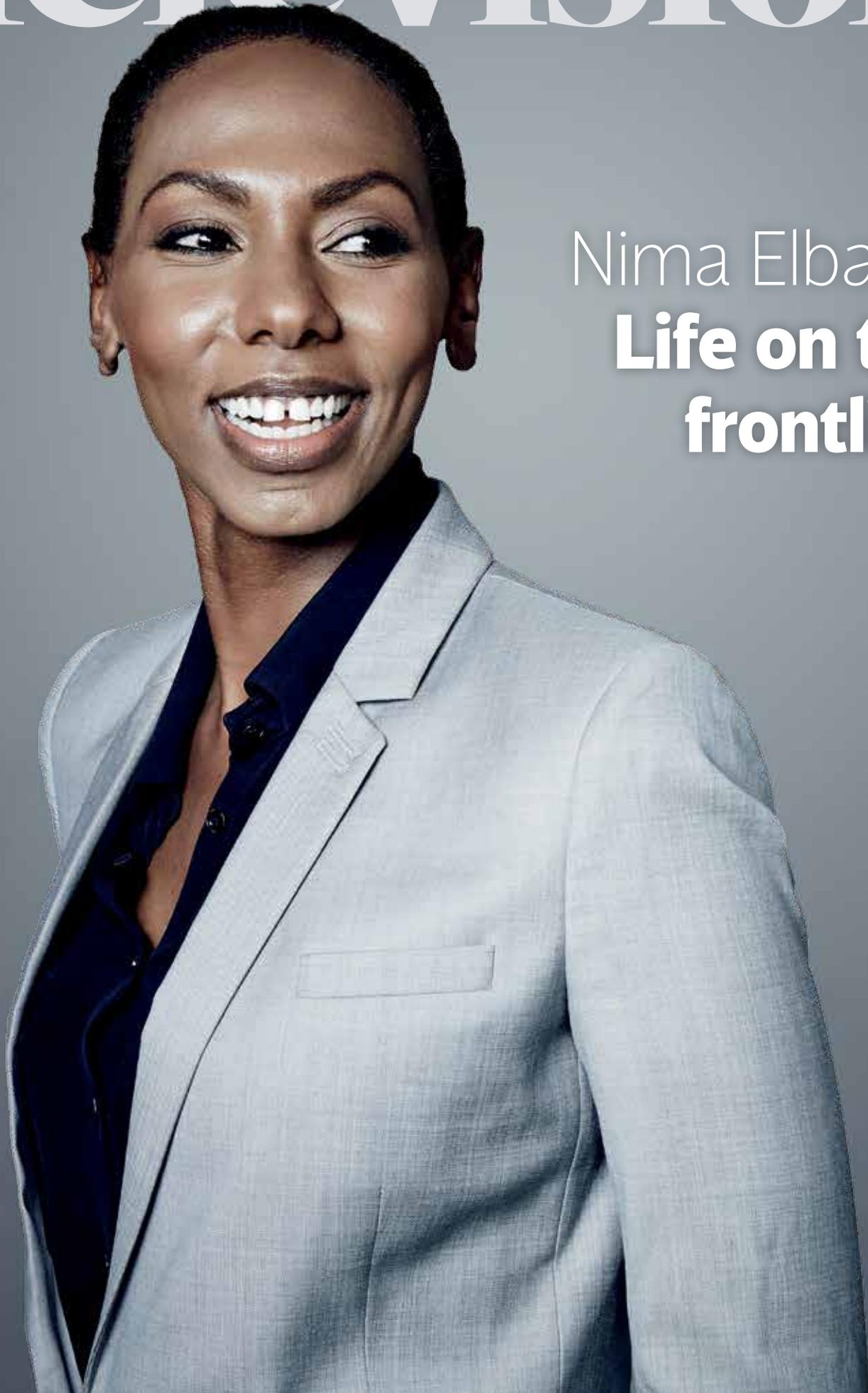


June 2016

Television



Nima Elbagir:
**Life on the
frontline**

Size matters

A provocative look at short-form content

Pat Younger CEO, Sugar Films (Chair)

Randel Bryan Director of Content and Strategy
UK, Endemol Shine Beyond UK

Adam Gee Commissioning Editor, Multi-platform
and Online Video (Factual), Channel 4

Max Gogarty Daily Content Editor, BBC Three

Kelly Sweeney Director of Production/Studios,
Maker Studios International

Andy Taylor CEO, Little Dot Studios

Steve Wheen CEO, The Distillery



4 July

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

Booking:
www.rts.org.uk



From the CEO



The third annual RTS/IET Joint Public Lecture, held in the unmatched surroundings of London's British Museum, was a night to remember. I was thrilled to see such a big turnout.

Nobel laureate Sir Paul Nurse gave a brilliant talk that was both accessible and erudite. A massive thanks to Sir Paul and to the evening's chair, BBC Worldwide CEO Tim Davie. I am very pleased that our partnership with the IET is working so well.

Last month, I was privileged to attend the RTS Scotland Awards. The ceremony was superbly hosted by Catriona Shearer and Sanjeev Kohli, and took place in the celestial

surroundings of the Oran Mor auditorium in Glasgow. Congratulations to all the winners.

Back in London, RTS Futures held an intimate workshop in the boardroom here at Dorset Rise: 14 industry newbies were treated to tips on how to secure work in the TV sector.

Bookings are now open for the RTS's London Conference in September, "Full stream ahead: commissioning, producing and distributing content in an age of on-demand".

The line-up of speakers includes: David Abraham, CEO of Channel 4; Sir Peter Bazalgette, Non-executive Chair of ITV and President of the RTS; Dido Harding, CEO of TalkTalk Telecom Group; Kevin MacLellan, Chair of NBCUniversal International; Tom

Mockridge, CEO of Virgin Media; Cathy Newman, Presenter of *Channel 4 News*; and Sharon White, CEO of Ofcom. Steve Burke, CEO of NBCUniversal, will deliver the opening keynote.

An early-bird rate is available for those of you who book a place before June 30 – just go to the RTS website: rts.org.uk/event/rts-london-conference-2016.

Meanwhile, we can all look forward to supporting our chosen sides in the Euros – and the EU referendum. You never know, we might even have a real summer this year.

Theresa Wise

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Cover picture: CNN

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National events

RTS FUTURES

Tuesday 28 June

Funny ha ha?! The serious business of working in TV comedy

Is working in comedy your dream job? Find out more from the top producers. Panellists include: James Farrell, Producer of *Mrs Brown's Boys* and *Flat TV*; Carol Baffour-Awuah, Producer who has worked on 8 out of 10 *Cats Does Countdown*, *Alan Carr: Chatty Man* and *Michael McIntyre's Big Show*; Danny Morrissey, Head of Talent for BBC Comedy. More speakers TBC. 6:45pm for 7:00pm
Venue: Hallam Conference Centre, 44 Hallam St, London W1W 6JJ

RTS FUTURES

Monday 4 July

Size matters: A provocative look at short-form content

Speakers: Randel Bryan, Director of Content & Strategy UK, Endemol Shine Beyond UK; Adam Gee, Commissioning Editor, Multi-platform and Online Video (Factual), Channel 4; Max Gogarty, Daily Content Editor, BBC Three; Kelly Sweeney, Director of Production/Studios, Maker Studios International; Andy Taylor, CEO, Little Dot Studios; Steve Wheen, CEO, The Distillery; and Pat Younge, CEO, Sugar Films (Chair)
Venue: The Hospital Club, 24 Endell Street, London WC2H 9HQ

RTS CONFERENCE

Tuesday 27 September

RTS London Conference 2016 Full stream ahead: Commissioning, developing and producing TV content in the age of on-demand

Principal sponsor: NBCUniversal International
Keynote speaker: Steve Burke, CEO of NBCUniversal. He is joined by: Channel 4 CEO David Abraham; Sir Peter Bazalgette, Non-executive Chair of ITV and

President of the RTS; Dido Harding, CEO of TalkTalk Telecom Group; Kevin MacLellan, Chair of NBCUniversal International; Tom Mockridge, CEO of Virgin Media; Channel 4 News Presenter Cathy Newman; and Ofcom CEO Sharon White; .

With burgeoning new models of TV consumption, opportunities for content creators and distributors are both incredibly exciting and potentially hazardous.

