

June 2015

Television



**The history
man goes
digital**

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From the CEO



I am very pleased to say that the May RTS Futures event, "First Dates – Falling in Love with Ideas", and our RTS Legends lunch featuring Jeremy

Paxman and Alastair Stewart were both huge successes.

Great ideas are the lifeblood of television. At "First Dates" (see page 21) the audience heard from some of TV's top creative thinkers on how to turn ideas into must-watch shows. Sincere thanks to all those who took part.

Our two heavyweight anchormen were expertly put through their paces by Steve Hewlett at the Legends lunch (see page 14). This sold-out event was seriously entertaining. The journalists who attended had plenty to write

about. It was fascinating to hear two very different perspectives on the election and its coverage.

Paul Jackson is standing down as Chair of RTS Legends. I am so grateful for the absolutely superb job Paul has done: the calibre and range of speakers he has persuaded to be interviewed at these lunches has been extraordinary.

Thanks, too, to Clive Jones, who co-produced the May lunch with Paul.

I was thrilled to attend the RTS Scotland Awards, on 20 May, at the Oran Mor in Glasgow, where we recognised the best of Scottish television. STV Deputy Director of Channels Elizabeth Partyka was a deserving recipient of the RTS Scotland Award (details on page 33).

Finally, I'd like to highlight the 20th RTS Student Television Awards, held

at the BFI Southbank on 5 June. The winners and nominees are presented from page 24 onwards. Congratulations to every single one of them.

And huge thanks to Stuart Murphy, our RTS Student Awards Chair. The highlights of the ceremony have gone out on Sky Arts.

As Creative Skillset recently reminded us, gaining a foothold in TV is often challenging. With luck, those who triumphed at the student awards will have a head start as they consider their options beyond full-time education.

Theresa Wise

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The winners, in 16 categories, were announced at a ceremony, hosted by comedian Romesh Ranganathan, on 5 June at the BFI Southbank

Cover picture: BBC

Editor
Steve Clarke
smclarke_333@hotmail.com
Writer
Matthew Bell
bell127@btinternet.com

Production, design, advertising
Gordon Jamieson
gordon.jamieson.01@gmail.com
Sub-editor
Sarah Bancroft
smbancroft@me.com

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

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National events

RTS EARLY EVENING EVENT

Monday 22 June

Diversity: job done?

Panellists:

Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson DBE; Kobna Holdbrook-Smith, Act for Change; Lucy Lumsden, Head of Comedy, Sky; Tunde Ogungbesan, Head of Diversity, Inclusion and Succession, BBC; Ade Rawcliffe, Creative Diversity Manager, Channel 4. Chair: Afua Hirsch, Social Affairs and Education Editor, Sky News.

Exclusive results of an industry survey by The TV Collective will be revealed on the night.

6:45pm for 7:00pm start

Venue: One Great George Street, London SW1P 3AA

■ Book online at www.rts.org.uk

RTS FUTURES

Thursday 16 July

Summer party

Organised jointly by RTS Futures and Guardian Edinburgh International Television Festival Talent Schemes. 6:30pm

Venue: Design Museum, 28 Shad Thames, London SE1 2YD

■ Book online at www.rts.org.uk

RTS CONVENTION

16-18 September

RTS Cambridge Convention 2015

Speakers include: David Abraham, CEO, Channel 4; Philippe Dauman, President and CEO, Viacom; Tim Davie, CEO, BBC Worldwide and Director, Global; Lorraine Heggessy; Jay Hunt, Chief Creative Officer, Channel 4; Michael Lombardo, President of Programming, HBO; James Purnell, Director, Strategy and Digital, BBC; Josh Sapan, President and CEO, AMC Networks; Sir Howard Stringer, Sharon White, Chief Executive, Ofcom; The Rt Hon John Whittingdale OBE MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport; and David Zaslav, President and CEO, Discovery Communications.

Chair: Tony Hall, Director-General, BBC. Early-bird registration discount until 30 June

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

■ Book online at www.rts.org.uk

RTS EARLY EVENING EVENT

Monday 28 September

In conversation with Mike Darcy, Chief Executive Officer, News UK

6:30pm for 6:45pm

Venue: The Hospital Club, 24 Endell Street, London WC2H 9HQ

■ Booking opening soon

JOINT PUBLIC LECTURE

Wednesday 4 November

Joint RTS/IET public lecture with Demis Hassabis

Demis Hassabis is founder of Deep Mind and an artificial intelligence researcher, neuro-scientist and computer game designer. 6:30pm for 6:45pm

Venue: British Museum, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3DG

■ Booking opening soon

RTS MASTERCLASSES

Tuesday 10 November

RTS Student Programme Masterclasses

Venue: BFI Southbank, London SE1 8XT

■ Booking opening soon

RTS MASTERCLASSES

Wednesday 11 November

RTS Craft Skills Masterclasses

Venue: BFI Southbank, London SE1 8XT

■ Booking opening soon

RTS AWARDS

Monday 30 November 2015

RTS Craft & Design Awards 2014-2015

The closing date for awards entries is Tuesday 1 September
Venue: The London Hilton, Park Lane, London W1K 1BE

Local events

BRISTOL

Tuesday 14 July

AGM

Venue: TBC

■ Belinda Biggam

■ belindabiggam@hotmail.com

DEVON & CORNWALL

■ Contact TBC

EAST ANGLIA

■ Contact TBC

LONDON

Tuesday 23 June

Pinewood Studios tour

Hosted by Pinewood TV Studios.

The studios are a short taxi ride from Slough/Uxbridge stations.

6:30pm

Venue: Pinewood Studios, Iver

Heath SLO ONH

■ Daniel Cherowbrier

■ daniel@cherowbrier.co.uk

MIDLANDS

■ Jayne Greene 07792 776585

■ jayne@ijmmedia.co.uk

NORTH EAST & THE BORDER

Tuesday 16 June

Filming with drones

A masterclass covering the use of drones in film and television, led by Mark Batey (BBC Academy) and Horizon AP (aerial filming specialist).

Weather permitting, there will be live flying. Registration via Eventbrite is essential. 7:00pm

Venue: Royal Grammar School, Newcastle NE2 4DX

■ Jill Graham

■ jill.graham@blueyonder.co.uk

NORTH WEST

■ Rachel Pinkney 07966 230639

■ rachelpinkney@yahoo.co.uk

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ John Mitchell

■ mitch.mvbroadcast@btinternet.com

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

■ Charles Byrne (353) 87251 3092

■ byrneccd@iol.ie

SCOTLAND

■ James Wilson 07899 761167

■ james.wilson@cityofglasgowcollege.ac.uk

SOUTHERN

■ Gordon Cooper

■ gordonjcooper@gmail.com

THAMES VALLEY

Wednesday 8 July

Summer BBQ – Drone fest

Tickets for this event are £13 for members, £16 for non-members and £8 for under-16's. This includes a BBQ supper.

6:30pm–8:30pm approx

Venue: Pincents Manor, Calcot, Reading RG31 4UQ

■ Penny Westlake

■ info@rtstvc.org.uk



WALES

Thursday 18 June

AGM

7:00pm

Venue: Cameo Club, 3&5 Pontcanna Street, Cardiff CF11 9HQ

Tuesday 4 August

Eisteddfod: TV and broadband in rural areas

Welsh-language event at the National Eisteddfod

Venue: S4C Pavilion, National Eisteddfod of Wales, Meifod, Mid Wales

■ Hywel William 07980 007841

■ hywel@aim.wales

YORKSHIRE

Friday 19 June

Annual Awards

Venue: Royal Armouries, Leeds LS10 1LT

■ Lisa Holdsworth 07790 145280

■ lisa@allonewordproductions.co.uk

TV diary

Peter Bazalgette praises television's election coverage and recommends some serious rethinking on the BBC licence fee



Apparently, I've not contributed a diary since 2010. Perhaps I only get invited in election years. In May 2010, I was also asked to review the different channels' election coverage by *The Guardian*.

On that occasion, I called it decisively for Sky News. ITN was fine but less dramatic. And the BBC, with its ship-of-fools party and an over-academic Vernon Bogdanor and a swingometer that couldn't cope with a three-way race and, and, and...

This time, I felt it was a dead heat. The BBC was extraordinarily better, ITV benefited from the considerable talents of Tom Bradby and Sky continued its excellent, Bloomberg-style blitzkrieg of statistics.

All, of course, profited from their joint exit poll, which was dramatic and accurate, and they had the guts to go with it (full disclosure: I was on the ship of fools... but not for long).

■ **To the second board meeting of the Creative Industries Federation, as an observer. Around the table are a movie mogul, a leading publisher, chairs of arts institutions, the BBC Director-General and a design guru, among others.**

It's very exciting that this new organisation, intended as a CBI for the creative industries, is now up and running.

I'm not sure whether observers are allowed to have opinions, but I suggest we should urge the new Government

to adopt policies to double the size of the fast-growing creative sector.

Super-fast broadband, better arts education, backing the BBC as a beneficial market intervention... all eminently possible (further disclosure: I was one of a group of arts/media folk who helped start CIF).

■ Talking of the BBC (and, let's be honest, we teletubbies talk about little else), when you strip away all the excitement generated in right-wing newspapers, only two real issues remain around Charter renewal. And neither of them concerns whether the Charter will be renewed. That is a given.

The first is the level the licence fee gets set at. The second is what its new regulation will look like.

Rona Fairhead has said that the Trust's days are numbered (though not in her RTS interview – I blame the host of the event). This is, clearly, a choice between Ofcom and Ofbeeb.

The former doesn't really want it but the latter seems overcomplicated. Whichever emerges, it could be charged with producing a "white paper" within two years, proposing the right funding mechanism for the next time around.

Though we've said this for some time, surely the licence fee will need to be rethought. So let's do the thinking (another disclosure: I was the one interviewing Rona).

■ **To their credit, television organisations are trying hard to respond to Lenny Henry's impassioned provocation about our diversity. One**

of the most important challenges? To recruit new drama writers from every background and community. Television drama – from the soaps to the BBC's Shakespeare productions – are the most vivid manifestation of our different cultures and our national conversation.

Good that ITV has Original Voices to bring fresh talent into its soaps. And encouraging that the BBC has its Writersroom seeking out BAME (black, Asian and minority ethnic) entrants to our industry.

We should also be putting more resources into the likes of the National Film and Television School and The London Film School to help them identify the widest possible field of creative talent (double disclosure: I'm on the ITV Board and was a member of the NFTS's).

■ Abroad for a week, I notice a piece about an Ofcom report in my Kindle edition of the *FT*. Apparently, 70% of five- to 15-year-olds have access to a tablet and one in 10 toddlers has their own.

We know that, with the exception of live programming, the under-25s are increasingly schedule avoiders. But how will this new, mobile-addicted generation consume our shows as they grow up? They'll still love our stuff, but when and where they want it.

Welcome to the VoD world, my friends (final disclosure: I'm typing this on an iPad).

Sir Peter Bazalgette is President of the RTS and Chair of Arts Council England.



Action man makes history online

“I’d rather have internet than running water,” declares Dan Snow, broadcaster, historian and self-confessed digital obsessive. Not content with making history programmes for broadcasters on subjects as diverse as China’s Terracotta Army and the D-Day landings, Snow is now building an online empire. His new tools are apps, YouTube videos, Facebook, Twitter (where he has a whopping 100,000 followers) and, most recently, Periscope, the Twitter-owned live video app.

Snow becomes animated when discussing Periscope, which he has used recently to share his journey across the English Channel as part of the 75th anniversary of the Dunkirk evacuation.

“You get an immediate reaction, you get an interesting buzz,” he gushes.

It’s not surprising that Snow is so enthusiastic. Born to the Canadian broadcaster Ann MacMillan, who was CBC’s London correspondent for many years, and former *Newsnight* presenter Peter Snow, he grew up immersed in visual storytelling.

The Snow children were trained in reporting from a young age. Home

Interview

Dan Snow was a late convert to YouTube. He explains to **Pippa Shawley** how he is building an online empire

videos featured the kids presenting pieces to camera about their holiday destinations.

Snow recalls: “My dad loved home videos; he loved editing them, and made great efforts, poor guy. In that era, God knows how he did it.”

It was thanks to his dad that Snow got his first big break in television. A producer spotted him taking part in Oxbridge’s Boat Race and, aware of his heritage, offered Snow junior and senior a television series together.

After declining the initial offer, they agreed to present a BBC programme in 2002 commemorating the 60th anniversary of El Alamein.

The idea was that Dan was the same age as the soldiers, while Peter was little older than the generals of the Second World War battle – “I just got incredibly lucky; I’m the first to admit it.”

He says he “owes everything” to his parents, “not just for the broadcasting experience, but because they gave me my love of history and they gave me my love of communication, language and interrogating the past to find out what’s going on in the future.”

Instead of embarking on a PhD as planned, Snow launched his TV career, following the El Alamein programme with series such as *20th Century Battlefields* and *Filthy Cities*, both for the BBC.

Today, Snow is known for his BBC factual programmes, including his latest BBC Two series, *Armada: 12 Days To Save England*, history dispatches on *The One Show* and, more recently, as part of the BBC’s live events team, broadcasting ceremonies such as the 70th anniversary of VE Day and Trooping the Colour.

Snow’s passion for history is matched only by his enthusiasm for digital media. With his production company, Ballista, Snow has created a series of history apps for institutions such as The



Armada: 12 Days To Save England

Tank Museum and the National Maritime Museum, in addition to Ballista's own *Timeline* series, which includes the award-winning *Timeline WW2*.

"I said in *The Guardian* a couple of years ago – and I was absolutely ripped to shreds – that apps are better than books, which is so obviously true because an app is a book... but pictures and video and maps are added in to it, so it's like a book with more stuff in it," Snow insists.

