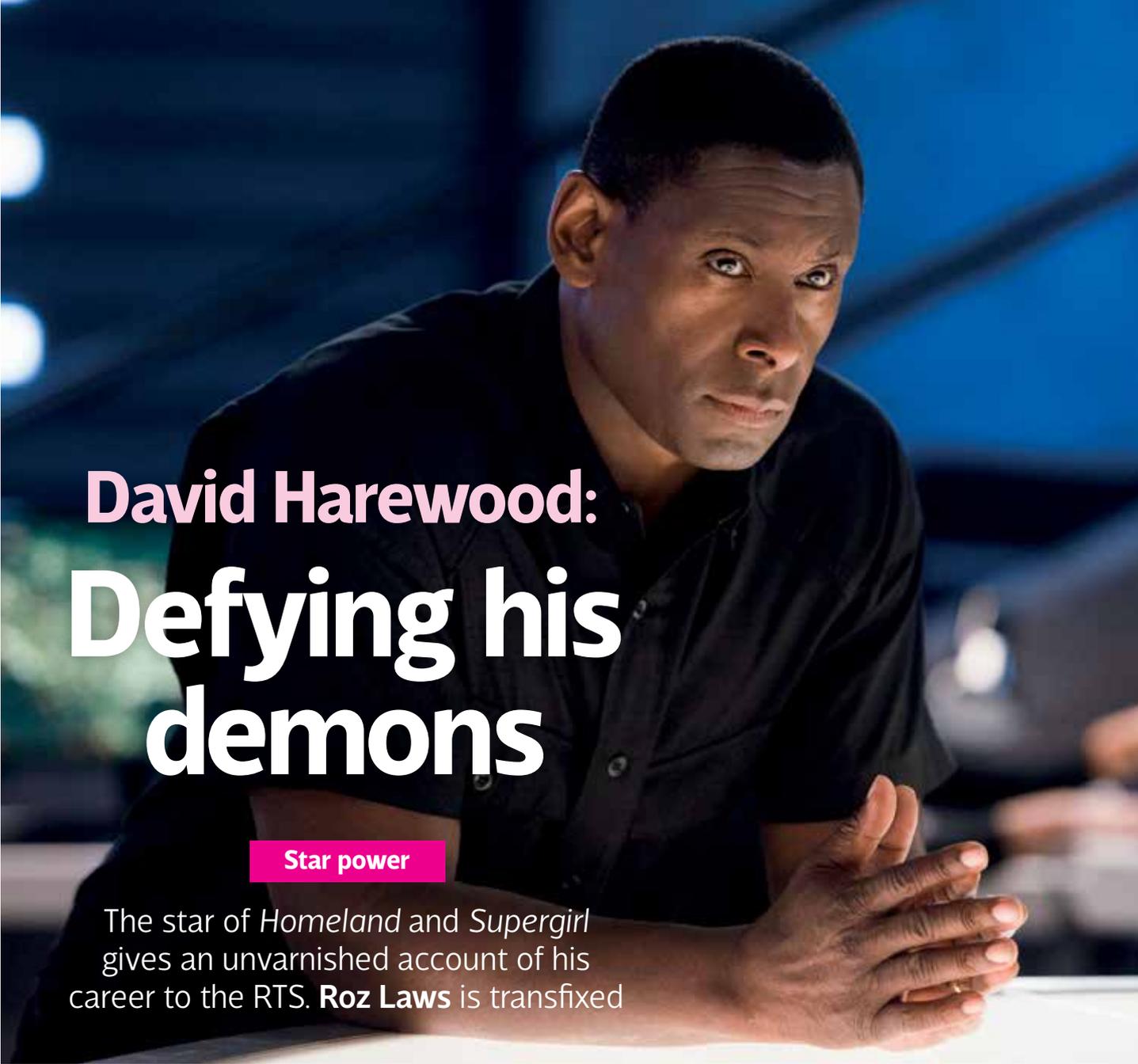
"Now, in *Inside No 9*, we write about anything. Something has to draw you to the subject in the first place.... There are your life experiences as a writer plus what you draw from other people's as well."

But even the most prolific dramatist experiences writer's block from time to time. Pemberton argued that he was fortunate to be part of a writing partnership with Shearsmith: "We talk and talk and talk. If we don't actually write anything, the day hasn't been wasted. I have written things on my own and found it really hard to dig my way out of [a block]."

"You just have to get something on the page... and I have to tell it to myself every single time I sit down to write."

Thomas revealed that she suffers writer's block daily. She advised: "First drafts don't have to be perfect, they just have to be written. However ragged and full of holes it is, however much you're embarrassed by it, you can then start to make it better." ■

**The RTS early-evening event 'The South Bank Show Live' was held at Kings Place in central London on 27 June. It was produced by the RTS, Directors Cut Productions, Sky Arts and Premier.**



# David Harewood: Defying his demons

Star power

The star of *Homeland* and *Supergirl* gives an unvarnished account of his career to the RTS. **Roz Laws** is transfixed

**A**ctor David Harewood spoke about his bumpy road to success – including the tough life lessons he learned from Spike Lee and from Erik Estrada of *CHiPs* – in a candid and entertaining homecoming evening in Birmingham.

During the RTS Midlands' "In conversation with..." event, the *Homeland* star enthralled the audience in the prestigious surroundings of the Council House's Banqueting Suite.

The 53-year-old discussed his working-class roots, having to move to the US to further his career and his

sectioning 30 years ago following a breakdown. This last was the subject of his acclaimed BBC Two documentary, *Psychosis and Me*, aired as part of Mental Health Awareness Week earlier this summer.

Harewood's UK TV credits include *Babyfather*, *Robin Hood*, *Doctor Who* and *The Night Manager*. But he had just £80 in his bank account and was on the verge of quitting acting before auditioning for *Homeland*.

The son of a lorry driver and a caterer, Harewood played CIA chief David Estes, before he was blown up at the end of the second series, and is now cast as J'onn J'onzz, the Martian

Manhunter, in *Supergirl*, a part he has played for five seasons. He also directed one episode of the show and has been asked to do more.

He said: "I knew I had to get to America because it's extremely difficult to make it as a black actor in this country. The people who make the decisions are a small cabal, who are very white, middle class and Oxbridge.

"It is changing, but very slowly. Setting up a production company is definitely the next step for me, so I can have some control.

"I would enjoy introducing things that maybe sometimes people are afraid to touch on. I think we need to

be brave in production. Britain is very dynamic but, sometimes, I watch TV and I don't see that."

Not that Harewood has been welcomed by everyone in the US. Samuel L. Jackson began a row when he criticised the casting of black British actors in films, suggesting that they were cheaper to hire.

Harewood wrote an article in the *Guardian* in response. This was subsequently attacked by Spike Lee in a scene in his Netflix series *She's Gotta Have It*.

When Lee was castigated for his lead character's harsh comments by industry players, including John Boyega of *Star Wars*, who tweeted that it was "trash" – he hit back on social media. Lee wrote on Instagram: "If you are hurt by the conversation then vent on your black Brit actor Dave Harewood."

At the time, Harewood declined to comment. He still doesn't want to add fuel to the fire but he told the RTS: "It is very hurtful when your heroes use your name in a derogatory way and dismiss you as cheap.

"They think that we are somehow not black enough and are insulted that we are able to imitate them. I find it bizarre. The arguments they are using don't make sense to me.

"Learning that your hero does not like you is the hardest lesson for me. The best lesson was actually given to me by that guy from *CHiPs*, Erik Estrada.

"When the first series of *Homeland* won all the Emmys [for Outstanding Drama Series and the drama prizes for Writing, Lead Actor and Lead Actress], I was celebrating after the ceremony, drinking Champagne and puffing on my cigar while people such as De Niro and Sidney Poitier congratulated us. I felt like a million dollars, then I noticed the guy from *CHiPs*.

"I went over to introduce myself and he told me 'Be ready for when it's over'. I thought: 'That's a weird thing to say, I'm having the time of my life over here!' But I thought about it, so when they blew me up, I was ready. I didn't moan, I just sent them an email thanking them for a great two years." ■

**'In conversation with David Harewood' was held in Birmingham's Council House on 6 June. It was an RTS Midlands event in partnership with Film Birmingham and was hosted by Radio WM's Samantha Meah.**

## Harewood: Psychosis and me

In the BBC documentary *David Harewood: Psychosis and Me*, the actor read his medical notes and tracked down old friends to discover exactly what happened to him during his mental breakdown at the age of 23.

He heard voices, one telling him that he was Martin Luther King and that he should walk to Camden at 3:00am. He didn't sleep and he sat in front of the mirror for hours, convinced his reflection was going to move. He told his friends that he had three brains.

In the film, Harewood broke down in tears when told how he had been wrestled to the floor by six policemen, who then pumped him with sedatives. He was briefly sectioned under the Mental Health Act.

He said: 'The documentary was the toughest thing I have ever done. I had to bare my soul and become very exposed. I was confronted by the truth about what actually happened – because I didn't remember.

'It made me realise how lucky I was,

to survive and not be criminalised. I was literally sat on by the police officers and I realised that lots of people die like that. Or they are restrained and imprisoned. That's scary, to wake up in prison as a psychotic.

'Halfway through making the documentary, I realised that I was on the verge of having another breakdown... I wasn't being allowed to say what I wanted. They had kept me in the dark. I needed to talk about race but they hadn't figured that into the film.

'It meant something to me and I called them out on it. I said I needed to speak to a black psychologist – it has to be part of the programme. They found me a great person but that whole question of race and identity hadn't been part of it, because they didn't know. Had I been in control, it would have been front and centre.