How is the emergence of myriad new distribution platforms impacting on the commissioning and production landscape? With new, entrepreneurial approaches to production, access to global funding and emerging trends in consumer behaviour – what are the real opportunities and challenges of creating programming for multiple platforms?

Venue: Kings Place, 90 York Way, London N1 9AG

RTS MASTERCLASS DAY

Monday 14 November

RTS Student Programme Masterclasses

Venue: BFI Southbank, London SE1 8XT

RTS MASTERCLASS DAY

Tuesday 15 November

RTS Craft Skills Masterclasses

Venue: BFI Southbank, London SE1 8XT

Local events

BRISTOL

Thursday 14 July

A night at the zoo

Bristol's only summer TV party! BBQ, band, booze and big tunes. 6:00pm-midnight
Venue: Bristol Zoo, Clifton, Bristol BS8 3HA

■ Belinda Biggam
■ belindabiggam@hotmail.com

DEVON & CORNWALL

■ Kingsley Marshall
■ Kingsley.Marshall@falmouth.co.uk

EAST

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

LONDON

■ Daniel Cherowbrier
■ daniel@cherowbrier.co.uk

MIDLANDS

Wednesday 29 June

RTS Midlands education programme grand finale 2016

Students from 15 secondary schools across the West Midlands have taken part in competitive education workshops to create a TV programme. These workshops were for Years 8 and 9 (ages 12 and 13). The top 15 teams now fight it out for the big prize: a VIP tour of BBC Birmingham.

Venue: University of Wolverhampton Wulfruna St, Wolverhampton WV1 1LY

Thursday 7 July

RTS Midlands Conference 2016

Keynote speakers: Colette Foster, Full Fat Television; Ian Mackenzie, Channel 4; Naz Mantoo, Edinburgh International TV Festival; Des Tong, Big Centre TV. Breakout sessions on diversity (with Barnie Choudhury) and smartphones for video and news (with Marc Settle). Book via RTSMidlands@rts.org.uk. 10:00am-3:00pm
Venue: Spring Grove House, West Midlands Safari Park DY12 1LF

Thursday 3 November

RTS Midlands Awards 2016

Booking opens in early September.

Venue: National Motorcycle Museum, Coventry Road, Solihull B92 0EJ

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

NORTH EAST & THE BORDER

Thursday 30 June

Networking evenings

The last Thursday of the month, for anyone working in TV, film, computer games or digital production. 6:00pm onwards.

Venue: Tyneside Bar Café, Tyne-side Cinema, 10 Pilgrim St, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 6QG

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

NORTH WEST

■ Rachel Pinkney 07966 230639
■ rachelpinkney@yahoo.co.uk

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ John Mitchell
■ mitch.mvbroadcast@btinternet.com

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

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

SCOTLAND

■ James Wilson 07899 761167
■ james.wilson@cityofglasgow-college.ac.uk

SOUTHERN

■ Gordon Cooper
■ gordonjcooper@gmail.com

THAMES VALLEY

Wednesday 15 June

Summer BBQ and lecture PQ and HLG interoperability

Peter Wilson explains the mechanisms of Perceptual Quantising and Hybrid Log-Gamma and their implications for Ultra-HDTV. 6:30pm
Venue: Pincents Manor, Calcot, Reading RG31 4UQ

■ Penny Westlake
■ info@rtstvc.org.uk

WALES

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

YORKSHIRE

Friday 24 June

RTS Yorkshire Programme Awards 2016

Hosted by *Emmerdale* stars Laura Norton and Mark Charnock
Venue: New Dock Hall, The Royal Armouries, Leeds LS10 1LE
■ Lisa Holdsworth 07790 145280
■ lisa@allonewordproductions.co.uk

TV diary

During a week in Manhattan, **Simon Shaps** wonders if reviving old shows is enough to reignite US network television



There is something borderline voyeuristic about being in New York for the annual Upfronts, the week-long jamboree when the US networks present their shiny new schedules to advertisers.

I am not here to attend the Upfronts but – like the NYU graduation ceremony I watch in Yankee Stadium (my daughter is there somewhere among the 16,000 members of the Class of 2016) – it is obvious that Americans do these big events better than anyone else.

The scale of the networks' annual Manhattan party, the parade of celebrities and the lavishness of the hospitality, though, cannot disguise the malaise that is affecting network TV in the US. The advertising dollars continue to roll in, but the conversation has shifted elsewhere.

■ **The headline in *The New York Times* is: "Laying a big bet on nostalgia, TV revisits its past in hopes of securing its future". *Prison Break*, *24* and *Gilmore Girls* are all to be revived, although it is also announced that ABC's boldly revived *The Muppets* is to be axed.**

It is as if the flood of revivals is a way of duping the audience into thinking that the on-demand revolution never happened. And that familiar titles from the past will reverse

audience decline and get families to gather round the television, as they used to do.

David Madden, President of Entertainment at Fox, is quoted in *The New York Times*: "We are not saying we are out of the original-idea business."

■ Of course, the revival game is not limited to the major networks. Manhattan is plastered with posters for A&E's remake of the 1977 mega-hit *Roots*, which launched at the end of May, on Memorial Day.

It is a big swing for A&E. The original series was watched by around 130 million people. Getting more than 10% of that audience today would probably count as success.

■ **On a sunny day, I head over to 30 Rock (NBC's Rockefeller Plaza HQ) to have lunch with Deborah Turness, President of NBC News.**

It seems a long way from her days at ITN in Gray's Inn Road, where we last met. Deborah seems in her element here.

Ratings have improved since she arrived and she is approaching the task of creating new revenue streams from her output with huge appetite.

Equally important, Deborah herself is no longer the story, as she was for several months when *Nightly News* anchor Brian Williams was suspended for six months for fabricating a story.

Williams is now back on air at

MSNBC, and NBC's decision to replace him with Lester Holt, the US's first African-American network evening-news anchor, has helped NBC News to top the ratings.

■ My final meeting of the week involves a visit – for the very first time – to the News Corp Building on Avenue of the Americas.

Having passed the 45-storey tower many times over the years, I am not sure why I have never been inside before now. Quite possibly, nobody ever invited me.

This time, I am meeting a couple of super-smart "scouts", who are looking for books to feed Fox's film studios. They get excited about one title, whose author I have got to know over the past year or so. Perhaps I will be invited back.

■ **For more years than I can remember, I have been addicted to my daily fix of the overnight ratings. As I get on a plane at JFK, I take a quick look at the previous night's numbers.**

One story stands out: the audience of close to 1 million that watched BT's coverage of the Europa League final on YouTube. While the traditional TV networks roll out their revivals – aka "reboots" – the future shape of television is becoming clearer.

Simon Shaps is the founder of Simon Shaps Ltd.

Winning access to the frontline



Nima Elbagir, reporting for Channel 4's Sudan: Meet the Janjaweed in 2008

Channel 4

The stained linen suit, the self-draining tumbler of Scotch, the well-turned tale about cheating death on the road – my every preconception about war correspondents has just been shattered by meeting Nima Elbagir.

Although she shares all their best qualities, she is not as other foreign hacks. She doesn't drink. She doesn't brag. And when she flies into a war zone she packs her prayer mat.

Really? "Actually, I tend to use whatever I can find. My camping towel will generally do."

I interview Elbagir in the canteen of Turner's HQ near London's Oxford Street, a slightly confusing place in that it is not sure whether its greatest icon is CNN's Christiane Amanpour or the Cartoon Network's Scooby-Doo.

Elbagir is a striking, six-foot-one Sudanese woman who, at 37, has made her name reporting the terrors inflicted by those who pretend to share her faith.

She has reported from Darfur, Mogadishu, Tahrir Square and Chibok. And

The Billen profile

Andrew Billen talks to CNN's **Nima Elbagir** and finds out what it is like to be a Muslim covering Islamist-inspired acts of horror

here she is, eating a fish-finger sandwich for breakfast and about to go on holiday for three weeks. Not, of course, to Tuscany or the Seychelles, but Zanzibar and then on to Khartoum, where her parents live.

Her well-earned break follows her latest award, from the RTS in February for Specialist Reporter of the Year. The judges praised her "determination, bravery and deep humanity". All those qualities were evident again in her coverage of the Brussels bombings in March.