Using digital media to tell a story is much more flexible for teaching history than using linear television alone, says Snow: "With linear TV, I think you've got to concentrate on the thing it does really well, which is seriously beautiful, high-end production values."

He's currently working on a 90-minute special about the Vikings for BBC One with space archaeologist Sarah Parcak, who co-presented *Rome's Lost Empire* with him. The special will track the Vikings through Iceland, Greenland and Canada, where satellite archaeology will be used potentially to discover new Viking sites further west than those previously found.

The spectacular landscapes of Iceland and Newfoundland are as vital to mak-

ing the show a hit as the archaeology.

"I think sometimes that commissioners and TV execs are a bit embarrassed about admitting that you want stunning visuals," says Snow. "But TV should be a celebration of the visual as well as the story from our past."

He cites 2014's *Operation Grand Canyon*, where he followed the journey of little-known explorer John Wesley Powell, as a programme in which the visuals drove the storytelling.

"No one had heard of him in America, let alone in Britain, and that was, allegedly, the reason that we went. But the reason that it did well and that people liked it was because it looked unbelievable," argues Snow. "It was a landscape people recognised but wanted to know more about."

The pictorial nature of television means that some periods of history get less airtime than others.

The Anglo-Saxons, for example, are an important part of British history. Arguably, they have been under-represented in factual television, as they did not leave the kind of tangible legacy that other cultures, such as the Romans and the Normans, did.

"I'm a big believer in the idea that, if you turn on a TV, it should look interesting," says Snow. "And the fact is, an Iron Age field system looks less interesting than the temple at Karnak, even to archaeologists."

This, inevitably, leads some to argue that history on television is slightly superficial, as Snow readily admits: "If you want to engage in incredibly scholarly debate and analysis, then maybe TV isn't quite the right place for you."

While Snow clearly enjoys making these high-quality documentaries, as well as the short segments for *The One Show* that see him dipping into a huge range of historical periods and events, it is online where he now wants to make his mark.

"Unfortunately," he confesses, "I came really late to the game on YouTube. We were just dumping offcuts of stuff that we were filming for other linear shows, and we'd go a year without putting anything on it."

Snow is making a concerted effort to build up his YouTube channel, *Dan's History Hit*, with short, snappy clips, but he is also planning to stream a live debate with a group of leading historians addressing big questions, such as: "Why did the Allies win the Second World War?"

While he may have failed to get in

on the ground floor with YouTube, he's quickly gathering a reputation for producing engaging and exciting live reports on Periscope.

"Periscope is for people who are confident doing live content in interesting places, and that is me," he says.

Snow has grand plans for Periscoping a journey across Libya's Second World War sites "as soon as it gets safe" but, for now, uses the app in down time during filming for other things.

A recent video from an empty Westminster Abbey, uploaded to his Facebook page but originally shared on Periscope, accrued over 30,000 views, and was captured shortly before Snow went live for the BBC's coverage of the 70th anniversary of VE Day.

"I hope the BBC doesn't mind me

TV SHOULD BE A CELEBRATION OF THE VISUAL AS WELL AS THE STORY FROM OUR PAST

quietly just scooping all of this," he jokes. While Snow hopes, eventually, to monetise his online efforts, he recognises that he needs to grow his 3,000 Periscope followers by another 47,000 or so before brands become interested in sponsoring his activities.

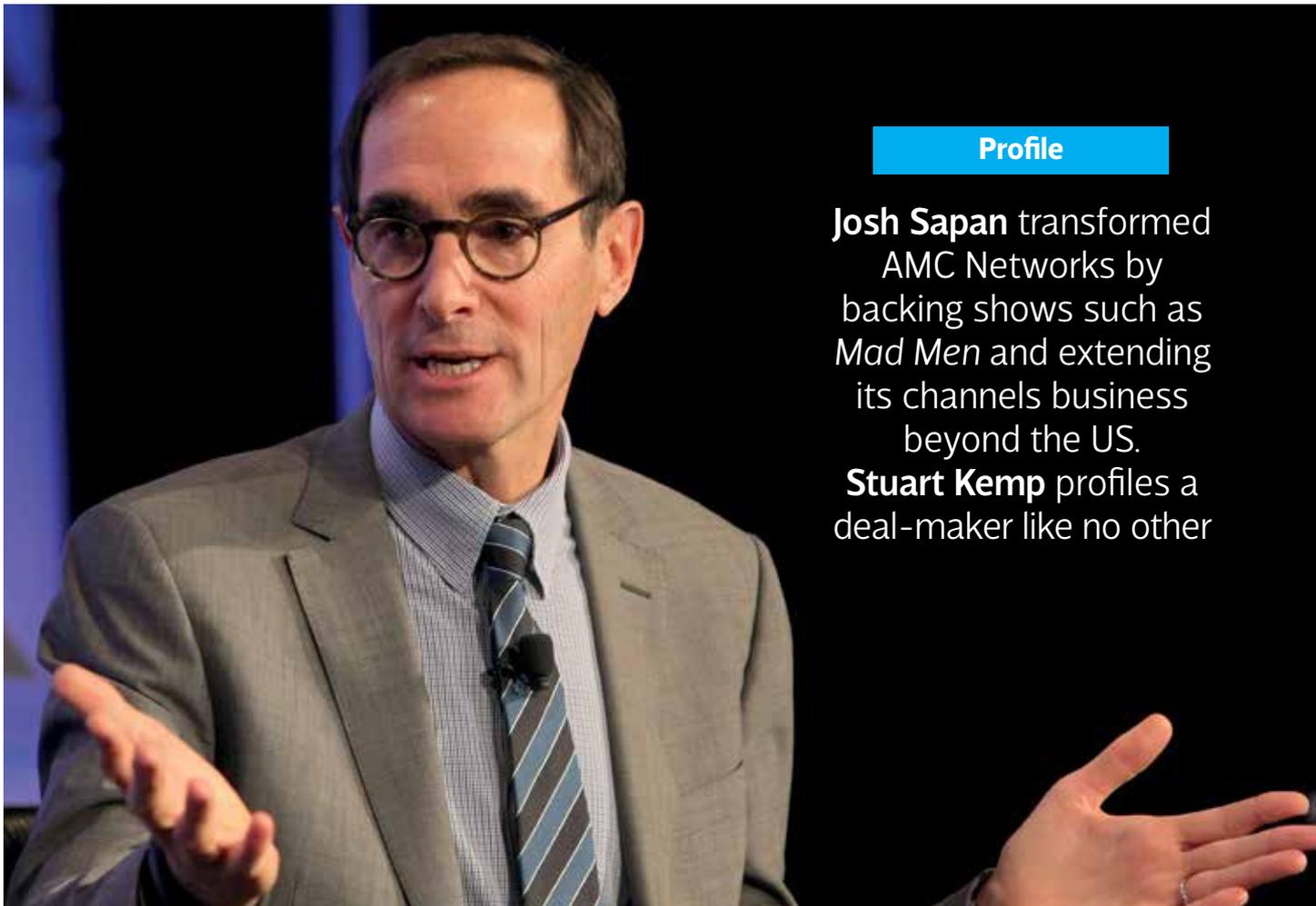
"It feels like I'm one or two steps away from creating something really interesting and something that's self-sustaining," he suggests.

On the rare occasions that Snow isn't working, he can be found enjoying the great outdoors or reading – either history books or to his two young children. Recently, he's been reading Greek myths with his three-year-old daughter, Zia: "I do a lot of reading with the kids – it's all I know how to do."

He adds: "I think it's really important to get away from screens, and I'm not a complete nutcase like I sound."

And what of those early show reels from the Snow family archives – will they ever see the light of day? "My mum and I looked at one the other day and we thought it would be fun to share if a programme-maker asked me for it.

"But, actually... I'd rather not advertise that I was a little, know-it-all twat when I was 12."



Profile

Josh Sapan transformed AMC Networks by backing shows such as *Mad Men* and extending its channels business beyond the US.

Stuart Kemp profiles a deal-maker like no other

From pipes to poetry

AMC Networks President and CEO Josh Sapan lays claim to having the world's largest collection of antique lightning rods. "They're architectural and a form of industrial art. I just got captivated by them," he explains.

One or two of them can be found lying around his office on Penn Plaza, a few blocks from the Empire State Building, alongside examples of another passion. This is his collection of panoramic photographs of people and places from the last century.

Gathered by Sapan over 30 years or so, the pictures have recently been collated into a coffee-table book titled *The Big Picture: America in Panorama*.

And then there is another growing collection: Sapan's awards for hit shows

and movies, as well as myriad prizes for his contribution to the cable industry – including the prestigious Paley Prize for Innovation and Excellence.

From his New York City base, one he describes as "looking like a junk shop", Sapan runs a burgeoning portfolio of entertainment brands. These include US cable television networks AMC, IFC, SundanceTV, WE tv and BBC America (a joint venture with BBC Worldwide that was acquired in late 2014).

His purview at the Nasdaq-listed cable empire, with its 2,000-plus staff, also encompasses feature-film labels IFC Films and Sundance Selects, and the group's international programming and distribution division, AMC Networks International.

Sapan, a published poet (yep, those of a less driven disposition should stop reading now) has been inducted into

The Cable Center's Hall of Fame and *Broadcasting & Cable's* Hall of Fame. He has also received The Media Institute's Freedom of Speech Award in recognition of his contribution to the advancement and protection of free speech.

The bespectacled executive is credited with building some of television's most influential entertainment brands and shows over the past decade, a period widely seen as a new golden age for television. Think AMC's *The Walking Dead*, *Mad Men* and *Breaking Bad* and SundanceTV's *Rectify* and *The Honourable Woman*, the latter co-funded by the BBC.

Sapan has also pioneered same-day theatrical and video-on-demand releases for independent films. His film credits include IFC Films's *Boyhood* (winner of a Golden Globe Award for Best Motion Picture – Drama), the

Oscar-nominated documentary *Finding Vivian Maier*, Sundance Selects's *Two Days, One Night* (also Oscar-nominated) and IFC Midnight's genre hit *The Babadook*.

And the world's most successful lightning-rod collector also enjoys having a laugh. He turned IFC into a home for original comedies and comedic talent including *Portlandia* – winner of Emmy, Peabody and Writers Guild of America nods – and projects from Will Ferrell (*The Spoils of Babylon* and *The Spoils Before Dying*) and Denis Leary (*Maron*).

While the obvious metaphor would be that of a legendary impresario with a thaumaturgic ability to capture lightning in a bottle, the reality is more prosaic. Sapan's willingness to invest in content and talent is, however, almost as rare as authentic wizards in a risk-averse economy. This is especially true for a listed company with a market capitalisation of \$5.6bn shackled, as it is, with Wall Street expectations about future growth and returns.

It helps that AMC Networks' biggest voting shareholders, Chuck (Charles) and Jim Dolan, two of the biggest media entrepreneurs in the US, provide support for Sapan and his board. They are prepared to take a punt on content that would give more conservative investors the fear.

"The Dolans are well known for being successful risk takers," Sapan says. He adds that a lot of AMC's success comes down to invention and innovation, and trying things out before its competitors.

As an example, he cites the company's decision to back *Mad Men*, *Breaking Bad* and *The Walking Dead* at a time when the marketplace considered the projects to be inappropriate, "expensive original programming, budget-wise, for basic cable".

The gamble paid off in terms of the shows' international critical and cultural impact. Their success, says Sapan, emphasises producers' willingness to invest in quality – and audiences' demand for high-quality fare.

Named CEO in 1995, Sapan led AMC's successful spin-off from Cablevision Systems Corporation in June 2011, when AMC Networks began trading on Nasdaq.

He is part of a well-established and tight-knit management structure at AMC Networks that includes COO Ed Carroll, AMC Networks Distribution

President Bob Broussard and James Gallagher, Executive Vice-President and General Counsel across the portfolio.

The quartet boasts a combined experience of more than 40 years at the cable coalface.

"We [the executive board] speak the same language and, because of the



Channel 5

IT IS VERY
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EVER BEFORE

length of tenure together, we have developed a shorthand of sorts that enables us to move quickly and take decisions," Sapan notes. "It is very important to be nimble and be able to move on decisions, because the world is moving more quickly than ever before."

The speed and efficiency with which he and his board can make deals counts for a lot with Sapan. AMC Networks has struck an exclusive content supply deal with Hulu, the US online VoD operator that is battling Netflix for subscribers.

The agreement to sell some future shows only to Hulu is a bold move for Sapan, given that Netflix has a deal in place to take many current AMC Networks shows, such as *The Walking Dead*, *Mad Men*, *Breaking Bad* and *Better Call Saul*.

While the specific future content that will flow to Hulu in the US is still

being ironed out, the move reveals the pace at which Sapan demands his businesses evolve.

"[AMC] shows in the future in the US will go to Hulu," Sapan says. "We found we had great sympathy with Hulu as a potential partner. It had just about doubled its subscriber base in a short period of time. It was really stepping up and improving what it was doing, and we were able to create an alliance with it that we found very satisfying."

Sapan describes Netflix, which will remain the home for all current AMC shows, as an "interesting and accomplished commissioner of TV shows" and one that "helped establish subscription video-on-demand as a form of consumption".

In 2014, Sapan oversaw the acquisition of Chellomedia, the international channels unit of John Malone's US and European cable giant, Liberty Global, for approximately \$1bn. It was a move that gave AMC Networks a foothold in more than 390 million homes in 138 countries. But of all the deals, it is the one struck late last year with BBC Worldwide for a 49.9% stake in BBC America that makes him smile.

Sapan unabashedly declares the BBC to be one of the world's finest – if not *the* finest – content creators across drama, comedy, factual and news. So, "to be more proximate to it was vital".