'I have never been so nervous about anything before the film was screened, but the reaction has been overwhelming and has given me great courage.'

## Harewood: An actor's life

Harewood was refreshingly honest about the TV jobs he took after leaving Rada, including roles in *Casualty*, *The Bill*, *Game On*, *Medics*, *Fat Friends* and *Ballykissangel*.

'When I look back on my career,' he said, 'I realise that I never knew how to say no. In hindsight, there were some jobs I shouldn't have done.

'But 30% of stuff was done to pay the rent. There's no point in saying, "I can't do *The Bill* because I want to be a movie star."

'I was never strategic in my career. I was just glad someone was offering me a job. Maybe it diluted my pedigree, but I just said yes to everything.'

Harewood raised a huge laugh from the audience when he revealed the five stages of an actor's life: Who's David Harewood? Get me David Harewood. We've got David Harewood. Get me a young David Harewood. Who's David Harewood?

He confessed that he had never done an American accent before *Homeland*, but it was one of several new skills he learned on the job.

'I was so green and had lost my confidence after not working for nine months. It was tough but it felt amazing for me to be there, a skint lad from Birmingham, working with people such as Claire Danes and Mandy Patinkin.

'I learned how these great actors were doing their thing. I would sometimes go in on my day off just to watch them work.

'I always tell young actors, don't just sit in your trailer and wait for your turn, go out and be on set and take it all in.'

He is now advising his elder teenage daughter, Maize, on the TV industry: 'She's said that she wants to act. She's so bright. I said that acting is just one part of a huge industry and it's really tough. I think she'd enjoy writing or going into production.'

# Unsung heroes of regional production

In recent years, Channel 4's new national HQ in Leeds and the BBC's relocation of 2,300 posts to Salford have dominated our perception of out-of-London programme production.

This is perhaps not surprising: the corporation has the largest Ofcom quota for UK production outside the M25 – 50% – followed by Channel 4 and ITV, who both have 35%, and Channel 5, with 10%.

But even channels not subject to the same quotas as the big public service broadcasters are quietly making regional shows. Some, such as History channel owner A&E Networks, are making more shows than ever outside London and reaping the benefit by reaching audiences across Britain.

In a review of regional TV production, published earlier this summer, Ofcom said: "Television production outside of London is a crucial part of the UK's broadcasting sector. It helps to disperse and stimulate investment and job opportunities in the sector throughout the UK [and] benefits viewers by ensuring a diverse range of programmes and editorial perspectives."

So why is there not more recognition of what the other channels are doing?

A&E Networks' general manager UK and senior vice-president, content and creative, Heather Jones, thinks part of the "problem is that people who live in London and media circles" do not tend to watch as much on her five UK channels as those outside the English capital.

However, when she tells Londoners about shows on History, such as *Al Murray: Why Does Everyone Hate the English?* or the forthcoming Damian Lewis documentary *Spy Wars*, they are invariably impressed.

Around 40% of A&E's UK spend goes out of London. This is an increase of 25% over the previous year. "We just got on with it. It's something we are very committed to doing," says Jones.

## Programme-making

A&E, Channel 5 and ITV all invest in making shows outside London.

**Tara Conlan** travels beyond the M25 to see their work

**'WE NEED TO REFLECT OUR VIEWERS AND HAVE REGIONAL FACES AND VOICES'**

She explains that shows on the Crime+Investigation channel are often more successful outside of London, with "heavy viewing in the Midlands, north east, north west and Scotland," and "valued because people are seeing themselves in them".

Jones has overseen a conscious effort to harness the "huge opportunities to tell stories outside London.... In archaeology series *River Hunters* we were genuinely discovering local history. The most important thing I said was: I do not want to see rivers south of Birmingham."

She acknowledges that it's cheaper to commission outside London – but it comes with "multiple benefits", including "the beautiful scenery". Regional shows can also fill some of the gap left by the decline in local newspapers: "Local media is very sparse these days. It's the duty of the national broadcasters, it's part of our remit. We're there to serve all the viewers."

Jones says that series such as C+I's most popular original show, *Murder-town*, "demonstrate the [role] of local stories. London didn't feature, it was Hull or Pontypridd."

She argues that structural change is necessary to support enough experienced talent, adding: "I applaud Channel 4 going to Leeds. There are certain corners of Britain that have owned genres – Bristol [for example, has] natural history. We have to start building these talent pools, and the only way to do that is by building proper structural ways to tell these stories."

Channel 5 has also quietly increased its regional investment by a whopping 40% – exceeding its Ofcom regional target of 10% twofold. Director of programmes Ben Frow explains his strategy: "Being an indie has got to be one of the hardest jobs – and being a regional indie is even harder. As a

A&E Networks



C+I's most popular original show, *Murdertown*

broadcaster, we owe it to them to support them as much as possible.”

Last year, he tried to improve regional-ity by “buddying up” commissioners with regional companies so that they could get to know the channel. This led to commissions worth £4m – the 35 hours of programmes included *Warship: Life at Sea*, made by Artlab Films, based in the north west.

But Frow admits that “it is hard for us to do regional commissions because of the time it involves... It requires effort on our part and their part to keep up the relationship – it’s not just a few hops down the Tube line.”

“We’ve still got more to do, but we increased the number of regional hours in primetime by 40% to 16.4 hours. It seems small fry still, but it’s an indication.

“It’s more difficult from a practical commissioning level, as it’s not as easy to have face-to-face conversations. But we’re going in the right direction.” Particularly, he says, in northern England and in the west, as Ofcom noted in its regional review.

“We’re not a metropolitan channel,” says Frow. “We need to reflect our viewers and have regional faces and voices. Our most successful shows are made in the regions, such as *The Yorkshire Vet* or *Cruising with Jane McDonald*.

“I only have nine commissioners. Three of them do live in the regions, so they help keep us grounded and not ‘West London up our own arses’”

Quotas “make sure you keep an eye on the ball,” Frow believes, but he “intends to do more”. “It doesn’t just come down to money, it comes down to time. You get so sucked up in the day to day... it’s difficult to find time to take a step back, but I’m passionate about it.”

Unlike Channel 5, ITV’s regional roots run deep. “ITV never gets enough recognition” for its regional contribution, argues Managing Director of ITV continuing drama and ITV North John Whiston.

ITV makes 2,000 hours of content from its regional bases. Around half of

all ITV Studios staff and 23 of its labels are based outside London. In 2017, the most recent figures available from Ofcom show that ITV made more than its quota of 35% – some 44%.

Whiston points out that the amount of filming required by *Coronation Street* and *Emmerdale* is equivalent to “two feature films a week” in Manchester and Leeds.

He says of *Coronation Street*: “We’re one of the biggest outside lots in Europe. We invested massively and we’re doing the same in Leeds and expanding there for *Emmerdale*. We just get on with it. Other companies have more strategic reasons to be shouting about it.”

“Talent outside London is huge. Quite a lot of people want to work outside London, as I’ve done most of my career.”

He points to quiz show producer 12 Yard in Glasgow as a prime example of how specialist talent can act as an incubator for a genre. The BBC’s Natural History Unit in Bristol also shows how this can happen. And, he says, “what’s great” is when a brand such as Twofour Group’s Channel 4 series *Educating Essex* can be extended into other areas and even into the US.

Whiston also admits that regional production is “of course... cheaper. No doubt about it.” Sunday-night drama *Victoria* uses houses in Yorkshire for key scenes so that programme-makers can film “without having to disturb the whole of London”.

He notes that it is now trickier to hire freelancers in Salford – a “sign of a buoyant market”. Having the BBC in Salford, however, is a “fantastic” advantage. “We share initiatives and training schemes... [and the corporation’s] big commitment [to MediaCity] has really transformed the area.”

The axing of *The Jeremy Kyle Show*, which provided great volume and training for ITV Studios staff in Salford, has been a blow. Whiston believes that Kyle’s show will likely be replaced by another regional series.

He is not enthusiastic about production quotas, and suggests that “quotas feel quite old-fashioned” in the international marketplace that ITV now finds itself a player in.

“We’re expanding on our own merits” he says. “Talent, place and cost” are driving ITV’s expansion in the regions: “we’ll carry on whether quotas are in place or not”. ■

# Sky's second

Is it just me, or does this account of the relentless march of Sky feel less like a window into the “future of entertainment” and more the TV equivalent of ancient history?

There are glorious deeds and all-conquering heroes. Step forward Jeremy Darroch, and the man who appointed him CEO of Sky, James Murdoch. Not forgetting the tragic fate of doomed and misguided rivals: hold your heads in shame, Setanta and a host of others.

Christopher Williams, deputy business editor of the *Telegraph*, has written a highly readable and comprehensive sequel to Matthew Horsman's *Sky High: The Rise and Rise of BSkyB*, published some 20 years ago. But the story we most want to read about, a story with far-reaching consequences for UK media, is the final shoot-out between the Murdochs, Disney and Comcast and how that might indeed shape the future of entertainment. And that is only covered in the final section of the book.

The rest, as they say, is history.

Before we come to the extraordinary climax of the story, as rival bidders sat in five-star hotel rooms on either side of London playing a multi-billion-pound game of poker, with Sky the prize, there is another important question that this book barely raises: the huge shift in the ownership of UK TV.

The companies involved in the final shoot-out for Sky were, of course, all American, and it is westwards that ownership of the UK production and broadcasting industries are moving – and at some speed.

Williams does quote Andrew Neil, Sky's founding Chairman, who told the competition investigation into the Fox bid for Sky: “We are in danger of ending up in the situation where nearly all our commercial broadcasters will be foreign owned. We will have given away the crown jewels.”