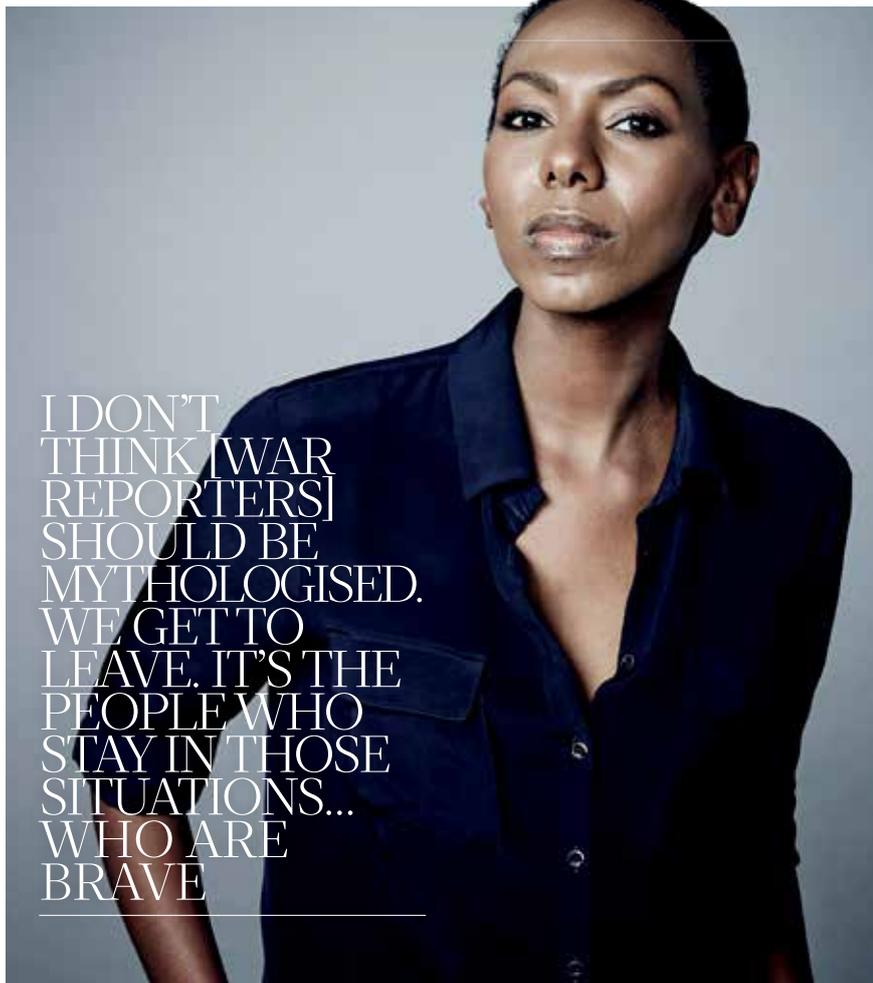
Elbagir was there anyway, having

spent two weeks on a series of special reports on the isolation of the Muslim community in Molenbeek. She had broadcast her first package, on how easy it was to obtain radical literature, when the reports of two explosions came through.

"We just thought it had to be a gas cylinder," she says. "They couldn't have had all those warning signs and then have this happen. I think I was almost in denial."

In April, she was back in Chibok, the Nigerian village from which more than 200 schoolgirls had been kidnapped in 2014, when Elbagir was the first foreign reporter in. Now, she was showing some of the mothers an exclusive video that appeared to show 15 of them alive and well. The tape had been found, she says, typically apportioning credit where it is due, by her producer Stephanie Busari.

"We were told that Boko Haram was quite unhappy [with the report], but that, clearly, didn't play into our thinking at all. It is now very closely associated with Isis and this isn't the image that Isis would like out there," she says. "No fatwa can justify this. Islamically,



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BRAVE

CNN

easy on the road, but she calls all that “entry-level Islam”. She does not wear a headscarf, although you can see her, like many women, doing so when reporting from Muslim countries.

I say that I once heard Max Hastings say on *Any Questions* that when he saw a woman in a niqab he felt a little sad.

“I don’t think that’s really his place to feel sad for someone else,” is her response. “I would feel as outraged as if some mullah felt ‘sad’ that girls were wandering around in hot pants.”

But she is a feminist? “I think that came more into conflict in my mother’s generation. I think my mother found it very difficult to call herself a feminist, because to be a feminist was to be very specific things. Feminism wasn’t terribly intersectional, whereas, in my generation, the emphasis on intersectionality in feminism is much more pronounced. I don’t think my faith is incompatible with any aspect of who I am. I never felt that it was.”

Elbagir would not call her upbringing liberal. Her father is a committed Sunni, but happy for his daughter to report from Darfur. “He just wouldn’t have been happy if I’d been partying until 3:00am.” Her mother is even more serious about her faith. Her grandfather, a polyglot with a huge and eclectic library, drank and “wasn’t particularly bothered”. Three uncles were practicing Marxists.

One tribe her parents definitely belong to is the media. Her father, Ahmed Abdullah Elbagir, founded Sudan’s *al-Khartoum* newspaper, suspended after a police crackdown on the press last year. Her mother is its publisher. In 1978, when she was born, her father, then an opposition politician, was in jail; he was only released three years later, when his health had deteriorated with asthma.

The family fled to Britain. Then, during what was known as “the reconciliation”, returned to Sudan to found the paper. In 1989, Omar al-Bashir – still Sudan’s leader – came to power in a coup and the presses were seized.

Abroad at the time, Elbagir’s father decided not to return home; his family, meanwhile, was refused permission to leave. It was two years before the family could be reunited in Exeter. There, the young Nima went to a succession of schools. “I was bored and, basically, a nightmare in class,” she recalls. Nevertheless, with her mother’s encouragement, she did well at A level and made it to the LSE to study philosophy. ▶

there is no justification for anything they do but, even with their twists and turns, there is no way to justify keeping 219 girls hostage to sell them back to the Nigerian government.”

As a Muslim, is she ever called disloyal? “That’s something I get accused of all the time. In Sudan, when I was reporting on Darfur, I was accused of being a traitor. Again, I completely understand that some of these things are very hard to hear. I mean, in Darfur we were reporting on mass rape.

“No one wants to believe that they are culpable in a system that could have allowed something like that to happen, but I don’t think it is helpful to deny that it exists.”

Is truth the most important thing to her as a journalist? “I think that sounds very serious.”

That is typical Elbagir, whose British public schooling has left her with a middle-class English accent and a gift for self-effacement.

Yet the issue is serious. There is an illiterate Facebook page, entitled “RIP Nima Elbagir”, which accuses her of spreading “propaganda” about tribal

wars in Africa. The page has passed her by, but, although she comes from a land riven by tribal conflict, she knows that the phrase “tribal war” can sound dismissive, and a little worse coming from her than a white journalist.

It haunts her still that the West largely ignored the tragedy of Darfur, which, aged 23, she reported for Reuters. It was, she says, not an easy story to “package”. It has been called genocide since (a phrase that might have helped), but Elbagir did not call it that at the time because she felt there were “very specific criteria to meet”.

What she did do was spend two weeks with the Janjaweed militia leader, Musa Hilal. She recalls that “at one point, he said to me that these women couldn’t be raped, because they didn’t have the moral character to be raped”.

Didn’t she want to explode? “You kind of just think, ‘Well, I could have a very small moment in which there would be limited satisfaction, or I can just do my job.’”

She is wary about defining her own Muslim faith. She prays five times a day and fasts, which is not always

Nima's narrative



CNN

Nima Elbagir, Senior International Correspondent, CNN, London

Family Married, no children; lives in Battersea

Born July 1978, Khartoum

Father Ahmed Abdullah Elbagir, politician and newspaper publisher

Mother Ibtisam Affan, publisher

Brought up Khartoum, Cairo, London, Exeter.

Education Private day schools in the West Country; London School of Economics (BSc in philosophy)

2002 Stringer for Reuters in Sudan, becoming one of the first journalists to provide footage from Darfur; taken on as a London-based graduate trainee **2005** *More4 News* and then *Channel4 News*

2011 Joins CNN in its Johannesburg bureau

2013 CNN, Nairobi bureau

2015 CNN, London bureau

Biggest stories *Unreported World* documentary *Meet the Janjaweed*; reporting from Mogadishu during US air strikes in 2007; the Ebola outbreak; first international journalist to report from Chibok, Nigeria, after Boko Haram mass kidnappings

Awards TV News Story of the Year and Broadcast Journalist of the Year at Foreign Press Association Awards 2008; Peabody Award 2014; RTS Specialist Journalist of the Year 2016

Recreation 'I'm working on getting some hobbies'

What she watches in her hotel room CNN, BBC, Sky and Al Jazeera Arabic 'but plenty of trashier telly when I'm at home'

› After graduating, Elbagir was a stringer for Reuters in Sudan and became a trainee journalist. She joined *More4 News* at its launch in 2005.