He categorises the relationship with the BBC as making AMC "better dressed". The BBC shares a vision with AMC, he says, of the "improving nature of television".

AMC executives signed the BBC deal after visiting London with the Dolans, where they met Director-General Tony Hall, BBC Worldwide CEO Tim Davie and Director of Television Danny Cohen.

"To put a more personal slant on it, culturally, the BBC people in London and in the US are certainly among my favourite people to work with," insists Sapan.

And just before the poet-collector, photography lover and visionary TV executive signs off, he notes that "there's not a whole lot of competition" when it comes to amassing the world's biggest lightning-rod collection.

Josh Sapan, President and CEO of AMC Networks, is speaking at the RTS Cambridge Convention, 16-18 September.

Scotland

How will the SNP's new presence at Westminster affect UK broadcasting? Maggie Brown foresees seismic events

With Team 56 – as SNP MPs call themselves – forming the third-largest party in

Parliament, the impact on broadcasting in the UK is likely to be profound. And the effects are certain to spread beyond the BBC Charter debate.

The economist Jeremy Peat, a former BBC Scotland Governor and Trustee, observes that the general election outcome “represents a massive vote for change”, requiring “not sticking plaster, but fundamental change”. He adds: “We are miles away from a stable equilibrium.”

John McVay, Chief Executive of Pact, warns: “The SNP doesn’t give up, it has become the single most effective force in British politics. It is democracy, but it is a monoculture.

“How much of the licence fee is spent in Scotland is central. The main issue is the BBC.”

He points specifically to the SNP’s manifesto demand for an extra £100m of BBC funds to be spent in Scotland each year. The money would help to expand Scotland’s creative sector, according to the nationalists.

On 21 May, the SNP MPs selected the former BBC broadcaster John Nicolson (MP for East Dunbartonshire) as their culture, media and sport spokesperson from a strong band of eight former PRs, journalists and producers in the parliamentary party’s ranks.

These include independent producer Brendan O’Hara (Argyll and Bute) and one-time STV and GMTV producer Hannah Bardell (Livingston). The latter ran the constituency office of former SNP leader Alex Salmond for several years.

The BBC, faced with a new political landscape dominated by a Conservative Government and an assertive SNP, is pausing for reflection before pub-



SNP Westminster MPs with party leader Nicola Sturgeon

A Change is gonna come

lishing its so-called “green paper” on Charter renewal. Ofcom’s scene-setting public service broadcasting review is now due later this summer.

This pause is evident in Scotland, too. Opinion formers point out that the harsh criticism of BBC Scotland before and immediately after the independence referendum has eased off.

Paul Hutcheon, Investigations Editor of *The Sunday Herald*, says: “Hostilities have ceased.”

This is, in part, because the general election proved to be so one-sided

and, unlike the “referendum paranoia”, not many questioned the objectivity of the TV coverage.

However, the SNP believes in delivering manifesto pledges. So, just a week after the election, Holyrood’s Devolution (Further Powers) Committee said that current plans to transfer more powers to the Scottish Government failed to meet either “the spirit or the substance” of last November’s hastily drawn-up Smith Agreement.

When David Cameron met SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon on 15 May, he

said he was open to “sensible suggestions” and a review about devolving further powers. After the meeting, she announced: “What we are talking about is business taxes, employment legislation, the minimum wage and more powers over welfare.”

But broadcasting, always high on Salmond’s agenda, seemed to have moved down the list of priorities. This is despite the fact that the SNP manifesto (silent on a separate Scottish Broadcasting Commission) said: “We’ll seek increased investment through BBC Scotland so that a fairer share of the licence fee is spent in Scotland, giving a £100m boost to our creative sector.”

The manifesto also argued that the Scottish Government and Parliament “should have a substantial role in all stages in the review of the BBC Charter... with responsibility for broadcasting in Scotland transferring from Westminster to the Scottish Parliament...”

“We believe the licence fee should be retained, with any replacement system, which should be based primarily on the ability to pay, in place by the end of the next BBC Charter.”

Peat says that the issue of the BBC “will continue to niggle away” ahead of the Scottish parliamentary election in 2016. He believes that everything points towards the “devo max” model (that is, devolving maximum powers short of independence). So there will have to be an accommodation by the BBC and Westminster to embrace a federal model.

McVay suggests that, under devo max, reserve powers could be retained in the UK Government in London but, in practice, operational oversight and scrutiny of BBC Scotland would be granted to the Scottish Parliament.

Peat urges the BBC to do the brave thing and hold a swift inquiry to report before the 2016 election: “The BBC should set itself the task of looking objectively, transparently, with two or three external members, at whether it is producing a service that fits the bill in the context of an increasingly devolved Scotland.”

Rob Woodward, Chief Executive of STV, suggests that, “arguably, the relationship we have with ITV is a template for the future [of BBC Scotland].”

STV argued to the Smith Commission that broadcasting should remain as a reserved power – in other words, still regulated by London-based Ofcom.

Woodward says: “We have sovereignty over our licence [from Ofcom]

[THE BIGGEST ISSUE IS] HOW YOU DO PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING IN AN INCREASINGLY FEDERALIST UK

in Scotland; the vast majority of our schedule is provided by ITV. But if we want to make changes, we have full autonomy. So we have a very strong tie with ITV but, equally, we celebrate being Scottish. But I am not saying it is the only model.”

He proposes that, as far as Scottish broadcasting goes, “an awful lot is working and working well”.

BBC news is a central issue.

“The news is the big one,” says Peat. “The news at 6:00pm and 10:00pm should be told through a different lens, of Scotland. The BBC in Scotland should aim to give Scottish viewers and listeners all the benefits of being part of the BBC, under a more devolved system.”

He acknowledges that the BBC faces a big adjustment, and that Wales and Northern Ireland are not so far down the path of devolution: “It has to be special treatment for Scotland.”

McVay agrees that the BBC now has an opportunity to engage with the SNP in the hope of landing a better Charter outcome. But, unless there is new cash, the demand for that extra £100m, if conceded, would have to come out of the BBC network budget. That would have a ripple effect across the entire UK.

For Stuart Cosgrove, Director of Creative Diversity at Channel 4 and based

partly in Glasgow, the biggest issue is “how you do public service broadcasting in an increasingly federalist UK. The system is not self-evidently geared to this.”

Cosgrove, who stands down later this year, takes the example of programme titles. The “British” in *The Great British Bake Off* and *Britain’s Got Talent* grates with perhaps 30% of Scots.

“British is not necessarily a word people here love,” he continues. “The BBC’s prominent coverage of the Royal Family also runs up against a growing republican streak.

“Stories told through the myopic eyes of the London media... will continue to be a thorn in the side. For the BBC in Scotland... it is not a healthy place to be.

“The BBC should be worried. The licence fee is quite significantly vulnerable over the next 10 years.”

Cosgrove points to STV’s growing success as a producer – it makes *Shetland* for BBC One – but notes that “not one major world TV format comes from Scotland”.

Channel 4 is, however, creating five or six new Scottish posts in games and app development.

Woodward says that STV’s share of viewing for its daily news programmes, including the mandated, ITN-supplied national news, at 6:30pm and 10:00pm, is 25% against ITV’s 19% nationally.

This, he claims, is because they are presented in a Scottish manner, broadcasting to a nation, with Scottish advertising representing 15% to 20% of the commercial breaks.

In 2014, STV had 21% of peak-time audiences, compared with ITV’s 20.7%, according to Barb.

STV is able to cross-promote its local TV shows off the back of flagship shows such as *Coronation Street* as “an integrated part of what we do”, says Woodward.

Observers agree that STV has found a “proper equilibrium” by adding bespoke programmes, including the 10:30pm *Scotland Tonight*, which is described as popular without being frothy.

No one suggests that the BBC yet enjoys any such equilibrium. The SNP is set to have a strong presence on the Culture, Media and Sport Committee. The party wants to retain the licence fee, but it also wants a BBC Scotland that is accountable to Holyrood.

Whatever the outcome, Peat warns that it will be essential to protect the BBC’s independence from government – any government, wherever it is based.

THE BBC SHOULD... LOOK OBJECTIVELY... AT WHETHER IT IS PRODUCING A SERVICE THAT FITS... AN INCREASINGLY DEVOLVED SCOTLAND



Content

Anne McElvoy turns the spotlight on **Stephen Lambert**, whose reality formats, such as *Wife Swap* and *Gogglebox*, have changed television

The format king

Stephen Lambert looks a bit like Lenin – bald, with steely blue eyes and a bit unyielding. He can claim to be the man who revolutionised factual television, bringing us so many of the formats that dominate the schedules, from *Wife Swap*, *The Secret Millionaire* and *Undercover Boss* to *Faking It*.

His most recent hit is *Gogglebox*, the Channel 4 offering that united David Cameron and Nick Clegg in admiration, when asked during the election campaign which shows they enjoyed.

I visit Lambert in his eyrie in Soho. His company, Studio Lambert, occupies most of a sparsely furnished set of offices. A – mainly – young workforce are clamped in headphones or intently bashing out scripts.

I ask what happens on all the other floors. “The same: making programmes,”

says Lambert, drily. The factory-like production belies the range of work that often takes him to Los Angeles, where he is Chair of All3Media America, (All3Media owns Studio Lambert). As the Studio’s CEO, he has the final word on the casting of global formats.

Now he is heading a new push into drama in the British and American market, having just hired the senior BBC drama executive Sue Hogg to spearhead the charge.

His biggest brands have different lives in various countries. *Four in a Bed*, a show about bed and breakfast owners swapping billets, while modestly impactful on Channel 4 daytime, is “absolutely huge in France – it seems to connect very powerfully to the way people see themselves”.

The Secret Millionaire thrived best in the US “because you had an amazingly deep pool of people to fish from”.

Scathing about critics who think that those natty formats are an easy way to make television, he says: “What people call ‘populist rubbish’ is just about the hardest thing to make. It’s a million times easier to make some obscure documentary than to make something really good and accessible that will hold people’s attention over many episodes.”

One of his best-known shows, *Wife Swap*, was originally dreamt up by his wife, the journalist Jenni Russell. But it took “a lot of finessing – because people had to be very familiar with the ground rules for it to work smoothly. You have to be absolutely clear what the proposition is.”

The resulting formats seem to be in the grip of the 21st-century equivalent of a medieval guild of trusted producers and developers, selecting and shaping which bits of “normal” life we see.

Ideas that thrive on the appearance

of us dropping into people's lives are, as he puts it, "the authored interpretation of life", because they are edited, with judgements made throughout the production process.

Ought we to be worried about the decline of the kind of documentary that Lambert was able to make as a programme-maker at BBC Two's *Modern Times*? AA Gill, *The Sunday Times*'s acerbic TV critic, believes that a vein of mockery underlies the format variety.

"There's a very questionable notion of the audience being left to entertain itself," he says. "*Gogglebox* is a parody of *The Royle Family*, but *The Royle Family* was brilliantly shot and written.

"The sum total of us watching people who are a bit odd, or clashes of class or culture isn't really that enriching or empathetic."

But Lambert can plead a documentary pedigree that precedes his lucrative formats. He made documentaries for several years until the mid-1990s, ending up as Editor of the award-winning *Modern Times*. And he was one of the high-flyers who left Auntie to set up an independent.

A culture of "managing up" (key decisions being made higher and higher up the management chain) prompted him to move on. "It infuriated me and I still think it is wrong that single commissioning editors are deciding so much of what goes on air. You end up reflecting the taste of a handful of people."

The BBC licence fee is, he thinks, "fine in principle, but I don't think it can last in its present form and the BBC will need to get its head around that".

He thinks that disaggregation and competition are more powerful forces than the licence-fee defenders have been willing to concede.

"It is ethically difficult, when there is so much competition around, to compel people to pay for the licence fee for services they may not want to use," he muses. "That argument is getting harder to make. You come back to the element of compulsion, which sits badly in a world where people want to exercise choice. If the service is so wonderful, why not give people the choice to pay for it?"

His solution sounds like a lean, core BBC service of news and some current-affairs output, with all other production commissioned from the independent sector (not surprisingly, perhaps, for an indie king).

"I don't understand," he says, "why we need BBC Entertainment (which

makes, inter alia, *Strictly Come Dancing*) or a BBC in-house drama or in-house factual department. The BBC is bombarded with ideas from companies who have proved over many years that they can make great programmes.

"It would be a much better service to the viewers for the BBC to focus on commissioning the best of all that than to be fussing about their provenance and quotas."

So, does he warm to the idea of BBC Studios, the brainchild of Director-General Tony Hall, to allow BBC

ended up apparently showing the monarch flouncing out of the room in a huff.

I ask Lambert what he learned from the incident. "Pay attention to everything and don't send out bits of tape you didn't mean to." He adds, with a mixture of defensiveness and humour, that "lots of trailers are wrong".

A few years on, he had a miss with the Notting Hill-based docusoap *Seven Days*, but, he reflects, that helped the company to finesse *Gogglebox*.

A much-anticipated *Million Second Quiz* in the US, intended to lure viewers



production to compete in a wider market place? Not very much.

"The purpose of it is very unclear to me," he says. "Is it in the market like anything else? And if it is selling to other broadcasters, what are the criteria to avoid it being just a state-aided intervention in the market, but with the licence fee giving the BBC an advantage? That doesn't sound sustainable."

Lambert's CV may suggest a career of one success topping another, but there have been setbacks. He looks far from thrilled when I mention "Crown-gate", a pratfall he experienced when he was head of RDF, his first independent production company, in 2007.