All this has happened at a time when the BBC and, more recently, Channel 4 have been spending huge sums of money as well as management time regionalising their UK operations, largely in response to political pressure.

## Book review

**Simon Shaps** enjoys a new history of Europe's most successful pay-TV operator but thinks a key question is ignored

*The Battle for Sky: The Murdochs, Disney, Comcast and the Future of Entertainment* by Christopher Williams is published by Bloomsbury, priced £25.00. ISBN: 978-1472964908



Much of the rest of UK television has a very different focus. Ultimate decisions about what happens here are now routinely taken in New York and Los Angeles, Philadelphia (home of Sky's new owner, Comcast) and Denver (the US home of Liberty Global).

The fate of Love Productions, creator of *The Great British Bake-Off*, is not really a question Christopher Williams feels he needs to consider, not least because the company could only have ever been a rounding error in the Sky acquisition, but it is worth dwelling on for a moment.

Love's founders, Richard McKerrow and Anna Beattie, who sold their business to Sky Vision, Sky's smallish, wholly owned distribution company, now find themselves owned by

**‘THE SALE OF SKY TO COMCAST WAS A “SUB-PLOT IN THE END OF AN ERA FOR THE MURDOCH DYNASTY”’**

Comcast. Keep an eye open for Philadelphia cheesecake in the next series of *Bake Off*. McKerrow and Beattie probably thought they would end up being owned by Fox or Disney.

Of course, money in the bank from the initial sale of the company softens the blow of waking up to discover you have new and unexpected corporate bosses. Carnival, maker of *Downton Abbey*, certainly seems to have thrived in the NBCU-Comcast family, and Left Bank, maker of *The Crown* doesn't seem to have done too badly under Sony's ownership, nor Wall to Wall within the Warners empire, now owned by AT&T.

But across broadcasting and production, many of our most prized television companies are no longer in control of their own destinies. Bleary-eyed executives complaining that they have been up late “talking to the US” are now a common sight in London's media haunts.

Sometime in the next few years an enterprising financial journalist – somebody very like Christopher Williams – should write a book to answer a strangely unexamined question: are the US media giants good custodians of companies they acquire outside their home market?

I will offer one anecdote to get that analysis started. At the end of a period doing some work for an LA-based company, a senior executive there asked me to tell him what time it was in London and what currency we used in the UK. It seemed funny at the time.

There are many things that can be said about the Murdochs, but I am pretty confident they always knew what time it was in Osterley or Wapping, as well as Mumbai and Shanghai. They also had a pretty good handle on currency fluctuations across the world, down to the last cent.

The story of how Rupert Murdoch bet the shop on Sky, installed a succession of hand-picked CEOs to run the company (falling out with some) and ended up, in the teeth of considerable shareholder hostility, giving the gig to his son, James, is largely familiar.

Under James Murdoch, the success

# coming

of its triple-play strategy of bundling pay-TV with broadband and telephony, which gave it access to a market three times greater than it had targeted up until that point, was fundamental. More recently, with Darroch at the helm, it has expanded internationally, principally into Italy and Germany. It has invested in its online platform Now TV and, as the SVoD challenge has loomed, the company has continued, above all, to invest in technology to improve its offer to its 50 million customers across Europe.

At the same time, the world around Sky has been changing fast, as a range of competitors with unimaginably deep pockets appeared on the horizon. Losing Champions League football to BT Sport hurt Sky – perhaps most damagingly, denting its self-image as the all-conquering upstart turned behemoth.

But what would happen if Amazon got really serious about launching a knock-out bid for the Premier League? Or Apple? How would Sky fare if the major movie studios launched streaming platforms for their own movies?

Could a platform so associated in the minds of consumers with sport and movies compete as hard in premium drama if the world went box-set crazy? So it was that Rupert Murdoch, sensitive to the headwinds across his empire, “confronted his own mortality” and decided to “cash in his chips”.

He had tried to tempt Time Warner into a merger, but failed, only to see the US telecoms giant AT&T move in and acquire the company for \$85bn. Of course, one implication of the AT&T deal was to raise a very large question mark over the future of Sky’s deal with Warner-owned HBO, which was the foundation of Sky Atlantic.

True, Sky had forged a deal with Netflix in 2018 that made the service available to its Sky Q customers.

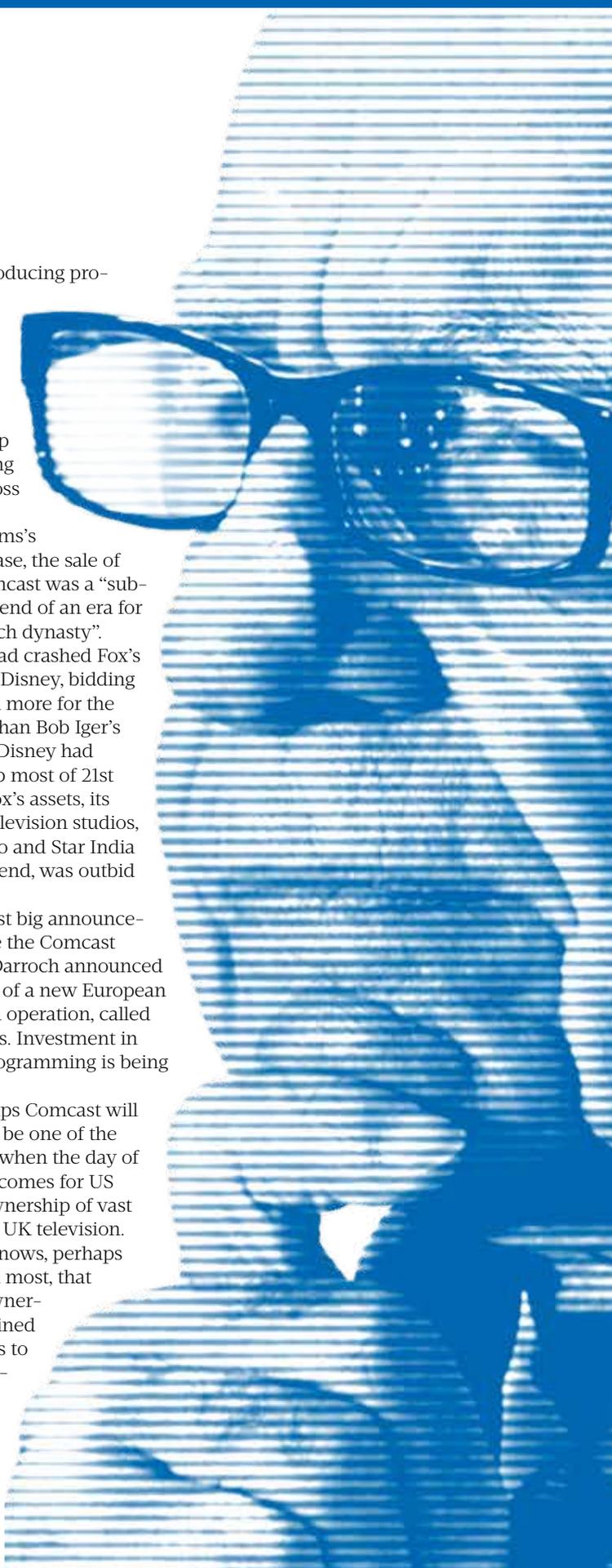
Williams writes that this deal helped lessen the immediate threat to Sky’s business from Netflix. But, he says: “More serious near-term challenges may come from Amazon and Apple, who, as well as spending millions of

pounds producing programmes are owners of vast technology platforms that could usurp Sky in living rooms across the world.”

In Williams’s telling phrase, the sale of Sky to Comcast was a “subplot in the end of an era for the Murdoch dynasty”. Comcast had crashed Fox’s party with Disney, bidding some £3bn more for the company than Bob Iger’s company. Disney had scooped up most of 21st Century Fox’s assets, its film and television studios, FX, Nat Geo and Star India but, in the end, was outbid for Sky.

In his first big announcement since the Comcast takeover, Darroch announced the launch of a new European production operation, called Sky Studios. Investment in original programming is being doubled.

So perhaps Comcast will turn out to be one of the good guys when the day of reckoning comes for US media’s ownership of vast swathes of UK television. Comcast knows, perhaps better than most, that content ownership combined with access to paying customers, supported by leading-edge technology, is TV’s new black. ■



Justin Sullivan/Getty Images

**Ben Dowell** meets the co-founder of drama specialist Mammoth Screen, **Damien Timmer**, whose eye for detail defines him

Profile

# The perfectionist

**F**or an example of the passionate perfectionism of drama producer Damien Timmer, look no further than the press screening of the first episode of ITV drama *Victoria*, starring Jenna Coleman.

On the big screen, Timmer noticed something awry with the young queen's eyes. Her contact lenses were visible. But rather than let the problem slide – after all, who would notice this small detail on a TV set? – Timmer and his post-production supervisor spent the best part of August regrading each and every one of Coleman's scenes.

"It was very unforgiving on the big screen and, if you're not taking it seriously, what's the point?" he says from the comfort of the West End offices of his production company, Mammoth Screen, where he is Joint Managing Director.

"It slightly dominated August a couple of years ago, which was not particularly helpful. But, these days, there are too many people who are going to tell you – very vocally – that you've got it wrong."

His dedication to the task at hand doesn't end there. Friends and colleagues will tell you about his 5:30am emails, sent at the only time he knows he can guarantee being free. And there was the recent example of his 50th birthday party, a Robots and Romans fancy-dress event where, half way through the celebrations, Timmer changed from one outfit to the other.