"Jon Snow is the reason I ended up in broadcasting," she reveals. "I was on a panel at the British Museum about Darfur and Jon was moderating. He said to me: 'Did you ever think about being a broadcaster?' I was filming at the time, for Reuters. So he introduced me to Lindsey Hilsum.

There was this thing called the Film Unit at *More4 News*. We were supposed to report, produce and shoot our own stories. I realised that I was a better on-air reporter than a camera operator."

Channel 4 News was an "amazing outfit", but small. Its offshoot, *More4 News*, closed in 2009. Ambitious to do more foreign news, Elbagir joined CNN in 2011.

After she received her RTS award in February, Simon Albury, Chair of the Campaign for Broadcasting Equality, wanted to know why the British media had not managed to keep her.

This is not a thought that goes down particularly well with the CNN press officer who is sitting in on our chat. He points out that the channel produces 20 hours of programming a week from London and is an established UK player. Nor is it one that is easy for Elbagir to address without it sounding as if the BBC and Sky should have been beating a path to her door.

Has she ever been discriminated against in TV because of her race? "For me, it's always been an advantage. I always try and make the point that I'm not typical of the ethnic-minority experience in this country. It is very dangerous to try and glean any lessons from my trajectory. I am privately educated. I speak Arabic fluently. I think it would be ridiculous if I hadn't managed to find a job in this climate.

"There are two very separate conversations that need to be had. There's the conversation about the value of representation and how you make that happen. And there's a conversation about why it is so much easier for people who come from more privileged backgrounds."

I'M NOT
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THE ETHNIC-
MINORITY
EXPERIENCE
IN THIS
COUNTRY

There is a third, too, about women and war reporting. In 2011, following the sexual assault of a French TV journalist, Reporters Sans Frontières called on editors to stop sending women to cover the Tahrir Square protests in Cairo. Elbagir flew there soon afterwards.

Was it too dangerous? "No, I think

it's the complete opposite in most situations. For a start, the aggressiveness tends to be less when you roll down the window and it's a woman. I mean, I found that extraordinary."

CNN, Elbagir points out, is full of female role models.

Her bosses are

women who started out on the floor as cable news was taking off. They would not think that way.

Would it be different if she and her husband of eight years, a Brit she met while in Sudan, had children? "I think that it's a valid question. I think it's a question that we would probably all ask ourselves.

"I don't think that it would change how I did things. I think that either you believe it's worth it or it's not. I don't think that having kids changes this. You could cross the road and get mowed down."

Elbagir refuses even to call herself brave: "No, because we choose to go, and we get to go home. I don't think it should be mythologised. We get to leave. It's the people who stay in those situations, it's the women who went back to Tahrir Square that night, who were brave."

Looking back, she thinks her hairiest moment was getting caught up in the ambush of a supply convoy along the Jalalabad highway in Kabul.

I ask if a gun was pointed at her. "Yes, but it was wall-to-wall traffic and there were Afghan families with picnic baskets sitting on the floor. It never kind of unfolds in that Hemingway-esque fashion. It's always more prosaic than people imagine it is."

As I say, Nima Elbagir is really like no press-corps veteran you have ever met. If CNN ever gets her behind a presenter's desk, my guess is that she will end up bigger than Amanpour. Scooby-Doo might need to look out, too. She's a star.

Picture redacted

Past its Olympic peak?

As the London 2012 Olympics concluded, the overwhelming emotion for the vast army of BBC executives, consumed for years by a project on the grandest of scales, was relief at a job well done.

Just as trepidation slowly gave way to triumph for the organisers, so there was widespread acknowledgement that London 2012 had also shown the BBC at its best. Like the volunteers who gave the Games its unique flavour, the athletes who delivered the best haul of British medals for more than a century and Danny Boyle's singular opening ceremony, the BBC's coverage became part of the story of that golden summer.

Few could have predicted that, four short years later, the Rio Olympics would be the last Games at which the BBC would provide comprehensive coverage. Indeed, it is not long ago that the BBC was facing the unthinkable prospect of losing the Games altogether. Discovery sent shockwaves through the market last summer by seizing the exclusive pan-European

Television sport

After Rio, Eurosport, not the BBC, will call the Olympic shots.

Owen Gibson previews the corporation's last exclusive Games

rights to the Olympics for £920m, leaving the BBC's position uncertain.

In the end, a compromise was brokered. From 2018 onwards, the BBC would share UK rights with the ambitious, Discovery-owned Eurosport.

It paid around £110m and gave up its exclusive rights to the 2018 and 2020 Games in order to be able to show live coverage of the biggest moments across two channels until at least 2024.

The general sense among BBC Sport executives, negotiating their way through a series of budget cuts and a bruising Charter renewal

process, was, once again, relief. Barbara Slater, the BBC's Director of Sport since 2009, says the deal was vital: "The coverage that the BBC will offer going forward will still be incredibly comprehensive – the baton for 'never miss a moment' hands on to Eurosport and we retain our special place as the curator of the best. There's no restriction on what we can show."

But, first, there is the small matter of Rio. This summer's Games should be a carnival of colour and excitement, but Rio is facing greater challenges than perhaps any Games of modern times.

There is the threat of the zika virus and the backdrop of political and economic turmoil, plus growing cynicism about doping and corruption.

Slater says that the key for the BBC will be to remember the lessons of London. "What London 2012 demonstrated was that lots of audiences want to experience the Games in different ways – the breadth and depth of the coverage [is what] people loved. That is definitely what we are trying to do with Rio."

The first-ever South American Games is also the first to take place >



The Rio Olympic park

▶ in a “minus” time zone since the accursed Atlanta Olympics in 1996. This presents its own challenges.

Roger Mosey, Slater’s predecessor as Director of Sport, who oversaw the BBC’s London 2012 coverage, before leaving in 2013, says that the time zone will present particular difficulties. “In many ways, it’s easier when it’s the other way around, and you’re broadcasting the big live moments in the afternoon,” he says.

Some of the biggest moments, such as Usain Bolt’s attempt to win his third successive 100m title, won’t be broadcast live until the early hours.

But, says the defiantly glass-half-full Slater, that will allow a bigger live showcase for other sports in peak time in the UK. Some of those, such as gymnastics and cycling, are among the sports that have boomed in the UK since the British medal rush started in 2008.

Slater, herself a former gymnast, who competed at the 1976 Olympics, says that if the BBC had lost the Olympic rights it would have been more difficult to make the case for covering these sports in the years in between. “We have always tried to serve those sports well with coverage from world and European championships. That’s pretty difficult if you don’t have the Olympic Games,” she says.

THERE WAS A SENSE DURING LONDON 2012 THAT THE BBC OWNED THE WHOLE THING... IT WAS THE ONLY ROUTE TO THE OLYMPICS

She points to the huge uplift in interest in Britain’s gymnasts since the last Olympics, thanks to sustained success.

“We are incredibly proud to be the Olympic broadcaster. Those sports can be extremely successful – the figures from the Glasgow World Gymnastics Championships were phenomenal.”

Technology has also marched on. The sight of commuters catching up on highlights or “snack-sized” programmes on their smartphones has become commonplace.

Meanwhile, families often settle down in front of their main television with a tablet or phone on their lap, augmenting or complementing their viewing on a second screen.

Slater says that a key lesson of its coverage of the Fifa Women’s World Cup from Canada last year was that well-produced catch-up content from the previous evening could be a real hit.

“The massive advance from London 2012 is in things such as speed – we have much better behind-the-scenes infrastructure facilitating everything we do,” she says. “You’ll be able to take the alerts you want. You will be able to choose and customise your experience. Different people will want really quick, really short-form content. All pulled together into a really good, bite-sized product.”

The time difference will also mean an important catch-up role for BBC Breakfast. Its iconic red sofa is physically moving down two flights of stairs to BBC Sport’s Salford home for the duration of the Games.

The live action will be spread across two channels – BBC One and, in another reminder of the changes since 2012, BBC Four, rather than the now online-only BBC Three.

“The hours of BBC Four are being extended. The Olympics is just too good not to have two networks. With two channels, you can offer a proper choice,” says Slater. Up to 24 sports will have dedicated streams online, with up to eight on the red button.