The escapade resulted in him leaving the company and Peter Fincham resigning from his controller's job at BBC One. It's still a bit mysterious, trying to work out how a trailer for the documentary *A Year with the Queen*

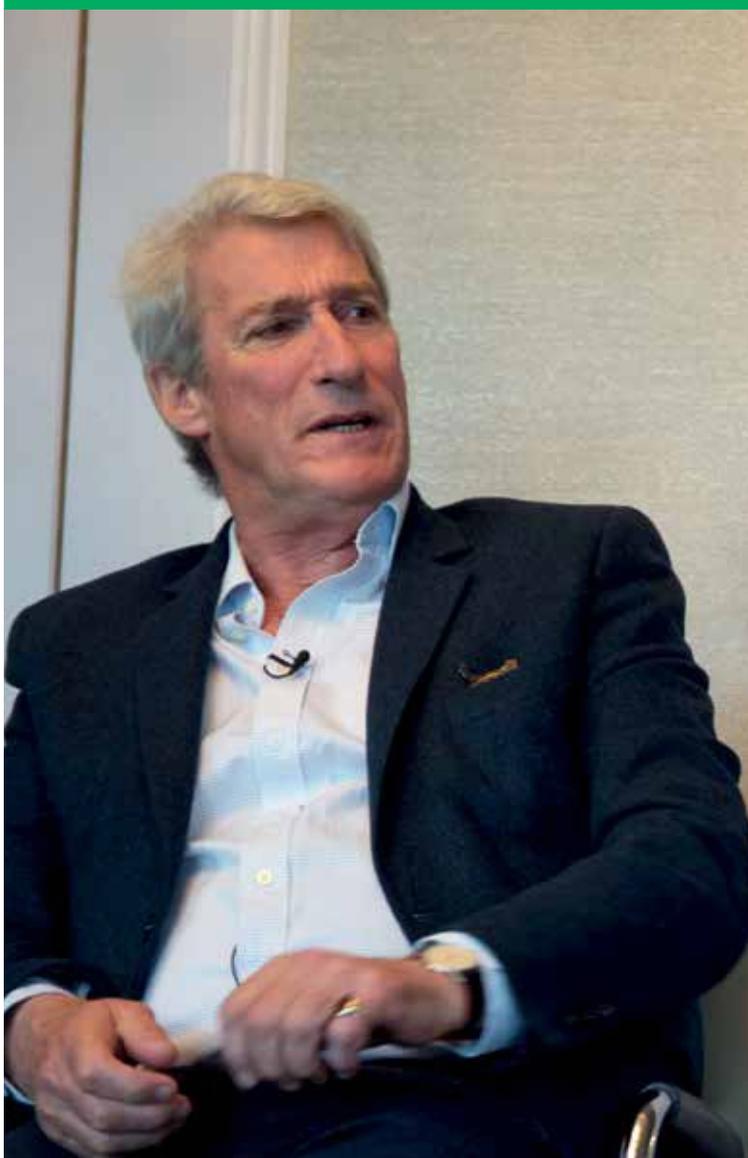
to play along in real time on phones and tablets with the contestants, didn't thrive on NBC. He admits that the digital age holy grail of combining consumer technology with formats remains elusive.

A friend notes that the format *meister* is "a walking contradiction" – the "£20m man" who still "works as hard as if he's just set up his first company out of a cardboard box".

He won't confirm that the figure represents his worth, but doesn't deny it. A favourite pastime suggests that he's not doing badly: he sailed with friends across the Atlantic to the Caribbean last year in his yacht.

"One is very lucky," he says with a rare blush. "I wouldn't want to stop working and just sail around, though."

Anne McElvoy is Public Policy and Education Editor at The Economist.



Head to head

RTS Legends

TV heavyweights **Jeremy Paxman** and **Alastair Stewart** lock horns, with conflicting takes on TV's election coverage. **Steve Clarke** has a ringside seat

Alastair Stewart may have hosted British television's first political leaders' debate in April 2010 but, more often than not, it was Jeremy Paxman who had the last word at a rumbustious RTS Legends lunch in May.

Steve Hewlett was the ringmaster at this highly entertaining event, which sought to bring an insider's perspective to the recent general election.

For much of the time, the two TV anchor men agreed to disagree. Paxman was as cynical as Stewart was enthusiastic. Maybe he'd recently attended a positive-thinking course.

The dogged Hewlett tried to put the erstwhile *Newsnight* attack dog on the spot and gain some new understanding of what, according to Paxman, had been "a monumentally dull campaign".

Stewart, meanwhile, said he'd enjoyed the election. He even found a good word to say about opinion polls.

Typically, Paxman eviscerated the pollsters: they had led the entire chattering classes up the proverbial garden path by predicting a hung parliament. Tory majority, no chance. Even *The Sun* was convinced that by now Ed Miliband would be in Downing Street leading a minority Labour government.

On the night of 7 May, Channel 4 viewers witnessed a heavily made-up Paxman attempting to hold his own alongside comedian David Mitchell.

At the RTS lunch, Paxman adopted his more familiar *Newsnight* persona – jaundiced, exasperated and withering. He was deft at batting aside any question he thought didn't deserve an answer.

Frequently, the feared interlocutor turned the tables on Hewlett and began asking the questions himself.

Overall, it was a bravura performance. Paxman's agent, who attended the lunch, will have returned to her office delighted. Brand Paxman remains potent despite the man him-

self no longer having a regular TV slot on which to decapitate politicians and other public servants.

It was clear from the beginning of the lunchtime encounter that the man who inherited Robin Day's mantle was pitching for a punch-up. As Stewart took issue with Paxman's pronouncement that the election was dull, the journalist who'd started his BBC career at Radio Brighton roared into action.

Paxman: "Did you think it was boring or not?"

Stewart: "No, I didn't think it was boring."

Paxman: "You thought it was interesting?"

Stewart: "I enjoyed it."

Paxman (voice rising to a crescendo of incredulous pique): "What did you think it was about?"

Stewart: "I think it was about... whether the British public wanted to stay with the Tory view of austerity and keep more of their own money



All pictures: Paul Hampartsoumian

YOU ARE AN IDIOT IF YOU BELIEVE OPINION POLLS... I AM TOTALLY AGAINST OPINION POLLS **PAXMAN**



Jeremy Paxman (left) and Alastair Stewart

THERE WAS NO OTHER NARRATIVE IN TOWN [THAN OPINION POLLS], SO WE FELL FOUL OF WHAT TURNED OUT TO BE A WRONG NARRATIVE **STEWART**

and make better decisions than the state. Ed [Milliband], rather eloquently, argued that there are things that can be done better by the state – overstated, perhaps, but there was a clear-cut choice...”

Hewlett, sensing that Paxman needed meat, turned to the vexed question of opinion polls and their disastrous performance during the campaign. Paxman’s reply didn’t disappoint.

“One of the lessons of this election is that you are an idiot if you believe opinion polls,” he thundered. “They are not what we all fondly imagine – stout ladies with clipboards accosting people in the street...”

“There are far too many young men who rarely see daylight making adjustments to the findings.

“It was clear from the start, and should have been clear to anyone with two grey cells after the experience of the Scottish referendum, when many polls said it was too close to call, that

polls were not to be taken as oracles of fact or trust...

“By the time the next election comes, no doubt, we will *not* have strung them up by their feet from every lamp post in Whitehall, which we should do, [and] there will be more opinion polls.

“We should pay as much attention to them as we shouldn’t have paid to the ones this time.

“I am totally against opinion polls.”

Stewart agreed that the pollsters needed to hang their heads in shame: “The truth of the matter is that there was no other narrative in town, so we fell foul of what turned out to be a wrong narrative...”

“The polls said exactly the same thing in 1992. This time, they changed the database and the methodology and still managed to screw it up.”

In mitigation, observed the ITV News man, there is a tendency for voters to feel guilty about voting Conservative. “As a number of commentators have

rightly observed, it is still that age-old truth of ‘the love that dare not speak its name,’” he said.

Occasionally, the pollsters did get it right. Stewart highlighted a local poll commissioned by ITV News, in which ComRes successfully forecast the Tory rout of the Liberal Democrats in the west of England. “In that one report, we predicted incredibly accurately what then unfolded,” he said.

Anyone expecting the two veterans to agree on the TV leaders’ debates was in for another clash of opinions. Hewlett asked if viewers had missed the 2010-style leaders’ debates in which Gordon Brown, David Cameron and Nick Clegg went head to head not once, not twice but three times live on network TV.

“I think the broadcasters behaved ludicrously about the debates. There is no constitutional entitlement to debates,” Paxman barked. “I don’t want to undermine the effort that was put in by the broadcasters to getting them. >

The future for TV election coverage



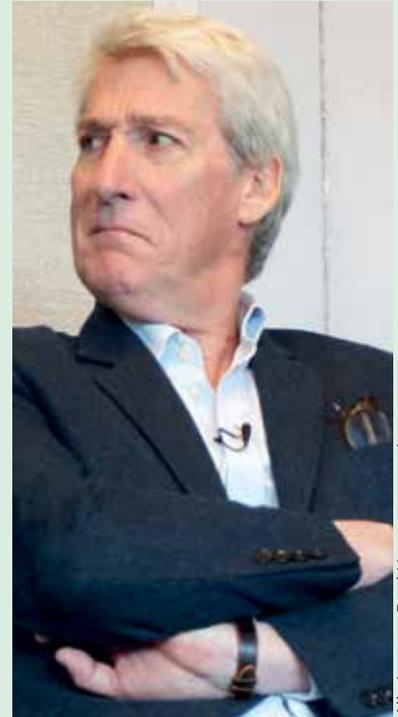
Jeremy Paxman: You can't have a publicly funded broadcaster that doesn't cover elections properly. So I'm afraid that they've pretty well got a blank cheque there. They certainly act as if they've got a blank cheque.

Steve Hewlett: Audiences [for the live election coverage] were down overall, but the BBC still did better than anyone else.

Alastair Stewart: If you aggregate the viewing of social-media sites such as BuzzFeed, all of that is still a pinprick compared with the number who watch mainstream terrestrial broadcasts.

Jeremy Paxman: Will ITV bother to cover the election in a meaningful way next time?

Alastair Stewart: My deeply held, passionate view is that ITV should. It is right and proper that we should. The BBC deserves and requires strong competition.



All pictures: Paul Hampartsoumian

► “They were trying to do what they saw as a public service, but to suggest that somehow this is something that has to happen every election was just preposterous and untrue.”

Did he believe in accountability, Hewlett pressed? “Of course. I want to see people having their feet held to the fire during an election campaign so that the voters can make up their minds.”

Stewart sounded disappointed that Cameron and his minders failed to give the green light for 2010-style leaders' debates this spring.

“What you ended up with was a real potpourri, some of which was not great,” he suggested. “There were debates all over the bloody place. None of them were echoes of another, so there was no basis for comparison....”

“In their own right, possibly, they were quite interesting, and quite good programmes, but there wasn't a pattern, as there was in 2010, where you could make some kind of comparison. I think that was a loss.”

Cue another Paxman explosion: “You think people sit at home watch-

ing all three debates, trying to detect nuance between one or the other. I don't think they do.”

The nearest thing to a head-to-head encounter between the two party leaders, arguably, was Paxman's excruciating encounter with Miliband (“People see you as a north London geek...”), preceded by a similarly abrasive interrogation of Cameron. The interviews were aired on 26 March by Channel 4.

Hewlett gamely asked Paxman how he felt the programme had gone. “It went OK. It was quite fun,” he replied tersely.

It was time for *The Media Show* presenter to attempt some psychoanalysis – well, sort of.

Was Paxman familiar with Andrew Marr's take on him? In case he wasn't, Hewlett read it out: “He looks disdainful and contemptuous and furious with his guests because he, by and large, is. You can't fake these things on television.”

The Rottweiler declined to grab the bait. Hewlett was left with no choice than to come up with an old chestnut. Did he like politicians?

“Ah,” groaned Paxman. “That's a ridiculous question. One likes some... Some of them are wonderful, some of them are...”

At which point Stewart began to say that, actually, he was rather fond of politicians.

“You like them as a breed?” sneered Paxman. “That's a very odd thing to say.”

“I'm also more than happy to say some of them are thieving, lying, condescending shits... The majority of politicians do the job to the best of their ability,” countered Stewart.

“I like some... They're just people, that's all. It's an absurd question,” growled Mr Grumpy. “It's like saying, ‘Do you like footballers?’”

“No, I don't,” deadpanned Stewart to audience laughter.

Hewlett returned to probing Paxman's psyche. Had he missed the experience of working for the BBC on election night? “No,” was his single-word reply.

Really, pressed Hewlett? “No.”

The silence was deafening. Stewart came to Hewlett's rescue by explaining

From left: Steve Hewlett, Jeremy Paxman and Alastair Stewart



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that it wasn't only election night itself that was of interest.

The polls' prediction of political deadlock led everyone into believing that the morning after the night before could have been riveting viewing as the horse-trading between parties kicked in live on air.

However, as things turned out, with Cameron claiming three scalps in less time than it takes to write a manifesto, there was good material for the broadcasters, Stewart pointed out.

"In a long period of covering this sort of stuff, the resignation speeches of both Nick and Ed were remarkable in their candour. It was great telly," said the seasoned ITN presenter.

Undaunted, Hewlett returned to how Paxman felt working for Channel 4, rather than the BBC, on election night. Did he feel out of the swim? Ouch.

"No, did you?" replied the former *Newsnight* star.

"I've never been in the swim," said Hewlett. "Well, not since I was a lot younger."

The banter over, Paxman continued: "Once there was a story moving,

I thought we were. We seemed to talk to a lot of people and go to a lot of counts."

And, in any case, the early hours of election-night marathons are pretty much dead airtime for even the most hardcore of political junkies, Paxman explained.

"The problem with that night is that it is a great event and, of course, everybody pays attention to it," he added. "The first few results are pretty well meaningless in terms of whether they return a blue or red MP.