This speaks volumes about the kind of lavish attention to



detail he expects to see on his own shows. These include *Endeavour*, the *Morse* prequel set in the 1960s, the Edwardian period piece *Parade's End*, *Victoria* and *Poldark*, which started its fifth and final series on BBC One in mid-July.

"Many producers think only about the deal. Damien thinks only about the show and making it as brilliant as possible," says *Victoria* creator and writer Daisy Goodwin. "He got the idea for *Victoria* straight away and he commissioned a pilot script straight away, even though I hadn't written a drama before. That showed imagination and courage."

When I put these points to him, he jokes that his first email was sent at 5:00am this morning, not 5.30am. And I believe him. He's not the only hard worker in TV but he seems to really go the extra mile. Why?

"That old adage, you're only as good as your last show, is something we all feel very strongly," he explains.

"That imposter syndrome, the sense that you're going to be found out with the next show you make, so you have got to make it as good as it possibly could be."

His childhood helps to explain his dedicated passion for TV per se and drama in particular.

When he was five years old, Timmer's parents spent three years working in the Far East, taking him away from Britain and British television. That absence fuelled his desire.

"I was an only child and grew up in a world where television was this hugely important force. As it is now. But it felt even more so then.... I was lonely. I missed television so much, which meant that, when I came back to England, I loved it even more because I had had time away from it. And I was such a fan.

"I took it terribly seriously, I suppose, because I understood its power from a very early age. You hear stories about Michael Jackson, the ex-BBC Two controller, planning his imaginary schedule in his fantasy *Radio Times*. I was almost as extreme as that. I did love television and had very catholic tastes."

So by his early twenties, and after graduating from Oxford (where he read history), he found he "wasn't equipped to do anything but enter that world".

Post-graduation, he quickly became fascinated by an Australian soap opera called *E Street*. He went to the reading room of the Australian Embassy and learnt about it in Australian newspapers. Eventually, he wrote to the producers. They told him that, if he could pay his own fare, he could come and work on it. This is what he did until *E Street* was axed.

He returned to the UK, and produced *Peak Practice* for Central Television in the late 1990s. This was followed by a stint as a producer on *Night and Day*, working alongside the future head of BBC drama, Piers Wenger.

It was with Wenger that he formed Mammoth 13 years ago, spending "six months in an empty office and wondering if we could make it work".

Mammoth's first big commission was *Lost in Austen*, Guy Andrews's witty take on *Pride and Prejudice*. As well as productions such as *Parade's End* (a hit for Benedict Cumberbatch) and *Endeavour*, his company is responsible for all the recent BBC TV Agatha Christie adaptations.

Now, Mammoth is owned by ITV (it completed the takeover in 2015), with a turnover in the region of £80m. The company expects to deliver 42 hours of original drama in 2019 (up from around 28 hours in 2015).

It has a core staff of 28 working across a slate that includes 10 shows in varying stages of production. One of

## 'IF YOU'RE NOT TAKING IT SERIOUSLY, WHAT'S THE POINT?'



Victoria

these is already being described as the new *Poldark*. It is a script for *The Lymond Chronicles*, Dorothy Dunnett's wonderfully complex collection of historical yarns set across Europe in the mid-16th century. The hero is the charismatic Scottish nobleman Francis Crawford of Lymond.

Mammoth has also optioned *Sunday Times* journalist Oliver Shah's book, *Damaged Goods: The Inside Story of Sir Philip Green, the Collapse of BHS and the Death of the High Street*.

A new *Pride and Prejudice*, adapted by Nina Raine, is in the works for ITV. A fourth series of *Victoria* is expected next year, when Jenna Coleman's queen faces the death of her beloved Albert (leading some to speculate that it could be her final outing in the tiara).

But don't think that because it's owned by ITV, Mammoth is predominantly a supplier to that particular network. Timmer describes *World on Fire*, Peter Bowker's seven-part Second World War drama for BBC One, starring Helen Hunt, as "the biggest thing we have ever made in terms of scale."

Mammoth is also working on an eight-hour drama, *The Serpent*, for the BBC, based on the real-life serial killer Charles Sobhraj, who preyed on tourists on the South East Asian hippie trail in the 1970s.

"I feel that, in terms of our cultural life and the life of the nation, when so much feels unstable and unhappy in the political landscape, the BBC is just about the best thing this country has got going for it," says Timmer. We meet on the day that the BBC is attacked by the papers (and Piers Morgan) for taking away free licences for the over-75s.

In fact, he says his blood is boiling: "I genuinely love the BBC, it needs to be cherished. I can't imagine a world where we didn't have it. Those British broadcasters that we have all grown up with are such an important part of the fabric of our lives. My hinterland is completely shaped by it. One of the things that unnerves me is imagining a world in which I had grown up without those institutions shaping us."

Passionate, see. From the very start of his life. No wonder he works so hard. ■

ITV

STEVE HEWLETT MEMORIAL LECTURE 2019

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# RTS Student Television Awards 2019

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hosted an  
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ceremony on  
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Southbank



Postgraduate Animation and  
Judges' Award: Music & Clowns

Richard Kendall

## Undergraduate Animation

### **Earthly Delights**

Efa Blosser-Mason, University of the West of England

"This stylised and sensual... allegory about mother nature opened up a wider debate about ecology."

#### **Nominees:**

- ▶ **Anna**, Jessica Mountfield, Dominic Povall and Team, Arts University Bournemouth
- ▶ **Towels**, Prawta Annez and Camilla Kjaernet, Falmouth University

## Postgraduate Animation

### **Music & Clowns**

Alex Widdowson, Royal College of Art  
"In this fascinating snapshot of a family, the film-makers laid themselves bare and created an honest and genuinely affecting film."

#### **Nominees:**

- ▶ **Desire Line**, Ruini Shi, Gareth Young, Michele Bianchi and Mike Wyeld, Royal College of Art
- ▶ **Good Intentions**, Anna Mantzaris, Royal College of Art

## Undergraduate Comedy & Entertainment

### **Delicious Love**

Alana Volavola, Freddie Berman, Ben Holmes, Jade Elwood, Sophie Masterman and Team, University of Gloucestershire

"A distinctive, original and memorable visual treat with its use of graphics, colour and set. [We] loved the narration, too."

#### **Nominees:**

- ▶ **Chopsticks!!**, Aeddan Sussex, Middlesex University

- ▶ **Meatball**, Jack Barrie, Cal Brown, Charlotte Glasgow, Celine Woodburn and Ben Evans, University of Derby

## Postgraduate Comedy & Entertainment

### **Uncommon**

Connor Langley, Michael Rowlands, Daniel Richardson, Mark Hunter and Jack Jarvis, University of Sunderland  
"Brilliant mortality tale for Christmas. Warm, well-shot and excellent comic timing in the writing and the acting."

#### **Nominees:**

- ▶ **Control**, Webster Mugavazi and Robin Pagnanelli, National Film and Television School (NFTS)
- ▶ **Pre-Occupation**, Elena Marotta, Adam Tindall, Moira James-Moore and Emie Wang, Goldsmiths University





Hosts Mollie King and Matt Edmondson

Richard Kendall

## Undergraduate Drama

### **Backwater**

Brendan McCallion, Frank O'Malley, Robin J Kavanagh and Brendan Corcoran, Institute of Art, Design, and Technology, Dun Laoghaire

"Very well directed, with a structure that allows the conflict between its characters to play out sensitively and without judgement. Beautifully shot."

#### **Nominees:**

▶ **Just Josie**, Georgina Rowlands, Ben Porro, Katia Shipulina, Lily-Evelina England and Nathalie Carraro, University of Westminster

▶ **What Separates Us from the Beasts**, Edward Kondracki, Sedona May Tubbs, Kieran Howe, JP Pezet and Team, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

## Postgraduate Drama

### **Smoked Mackerel**

Ciarán Charles, Scott Butler, Michael Lambert and Gemma Carline, University of Sunderland

"A terrific piece of grounded, realist film-making, [with] an immersive sense of place."

#### **Nominees:**

▶ **Dead Birds**, Johnny Kenton, Sabina Smitham, Amelia Spencer and Team, NFTS

▶ **The Pilot**, Nathan Carter, University of York

## Undergraduate Factual

### **Nick Reynolds: The Final Portrait**

Jesse Hargrave, Adam Polley, Curtis Stephan, Stacey Willis and Lewis Woolcock, Solent University

"Gripping from the start. A layered film that had so much to say about death and how we view the subject matter."

#### **Nominees:**

▶ **Mathew vs Pritchard**, Jake Hardy-Behrends, Ethan Blake Brooks, Vratislav Karas and Marketa Janouskova, University of South Wales

▶ **The Bad Guy**, Cory Thomas, Laura Buchanan, Giulia Veronelli, Marco Di Gioia and Danny Flynn, University of Stirling

## Postgraduate Factual

### **Fake News Fairytale**

Kate Stonehill, Jimmy Campbell Smith, Ronnie McQuillan, Conor Meechan, Alexandra McArdle and Team, NFTS

"A highly original film that tells a topical urban horror story with insight, wit and panache."

#### **Nominees:**

▶ **Some of These Days**, Vincent Förster, Olesya Ryasik, Anne Talenta, Scott McCrone, Tino Mensel and Team, Edinburgh College of Art

▶ **We Are All Here**, Hannah Currie, Goldsmiths, University of London

## Undergraduate News

### **Horse Racing's Gender Divide: The Final Hurdle**

Elliot Hawkins, University of Lincoln  
"A fresh look at the role of women in sport. Good voices that were given time to breath. Technically accomplished."