The BBC's presenting team: from left, Michael Johnson, Gabby Logan, Clare Balding, Hazel Irvine and Sir Steve Redgrave

"When you say 24/7, it's not only across hours but across all media devices: 550 hours on BBC One and BBC Four, alongside Radio 5 Live," she enthuses. "More than 3,000 hours of live coverage; 24 streams. It's relatively cost-effective to stream content."

Mosey, now Master of Selwyn College, Cambridge, accepts that Rio will represent something of the end of an era for the BBC's Olympic coverage, but believes that the Eurosport deal was probably the best that it could have been done in the circumstances.

"It was very good for the BBC that it did the deal with Eurosport, and the deal it has emerged with is good," he says. "But there was a sense during London 2012 that the BBC owned the whole thing and the only route to the Olympics was through the BBC."

"That sense of the nation coming together for one enormous event is not something that you can replicate again," he argues. "In the end, most people will get most of what they want from the BBC."

"But that sense of enterprise and entrepreneurship that we were able to bring to London 2012 will get harder now that the rights landscape has shifted."

Much of the presenting talent will be familiar from London, with Gabby Logan and Clare Balding again taking central

[RIO SUFFERS] THE THREAT OF THE ZIKA VIRUS AND THE BACKDROP OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC TURMOIL, PLUS... CYNICISM ABOUT DOPING

roles. The experienced line-up includes Hazel Irvine, Jason Mohammad, Dan Walker, Matt Baker, Helen Skelton, Eleanor Oldroyd and Mark Chapman. New pundits include former athletes Becky Adlington and Victoria Pendleton.

The BBC will take more than 400 staff to Rio. So far, it has avoided the usual newspaper sniping about the scale of the operation. Numbers are 40% down on London 2012.

One day, says Slater, it may be possible to direct coverage from London but, despite advances in technology, the time delay is still too great at present.

One notable absentee will be Gary Lineker, who will stay in the UK to concentrate on the start of the football

season. He has a date with his underpants in the *Match of the Day* studio.

Olympic gold medallist Jonathan Edwards will also be missing from the TV coverage, having decamped to front Eurosport's programmes. He will, however, be reporting for BBC 5 Live.

The balance between news and sport will also be more delicate than ever, given the plethora of issues swirling around these Games – not least, the doping cloud that will hang over them, whether or not Russian athletes are allowed to compete.

And Channel 4 will also be busy working out how to follow up the success of its bold gamble to screen the London Paralympics. Again, the challenge will be to cope with the time zone – and the fact that the focus will inevitably be less intense than four years ago.

For Slater, these Games – the last the BBC will broadcast on this scale but not, thankfully, the end of its long, emotive link with the world's biggest sporting event – will be a celebration, too, of what the BBC can bring to sport.

They could also be a reminder, at the end of a bruising period financially, of just what sport can bring to the BBC. Slater says: "We're trying to do the very best with the resources we have to bring to audiences as many of those moments that matter to the public."

ITV's new hit-makers

ITV programming

Neil Midgley asks if Kevin Lygo's revamped commissioning team has the X Factor

Kevin Lygo's new job is possibly the biggest in British television – and certainly the most exposed. ITV's incoming Director of Television must, together with his freshly minted team of commissioning chiefs, arrest a decline in audience that saw the main channel's viewing share halve between 2000 and 2015.

Downton Abbey is gone, *The X Factor* is on the wane, and ITV hasn't launched a breakout hit since *Broadchurch* in 2013. The company's share price, which peaked at over 280p last July, fell close to 200p recently.

There are fears of ad spend going down and competition from Netflix going up.

While Niall Sloane remains Head of Sport, Michael Jermy keeps charge of news and Helen Warner stays at the helm of daytime, Lygo has brought in five hand-picked senior lieutenants to sort out primetime – and deliver the new hits that ITV so desperately needs.

Television presents a user's guide to the new team.

Peter Davey Head of Comedy Entertainment



Who is he?

The only one of the prime-time five to survive from Peter Fincham's commissioning team (he worked for former Director of Entertainment Elaine Bedell), Davey has been promoted in the reshuffle, to work directly for Lygo.

His challenge

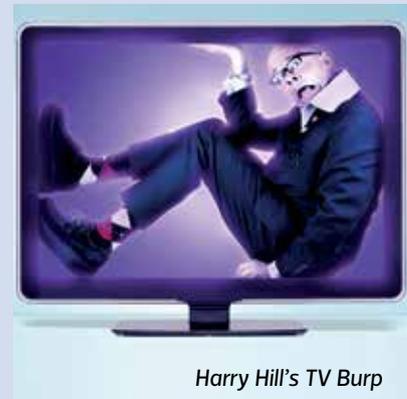
'There's a massive amount of opportunity at ITV,' says Davey. 'We have a huge breadth of shows in comedy entertainment – panel shows, studio shows, scripted comedy, live events, game shows, and more – for not only the main ITV channel, but also ITV's digital channels, particularly ITV2.'

'My brief is to work collaboratively with the whole production community, to find the best new entertainment and comedy ideas through the ITV week – and create more weekend hits such as *Ninja Warrior*.'

How will he perform?

'I'm really excited about how they are sending out all the signals of being highly competitive, and everything's up for grabs. ITV feels open for business,' says Jon Thoday, Managing Director of independent producer Avalon. 'And we are particularly interested in early-evening Saturday and ITV2.'

'We know, from having launched *Harry Hill's TV Burp* in an early-evening Saturday slot, that it can be a great place to do something new. And ITV2 is proven as a place where you can successfully launch a show.'



Harry Hill's TV Burp

All pictures: ITV

However, a senior industry source points to the fact that ITV is launching three new talent shows – *The Voice*, *The Voice Kids* and *Little Big Shots* (a UK version of a hit NBC kids' talent search) – into a talent-show market that is at least saturated, if not in serious decline.

'The danger is that ITV has added two new kids' talent shows, when *Britain's Got Talent* already relies heavily on child acts,' says the source. 'They've tripled the burden on an already depleted casting pool. Either that weakens BGT, or the other two shows aren't nearly as well cast.'

Siobhan Greene Head of Entertainment



Who is she?

As Head of Television at Simon Cowell's Syco TV, Siobhan 'Shu' Greene helped to create and launch *Britain's Got Talent* and *The X Factor*. From 2012, she worked under Lygo – in his former job at ITV Studios – producing shows such as *Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway*.

Her challenge

Greene is responsible for ITV's 'big five' entertainment shows – *The X Factor*, *Britain's Got Talent*, *I'm a Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here!* and *Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway*, as well as the transfer of *The Voice* from BBC One. 'The job of keeping these shows shining brightly is something that I feel born to do,' says Greene. 'It's going to be a fantastic challenge – but one that we are all up for. Plus, working with independent producers to create a new generation of shows is, for me, the icing on the cake.'

How will she perform?

'Shu is Yorkshire born and bred – if you could cut through her, she'd have "ITV" stamped like a stick of rock,' says a senior industry source. 'She's incredibly good with talent management, and she survived a pretty brutal battle with cancer. Don't be fooled by the broad grin and the gorgeously naive persona. There's a ruthless winner in there who is utterly driven to succeed.'

ITV has been delicately negotiating a new deal with Simon Cowell, for three more years of *BGT* and *The X Factor* (through to 2019). At the same time, Greene has to successfully relaunch their main BBC competitor, *The Voice*, as an ITV show (and launch *The Voice Kids*, too).

'There are a lot of us who just don't think *The Voice* will do the business on ITV,' says the source. 'Which, bizarrely, will leave Cowell in a much stronger position.'



Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway

Polly Hill Head of Drama



Who is she?

Over 10 years at the BBC, Hill worked her way up to be Controller of Drama Commissioning – a job she took over from Ben Stephenson only last May.

Her challenge

Though drama is consistently performing better for ITV than any other genre,

with its 2016 hits including *The Durrells* and *Marcella*, its output is perceived as unoriginal. Moreover, its dramas are considered by viewers and critics alike to have been outshone by Hill's own recent BBC shows, such as *The Night Manager* and *Happy Valley*.

How will she perform?

'Polly is the best possible choice for ITV,' says Patrick Spence, Managing Director of drama indie Fifty Fathoms, which makes *Fortitude* for Sky Atlantic and made *The A Word* for BBC One under Hill. 'She has the courage to bring an era of ultra-conservatism in drama commissioning to an immediate end.'