"Nothing much happens between the exit poll and getting on for 2:00am. We had comedy [on Channel 4], which I enjoyed very much."

At least the great inquisitor had found something to like from the 2015 UK general election.

The RTS Legends lunch 'General election 2015: did television come to the aid of the party?' was held at the London Hilton on 19 May. Jeremy Paxman and Alastair Stewart OBE were interviewed by Steve Hewlett. The producers were Paul Jackson and Clive Jones.

QUESTION & ANSWER

Q Can the licence fee remain in its present form?

A *Jeremy Paxman:* John Whittingdale may be terribly good for the BBC, [but] I'm a journalist, not a clairvoyant.

The question you have to ask yourself is whether you think the world will be a better place without the BBC [applause]. Then, you have to ask yourself how you would fund it...

It clearly can't last. As platforms become interchangeable, a tax upon the ownership of a particular piece of technology becomes very, very hard to justify. In fact, I would say becomes impossible...

I can't see an alternative [to the licence fee] at present.

Local-TV: here to stay



STV Glasgow believes it has a bright future

If you were to believe the headlines, you might think that local television – dismissed by some as “Jeremy Hunt’s pipe dream” – was dead in the water. The former Culture Secretary’s vision, scorned by most broadcasters, was bulldozed on to the statute book four years ago and the first channels are now 18 months old.

Hunt thought it wrong that Birmingham, Alabama, had eight local-TV stations while Birmingham, UK, had none, and secured some funding and the Channel 8 slot on Freeview (in England, at least) to help the new stations get established.

But his plan quickly ran into difficulties, as the headlines have accurately testified:

- ▶ “Birmingham’s City TV is first of Hunt’s local-TV networks to go bust”
- ▶ “London Live local-TV station to cut one-third of its staff”
- ▶ “YourTV Manchester is no more”
- ▶ “It’s very unlikely that all local-TV stations will survive, admits Ofcom”.

No one would claim that local-TV is in rude health, but reports of its death – like Mark Twain’s – have been exaggerated.

“Whatever you think about the

Local-TV

Ignore the premature epitaphs, argues **Torin Douglas**. Jeremy Hunt’s vision for a new generation of small TV stations refuses to be buried

original Jeremy Hunt plan, local-TV is now a reality, it’s part of the media landscape,” says Nigel Dacre, former Editor of ITV News. “It may change and evolve but, in my view, it’s not going away.”

As Director of Notts TV, and former Chair of the Local-TV Network, he believes that local-TV has a healthy, if challenging, future.

At a recent Westminster Media Forum event, he spelt out some reasons to be cheerful. Seventeen local-TV channels have been launched so far, in towns and cities such as Brighton, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Grimsby, London, Liverpool, Newcastle and Nottingham.

Ofcom has licensed channels in a further 14 towns and cities, including Aberdeen, Cambridge, Middlesbrough, Reading, Swansea and York, which are due to launch in the next two years.

Moreover, the Birmingham and Manchester licences have been taken over by other local-TV groups.

“We estimate that more than 300 new, full-time jobs have been created in the local-TV sector in the past year,” he said, “as well as many freelance opportunities and production company commissions.

“Most channels also have a relationship with local broadcast journalism courses, providing unprecedented levels of training and experience.”

The channels are owned by more than a dozen different organisations, with widely differing business models.

They range from established media groups, epitomised by STV, the owner of the Channel 3 company in Scotland, which has launched stations successfully in Glasgow and Edinburgh and won licences for Aberdeen, Ayr and Dundee, to much smaller community-based channels in places such as Belfast and Sheffield.

Several newspaper groups are involved, including Archant, which

runs Mustard TV in Norwich, the Kent Messenger Group in Maidstone and the *Evening Standard* in London (owned by Evgeny Lebedev). The problems of the *Standard's* station, London Live, have – perhaps inevitably – dominated news and comment about the sector, to the frustration of channels that have made better progress outside the capital.

Launched in a blaze of publicity in March 2014 – not least in its sister paper – London Live has since cut back severely on staff and programme commissions. It has obtained Ofcom's permission to reduce its local programming obligations.

But Tim Kirkman, the station's Chief Operating Officer, says things are looking up, after "a dreadful start" a year ago. Then, London Live had an audience share of just 0.16% (compared with a business-plan target of 0.7%). He brandishes charts and figures to support his case.

"Last week was our best ever, with a 0.5% share of all adult viewers," he tells me, as he shows me round the studios and newsroom shared with the *Standard* and *The Independent*. "On Wednesday, we had a 1.1% share with our crime night and we've now got consistent growth in audience and revenue.

"In the first half of May, we averaged a 0.42% share of viewing in London, an increase of 147 per cent, year on year.

"When we were showing Miss World for three hours, we had a higher share than Channel 4 or Channel 5. And we have a bigger reach in London than Sky Sports, Sky Atlantic and Gold."

Kirkman has restructured the business, shedding 20 staff and original commissions such as *Food Junkies*.

He says the initial plans were simply unsustainable on its low audience share but, after cutting costs, this year's losses will be half last year's. Kirkman says he is on course to move into a monthly profit by September 2016.

It's not just in London where there are signs of progress.

"The four Made TV channels, in Bristol, Cardiff, Leeds and Newcastle, are – according to their own research – [achieving] an average reach of 13% across each of their stations," says Dacre. "Local magazine-style programmes are getting a particularly good response, such as *The Mustard Show* in Norwich, *The 6:30 Show* in Nottingham, *The Riverside Show* in Glasgow, and *Talking Sheffield*.

"Night after night, these programmes are interviewing local people in a local studio about local stories and events."

The stations also benefit from a deal with the BBC, negotiated as part of the 2010 licence-fee settlement. Under this, the corporation buys some of their raw news footage to use in its own local-TV bulletins.

Each licensee is guaranteed an income of £150,000 in its first year, for providing 85 stories a month, whether or not the footage is used.

"The public purpose of the scheme is to incentivise the stations to provide local news coverage," says Chris Carnegie, BBC Editor, Local-TV, who co-ordinates the scheme. "They're using our money to provide two or three stories a day for their local audiences, so it's pump-priming their news rooms."

Bill Smith of Brighton's Latest TV told the Westminster event: "We've been working with the BBC very successfully and done a lot of co-productions with their Tunbridge Wells team. It's worked really well, but it's going to end in a year and a half's time. I think that's a massive mistake."

Jeff Henry, Chief Executive of Archant and a former CEO of ITV Consumer and Granada Sky Broadcasting, was less enthusiastic: "My understanding is that the DCMS suggested that £15m of licence fee money be spent with local-TV and the BBC has managed to eke out just over £1.8m so far.

"In Mustard TV, we genuinely believe we have a great local-TV channel but financially it is challenged – or, rather, the model is challenged."

The BBC says the local stations have been slower to launch than expected, but it still expects to spend about two-thirds of the money.

It is actively discussing other ways it can use this budget, beyond news footage. But any continuation of the scheme, as proposed by Smith, would depend on the next licence-fee settlement.

Smith was one of the pioneers of local television, long before Jeremy Hunt got the bee in his bonnet.

"I wrote to Margaret Thatcher in 1983, asking for a TV station in Brighton and it took a while after that to get it," he says. "Our station got 200,000 viewers last month, but you probably didn't know that. The only print you see about local-TV comes from London, and they don't really want us to succeed."

That's one of the companies' main challenges: not just to win local audiences and advertising, but to persuade sceptical London media types that local-TV has a future.

WE ESTIMATE
THAT MORE
THAN 300 NEW,
FULL-TIME JOBS
HAVE BEEN
CREATED IN
THE LOCAL-TV
SECTOR IN THE
PAST YEAR

WHEN WE WERE
SHOWING MISS
WORLD FOR
THREE HOURS, WE
HAD A HIGHER
SHARE THAN
CHANNEL 4
OR CHANNEL 5

OUR FRIEND IN THE WEST

For the past 12 months, the message from Westminster regarding BBC Charter review has been that nothing would happen before the election. Now, of course, it's as if a starting pistol has been fired.

This is particularly so with sections of the press going into a frenzy of anticipation, based on certain previous statements by the new Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, John Whittingdale.

In Wales, the interviews I've been asked to do as Chair of S4C have all been about what it might mean for the future of the Welsh-language channel.

In 2010, then-Secretary of State Jeremy Hunt announced a substantial cut in S4C's funding. It agreed with the BBC that most of that funding, from 2013, would come from the licence fee, rather than from Whitehall.

Much public debate followed in Wales as to whether this would result in the loss of S4C's independence.

Ultimately, an agreement was reached between the BBC Trust and the S4C Authority that guaranteed S4C's operational and editorial independence while ensuring that the Trust retained ultimate accountability for use of the licence fee.

The agreement runs to March 2017, albeit with payments to S4C falling by 1% each year in the final two years. Some 8% of S4C's funding continues to be provided by DCMS, although this is subject to future Spending Reviews.

The agreement between the S4C Authority and the BBC Trust has worked well. The Trustee for Wales sits on the S4C Authority as a full member.

Through a Joint Partnership Board, the executives of S4C and BBC Wales

With a new government in London, the future of Welsh-language service S4C is again under scrutiny, says
Huw Jones



S4C

work together on a range of projects, including plans to co-locate some S4C functions in BBC Wales's new Cardiff HQ, co-producing the second series of *Y Gwyll/Hinterland* and making S4C programmes available on iPlayer.

But with the very existence of the BBC Trust being debated, and a clear desire by the BBC to draw lines in the sand regarding erosion of the licence fee, what happens now?

Broadcasting is one of those areas of government that has not been devolved. Responsibility for securing, across various platforms, the full range of public service broadcasting needed

by viewers across the UK and its component nations is therefore the responsibility of the UK government.

In the case of S4C, set up in 1982 after prolonged campaigning and political debate, a commitment to Welsh-language broadcasting was made from the heart of the UK government. This remains in force, most recently in the form of the Public Bodies Act 2011, which requires the Secretary of State to ensure "sufficient funding" for S4C to carry out its duties.

There is also a widespread understanding of the need for more than one voice in public service broadcasting, particularly where, as in Wales, the commercial provision of news and entertainment is weak.

It is the Secretary of State who will need to take a view as to the needs of a Welsh-language television service. He will have to do so at the same time as he considers the demands to be placed on the licence fee and on public spending.

The S4C question may throw some light on the nature of the essential duties that should be undertaken by the BBC Trust or its successor body.

Assuming a further agreement is reached for S4C to continue to receive its funding primarily from the licence fee, such an agreement needs to be with an arm's length body, not with the executive, to avoid any perception of a takeover.

And, in a world where the BBC's relations with partners and other sections of the industry have often been questioned in terms of dominance, one suggestion is that the Trust/"Ofbeeb" should adjudicate on the fairness of all such relationships. The debate will surely continue.

Huw Jones is Chair of the S4C Authority.

Half an hour to create a hit



Paul Hampartsoumian

Creating a hit show is TV's holy grail. It is, however, rare to get an insight into the exacting and time-consuming process of nurturing an idea and turning it into a successful series.

At the latest RTS Futures event, top TV creative Ana de Moraes explained the art of brainstorming, programme development and pitching, focusing on one of the big successes of her career – Channel 4's *First Dates*.

De Moraes left her native Brazil in 2000, joining first Endemol and then Twenty Twenty Television, where she helped to create BBC One's RTS award-winning period legal drama *Garrow's Law*, Sky Living fashion show *Styled to Rock* – and *First Dates*.

In 2014, she became Creative Director of Development Central, the in-house unit created by BBC Director of Television Danny Cohen to develop non-scripted shows across genres at the corporation.

RTS Futures

Matthew Bell reports from an RTS Futures event that offered tips on how to turn ideas into great TV

“Cross-genre TV is a big trend at the moment,” De Moraes told the Futures audience. “*First Dates* is a really good example of cross-genre TV – I don't think of it as a dating show: it's a show about dating.”

De Moraes argued that shows such as *The Great British Bake Off* at the BBC and *Gogglebox* at Channel 4 have taken their inspiration from more than one genre, including documentaries, specialist factual and factual entertainment.

“It doesn't matter where the idea comes from or where you're pitching it.

It's all about having the idea – and everyone will take a good idea,” she said.

Discussing the genesis of *First Dates*, which debuted on Channel 4 in 2013, De Moraes recalled: “We were brainstorming dating shows for another channel – not Channel 4 – when a producer said to me, ‘Isn't it odd how you never get to see a real date.’

“What you do see are couples jet skiing or camel riding, which they never do in real life – it's contrived and constructed [for TV]. I started to think about how we could capture an actual date.”

A rig with fixed cameras, set up in a restaurant, thought De Moraes, could provide the realism that dating shows lack. The original channel, Sky Living, turned the idea down but Channel 4's then-Deputy Head of Factual, Nick Mirsky, was more receptive.

He even suggested adding an element of interactivity to the show (then known as *Date Night*) so that viewers could apply to date the >

Gurus share tips on development

There are three stages to getting a new programme on TV: coming up with an original idea, developing it and pitching it successfully.

Easy? Definitely not. Not one of the execs whom *Television* spoke to was willing to put a figure on their success rate, possibly because it would be discouragingly low. Nevertheless, new shows emerge. If they become a returnable format and are sold around the world, they can become cash cows for the production company.

To help generate ideas, BBC Development Central's Lucy Bacon says: 'Consume as much popular culture as possible and watch TV – the stuff you wouldn't usually watch.' And, she adds, don't ignore online content on platforms such as YouTube and Vine.

Brainstorming is a useful technique. 'Talk about the things that you really care about or bug you,' advises Bacon, who is Ana de Moraes's deputy at the BBC's in-house development unit. Her credits include Channel 5's *Eddie Stobart: Trucks & Trailers*.