#### **Nominees:**

▶ **A Testing Choice for Down's Syndrome**, Jennifer Smith, University of Salford

▶ **At Arm's Length**, Teri Limongi, University of Sheffield

## Postgraduate news

### **There's Something in the Water**

Grace Marner, University of Sheffield  
"Complex science told in an engaging way.... The real highlight was Kurt the Crab, a simple idea and well executed."

#### **Nominees:**

▶ **Special Needs: Failure to Educate**, Philip Sime and Imogen Harper, City, University of London

▶ **Twnel y Rhondda, The Rhondda Tunnel**, Jared Lawthom, University of Sheffield

## Undergraduate Short Form

### **I Love Tennis**

Sam W Bufferry, London South Bank University

"The writing was poetic, with a rhythmic coherence."

#### **Nominees:**

▶ **Nose**, Izzy Mooney, Kiki Nafig, Emma Lazenby, Jake Lucas and Team, University of the West of England

▶ **Speak to Her**, Jack Desmond, Philip Emo, Sean Doupe and Cian Desmond, Institute of Art, Design, and Technology, Dun Laoghaire

## Postgraduate Short Form

### **Hold Still**

Alexandra Brodski, Nikita Leibovici, Matt Gillan and Team, NFTS

"Simple, stunning and fantastically executed in a single shot."

#### **Nominees:**

▶ **A Missing Beat**, Maria Abdel Karim, Bournemouth University

▶ **The Pool**, Julia Alcamo, Arts University Bournemouth ▶



All pictures: Richard Kendal

**1 Undergraduate News:**  
*Horse Racing's Gender Divide: The Final Hurdle*

**2 Undergraduate Production Design:**  
*Delicious Love*

**3 Undergraduate Editing:**  
*Backwater*

**4 Undergraduate Writing:**  
*Speak To Her*

**5 Postgraduate Factual:**  
*Fake News Fairytale*

**6 Postgraduate Short Form:**  
*Hold Still*

**7 Undergraduate Camerawork:**  
*Backwater*

## See for yourself



You can see a selection of the students' films at [www.rts.org.uk/StudentFilms2019](http://www.rts.org.uk/StudentFilms2019)

## Undergraduate Camerawork

### **Backwater**

Robin J Kavanagh, Institute of Art, Design, and Technology, Dun Laoghaire  
“The camerawork in this film was incredibly accomplished. Natural and well-lit, you could have been watching work done by a professional.”

#### **Nominees:**

- ▶ **Chopsticks!!**, Roan Lenihan, Middlesex University
- ▶ **Speak to Her**, Sean Doupe, Institute of Art, Design, and Technology, Dun Laoghaire

## Postgraduate Camerawork

### **Dead Birds**

Jonathan Flint, NFTS  
“An incredibly impressive film, filled with stand-out moments and featuring a wide range of outstanding shots.”

#### **Nominees:**

- ▶ **Fake News Fairytale**, Ronnie McQuillan and Kate Stonehill, NFTS
- ▶ **Some of These Days**, Vincent Förster, Edinburgh College of Art

## Undergraduate Editing

### **Backwater**

Brendan Corcoran, Institute of Art, Design, and Technology, Dun Laoghaire  
“Fantastic timing. An impressive edit helped to tell this story in the best way possible. Nailed it.”

#### **Nominees:**

- ▶ **Chopsticks!!**, Aeddán Sussex, Middlesex University
- ▶ **Speak to Her**, Cian Desmond, Institute of Art, Design, and Technology, Dun Laoghaire

## Postgraduate Editing

### **Some of These Days**

Anne Talenta, Edinburgh College of Art  
“The edit for this film really helped bring the heart in this story to the fore.”

#### **Nominees:**

- ▶ **Dead Birds**, Conor Meechan, NFTS
- ▶ **Smoked Mackerel**, Gemma Carline, University of Sunderland

## Undergraduate Production Design

### **Delicious Love**

Jade Elwood, University of Gloucestershire  
“So bright and so clever, the look and design of this film were simply outstanding.”

#### **Nominees:**

- ▶ **Backwater**, Muireann Howley, Institute of Art, Design, and Technology, Dun Laoghaire
- ▶ **Just Josie**, Nathalie Carraro, University of Westminster

## Undergraduate Sound: **What Separates Us from the Beasts**



Richard Kendal

## Postgraduate Production Design

### **Dead Birds**

Ian Crossland, National Film and Television School  
“The design in this film was very well thought out and executed.”

#### **Nominees:**

- ▶ **A Missing Beat**, Alena Shen, NFTS
- ▶ **Control**, Fiona Guest, NFTS

## Undergraduate Sound

### **What Separates Us from the Beasts**

JP Pezet, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland  
“Multi-layered and well-mixed, technically very accomplished, plus very impressive use of location sound.”

#### **Nominees:**

- ▶ **Chopsticks!!**, Aeddán Sussex and Zack Wills, Middlesex University
- ▶ **Delicious Love**, Kate Sininde, University of Gloucestershire

## Postgraduate Sound

### **Dead Birds**

Sean McGarrity, NFTS  
“Fantastic sound design, which was well executed, the dub both complemented and enhanced the visuals and dramatic sections.”

#### **Nominees:**

- ▶ **A Missing Beat**, Filipe Botelho, Bournemouth University
- ▶ **Some of these days**, Scott McCrone and Sebastian Dieterle, Edinburgh College of Art

## Undergraduate Writing

### **Speak to Her**

Philip Emo, Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Dun Laoghaire  
“A beautiful story, very well told.”

#### **Nominees:**

- ▶ **Anna**, Jessica Mountfield, Arts University Bournemouth
- ▶ **Backwater**, Brendan McCallion and Frank O'Malley, Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Dun Laoghaire

## Postgraduate Writing

### **Smoked Mackerel**

Ciarán Charles, University of Sunderland  
“An excellent script is just the beginning for this outstanding film.”

#### **Nominees:**

- ▶ **Dead Birds**, Amelia Spencer, NFTS
- ▶ **Fake News Fairytale**, Kate Stonehill, NFTS

## Judges' Award

### **Music & Clowns**

Alex Widdowson, Royal College of Art ■



**1 Undergraduate Writing:**  
*Speak to Her*

**2 Undergraduate Animation:**  
*Earthly Delights*

**3 Postgraduate Comedy & Entertainment:**  
*Uncommon*

**4 Undergraduate Comedy & Entertainment:**  
*Delicious Love*

**5 Postgraduate news:**  
*There's Something in the Water*

**6 Undergraduate Factual:**  
*Nick Reynolds: The Final Portrait*

**7 Undergraduate Short Form:**  
*I Love Tennis*

All pictures: Richard Kendal

The RTS Student Television Awards 2019 reward outstanding work produced during the 2017/18 academic year. Undergraduate entries were first

judged at a regional level by their local RTS Centre in the winter of 2018. The winning films from each RTS Centre, along with all postgraduate

entries, were then judged nationally in April 2019. No nominations are accepted for the Judges' Award.

West of England

RTS West of England and The Farm hosted a sold-out screening of feature documentary *Last Breath* at Bristol's Everyman Cinema in June.

Four years in the making, the film has been described as “Gravity meets *Touching the Void* – 100 metres underwater”. It tells the story of a commercial diver, Chris Lemons, who is stranded on the seabed with five minutes of oxygen left – but no chance of rescue for more than half an hour.

Following the screening, Plimsoll Productions head of specialist factual Kate Beetham discussed the production process with Bristol-based talent Alex Parkinson, who combined the roles of director, producer, writer and director of photography, producer/director Richard da Costa and editor Sam Rogers.

Da Costa had met Lemons when he was working for the oil and gas industry. “Chris was a compelling character and I was gobsmacked to hear his story, so we made an industry film about the incident,” he recalled. A chance meeting with Parkinson led to the pair developing it into a feature doc.

On getting consent and cooperation from those involved, da Costa said: “It



*Last Breath*

BBC

## Bristol takes a deep dive

boils down to two things: trust and intention. What I think made getting the divers on board a natural process was, first, that we had an existing relationship. Second, they understood that our intention was to be authentic in our portrayal of their world and their story.

“We were genuinely interested in telling the story in as accurate a way as we could, and we wanted to bring this

strange and unknown world to a wider audience.”

Parkinson reflected: “I think the authenticity behind it is so important and, hopefully, strong throughout the film. Our overall ambition for the film is that the audience won’t just watch it, but experience it, too – feeling at least some of the tension, fear and emotion the people there on the night did as this incredible story unfolded. We want

it to be very immersive.”

Sam Rogers discussed the challenge of bringing together the different elements of the story in the edit – reconstruction, archive and interviews – to focus on the power of the narrative and keep the audience on the edge of their seats.

*Last Breath* was broadcast on BBC Four in May and is now available on Netflix.

**Suzy Lambert**

## Video compression explored

Thames Valley

To coincide with the last day of the Media Production Show at Olympia in London in June, RTS Thames Valley arranged an event at video compression specialist V-Nova's Paddington office.

The V-Nova team, headed by CEO and co-founder Guido

Meardi, outlined compression options, new developments and upcoming standards.

Chris Pearman, remote production strategist and architect at Red Bee Media, spoke about the growth and latest trends in remote production. He discussed how V-Nova had helped the

media services company deliver an innovative 32-feed production set-up at the Cannes Film Festival this year.

V-Nova product and marketing manager Fabio Murra discussed how faster computer processing power, network speeds and developments in data storage can

improve the user experience for contribution and over-the-top delivery, as well as for linear broadcasting.

Acknowledging how viewer habits are changing dramatically, Murra discussed the explosion of video consumption, with more programmes being delivered through smaller pipes. The end game, he said, was to improve efficiency and costs-effectiveness.