'And the writing community will trust Polly when she says that ITV will give them space to express themselves again. Writers who had turned their backs on ITV will now come back.'

Even with Hill's Rolodex, it will be a struggle to return ITV drama to its former glories. 'Name one iconic drama character on ITV,' says a drama industry insider. 'In the 1990s, there was Morse, Robbie Coltrane in *Cracker*, Jane Tennison. Now there isn't one.'

Hill also faces the knotty problem of

ITV Encore, a drama channel that is currently exclusive to Sky and which spends £10m or more annually on original commissions – so far, to little success.



The Frankenstein Chronicles

All pictures: ITV

Shows such as *The Frankenstein Chronicles* and *Houdini & Doyle* have not set the ratings on fire. 'But look at Hill's more niche work on BBC Two, with shows such as *Wolf Hall* and *The Honourable Woman*,' says the insider. 'If anybody can make Encore work, she can.'

Continued on page 14 >

Sue Murphy

Head of Factual Entertainment



Who is she?

Murphy worked for Lygo at Channel 4, as his Head of Features and Factual Entertainment. More recently, she was Joint Managing Director of All3Media subsidiary Optomen.

Her challenge

'We have huge strength in the schedule pre-watershed with the soaps, but my aim is to find some great factual entertainment series that can sit alongside them,' says Murphy. 'Returnable series are the holy grail. To get to where we want to be, we'll have to take some risks and back the talent and the ideas we believe in.'

How will she perform?

'I think she's brilliant, I genuinely do,' says Alex Fraser, who, as Creative Director of Maverick TV, made *Embarrassing Bodies*, *How to Look Good Naked* and *10 Years Younger* for Murphy at Channel 4. 'One of the things Sue's very good at is thinking about what her audience wants – I don't think she'll just impose Channel 4 sensibilities on ITV. But I think she will move away from the travelogues.'

Fraser also believes that factual commissioner Jo Clinton-Davis, who is staying with ITV and reporting to Murphy, will be an asset. 'Jo's journalistic interrogation, coupled with Sue's rather bold, brave, wonderful, populist mind, will be a bit of gold dust,' says Fraser.

Another senior independent producer puts it more bluntly: 'There's a bit of the Janet Street-Porter about Sue. Other creative people can find that overbearing and overwhelming.'

Industry figures also point to the



All pictures: ITV

disastrous *Hotel GB*, a mish-mash format that Optomen made for Channel 4 in 2012, saying that Murphy's time as a producer has been 'quiet' since then. 'But ITV factual can only get better,' says one. 'It's ground zero. It's a total disaster area, it's a blasted heath, where nothing is growing.'

Rosemary Newell

Head of Digital Channels and Acquisitions



Who is she?

A former BBC One scheduler, Newell was Head of Channel Management

across Channel 4's entire portfolio under Lygo – before joining Discovery Networks International in 2014.

Her challenge

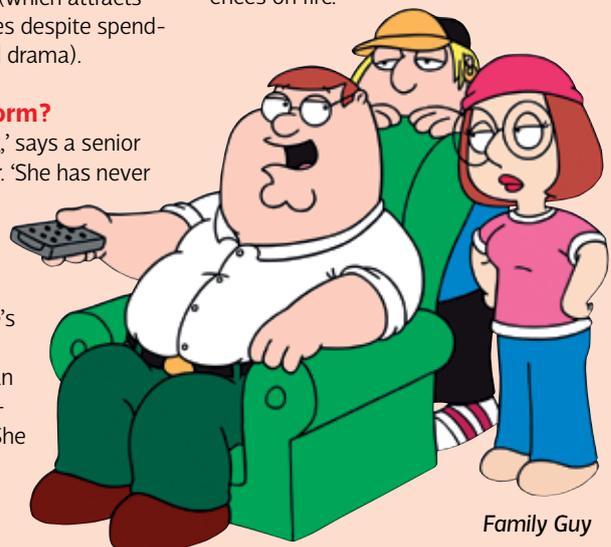
To make sense of ITV's unruly channel portfolio. This includes ITV2 (which benefits from BBC Three's closure, especially the transfer of *Family Guy*, but has suffered from a lack of consistency) and ITV Encore (which attracts woefully low audiences despite spending millions on original drama).

How will she perform?

'Rosemary is amazing,' says a senior independent producer. 'She has never sought the limelight – she's very happy standing behind charismatic people such as Kevin, but she's actually doing a lot of the hard work. She's an incredibly clever, intuitive, subtle operator. She made the Channel 4 schedule sing for Kevin.'

Although Avalon's Thoday is enthusiastic about ITV2's potential for finding hit shows, another producer complains that 'every time I pitch to ITV2, they want something different'.

Newell also has the tricky problem of finding a role – if there is one – for international acquisitions on ITV's main channel after *Pushing Daisies*, *Dexter* and *The Americans* failed to set audiences on fire.



Family Guy

OUR FRIEND IN THE NORTH

For a long, long, long time the problem with being a TV producer in Liverpool was very simply that there was no one to trade with. In other words, there was no TV culture.

I'm happy to say that I was one of the founding fathers of a show that ignited a new TV culture. *Brookside* began on 2 November 1982 at 8:00pm on the channel that gave birth to independents, which was, of course, Channel 4.

The trickle-down effect was that independent producers started to emerge in all genres, from drama and documentary to reality TV. *Brookside* was the new kid in town, much scoffed at and maligned by its (well-heeled) counterparts, such as *Coronation Street*, produced in Manchester.

However, from its manufacturing base in Liverpool, *Brookside* embraced both new technology and new techniques. We bought two Steadicams direct from Los Angeles.

Brookside was shot in a filmic, single-camera style and its production values encouraged a new generation of British film-makers who wanted to produce feature films. Along came *Letter To Brezhnev*, part-financed by Channel 4, and the 1980s revolution that was the foundation of what we have today.

I produce a range of drama in Liverpool that starts at the low-beer end with a series of one-off, *Play for Today*-style daytime dramas. Last month saw us complete 45 episodes of this series, entitled *Moving On*, which was created by Jimmy McGovern.

At the higher end of the food chain, I have produced feature films such as *Liam*, directed by Stephen Frears. He

Colin McKeown
traces the roots of
his city's special TV
culture to explain
its allure to writers



Liverpool Echo

started his film career in Liverpool with a movie starring Albert Finney, called *Gumshoe*.

In 2014, I produced the award-winning film *Common*, which has helped change the "joint enterprise" law – also written by McGovern.

Recently, we launched his latest film, *Reg*, the true story of Reg Keys, who challenged Tony Blair about Britain's involvement in the Iraq war. *Reg* stars Tim Roth and Anna Maxwell Martin and was shown by BBC One on 6 June, the 72nd anniversary of D-Day.

The BBC believed in the film so much that *News at Ten* was delayed until 10:30pm. This is an accolade that the city of Liverpool can feel extremely proud of.

Our culture that ignited in the 1980s strengthens every year. Liverpool has always been a city for storytellers. Writers of the calibre of McGovern, Frank Cottrell-Boyce, Alan Bleasdale and Willy Russell have been the forefathers of a newer generation of writers such as Nick Leather, Shaun Duggan, Colette Kane, Esther Wilson, Arthur Ellison, John Fay, Nicky Allt and Dave Kirby.

These days, if you throw a stick out of a window in Liverpool you won't hit a writer, you'll hit two. Liverpool is an inspirational city and therefore writers and film-makers gain a real sense of place, in the way that Muslims can with Mecca.

Film-makers and technicians who were drawn to London are now taking every opportunity to come back, whether on a project basis or making that lucrative move from south to north.

Liverpool writers tap into the fibre of the place, which yields a hard rock of matriarchs and underpins a phenomenal resilience. I don't believe that any other city could have endured and finally triumphed over the atrocities that it was subjected to during the 27 years of the Hillsborough tragedy.

The journey of a city was uniquely dramatised by Jimmy McGovern in his ITV drama *Hillsborough*, which first aired in 1996.

It helped Liverpool fight back. One of the best tools this wonderful place could ever have had was fashioned by creative writing. As more world-class talent is being drawn to the city, its future could not be brighter.

Colin McKeown MBE is the founder of LA Productions and the Liverpool Film Academy.