'Be scientific. Lots of people think ideas come out of thin air – they don't,' says Wall To Wall Head of Entertainment Development Poppy Delbridge. 'Know the shows out there and research them thoroughly.'

Delbridge recently worked on Channel 4's upcoming entertainment series, *Time Crashers*, in which celebrities 'crash' through time and live as ordinary people in different eras of history.

'You can use an existing show as a jumping-off point. Take a show and pull it apart to the Nth degree, then add or take away parts and see what works,' says Tom Williams, Development Producer at indie Remedy. Williams specialises in quizzes and was part of the team that developed Channel 4's *The Million Pound Drop*.

While developing a show, adds Williams, 'be malleable. Don't get too hung up on your idea – accept other people's input.'

Development teams should have a good mix of people and specialisms to avoid a 'sameness' creeping into ideas. Ideally, says De Moraes, a team should be composed of 'ideators' (the people who have lots of ideas), developers, implementers and clarifiers (those who ask the difficult questions).

'If you only have ideators – it's such a ridiculous American word – and everyone is too competitive and thinks their idea is better than anybody else's, you're not going to get anywhere. You need people who can take an idea and work on it to make it better,' she says.

'It's important to have people who think in different ways and from different backgrounds,' De Moraes adds.

At the BBC's Development

Central, her team is made up of Bacon, whose background is in factual entertainment; three producers, two from documentaries and one from specialist factual; an assistant producer with a past in shiny-floor entertainment shows; and four trainees. De Moraes started as a trainee at Endemol. She answered an ad that asked applicants to come up with three ideas for shows.

'Don't be too formal when pitching – try to make it compelling. Anything that makes them remember you and want to see more helps,' says Bacon.

When she successfully pitched daytime cookery show *Britain's Best Bakery* to ITV she 'took in a lot of cakes' for the execs at the meeting.

And never give up, says Bacon: 'Don't be afraid to get it wrong. You can learn from every idea that is rejected and, one day, you'll get it right.' Ideas can be rejigged, recycled and pitched again.

'Remember, there are other channels to take your idea to,' says Delbridge. In fact, notes Bacon: 'Some of the best ideas have done the rounds before finding their ideal broadcaster.'



Ana de Moraes



› people on the programme whose dates had failed.

'We all felt that a bad date would be fun because it would offer car-crash TV moments.' But De Moraes worried about 'whether it would be so interesting to see people getting on'.

To resolve this question, Twenty Twenty made a mini-pilot of the show for Channel 4, which was shown to the RTS Futures audience. 'It proved that the show is just as enjoyable, if not more so, with couples who have a spark,' she said.

In fact, the interactive element of *First Dates* did not survive the first series.

'It was expensive and hard work getting people cleared, ensuring they weren't psychopaths and then bringing them down to London for their date,' said De Moraes.

Channel 4 was very supportive in giving the show time to establish itself. 'The first series did OK but it wasn't amazing. We were given a second series and, again, it did all right, but it didn't double its numbers like *Gogglebox*, which the channel had been hoping. The third series, though, has done



All pictures: Paul Hampartsoumian

Hybrid lover is pitch perfect

At the event 'First dates: falling in love with ideas', seven teams of RTS Futures members, each assisted by a development executive from a leading indie or broadcaster, developed an idea in 30 minutes.

The idea had to combine key features of two or three different series. 'It's a good technique to play around with the component parts of successful shows,' explained the chair and producer of the event, Ross McCarthy.

The teams then had just a minute to pitch their best idea to the room.

A team mentored by Voltage Head of Development Helen Docherty brainstormed and developed the winning format, *Undercover Lovers*, a hybrid of three series – *Big Brother*, *Playing It Straight* and *Wife Swap*.

'Imagine a house with five girls and five boys, all claiming to be single. However, two of them are, in fact, a couple,' began the winning pitch. 'They are given tasks such as cooking, DIY and finding directions on a map. Will the real couple be able to keep their cool?'

'At the end [of the show], the house will vote on who they think the real couple is. If nobody manages to identify them, they win a cash prize, but if a housemate spots who the couple is, the cash is split between the housemates.'

Undercover Lovers was praised by Ana de Moraes as 'the most original and distinctive' idea for a new show. Discussing the other pitches, the BBC executive added: 'They were good ideas but a lot of them were similar to existing shows.'

Thanks to the following development executives for their help in mentoring the teams: Helen Docherty, Voltage; Iestyn Barker and Tom Williams, Remedy; Joe Evans, Tiger Aspect; Joe Varley, Zeppotron; Lucy Bacon, BBC; Martha Housden, Twenty Twenty; Neale Simpson, Fizz/RDF; and Poppy Delbridge, Wall to Wall.

a lot better," she said. "All credit to C4 – it gives shows a chance to grow."

Good casting, as much as the original idea, is critically important to the success of reality shows such as *First Dates*. "The key thing for us was to avoid people who just wanted to be on TV – you need people who really are looking for love," argued De Moraes. "If they're not, the show's not going to work."

"You have to operate a strict filter and you certainly can't just go for the good-looking ones. You need to find people who have layers to them – real people who have more to them than meets the eye."

Viewers, she continued, have to root for the couples on screen. "Even when they are over the top or do something unpleasant, they have to be likeable – otherwise the show doesn't work," added De Moraes.

The *First Dates* format has been sold around the world; the Netherlands, Australia and Canada have acquired the programme. NBC has bought the rights for the US and is shooting its first series this summer in Chicago, with Ellen DeGeneres executive producing.

Turning to one of her other successes, the best part of a decade earlier De Moraes had helped to launch the TV career of Gareth Malone in BBC Two's *The Choir*, in which he started a school choir and brought it rapidly up to competition standard.

She had sold the idea to BBC factual commissioners Ben Gale and Richard Klein before she even found Malone. At the time, he was working for the London Symphony Orchestra's community choirs.

Talent, De Moraes argued, is now more important than ever before. "If we were pitching that [show] today, we would never pitch it without the talent attached," she said. "Talent has become expected. Ten years ago, you could pitch the idea with just a piece of paper. People were more open to that."

"But now the bar is higher and people expect to see talent from the start."

The RTS Futures event 'First dates: falling in love with ideas' was held at the Hallam Conference Centre in central London on 11 May. It was produced and chaired by Ross McCarthy.

The winners in 16 categories were announced at a ceremony, hosted by comedian Romesh Ranganathan, on 5 June at the BFI Southbank

RTS Student Television Awards 2014



Awards Chair:
Stuart Murphy



Host: Romesh
Ranganathan

All pictures: Richard Kendal



Skunky Dog:
Winner of both
Undergraduate
Drama and
Undergraduate
Craft Skills
Camerawork

The awards celebrate the best in student television. Undergraduate and Postgraduate awards are both judged in five categories: Animation, Comedy & Entertainment, Drama, Factual and, new for this year, Open – for films that are a maximum of three minutes in length and on any subject matter.

Undergraduate and Postgraduate Awards are also presented for the craft skills of Camerawork, Editing and Sound.

The RTS Student Television Awards 2014 reward outstanding

work produced during the 2013/2014 academic year.

Undergraduate entries were first judged at a regional level by their local RTS Centre in the winter of 2014.

The winning films from each RTS Centre, along with all postgraduate entries, were then judged nationally in April 2015 ahead of the awards presentation during the ceremony on Friday 5 June.

The awards are chaired by Stuart Murphy, Director, Sky Entertainment Channels.

UNDERGRADUATE AWARDS

Undergraduate Animation

Shoot

Rory Conway, Sammy Khalid, David Slattery and Kieran Noone, Ballyfermot College of Further Education

“An ambitious and professional film with great comic timing. Every stage of production is of a high standard.”

Nominees:

- ▶ **Domestic Appliances**, Lewis Firth Bolton, Edinburgh College of Art
- ▶ **Fractured**, Jocie Juritz, Kingston University

Undergraduate Comedy & Entertainment

Little

Harry Jackson, Alfred Johnson and Team, Arts University Bournemouth

“Thoroughly charming, a very well written script, funny, surprising and beautifully performed.”

Nominees:

- ▶ **Bun Oven**, Genia Krassnig, Christian Cerami, Matt Tume and Team, University of Westminster
- ▶ **Marital Combat**, Ally Lockhart and Team, City of Glasgow College

Undergraduate Drama

Skunky Dog

James Fitzgerald, Paddy Slattery and Team, National Film School, Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Dún Laoghaire

“An ambitious, professional, deeply felt piece of storytelling... a poetic, absorbing, uneasy and truthful film.”

Nominees:

- ▶ **Archie**, Sophie Piggott, Staffordshire University
- ▶ **Sunday Dinner with the Morgans**, Alex Forbes, Jack Pollington and Allan Armstrong, University for the Creative Arts, Farnham

Undergraduate Factual

Thick Skin

Despina Christodoulou and Robert Dalton, University of Leeds

“Beautifully shot [and] cleverly and evocatively structured, this really left you wanting to know more.”

Nominees:

- ▶ **Porters**, James Dougan, Max Cutting and Daniel Ridgeon, University of South Wales
- ▶ **The Invisible School**, Hugo Pettitt and Hannah Bush Bailey, University of the West of England

Undergraduate Open

LA Larry

Lauren Clark, University of Central Lancashire

"A wonderfully realised, well-executed submission with... pacy syncing of images and music."

Nominees:

- ▶ **Nan**, Luke Taylor, Bath Spa University
- ▶ **Vice Versa – Creation**, Natasha Hawthornthwaite, Rhodri Carter and Daniel Ridgeon, University of South Wales



Porters:
Undergraduate
Craft Skills
Editing



Little:
Undergraduate
Comedy &
Entertainment

UNDERGRADUATE CRAFT SKILLS

Camerawork

Skunky Dog

James Fitzgerald, Paddy Slattery and Team, National Film School, Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Dún Laoghaire

"There were clever choices when it came to composition and framing.... The hill scenes were breathtaking."

Nominees:

- ▶ **Shoot**, Rory Conway, Sammy Khalid, David Slattery and Kieran Noone, Ballyfermot College of Further Education
- ▶ **Sunday Dinner with the Morgans**, Alex Forbes, Jack Pollington and Allan Armstrong, University for the Creative Arts, Farnham

Editing

Porters

James Dougan, Max Cutting and Daniel Ridgeon, University of South Wales

"An ambitious, concise and well-structured programme [that highlighted] the vital craft of editing."

Nominees:

- ▶ **Skunky Dog**, James Fitzgerald, Paddy Slattery and Team, National Film School, Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Dún Laoghaire
- ▶ **Sunday Dinner with the Morgans**, Alex Forbes, Jack Pollington and Allan Armstrong, University for the Creative Arts, Farnham

Sound

Archie

Sophie Piggott, Staffordshire University
"Displayed film-quality sound design, [and] a real flair for imaginative processing and mixing."

Nominees:

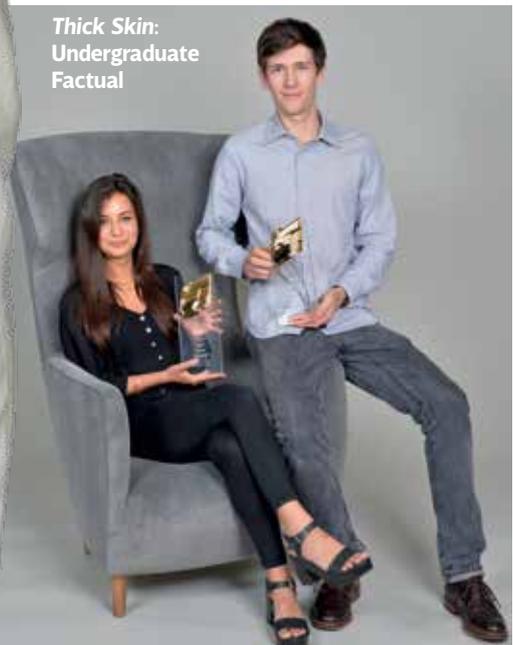
- ▶ **Skunky Dog**, James Fitzgerald, Paddy Slattery and Team, National Film School, Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Dún Laoghaire
- ▶ **Thick Skin**, Despina Christodoulou and Robert Dalton, University of Leeds ▶



LA Larry:
Under-
graduate
Open



Archie:
Under-
graduate
Craft
Skills
Sound



Thick Skin:
Undergraduate
Factual

All pictures: Richard Kendal

POSTGRADUATE AWARDS

Postgraduate Animation

The Bigger Picture

Daisy Jacobs, Jennifer Majka, Christopher Hees and Team, National Film and Television School

“The authenticity of the storytelling is matched by the originality of the technique. An accomplished film.”

Nominees:

► **Meanwhile**, Stephen McNally, Royal College of Art

► **Pineapple Calamari**, Katarzyna Nalewajka, Daniel Negret and Team, National Film and Television School

Postgraduate Comedy & Entertainment

Secret Studio

James Spokoini, Sipho Sondiyazi and Team, National Film and Television School

“A show within a show that felt truly original. A clever concept matched with high production values.”

Nominees:

► **Nightdare**, Serafeim Ntousias, Karin Camarinha and Team, National Film and Television School

► **School on Report**, Lee Otway, York St John University

Postgraduate Drama

How I Didn't Become a Piano Player

Tommaso Pitta, Christopher Hees and Team, National Film and Television School

“This film united the jury. Funny and engaging with a high-end cast and beautifully paced. Confident direction, as a story should be.”

Nominees:

► **Jam Man**, John Evans and Lester Hughes, Bangor University

► **North**, Philip Sheerin, Jacob Thomas and Team, National Film and Television School

Postgraduate Factual

Side by Side

Jack Warrender and Team, National Film and Television School

“A compelling narrative, impressively directed and beautifully observed.”