**Tony Orme**

**Carole Solazzo** listens in as **Jason Manford** discusses a career ranging across comedy and drama

**T**he life and legacy of television journalist turned music impresario Tony Wilson – “His passion... as a presenter made us all raise our game,” RTS North West Chair Cat Lewis told a packed audience at the Lowry in June – are commemorated by the annual Anthony H Wilson Memorial Lecture.

This year, it featured fellow Mancunian Jason Manford – comedian, actor, TV presenter and quiz show panelist – in conversation with former *Coronation Street* regular Catherine Tyldesley.

Manford’s start in show business could not have been more different to Wilson’s, who joined ITN as a trainee reporter after graduating from Cambridge University. Manford was 16 and working in a Manchester pub with a weekly comedy night, where he was lucky enough to hear the likes of Caroline Aherne and Peter Kay.

One night, he was pressed into covering for a stand-up who was a no-show. Almost immediately, he was heckled about a black eye and admitted he’d been mugged.

Musing aloud, he recalled that his mugger “gave me a choice: ‘Give us your money or I’ll beat you up.’ I gave him my money and he beat me up anyway... [More than being mugged] I was annoyed that this guy had broken our gentleman’s agreement.”

This got the biggest laugh of the evening and, through



BBC

Upcoming BBC sitcom *Scarborough*

## Manford: from stand-up to TV

it, Manford learnt “that tragedy and comedy are closely linked” – and how to use his life as material, developing observational comedy routines like his hero, Kay.

Manford followed in Kay’s footsteps, developing parallel careers in comedy and acting. “Comics... lend themselves to acting,” Manford claimed. “There’s another layer they can bring to [the role].” Although, ironically, the roles he was offered initially were playing stand-up comedians, including one in Stephen Poliakoff’s 2006 BBC One drama *Gideon’s Daughter*.

Subsequently, Manford appeared in hit northern comedy dramas such as

BBC One’s *Cutting It* and *Ordinary Lies*, and Channel 4’s *Shameless*, while continuing to enjoy great success on the comedy circuit.

This autumn, Manford is set to appear in Derren Litten’s new sitcom for BBC One, *Scarborough* (Litten wrote ITV’s *Benidorm*).

However, Manford’s most popular recent performance was a video he made while on location, posted on social media, in which he spoke about his struggles with mental health. “Men under 55 – their biggest killer is suicide,” he said. “[Men] go to the doctor and let him... put a finger up their bum, but won’t go in for a chat, which is less weird!” ■

## RTS events IN BRIEF

### Barnes takes over in capital

Phil Barnes has been elected RTS London Chair, replacing Dan Cherowbrier, who had been in post for three years. Barnes works in media planning for Walt Disney. He joined the Society in 1995 while working in Plymouth and served as Honorary Secretary and then Chair of the Devon and Cornwall Centre.

### Republic centre tours Virgin HQ

Republic of Ireland members visited the Virgin Media Television operation in Ballymount, Dublin, at the end of June. Director of content Bill Malone, head of programming Aoife Stokes and studio manager Mark Bayley guided them around the complex. The visit included the newsroom, where executive producer Gareth O’Connor and presenter Claire Brock were preparing the 8:00pm bulletin, and Studio One, in which the late-night current affairs show, *The Tonight Show*, is produced.

### London quiz adds Braine power

Musical comedian Harriet Braine hosted the second RTS London summer quiz in early June. Eleven teams faced five tough rounds of questions, including a music segment in which the host covered theme tunes from hit shows such as *Friends* and *Mock the Week*. ‘Shame of Thrones’ bagged the prize for best team name but ‘Free Bag’ secured first place in the quiz.



Channel 4

## School drama doubles up

**Yorkshire Centre** BBC Yorkshire enjoyed a good night at the RTS Yorkshire Awards in Leeds, winning six awards in front of an audience of 300.

The BBC's regional producer dominated the news and current affairs categories, with *Inside Out* winning the News or Current Affairs Story category for its investigation into faulty Ford cars.

*Look North* secured the News Programme prize and its reporter, Emma Glasbey, took the News or Current Affairs Reporter award. "[Her] reports were consistently strong, authoritative and well crafted," said the judges, who were "particularly impressed that the reporter chased down a reluctant interviewee in heels".

The regional news programme's Amy Garcia won the Presenter category.

BBC Yorkshire series *The Lakes with Paul Rose* was awarded the Features prize and editor Richard Levy won the Professional Excellence: Factual Post-production category for his editing of the programme, which explored the landscape and people of the national park.

York-based indie Air TV scooped three prizes, including the Independent Spirit award. It also won the Single

Documentary award for BBC series *River Walks: A Nidderdale Adventure* and the Low-cost Factual category for *Helicopter ER*, which aired on UKTV channel Really.

Channel 4's school drama *Ackley Bridge*, which is made by The Forge Entertainment, took home two prizes, including the Drama award.

"The winner was contemporary, relevant and didn't shy away from issues that

others might avoid," said the judges."

It also won in the Original Digital Content category for its *Snapchat Stories*, which was produced by The Forge Entertainment and social media agency That Lot.

The Outstanding Contribution award went to the team behind the winning bid that brought Channel 4 to Leeds. The judges said: "RTS Yorkshire sees this as a game-changing moment and is thrilled to express its gratitude to the people who together delivered this brilliant outcome."

"It's been an exciting year for TV production in Yorkshire and that is reflected in the quality of this year's nominations," said the RTS Yorkshire Awards Chair Lisa Holdsworth.

"We thoroughly enjoyed a night of well-deserved celebration of, not just the winners, but of the people and companies who make this region a centre of excellence."

Former *Gogglebox* star and *Songs of Praise* presenter Kate Bottley hosted the ceremony at the Queens Hotel, Leeds in mid-June.

Event sponsors included: Channel 4; Channel 5; Daisybeck Studios; Screenskills; York St John University; Prime Studios; The Garden; True North Post; ITV Calendar; and Universal Production Music.

**Matthew Bell**

### RTS Yorkshire Television Awards winners

**Outstanding Contribution** - *Team Leeds* for Channel 4

**Drama (sponsored by Screenskills)** - *Ackley Bridge* - The Forge Entertainment (supported by Screen Yorkshire) for Channel 4

**Single Documentary** - *River Walks: A Nidderdale Adventure* - Air TV for BBC One/BBC Two

**Documentary Series** - *The Yorkshire Vet* - Daisybeck Studios/Motion Content Group for Channel 5

**Factual Entertainment** - *The Pets Factor* - True North Productions for CBBC

**Features** - *The Lakes with Paul Rose* - BBC Yorkshire for BBC One/BBC Two

**News or Current Affairs Reporter** - Emma Glasbey, *Look North* - BBC Yorkshire

**News or Current Affairs Story** - *Ford Investigation, Inside Out* - BBC Yorkshire

**News Programme (sponsored by York St John University)** - *Look North* - BBC Yorkshire

**Presenter** - Amy Garcia, *Look North* - BBC Yorkshire

**One to Watch (sponsored by Channel 5)** - Harry Lock - True Vision Yorkshire

**Animation** - *Mr Shapeshifter* - Fettle Animation for The GW Theatre Company website

**Independent Spirit (sponsored by Channel 4)** - *Air TV*

**Low-cost Factual** - *Helicopter ER* - Air TV for Really

**Original Digital Content** - *Ackley Bridge Snapchat Stories* - The Forge Entertainment/That Lot for Channel 4

**Music and Sound** - Harrison Spinks advert: *The True Bedmakers* - The Firm

**Professional Excellence - Factual Post-production** - Richard Levy, film editor, *The Lakes with Paul Rose* - BBC Yorkshire for BBC One/BBC Two

**Professional Excellence - Factual Production** - The production team, *Behind Closed Doors: Through the Eyes of the Child* - True Vision Yorkshire for BBC Two

More than 400 guests attended the RTS Scotland Awards 2019, which saw the broadcaster, television executive and writer Stuart Cosgrove recognised for his work for Scotland's TV industry.

Cosgrove, who led the Scotland team that campaigned successfully to bring one of the Channel 4 hubs to Glasgow, is the latest recipient of the prestigious RTS Scotland Award.

The inaugural Writer award went to Lorna Martin, who adapted her bestselling book, *Woman on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, for television. *Women on the Verge*, a Merman/House Productions series, aired on UKTV channel W and RTÉ2.

Synchronicity Films series *The Cry*, which secured six nominations, won the Drama prize. The BBC One thriller starred Jenna Coleman as a teacher whose life collapses after her baby son disappears.

Scotland's new Gaelic TV channel BBC Alba/MG Alba took home four awards: *Buidheagain* (Children's); *FUNC* (Comedy); *Tommy Burns* (Sport: Programme); and the Camera craft award for Daibhidh Martin who shot a two-part doc about the traditional annual hunt for young gannets, *Sùlaisgeir An t-Sealg*.

"We've had more Gaelic entries than ever before, plus a number of independent companies submitting entries for the first time," said



Synchronicity Films

RTS Scotland Chair April Chamberlain.

The Young Journalist Award went to Ceri Isfryn, who produced Firecrest Films' documentary for Channel 4's *Dispatches* current affairs strand, *Inside Facebook: Secrets of the Social Network*. She received a prize of £1,000 in memory of former BBC Scotland news and current affairs editor George Sinclair.

Glasgow indie Firecrest Films also makes *Supershoppers*, whose presenter, Sabrina Grant, won the On-screen Personality award.

BBC Studios' film for the

long-running *Imagine...* programme, *Rupert Everett: Born to be Wilde*, scooped the Documentary and Specialist Factual: Arts prize and the Editing craft award for Berny McGurk.