RTS/IET Lecture

Nobel laureate
Sir Paul Nurse
makes a passionate
case for science's
capacity to effect
positive change.
Matthew Bell
reports



Paul Hampartsoumian

Science as revolution

Sir Paul Nurse delighted his large audience with a passionate defence of science as a revolutionary force that can transform our lives, when he delivered this year's Royal Television Society and Institution of Engineering and Technology Joint Public Lecture at the British Museum.

In a wide-ranging speech, the Nobel Prize-winning geneticist discussed the approach to science in the media, government and education. And – in advance of the EU referendum – gave strong backing from the scientific community for staying in Europe.

The main thrust of Nurse's lecture, "Science as revolution", was that, throughout history, science has been a highly revolutionary activity. This, he argued, remained the case and science would, provided "it is nurtured and the public properly engaged, continue to bring great benefits to us all".

Nurse was awarded the Nobel Prize in 2001 – with Leland Hartwell and Tim Hunt – for work on the cell cycle. He is currently Director and Chief Executive of the Francis Crick Institute, which conducts research into the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of serious illnesses.

Nurse on... politicians and the EU

'Both government and parliamentary scrutiny procedures must be fully aware of how science can contribute to policymaking, by ensuring that they have access to the highest-quality scientific advice – and by heeding that advice,' argued Sir Paul Nurse.

He added: 'Scientific evidence and argument must be listened to and treated with respect.

'For this to be effective, scientists must adhere to the highest standards of behaviour. They need to be open and honest, free from hype, and be absolutely clear about what knowledge is more certain and what is more tentative. This can be difficult when politicians and the public demand certainties that cannot be delivered.'

BBC Worldwide CEO Tim Davie, who chaired the joint RTS/IET event, asked Nurse to score UK politicians for their support of science.

'In Britain, we are among the best in the world. Certainly, a B+ – at least for some of them,' he replied. 'Often, scientists say that we need more

scientists in government – I don't think that's true. We need to have politicians in government who understand how science works and know how to get advice from science.

'We have some champions of science in government at the moment, and we are heavily reliant on them. George Osborne, and Gordon Brown before him, are both champions of science.

'I have to go to them every time if I'm trying to develop something, because mostly I am listened to politely but I can't get access.'

Nurse argued that the UK scientific community strongly backed staying in the EU, although the media's understandable quest for balance could make Brexiters seem more numerous than they were. 'There are only two [from science] that I've seen in favour of EU departure and they are [interviewed] all the time, as if there were thousands of them,' he said.

'If we want good science in this country, we have to stay in the EU.'

Nurse on... television and the media

The mass media, including television, has to be 'highly responsible' in its reporting, said Sir Paul Nurse. '[It] needs to avoid sensationalism; to be careful about so-called balance, when certain opinions have little evidential support or are potentially highly flawed, to avoid mystification; and to properly explain what can be difficult topics.'

'There are excellent communicators of science in the mass media and they should be given every encouragement,' he added. 'Let us not underestimate the power of the mass media. Look at what happened with [Sir David] Attenborough and how interest in natural history and zoology [grew] 30 years ago. Look at what's happening with Brian Cox and physics today.'

Great advances in sciences, Nurse argued, were 'usually driven by creative and technically capable individuals'. He drew a parallel with television, which also required 'collaborative teamwork and creative, technically competent

individuals. In both spheres of activity, good practitioners are often rather anarchic – trying to organise or manage them is like herding cats.'

But he warned that science was under threat, particularly from 'those who mix up science, based on evidence and rationality, with politics and ideology, where opinion, rhetoric and tradition hold more sway'.

In response to a question from the audience on scientific misinformation spread by the media, Nurse said: 'Scientists like me have to be on the front foot in correcting those errors.'

Initially, this should be done 'politely and courteously', but, he said, firmer action was needed for repeat offenders: 'When they serially offend, we should crush them and bury their ideas.'

'I don't think the press does a bad job. I often think that science journalists do an excellent job, only to have it ruined by a terrible headline or a piece of spin, and that is very unfortunate.'

Picture redacted

He directed journalists to the Science Media Centre, which 'has put together a panel of expert scientists who happen to be media friendly and don't just look at their shoes'.

Nurse on... science in school

'For science to play its proper role, we require a public at ease with science and a democracy that can cope with the complex decisions involving science,' stressed Sir Paul Nurse. 'This needs to start in our schools.'

'We have to provide a science education that not only trains future scientists for the next generation – that's only a very small fraction of the total population of schools – but also trains future citizens to cope with the increasing effects that science will have on our democracy.'

'Students need to be aware that science is a way of thinking, of experimenting and making observations, of weighing up evidence.'

'They need to know that science can be tentative in its conclusions, but can also lead to advances in knowledge of the world and of ourselves.'

'Science is not simply a series of facts and figures, although some of these can be extraordinary, stimulating and inspirational: science is a process that builds

reliable knowledge. Every student who leaves school should, for example, know the difference between astrology and astronomy – I doubt that more than 50% do at the current time – and between the theories that underpin homeopathy and evidence-based medicine.'

'A key requirement of a modern education system must be to equip a future citizenry to cope with the impacts that science and technology will have on their lives and on the proper functioning of a healthy democracy.'

Picture redacted

Nurse elaborated on these thoughts during the question and answer session that followed his lecture: 'In schools, we have to have inspirational teachers, and it is difficult to be an inspiring teacher in a difficult subject such as science.'

'[School] shouldn't be about learning the periodic table; it should be about understanding the basics of the periodic table.'

'We should reform the curriculum so that we excite, inspire and explain what science is.'

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Nurse on... revolutionary science



British Library

› 'When we think of revolutions, we usually consider major transformations in the spheres of politics, economics, social organisation or religion, and not of science,' said Sir Paul Nurse.

'But to these we should add the revolutions brought about by science, both cultural – through improved knowledge of the natural world and of ourselves – and through the major impacts that improved knowledge can have on... human civilisation.'

Nurse illustrated his lecture with examples of scientists and their ground-breaking work: Nicolaus Copernicus, who suggested the then-revolutionary idea that the Earth and other planets

circled the Sun; Galileo Galilei's discovery of Jupiter's moons; and Charles Darwin's theory of evolution.

'The technological advances that have arisen from science have been legion: the development of energy sources; ... the use of new materials... leading to the robotised factory of today; new means of transport; ... and the management of information with the telegraph, the radio, the television, the computer and the worldwide web...

'There have been other revolutionary consequences of science for society centred on... what it means to be human. Like all other living organisms, human beings have to be understood

in terms of their inherited genes, their cellular chemistry, their interactions with the environment...

'Modern science has had another, more curious, type of impact, which I believe is also going to be revolutionary, on human knowledge. Einstein, in his theory of general relativity, proposed a continuum of space-time to account for gravity, which undermined the common-sense view of the world expressed in terms of time and three dimensions of space...

'Studies of atomic structure some years later led to quantum mechanics, a sort of Alice in Wonderland world, a place where Schrödinger's cat can be alive and dead at the same time...

'Revolutions are unsettling and often strenuously opposed. This was the case with Copernicus moving the Earth from the centre of the universe. Remember: the [Spanish] Inquisition didn't argue with Galileo; they simply showed [him] the instruments of torture...

'At its best, society has shown it can deal with these threats. I am optimistic that, in the future, society will increasingly see the value of science in bringing about revolutionary changes to our knowledge, and revolutionary improvements in society and the human condition.'

Nurse on... science, ethics and morality

'Studies based on evolutionary genetics and animal behaviour have implications for ethics and morality,' warned Sir Paul Nurse. 'Science has a habit of invading other domains of human activity, which at first sight appear to have no place for science.'

'This was the case for Galileo [Galilei] and [Charles] Darwin, and is still the case today. Modern scientific advances have increasing impacts on spheres of activity once thought to be the domain solely of politics, philosophy and of religion.'

Discussing the impact that science has had on ethics and morality with the evening's chair, Tim Davie, Nurse said that science – in particular, 'our understanding of genetics and behaviour' – could help to explain why people act in an altruistic manner.

'Altruism is key for personal relationships, the development of society



Sir Paul Nurse

Paul Hampartsoumian

and the maintenance of community,' he added.

Neuroscience, Nurse argued, was another area where science could come into conflict with ethics and morality. Although it was 'still pretty crude', neuroscience was 'giving us ways of understanding how our brains

work, which, with it, will bring us ways in which we can actually manipulate brains. This has significant consequences. We will better understand giving evidence in court if we understand more about memory and the recall of memory.'