Nominees:

► **A Wee Night In**, Stuart Edwards, Noe Mendelle and Emma Davie, Edinburgh College of Art, Screen Academy Scotland

► **Sing Your Heart Out**, Peter Akar and Team, National Film and Television School

The Bigger Picture:
Postgraduate Animation



Side by Side:
Postgraduate Factual

Shoot:
Undergraduate Animation



Sing Your Heart Out:
Postgraduate Craft Skills Sound



Side by Side: Postgraduate Craft Skills Editing



Top row, from left: *How I Didn't Become a Piano Player*, Postgraduate Drama; *Secret Studio*, Postgraduate Comedy & Entertainment; Sky film crew interviewing guests during lunch

Once She Was Just Like You: Postgraduate Open

Postgraduate Open

Once She Was Just Like You

Dan Neeson and Team, National Film and Television School

"Clearly a labour of love for a devoted film-maker.... A shocking and elegant piece of film art that deserves as wide an audience as possible."

Nominees:

- ▶ **First Time**, Ryan Vernava and Team, National Film and Television School
- ▶ **Nereid**, Charlotte Boyle, University of Salford

POSTGRADUATE CRAFT SKILLS

Camerawork

A Wee Night In

Stuart Edwards, Noe Mendelle and Emma Davie, Edinburgh College of Art, Screen Academy Scotland

"The film used the camera with great wit and confidence... to capture the beauty of an intimate world."

Nominees:

- ▶ **North**, Philip Sheerin, Jacob Thomas and Team, National Film and Television School
- ▶ **The Bigger Picture**, Daisy Jacobs, Jennifer Majka, Christopher Hees and Team, National Film and Television School

Editing

Side by Side

Jack Warrender and Team, National Film and Television School

"[Terrific] storytelling, elegance and confidence with the subject matter [and] an emotional sensitivity to the story."

Nominees:

- ▶ **How I Didn't Become a Piano Player**, Tommaso Pitta, Christopher Hees and Team, National Film and Television School
- ▶ **North**, Philip Sheerin, Jacob Thomas and Team, National Film and Television School

Sound

Sing Your Heart Out

Peter Akar and Team, National Film and Television School

"Displaying great knowledge and technique [and] capturing extraordinary moments in audio."

Nominees:

- ▶ **Nightdare**, Serafeim Ntousias, Karin Camarinha and Team, National Film and Television School
- ▶ **Side by Side**, Jack Warrender and Team, National Film and Television School

All pictures: Richard Kendall



RTS

Nothing gets our digital team more excited than a good awards bash. So it was with delight that we tweeted and live-blogged our way through the RTS Student Television Awards from BFI Southbank on 5 June. If you missed us live, you can look back at the blog, pictures and videos on the RTS website now.

I've just been into Google HQ to chat to the experts at YouTube – one of our International Patrons – to get some tips on creating a winning video channel for the Society.

Our video guru, Bex Stewart, has already taken some of the points on board to create some cracking content that's pulled in several thousand clicks.

There is a buzz at HQ around the new RTS Digital Hub, which will debut later this summer. We're completely redesigning the RTS website to make it more appealing and easier to use, plus adding new sections including an education and training hub.

At a time when Creative Skillset is saying that more needs to be done to help new entrants gain a foothold in TV, the learning zone will feature plenty of video tips. There will be advice from those who have already made it, plus a list of work placements and courses for career entrants. The zone will also promote the RTS's undergraduate bursaries scheme.

I've been talking to each of our patrons ahead of the new site going live. A patron section will be dedicated to each of our supporters. There's lots to look forward to.

Tim Dickens is RTS Digital Editor.

► *Do you have a news or feature idea for the RTS website? Let Tim know on 020 7822 2836 or tdickens@rts.org.uk.*

FROM THE DIGITAL EDITOR

The RTS's latest online features look at making fixed-rig documentaries, remaking history and making TV open to all, reports **Tim Dickens**



David Brindley

ITV

Tips in 60 seconds... How To Succeed in Fixed Rig

Fixed rig is an increasingly popular way of storytelling in television. As Channel 4's Commissioning Editor for Documentaries, David Brindley, points out in his one-minute slot, fixed-rig shows are an excellent way of breaking into factual and documentary programming.

This *Tips* was even picked up by the amusing @TheTVController, who tweeted it for the attention of the BBC's incoming Head of Commissioning for Documentaries, Patrick Holland. Watch this space!

► j.mp/fixedrigtips



Spanish Armada: Dan Snow talks about 12 days that saved England

Complementing her fascinating article in this magazine, Pippa Shawley talks to Dan Snow about his latest BBC show, *Armada: 12 Days To Save England*, for RTS online.

Snow described the casting of ex-*EastEnders* star Anita Dobson as Queen Elizabeth I as "awesome" and

"a clever reminder that Elizabeth wasn't always the young virgin queen".

► j.mp/DanSnow



Creative Skillset calls for fairer access to TV industry

New figures from Creative Skillset last month show that more still needs to be done to have a wider range of people working in the TV industry. We take a close look at the data. Nearly half of all respondents to Skillset's survey said that they had had to do unpaid work experience to further their TV careers.

► j.mp/fairerTV



Watch: new RTS promo video

Produced by RTS Bristol member John Durrant, our spanking new promo for the Society focuses on the best of what we do across the UK. With clips from our awards, events and videos – and an upbeat soundtrack from an RTS Award-winning musician – we think you'll love it.

► j.mp/RTSvid

Wales gets an editing masterclass

■ Paul Hawke-Williams has an infectious enthusiasm for post-production. He told an audience of students, sound/video editors and RTS members at his company's training suite in Cardiff Bay: "It's so easy to edit these days – non-linear editing is like word processing."

Hawke-Williams heads Digital Media Training. Harnessing more than 10 years' experience as a video editor and trainer, he ably demonstrated the latest software packages at the Wales Centre event, "Post-production in the palm of your hand", at the end of April.

Apple's reworking of its Final Cut software has been controversial, but Hawke-Williams believes that Pro X "represents a radical move away from conventional film-based paradigms. It took a lot of getting used to, but I love it now. It's only a matter of time before Adobe and Avid follow suit."

Paul Owen, Operations Director at Gorilla, argued that Avid is king for effective workflows and content sharing in a busy post-production environment. Gorilla provides editing and sound-dubbing services from the new Glo-Works creative industries centre in Cardiff Bay.

"The whole production team can work on the same material, with greater efficiency and saving huge amounts of time," said Owen.

Hawke-Williams suggested, however, that "although you can fix things in post, it's still better to shoot things properly in the first place".

Hywel Wiliam and Tim Hartley

Success shocks director

Wolf Hall director Peter Kosminsky admitted to being totally surprised at the success of the BBC Two drama, which drew audiences of up to 4.5 million earlier this year.

"It broke box-office records and had the best set of reviews of anything I have ever done. I don't think any of us anticipated what was going to happen," he told a Southern Centre event at Bournemouth University in April.

Kosminsky gave his reaction to a reported comment by Mark Rylance, who played Thomas Cromwell in the adaptation of Hilary Mantel's novels *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies*, that the director was a good observer of actors at work.

"My job is to create the right atmosphere to allow the actors that I cast to do their best work," said Kosminsky. "People are not tuning in to see the shots – they are tuning in to see the performance."



Wolf Hall: Mark Rylance as the scheming Thomas Cromwell

BBC

Commenting on the current state of TV drama, Kosminsky said: "Tax breaks have been transformative for the industry; there's a blossoming, the like of which I have never seen. But we don't have the crew, so it means that the pressure is on places like Bournemouth to train people to come and work in the industry."

He stressed that it was important for such courses to stay industry-focused, and

value craft and production skills in equal measure with academic performance.

Would Kosminsky return to Cromwell? He was enthusiastic but said that it would depend on Mantel, who is still writing the third novel in her trilogy on the life of Henry VIII's adviser.

"We've spoken to her about it and the book is going well but it's not going to be a short one," he said.

Gordon Cooper

Yorkshire loses indie stalwart

■ One of Yorkshire Centre's strongest supporters, Allen Jewhurst, died in May after fighting a typically defiant battle with cancer.

He was an inspiration to hundreds of people in the industry. Many of them owe their current positions to his support, guidance and enthusiasm.

Allen worked at Shepperton Studios as an editor, then at BBC News, before moving to Yorkshire Television in the



Allen Jewhurst

Paul Harness Photography

1970s, where he worked on *In Loving Memory*.

Allen was, in every sense, a creative visionary and one of the first people in the UK to see the potential of independent production. The

company he formed more than 30 years ago, Chameleon TV, became a watchword for quality and innovation.

One of his proudest boasts was that Chameleon never made a single programme that it wasn't passionate about.

I was delighted that Allen received the Yorkshire Centre Award last year, recognising his outstanding contribution to the TV industry. The response in the room spoke volumes.

The region, the industry and the world is poorer for his passing, but his legacy will always live on.

Mike Best

Thames Valley replays Las Vegas highlights

As the flashing neon lights of Las Vegas faded for another year, Thames Valley Centre assembled a crack panel to review the annual NAB broadcast convention. What was the buzz? Did we learn anything new?

The event, held at Pincent's Manor, Reading, in mid-May, was chaired by journalist Dick Hobbs, who warned the panellists to avoid repeated mentions of "the Cloud". Other buzzwords of the evening included 4K, second screen, drones and IP.

There was consensus that "content" was driving innovation. Consumers want

more content, quicker, anywhere and any time.

Keith Nicholas, from BBC Studios and Post Production, argued that the market dynamic had changed: "The consumer now drives the industry, not the content owner or the broadcaster."

But rather than a cause for anxiety, the panellists saw this as an opportunity. "It's simply a different model," said Robin Adams, from broadcast equipment manufacturer EVS. "The huge diversity of acquisition sources – from drones to phones – means that there is a boatload of content to manage, store, distribute and monetise."

Chris Brandrick, from wireless camera hire company Broadcast RF, agreed: "Consumers have a huge appetite for unique content, and technology advances in cameras and wireless technology are now enabling the creation and distribution of those images to our screens."

At the other end of the image scale, Ultra-HDTV in its 4K guise was still the big topic. Yet Neil Maycock, from broadcasting technology outfits Quantel and Snell, played down the hype. Yes, consumer TV-buying decisions were all about "mine's bigger than yours" and "mine's got more pixels than

yours", but there was also a widely held view that 4K was being foisted upon consumers by set manufacturers.

He argued that the real focus should not be on 4K but on HDR (high dynamic range), which improves colours and contrast, because that was what would "bring about more dramatic changes in picture quality". Maycock acknowledged, however, that this was a much harder sell to consumers.

Nicholas added that the difficult and time-consuming aspect of handling 4K images was in post-production and effects rendering.

"It's about broadcasters and content owners having an agile, IT-based infrastructure to cope with whatever the future content world brings," said Maycock – whether that content comes from phones or drones.

Rob Ettridge

■ BBC Research & Development hosted an evening session for RTS London in April to demonstrate its latest kit, from the use of the 4K standard of Ultra-HDTV to live reception on mobile devices. Some of the technology was first trialled at the Glasgow Commonwealth Games.

Venue Explorer makes use of 4K production technology to offer viewers an interactive experience on their tablet, giving them a choice over which events to watch.

First tested in Glasgow, a locked-off 4K camera was used to give a wide view of the athletics stadium where multiple events were running concurrently. Viewers could pan across that field of view and click for a closer look at a particular event, with the audio feed matched to the video.

Other production genres have been looking at this technology – natural history

BBC demonstrates new hi-tech gear



Venue Explorer brings the action closer to viewers

and arts in particular – and more trials are expected.

Graphical overlays, which were developed by BBC R&D for an augmented video player, were also part of the Venue Explorer trial.

Live rendering of overlay

graphics at the client end allows viewers to personalise their viewing experience by choosing which overlays they see, giving different viewers different levels of content. For example, they can choose subtitles for specific actors or

pause a drama episode to get a plot summary. More trials are likely.

Mobile broadcasting was also trialled in Glasgow, with BBC R&D exploring ways to stream live TV to mobile devices by providing seamless switching between 4G broadcast and wi-fi.

TV white spaces – the gaps between primary broadcasters in the TV part of the radio spectrum – will be made available by Ofcom this year and the BBC is looking at opportunities to provide enhanced services, especially for low-power devices.

BBC R&D is also exploring 360° TV. Wearing a virtual-reality headset, viewers are placed at the centre of the action, a feeling that is boosted by the use of BBC-developed, object-based audio, which matches sounds to the right source in the viewer's field of vision.

Nick Radlo

Improv adds realism to cop show

Channel 5 is renowned neither for its homegrown drama nor for attracting critical praise, but *Suspects* gives it both. The cop show has notched up three series since its TV debut in February 2014 and, at the end of April, it was the subject of an RTS London event at ITV's London Studios.

"It's a very straightforward police procedural," explained co-creator and Executive Producer Paul Marquess, the founder of FremantleMedia subsidiary Newman Street Productions, which makes the series. But there's a twist: the cast improvise, working from a storyline, but no script.

The idea for *Suspects* was triggered by Marquess's time at *The Bill* and *The Only Way is Essex*. On ITV's cop drama, he worked with a number of top-quality writers – but not enough, he felt, to make the 100 or so hours of TV a year that the schedules demanded.

"We'd often end up with an A-list cast, really good stories that we'd worked out over a period of months, a very well-directed [show] and a B-list script," he recalled.

The final episode aired in 2010. "It seemed like a tragedy to me. *The Bill*, twice a week, was telling very good cop stories for a mass audience," said Marquess.

Around the same time, other long-running dramas, such as *Heartbeat* and *The Royal*, were also being pulled. "There was a real feeling that the days of mid-budget drama were gone in the UK," he added.