*What Separates Us from the Beasts*, a drama from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, won the overall Student Award, holding off the winners of the Animation, Comedy and Entertainment, Short Form and Factual categories from the RTS Scotland Student Awards in April.

The ceremony was held at the Old Fruitmarket in Glasgow and hosted by STV

presenter Jennifer Reoch and stand-up comedian and Heart radio presenter Des Clarke. A record number of entries was received for awards across 24 categories.

"What a great year it has been for the creative industries in Scotland," said Lisa Hazlehurst, head of Lion Television and Chair of the RTS Scotland Awards. "Scotland's television industry continues to expand and the high standard of submissions demonstrates what brilliant programmes are being produced here."

**Matthew Bell**

## RTS Scotland Television Awards winners

**RTS Scotland Award - Stuart Cosgrove**

**Drama - *The Cry*** - Synchronicity Films for BBC One

**Writer - Lorna Martin, *Women on the Verge*** - Merman/House Productions for RTÉ2 and W

**Director - Simon Hynd, *There She Goes*** - Merman for BBC Four

**Comedy - *FUNC*** - *The Woven Thread* for BBC Alba

**Children - *Buidheagain*** - Sorbier Productions for BBC Alba

**On-screen Personality - Sabrina Grant,**

***Supershoppers*** - Firecrest Films for Channel 4

**Factual Entertainment and Features - *Class of Mum and Dad*** - Firecracker Scotland for Channel 4

**Documentary and Specialist Factual - *Fashion's Dirty Secrets*** - Stacey Dooley Investigates - Hello Halo Productions and Oak Island Films for BBC One

**Documentary and Specialist Factual - *Arts - Imagine... Rupert Everett: Born to be Wilde*** - BBC Studios for BBC One

**Documentary and Specialist Factual - *History - The Flu That Killed 50 Million*** - BBC Studios for BBC Two

**Documentary and Specialist Factual - *Science and Natural History - The Secret***

***Life of Landfill: A Rubbish History*** - Tern Television Productions for BBC Four

**Daytime - *Antiques Road Trip*** - STV Productions for BBC One

**News - *STV News*** - STV

**Young Journalist - Ceri Isfryn** - Firecrest Films for Channel 4

**Current Affairs - *Disclosure: Suffer the Children*** - BBC Scotland

**Sport - Live Event - *The Betfred League Cup Final 2018*** - Sunset+Vine for BT Sport

**Sport - Programme - *Tommy Burns*** - purpleTV for BBC Alba

**Short Form - *Time For Love*** - BBC Scotland for BBC The Social

**Animation and VFX - *The Great War: An Orkney Memorial Experience***

***Playdead*** for Kirkwall Townscape Heritage Initiative

**Professional Excellence - Sound - *Michael MacKinnon/Savalas, Make Me Up*** - Hopscotch Films for BBC Four

**Professional Excellence - Camera - *Daibhidh Martin, Sùlaisgeir An t-Sealg*** - MacTV for BBC Alba

**Post-production - Editing - *Berny McGurk, Imagine... Rupert Everett: Born to be Wilde*** - BBC Studios for BBC One

**Post-production - Graphics and Titling - *Peepshow, Angela Carter: Of Wolves & Women*** - BBC Studios for BBC Two

**Student Television Award - *What Separates Us from the Beasts*** - Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

# John Myers 1959-2019

**F**riends and colleagues from the world of television and radio packed Carlisle Cathedral in June for the funeral of media executive John Myers, who died suddenly, aged 60.

John was one of the most influential and successful figures in British media, having launched and developed commercial radio brands including Century, Smooth, Real and Rock.

He was Chief Executive of both GMG Radio and the Radio Academy, and produced the *Myers Report* on the future of local radio for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (as it was) in 2009. Two years later, he advised the BBC on streamlining its radio services.

His early career saw him working for BBC local radio

in his home city of Carlisle and he spent nearly four years at Border Television, where he was an in-vision continuity announcer. One of his signature achievements was introducing the unpredictable puppet Eric the Monkey.

John went on to be a guest presenter on neighbouring Tyne Tees Television while running Century Radio, where he also hosted the station's breakfast show.

His presenting style was warm but anarchic. His 2012 autobiography *Team, It's Only Radio*, is packed with laugh-out-loud examples of on-air incidents with guests and listeners. These included the woman who insisted during a phone-in that Hitler's first name was Heil.

John's management style was similarly legendary and

he became the star of the 1999 BBC Two documentary series *Trouble at the Top*, which observed the launch of a new radio station in the north west. His hiring of ex-politician Derek Hatton and his firing of the religious affairs producer made headlines.

In recent years, he focused on his company Myers Media, and enjoyed spending time with students at the University of Sunderland and Cumbria University.

He would use his extensive contacts generously to secure work experience and his masterclasses were direct and entertaining; "If you're coming to me for a job, look me in the eye, have a firm handshake and be nice to whoever welcomes you into the building. Because, after your interview, I'll be asking them what they thought of you."



Myers Media

John was an active committee member of the North East and the Border Centre, chairing awards panels and organising events.

He had a passion for golf and was at the 18th hole at Gleneagles in Scotland when he collapsed and died. He had recently been given the all-clear following treatment for throat cancer.

John is survived by his wife, Linda, children Scott and Kerry and grandchildren, Mia and Marcus. ■

**Graeme Thompson**

# Bernadette Rogers 1929-2019

**R**TS Fellow Bernadette Rogers, who died in May at the age of 89, was a former director of research at Rank and a chief scientific adviser to the government on broadcast technology.

Bernard, as he then was, joined the Society in 1958 and became a Fellow in 1975. At the time, he was chief engineer and manager of the Advanced Laboratory at Rank Radio International.

He joined Rank in 1952 to work on colour TV. He went on to advise Margaret Thatcher's Government. One of his tasks was to win acceptance for the British Teletext system from standards bodies in Europe and the US.

Bernard was born and brought up in south London, and married Joyce in the late 1960s. In 1991, he underwent gender reassignment surgery, becoming Bernadette.

After taking time off to recover from the surgery, she returned to work in Whitehall as Bernadette. Years later, she told the *Northampton Chronicle & Echo*: "On the first day I sat in the big chairman's chair and in front of me was a big envelope. In it was only one thing – the key to the ladies' loo. Even Whitehall could act very sensitively."

The Gender Recognition Act in 2004 gave Bernadette legal acknowledgement of the change in her gender, which allowed her to be



Bernadette Rogers (left) and partner Joyce

PA

issued with a new birth certificate as a woman. In 2005, she and Joyce divorced so they could become civil partners. Bernadette told BBC

News she had always known that she was really a woman: "I've been waiting 71 years for this." ■

**Matthew Bell**

**T**he Society held its first ever bursary students and mentors reception at the BFI in central London in June, attended by participants drawn from all five years of the scheme.

Addressing the students and mentors, RTS Education Chair Graeme Thompson said: “You are part of a thriving project, which is making a difference to representation in the TV and screen industry. We fervently believe that we reach the parts that others in the industry can’t reach – and that’s fantastic for the diversity of our industry.”

RTS CEO Theresa Wise added: “The media industry should reflect the country and, if it is only reflecting those who can afford free internships or who have families with connections, then we’re not doing our job.”

Mentors are a key component of the RTS bursary scheme, which, by the end of 2018, was supporting 125 students at 44 universities. “We’ve been incredibly fortunate to recruit really amazing people from broadcasters and production companies up and down the land who’ve given their time and



Liam Warden (left) and James Rogan

Paul Hampartsoumian

## Bursaries mark first five years

support for this scheme,” said Thompson.

James Rogan mentored Adam Mann, who worked as a researcher on BBC Two doc *The Mighty Redcar* and is now in the same role at factual indie *The Garden*. He gave Mann experience on sets and

an internship at the indie he founded, Rogan Productions, helping him “to work out which direction he wanted to go in”. As a mentor, Rogan tries to “give students an understanding of how the interview process works and how to engage with

people in the industry”.

Rogan’s new mentee is University of Sheffield Journalism Studies student Liam Warden, who said: “I’ve already learnt about the importance of networking – and how things can happen through making connections.”

James Mailey, who recently completed his computer science degree at Durham University, also highlighted the benefits of networking.

“The bursary money has been a help, but the chance to network with so many great people has given me opportunities to find work. Coming from a science background, I never thought I’d be able to get into TV,” he said. While studying, Mailey has worked as a paid location scout and as a runner for Freeform Productions.

RTS Production and Broadcast Journalism Bursaries are offered to students from less affluent backgrounds with the goal of widening participation in television. The Society also offers Technology Bursaries. The scheme is supported by All3Media, STV, Disney and the Steve Hewlett Memorial Fund. ■

**Matthew Bell**

## Cardiff kicks off diversity debates

■ The Creative Diversity Network and the RTS have joined forces to host discussions on diversity across the UK. The first event – ‘The network speaks: beyond tokenism’ – took place in Cardiff in June to a full house of unscripted programme-makers from Wales, who took part in a conversation about diversity and representation on screen.

The series of discussions aims to take the conversation



Deborah Williams

Hywel Wiliam

about disability out of London and change how the industry works for everyone. It will focus on local issues and solutions, generated through intimate, accessible and open discussions.

Such honesty can be revealing, showing how nuanced and subtle cultural values in broadcasting can inadvertently exclude viewers, particularly from ethnic minority groups. As one contributor put it, ‘Gardening programmes appeal to a white, middle-class audience – but some viewers might say, “Who needs a garden anyway? Asians don’t do gardening, we just concrete over it.”’

The session highlighted

potential solutions to address issues around stereotyping, trust, legacy, outreach and fear.

One worker explained how he had to hide his disability to get a job in TV. Another described a fear of being ‘stitched-up’ by producers, arguing that role models can help to change perceptions and increase trust.

Creative Diversity Network CEO Deborah Williams thanked RTS Wales for partnering with her organisation: ‘I enjoyed the day immensely and felt it was a resounding success. I hope they all continue in this vein and are as productive as this one in Cardiff.’

**Lou Phelps and Hywel Wiliam**

## National events

### RTS EARLY EVENING EVENT

Thursday 29 August

#### In conversation with Jeff Pope

With journalist and broadcaster Caroline Frost. Jeff Pope is head of factual drama at ITV Studios  
Venue: TBC

### RTS CAMBRIDGE CONVENTION 2019

18-20 September

#### Content, consumers and everything in between

Principal sponsor: ITV. Chaired by Carolyn McCall, CEO, ITV. Confirmed speakers include: Karen Blackett OBE, country manager, WPP; Philippa Brown, CEO, PHD Worldwide; Jeremy Darroch, CEO, Sky; Howard Davine, executive vice-president, business operations, ABC Studios; Tony Hall, Director-General, BBC; Reed Hastings, CEO, Netflix; Tim Hincks, Co-CEO of Expectation; Sir Lenny Henry; Alex Mahon, CEO, Channel 4; Jane Turton, CEO, All3Media; Sharon White, CEO, Ofcom; Rt Hon Jeremy Wright MP, Secretary of State, DCMS; Linda Yaccarino, Chair of advertising and client partnerships, NBCUniversal; and David Zaslav, President and CEO, Discovery.  
Venue: King's College CB2 1ST

### STEVE HEWLETT MEMORIAL LECTURE 2019

Tuesday 24 September

#### Speaker Mark Thompson

Mark Thompson is President and CEO of the New York Times Company, and a former Director-General of the BBC. Drinks reception sponsored by BBC Studios. 6:00pm for 6:30pm  
Venue: University of Westminster, London W1W 7BY

### RTS MASTERCLASSES

Tuesday 5 November and  
Wednesday 6 November

#### RTS Student Masterclasses

Venue: IET, 2 Savoy Place, London WC2R 0BL

### RTS AWARDS

Monday 25 November

#### RTS Craft & Design Awards 2019

Sponsored by Gravity Media Group  
London Hilton on Park Lane  
22 Park Lane, London W1K 1BE

### RTS FUTURES

Wednesday 12 February 2020

#### RTS Futures Television Careers Fair 2020

10:00am-4:00pm  
Venue: Business Design Centre, 52 Upper Street, London N1 0QH

## Local events

### DEVON AND CORNWALL

■ Jane Hudson  
■ RTSDevonandCornwall@rts.org.uk

### EAST

Thursday 21 November

#### The Galaxy Britain Built: The British talent behind Star Wars – screening and Q&A

Join David Whiteley and special guests for a screening of his award-winning film. To book a place, email [rtseast@rts.org.uk](mailto:rtseast@rts.org.uk)  
Venue: TBC  
■ Jayne Greene 07792 776585  
■ RTSEast@rts.org.uk

### ISLE OF MAN

■ Michael Wilson  
■ michael.wilson@isleofmedia.org

### LONDON

Wednesday 9 October  
IBC 2019 review

Joint event with the Institution of Engineering and Technology. 6:30pm for 7:00pm  
Venue: IET, Savoy Place, London WC2R 0BL

Wednesday 4 December

#### Christmas Lecture: David Abraham

6:30pm for 7:00pm  
Venue: Cavendish Conference Centre, 22 Duchess Mews, London W1G 9DT

■ Phil Barnes  
■ rts@philbarnes.com

### MIDLANDS

Thursday 3 October

#### Zomboat masterclass and screening

When the zombie apocalypse is unleashed in Birmingham, the only way to escape is by... canal boat. Zomboat premieres on ITV2 in the autumn and on Hulu later this year.  
Venue: TBC

Monday 7 October

#### RTS Midlands TV Careers Fair 2019

Book via [Eventbrite.co.uk](http://Eventbrite.co.uk). Tickets are £10, and cannot be purchased on the door. Minors must be accompanied by a fee-paying adult. Panel sessions with production teams and talent, bootcamps, CV advice, networking and information about the jobs and training schemes that are available.  
10:00am-4:00pm  
Venue: Edgbaston stadium, Birmingham B5 7QU

Friday 29 November

#### RTS Midlands Awards

Venue: International Convention Centre, Broad Street, Birmingham B1 2EA  
■ Jayne Greene 07792 776585  
■ RTSMidlands@rts.org.uk

### NORTH EAST AND THE BORDER

■ Jill Graham  
■ jill.graham@blueyonder.co.uk

### NORTH WEST

Thursday 26 September  
Awards launch party

Details TBA  
Venue: Compass Room, Lowry Theatre, Salford Quays M50 3AZ

Saturday 23 November

#### RTS North West Awards

Venue: Hilton Deansgate, 303 Deansgate, Manchester M3 4LQ  
■ Rachel Pinkney 07966 230639  
■ RPinkney@rts.org.uk

### NORTHERN IRELAND

Thursday 25 July

#### RTS NI Programme Awards launch event

Enjoy a glass of prosecco or beer on arrival. Held in association with Media Therapy. 4:00pm-7:00pm  
Venue: The Orpheus, Hill Street, Belfast BT1 2LB

Thursday 7 November

#### RTS NI Programme Awards

Venue: The MAC, 10 Exchange Street West, Belfast BT1 2NJ  
■ John Mitchell  
■ mitch.mvbroadcast@btinternet.com

### REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

■ Charles Byrne (353) 87251 3092  
■ byrnecc@iol.ie

### SCOTLAND

September – date TBC

#### The technology behind weather reporting

With STV's Sean Batty.  
Venue: STV Pacific Quay, Glasgow G51 1PQ  
■ Cheryl Strong  
■ RTSScotland@rts.org.uk

### SOUTHERN

■ Stephanie Farmer  
■ SFarmer@bournemouth.ac.uk

### THAMES VALLEY

■ Tony Orme  
■ RTSThamesValley@rts.org.uk

### WALES

3-10 August

#### National Eisteddfod 2019

Eisteddfod events details TBC  
Venue: Llanrwst, Wales  
■ Hywel William 07980 007841  
■ HWilliam@rts.org.uk

### WEST OF ENGLAND

■ Suzy Lambert  
■ suzy.lambert@rts.org.uk

### YORKSHIRE

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



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To join and for full details of all member benefits visit our website

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

# OFF MESSAGE

**T**hinking of booking a motivational speaker? Look no further than the diminutive powerhouse that is Siobhan Greene, one of the doyennes of TV entertainment.

“I don’t take drugs but, if I did, TV would be my drug of choice,” Shu told the youthful audience at the recent RTS Student Television Awards.

Her rousing opening remarks wowed the wannabes who heard how she’d defied difficult circumstances to rise to the top. Shu was a teenage single mother who went on to become a high-flying key exec at Simon Cowell’s Syco.

Her big break came when she landed a job at Yorkshire Television in the typing pool. “The people at YTV made me believe I could be someone,” she recalled, outlining her incredible journey from Halifax to Hollywood.

A more impressive role model for the next generation of TV talent would be hard to find.

Off Message wishes Shu huge success when she leaves ITV to launch her own production company in September.

■ **Staying with the student awards, Off Message wasn’t the only one to be blown away by the amazing quality of this year’s nominees and**

**winners. The good news is that 25 of the films are available on a YouTube channel, with a link to the playlist at [www.rts.org.uk/StudentFilms2019](http://www.rts.org.uk/StudentFilms2019).**

**If you want to get a taste of the imagination, craft skills and range of the work undertaken by year’s awards contenders, take a look.**

**You’ll regret if it you don’t.**

■ Jed Mercurio revealed his disdain for internet abuse at the Society’s hugely enjoyable live staging of *The South Bank Show* last month, which featured some of the country’s leading TV dramatists.

Would the panellists rewrite and reshoot scenes in response to a social-media backlash, asked one member of the audience?

“I think the clue as to whether that [type of criticism] is valid is contained in the two words, ‘social media,’” replied the *Line of Duty* creator. “On Twitter, people are telling me the Earth is flat.”

After a moment’s thought, he added: “If these muppets on Twitter were able to crowdfund the budget, I would love to reshoot everything I’ve ever done.”

■ **Congratulations to Clive Jones, the erstwhile ITV executive knighted in the recent Queen’s Birthday Honours.**

**Clive’s career in television was legendary. He ran ITV franchise**

**holder Carlton during a difficult period and was one of the pioneers of breakfast TV in the UK. He was also an early champion of diversity.**

**He left TV in 2011 to chair the Disasters Emergency Committee. It is this work that he was knighted for, which he said had renewed his belief in mankind. “You see the British public making donations and then you can see in, for example, the Philippines a community being rebuilt,” he noted.**

**Aged 70, Clive is preparing to take over the chairmanship of another charity – Sightsavers, which works to prevent avoidable blindness worldwide.**

**“Well, my wife says I’m dangerous when I’m bored,” he says.**

■ And, finally, Off Message was flattered to be invited to the Conservative Party’s Arts and Creative Industries Network’s summer bash.

CACIN’s soirée was held in the history-soaked atmosphere of Soho’s The Court, once known as the Bag O’Nails, a 1960s watering hole frequented by the Beatles and Jimi Hendrix.

“If we had a Boris cocktail tonight, it would be robust and full-bodied,” quipped Damian Collins MP, chair of CACIN, as he greeted guests.

As for the characteristics of a “Jeremy” cocktail, Off Message couldn’t possibly comment.



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