On *TOWIE*, Marquess found himself having to construct storylines for the show's characters: "We would be on set with these non-actors and, once you'd got them in the right place, pressed the



Suspects: Fay Ripley stars in the Channel 5 drama

Channel 5

right buttons and shot it properly you'd end up with a really good show. I thought: 'What if we did this with actors?'"

In 2012, daytime ITV show *Crime Stories* provided the dry run for *Suspects*. Shot cheaply and in a documentary style, the programme attracted up to 1 million viewers and the attention of Channel 5 Director of Programmes Ben Frow.

Suspects has three main characters: DI Martha Bellamy (Fay Ripley from much-loved ITV comedy-drama *Cold Feet*), DS Jack Weston (Damien Molony, who played Hal the vampire in BBC Three's *Being Human*) and DC Charlie Steele (Clare-Hope Ashitey in her first leading TV role).

A retired police inspector was hired to prepare the actors. "We taught them how to restrain, handcuff and do a police interview, and how to move around the police station like they owned the place, which was important," said Producer Kara Manley. "We needed to immerse them in the police world and to give them the confidence to take control of scenes."

The team works quickly.

There are no rehearsals – "The actors prep their characters but we don't want them to rehearse. It has to feel raw and have an edge to it," explained Marquess – and scenes are shot in, at most, three takes and often just one. As a result, it takes two and a half days to shoot one commercial-hour episode (46 minutes) – four times quicker than a drama made in a more traditional way.

The RTS London event was chaired by the Editor of

BBC Radio 4's *The Archers*, Sean O'Connor. "We have no rehearsals and only two takes, and we've been doing it like that for 65 years. [*Suspects*] is very new but it's also quite old as well," he said.

"The biggest benefit of the 'no rehearsal, get on with it' [method] is that it sounds alive and real. There's a verisimilitude about it – you have cops; I have farmers," O'Connor added. "Don't do rehearsals, don't do it more than twice – you're on to a really good format, which feels new, fresh and exciting."

Director Craig Pickles, who has worked on all three series, explained that the actors can take their improvisation as far as they want, but that the arc of the story has to be followed.

He told the London Centre audience: "Directing this is about letting the actors run free, so long as they get the investigation into it."

"It is a very honest piece of television," concluded Marquess. "It's not arch and it's not trying to be too clever. It was designed to appeal to a Channel 5 audience."

Matthew Bell

Rol feasts on Apple lesson

■ Republic of Ireland Centre hosted an informative session on using the iPhone and iPad by Noel Hayes from the Compu b Apple reseller store in Grafton Street, Dublin.

'An Apple a day' at RTÉ, Dublin, in May revealed that many media people are not using their devices to their full capacity.

Hayes addressed the necessity of backing up valuable data, advising the audience to back up

frequently, using either iTunes or iCloud. He also explained how to use the increasingly popular iCloud storage system.

Responding to a question from the audience, Hayes offered tips on extending the battery life of devices. Using wi-fi, turning on auto-brightness, fetching data less frequently and turning off notifications from apps would all prolong usage, he said.

Charles Byrne

Memories of a world at war

Four years in the making and, at the time, the UK's most expensive series, *The World at War* remains TV's greatest documentary.

Knitted together by Laurence Olivier's narration and a Carl Davis score, the programme movingly tells the story of the Second World War using eyewitness accounts and interviews with important figures, including Albert Speer and Lord Mountbatten.

Memories of making the Thames Television documentary, together with clips from the 26-part series first broadcast on ITV in 1973, featured strongly at the Jane Mercer Memorial Lecture, "Moving Images", which was given by Raye Farr.

She worked as a researcher on *The World at War* and went on to become Director of the Steven Spielberg Film and Video Archive at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The annual lecture, which was held in mid-May in London, is organised jointly by archive body Focal International and RTS London.

The US-born Farr was living in the UK in the late 1960s when she made her TV bow on *All Our Yesterdays*, a long-running Granada series that showed clips from war-time cinema newsreels 25 years ago that week.

The show's presenter, Irish journalist Brian Inglis, and his Granada colleague Bill Grundy recommended Farr to Jeremy Isaacs, the Producer of *The World at War*.

Farr told the large audience that she served her apprenticeship in archival film on the series: "As a researcher, I had the freedom to explore and discover – this was my film school."

Enduring friendships were



Evacuation of Birmingham schoolchildren and (inset) Raye Farr

Birmingham City Council

forged making the series. "Comradeship is what we felt and feel. The number of people here from *The World at War* is a clear tribute to how close we were," she said.

One such luminary in the audience was Isaacs, who was asked whether he thought that such a huge undertaking as *The World at War* could be made now.

"It would be hugely difficult to envisage a series at that length today," he replied. "But it's not beyond the ingenuity of a great broadcaster to do a follow-up."

"It's important that film-makers should make the films about wars or famines or clashes in society that they want to make."

"It doesn't matter if it's only one film, or three or six; the important thing is that they should be good films. They should tell necessary truths honestly and compellingly."

Isaacs added that Farr's friend, the US-born film-

maker and RTS Fellow Norma Percy "has half a dozen series to her credit that are absolutely brilliant – they're just as good and just as important as the blockbusters". Percy's award-winning series include *The Death of Yugoslavia*.

Remaining in the UK, Farr worked on two Thames series, *Destination America*, telling the story of mass emigration to the US, and *Hollywood*. She recalled "the sheer delight of working with David Gill and Kevin Brownlow [on *Hollywood*]", adding that the 13-part series on the silent-film era remains "the only non-war, non-totalitarian, non-tragic series of my career".

Working on *Hollywood* took Farr back to the US, where she has remained. She linked up again with producer Martin Smith, whom she had first worked with on *The World at War*, for *Vietnam: A Television History* (1983) and



The Struggles for Poland, (1987), for which she produced an episode on Jewish life.

Smith was instrumental in setting up the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC, from which Farr retired in October 2013.

"*The World at War* and the British documentary film tradition are a critical part of the success of this museum," said Farr. "Martin, with [exhibition designer] Ralph Appelbaum, really conceived the exhibition."

Smith was in the audience and made a forceful point about film-makers' responsibilities. "It is a disgrace that we make so many films with so much archive material yet

Glasgow Girls' big day

there is no way for people to find out where that material comes from.

"Anybody who makes a documentary film today and doesn't put their shot list up, and list every archive so people can cross-check it, is failing in their duty – this is the only way we can be accurate," he said.

Farr read out an apposite quote from the writer Susan Sontag: "We live under constant threat of two equally fearful but seemingly opposed destinies: unremitting banality and inconceivable terror. It is fantasy, served out in large rations by the popular arts, that allows most people to cope with these twin spectres."

The words, said Farr, "spoke to me about the endless success of war films and documentaries, and about how some of us are able to work with horrific historical images over many years, even dedicating large portions of our professional lives to discovering, studying, identifying and preserving them.

"Many of us here share a passion and commitment to understanding their context and particularity, and insisting that they should be used to tell only the history that they reveal."

It is a privilege, she added, "to discover pieces of new reality through the lenses of those who did the reporting. Don't we have a responsibility to examine and use them with exceptional care and intelligence?"

"I owe it to the [Holocaust] survivors to be truthful and careful, to tell that story with enormous respect. In my career, the two groups of people that have meant the most to me are Holocaust survivors and my dear colleagues."

Matthew Bell



Glasgow Girls: (from left) Agnesa Murselaj, Roza Salih, Colin Barr, Brian Welsh and Kate Cook

Ilisa Stack and Patrycja Dymkiewicz

The BBC and Channel 4 dominated the RTS Scotland Awards, which were held at the Óran Mór, Glasgow, in late May, winning all the major programme categories.

The Drama award went to Minnow Films for *Glasgow Girls* (BBC One Scotland/BBC Three) while *Keys to the Castle* (Darren Hercher Films for BBC Two Scotland) won the Documentary and Specialist Factual award. The judging panel, which was chaired by April Chamberlain, said the

latter "offers the viewer a window into a very intimate world; it is elegant and moving storytelling".

Holiday of My Lifetime with Len Goodman (Raise the Roof Productions for BBC One) picked up the Daytime award and *It Was Alright in the 1970s* (Objective Scotland for C4) the award for Factual Entertainment and Features.

The Referendum Programme prize was won jointly by *Scotland in a Day* (The Comedy Unit for C4) and *Scotland Decides: The Big*,

Big Debate (Mentorn Scotland for BBC One Scotland). The C4 show was praised for its "network ambitions and stellar cast", while *Scotland Decides* "pioneered new ways of engaging with young first-time voters", said the judges.

In the news and current affairs categories, STV News' Political Editor Bernard Ponsoby was named Television Journalist of the Year. The News Programme award went to *Reporting Scotland* (BBC Scotland News and Current Affairs for BBC One Scotland), while the Current Affairs prize went to *Cybercrimes with Ben Hammersley: Darknets* (Tern TV for BBC World News).

The RTS Scotland Award was made to STV Deputy Director of Channels Elizabeth Partyka to acknowledge her outstanding contribution to Scottish television.

Most recently, Partyka oversaw the launch of STV's local-TV channels, STV Glasgow and STV Edinburgh.

Matthew Bell

North East celebrates youth

The Young People's Media Festival, organised by RTS North East & the Border in May, attracted 30 entries involving more than 150 young people at schools and colleges across the region.

The Senior Drama category was awarded to *Bench*, a film from Hartlepool Sixth Form College students Matthew Appleyard, Hollie Boynton-Briggs, Tom Curtis and Doug Macaskill.

Superdog, an individual entry from Jacob Crow, snapped the Entertainment category. *MUM* from William Howard School student Ellie Gray won the Factual award.



Matthew Appleyard

Ztone Photography

Jonnie Knights, Caitlin Gill, Simon Ramshaw and Paige Lamb of Newcastle-based Northern Stars won the senior award for entries that received support from industry professionals with *I am Sam*.

Rebecca Anderson, David Buckley, Thomas Buckley, Dylan Bulmer, Aaron Page, Morgan Smith and Tilly Woolley from Usworth Colliery Primary School, Sunderland, won the junior prize, with *Mike and the Mysterious Monster*.

Rachel Teate, star of CBBC's *Wolfblood*, and BBC producer and presenter Chris Jackson were the hosts at the University of Sunderland's David Puttnam Media Centre.

"The standard was high and the judges of both junior and senior events had a difficult task," said Festival Director Tony Edwards.

Matthew Bell

OFF MESSAGE

By now, we all know that TV Rottweiler Jeremy Paxman can do tender as well as tough. Thinking his mike was switched off, Channel 4 and Sky News audiences in March heard a concerned Paxman ask Ed Miliband if he was OK live on air.

He'd roughed up the luckless Labour leader by pressing him hard on his relationship with his brother, David, and on Miliband's perceived reputation "as a north London geek".

At last month's RTS Legends lunch, Steve Hewlett discovered that this level of courtesy from Paxman was more or less normal.

As the applause faded away at the end of the sold-out event, Paxo couldn't resist a final one-liner at the expense of his interviewer.

"Are you OK, Steve?" enquired the solicitous ex-*Newsnight* man.

To which there really was no answer.

■ **Commissioners need no reminding of *Game of Thrones*'s epic success.**

With this in mind, ITV is expecting big things of its expensive reimagining of *Beowulf*, which is due on screen early next year.

Alas, not all TV fantasy fiction hits the spot with audiences.

BBC One's ambitious, special-effects-laden, Sunday-night drama *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* has failed to repeat the success of the slot's previous incumbent, *Poldark*.

Episode 2 of the story of two early-19th-century magicians managed only a shade over 2.5 million viewers, a 13% share.

This is hardly ratings magic.

■ Talking of *Poldark*, ITV's buying binge of production companies continues apace.

Kevin Lygo, Managing Director of ITV Studios, pulled out of a proposed deal at the end of May with the TV arm of Harvey Weinstein's empire.

Days later, ITV announced it had purchased Mammoth Screen, whose hits include *Poldark*.

The company was set up by ex-ITV people. The broadcaster first bought in to Mammoth back in 2007, as a minority shareholder. As well as *Poldark*, Mammoth's credits include *Parade's End* and *Endeavour*.

Coincidentally, Mammoth is also producing *Book of the Dead*, a 10-part detective drama set in ancient Egypt, for... The Weinstein Company.

■ **As TV types begin to turn their attention to the summer's distractions of the beach or barbeque, what should they take with them on their holidays to read?**

Peter Bazalgette reminds us in his TV Diary (page 5) that teletubbies like nothing better than talking about the BBC. For BBC junkies, Charlotte Higgins's book, *This New Noise: the Extraordinary Birth and Troubled Life of the BBC*, published this month, looks to be about as definitive as it gets.

It is based on her series of lengthy articles published in *The Guardian* last year analysing the corporation's past, present and future.

If this is too much of a big read, Nick Robinson's *Election Notebook: The Inside Story of the Battle Over Britain's Future and My Personal Battle To Report It* might make a better poolside choice.

Incidentally, it's good to have the BBC's Robinson back on TV and online. Robinson's gift for getting to the heart of a story and writing so incisively is a huge asset to the BBC.

■ "It's like panning for gold," was the recent verdict from BBC England Director Peter Salmon on trying to secure a new hit comedy.

Congratulations, then, to BBC One's *Peter Kay's Car Share*, the highest-rated new sitcom to premiere on any British channel since 2011.

Despite the risks involved in nurturing new comedy (*Car Share* debuted on iPlayer as a box set before moving to BBC One) the summer schedules are not lacking in laughs.

This month saw Ian McKellen and Derek Jacobi return in the second series of the high-camp, retro ITV sitcom *Vicious*.

On the same night, Channel 4 showed the first episode of season 2 of *Man Down*: surreal, scatological and just plain silly.

The two shows inhabit different comic universes. Let's hope each one finds an audience, linear, digital or, more likely, a mix of both.



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