'We are a consequence of our genes, our environment and of how we've developed. Now, there may be aspects of our behaviour that are really strongly genetically determined. If that leads to, say, criminal behaviour, you have to ask yourself: can someone really be guilty of something they were born with? We have to think about these things.'

Sir Paul Nurse's RTS/IET Joint Public Lecture, 'Science as revolution', was given at the British Museum in central London on 11 May. The event was chaired by BBC Worldwide CEO Tim Davie and produced by Helen Scott.



The thrill of escapism

Have you heard about the woman who named her new production company after her dog? She then went on to make ITV's most popular new drama series since *Cilla* in 2014.

The Durrells, described by *The Daily Mail* as "a masterclass in ideal Sunday telly", was the first show produced by Sid Gentle Films to be broadcast.

More than 6 million people tuned in regularly this spring to watch the sun-soaked, feel-good adventures of an English family struggling to adjust to life in 1930s Corfu.

The six-part remake, based on Gerald Durrell's *My Family and Other Animals*, gave ITV a much-needed hit after several high-profile flops. Season 2 will start filming in Corfu late this August.

Sid Gentle Films was formed two and a half years ago by the experienced British TV drama producer Sally Woodward Gentle. Her career spans the BBC, where she was Head

Content

What is the secret of a successful Sunday-night drama? Sally Woodward Gentle shares her recipe with Steve Clarke

of Development, and leading drama independents Kudos (as Managing Director) and Carnival (as Creative Director).

"I wanted to call the company Sid, after my ancient Bassett Hound, but there was already a firm called Sid, so I had to use my surname as well," she explains.

Woodward Gentle, dressed in a comfortable jet-black frock and gold jewellery, is sitting on a small, lived-in sofa in her cramped, homely office in London's Fitzrovia. Next to her is the

firm's MD, Lee Morris. Disarmingly, he looks like he might have strolled in from a construction site.

Neither resembles what you might think of as *Forbes* magazine's idea of a successful entrepreneur. Yet the independent producer has been financed by US investment firm The Yucaipa Companies (owner of the Soho House club chain), founded by billionaire Ron Burkle.

But appearances can be deceptive. A cursory glance at their CVs confirms that Woodward Gentle and Morris form an extremely dynamic drama duo.

So don't be surprised if, before long, they join the growing list of British drama indies that have been acquired by multinational content and distribution companies. Unless things go very much awry, the peculiarly named Sid Gentle Films looks set to make a splash with those broadcasters and platforms that are hooked on drama.

The pair have around 40 years' combined experience in making successful, and often outstanding, TV drama. Their portfolio embraces >

THERE'S A LOAD OF NOT VERY GOOD DRAMA... THERE ARE A LOT OF REMAKES, ADAPTATIONS AND SPIN-OFFS. THEY FEEL QUITE SAFE

Crime wave is drama overkill



Sid Gentle Films

Sally Woodward Gentle: 'I like crime drama but I do think that there's too much.... I did four seasons of *Whitechapel* and, before that, I served my time on *Waking the Dead*.

'There is something very reassuring about crime drama. You know where you are; the crimes get solved. You can have that vicarious thrill of crime.

'But there are far too many that are too similar. There is a law of diminishing returns in certain types of story. Some of them are a little bit po-faced and don't actually enjoy the genre enough.

'There are some people who make crime drama because they know they can sell it but, actually, are slightly embarrassed about trying to make it about something.

'They should just enjoy it as a genre. We wish we had a crime drama. We've just picked up *Rag Doll*, a book by a new author, pre-publication. We hope that it will be our crime drama.'

▶ single films, serials and returning series. They collaborated on *Enid*, the BBC Four biopic starring Helena Bonham Carter as Enid Blyton, and on Channel 4's award-winning adaptation of William Boyd's *Any Human Heart*. Woodward Gentle oversaw four seasons of ITV's gothic crime saga *Whitechapel*, and she helped to develop BBC One's schedule-defining *Spooks*.

For good measure, it's worth mentioning that Morris was a producer on the brilliant British film *The Damned United* and several high-end period pieces, often filmed in faraway places.

The two met at the BBC. "If you're filming abroad and the production's gone tits up, Lee was the man to send in, a bit like the SAS," says Woodward Gentle.

It was this kind of ability that proved so vital in producing *The Durrells* in Corfu during the last Greek financial meltdown. At the time, people were allowed to withdraw no more than €50 a week from a Greek bank.

So, was there ever a risk that the company would run out of money during the two-month Corfu shoot? "No, but we had to take out lots of euros in our knickers," replies Woodward Gentle.

She is speaking metaphorically. "The Greek banking crisis made everybody here very nervous about lending us money," explains Morris. "Once we'd got the funding in place, the first question anyone asked was: 'What are you going to do with the money – you're not going to put it in a Greek bank?' But we had to."

Whenever a technician or an actor flew out from London to join *The Durrells* on location, they were usually given a large wad of euros to accompany them.

It sounds a bit like the widowed Mrs Durrell (played to perfection by Keeley Hawes in the series) getting by on a wing and a prayer in her new, decrepit home in the Ionian Sea.

Seemingly, nothing was left to chance in developing or producing *The Durrells*.

Post-*Downton Abbey*, ITV needed another period drama to cheer up and charm audiences on Sunday evenings.

Morris had worked on the production of the BBC's 2005 adaptation of *My Family and Other Animals*, a single 90-minute film, coincidentally also scripted by Simon Nye.

To make it different, Woodward Gentle knew that the new version needed to put Gerald's mother – rather than the boy, cute though he was – at the centre of the story.

"When you've got a single mother and four children, you've got this amazing family dynamic," she explains. "We knew the book was funny, with beautifully crafted characters, and how many episodic adventures there were. In two pages, there are ideas for an entire episode."

She continues: "Basically, we were thinking about what we'd want to watch at 8:00pm on a Sunday that's unpatronising and has a slight literary quality.... You've got family, you've got animals. It's total escapism."

Woodward Gentle makes it all sound very easy. Yet, producing a show that is so effortless to watch requires hard graft – and a fresh eye.

Steve Barron, who directed three of the six *The Durrells* and whom Woodward Gentle had first met when he was helming pop videos (Barron directed Michael Jackson's *Billie Jean* video), was ignorant of the books. He had never watched a single ITV drama.

To rectify this, she sent him several. These included episodes of *Downton Abbey* and *Poirot*. Barron came back and said: "*Downton*, I've worked it out, it's just a series of mid-shots."

"He didn't know what you could and couldn't do, so he was very true to the material and made it quite magical," opines Woodward Gentle, whose father worked as a set designer at Thames Television.

Aside from *The Durrells*, Sid Gentle has two other shows on the go, plus several in development. The latter



BBC One's forthcoming *SS-GB*

BBC

includes at least one comedy. Sky Arts showed the four-part *Neil Gaiman's Likely Stories* last month. The cast featured such talent as Tom Hughes, Johnny Vegas, George MacKay, Rita Tushingham and Kenneth Cranham. Jarvis Cocker provided the music.

More ambitious is an adaptation of Len Deighton's *SS-GB*. The story imagines what might have happened to Britain under Nazi rule following the Second World War.

Woodward Gentle and Morris are anxious that audiences might confuse the new, five-part series with Amazon's recent version of Philip K Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*, set in a post-1945 parallel world when the Germans and the Japanese have partitioned the United States.

If the show – expected to be shown on BBC One next winter – follows the pedigree of *The Durrells*, they need not worry. “Five years ago, we wouldn't

have got *SS-GB* away. You'd never have got the cash to make something like that,” suggests Morris.

Today, content providers are determined to bring feature-film-style production values to the shows they commission and, if necessary, spend big money.

So how, in such a competitive TV drama marketplace, does Sid Gentle Films intend to make its mark? Are its directors worried that the company might become a one-hit wonder?

“It's all about either storytelling or a bit of bucolic escapism,” says Woodward Gentle. “When you read a project you ask yourself: what is the pleasure is this? There's got to be pleasure.

“It can be pleasurable because it's thrilling. It puts you on the edge of your seat. Or it can be pleasurable because it's sunshine and animals. Or it can be thrilling because it's intellectually stimulating.”

“There's a load of not very good drama,” she adds. “I was just looking at the new shows at the LA Screenings and they all look really dull.

“This,” she concedes, “is pretty strong coming from the makers of *The Durrells*, which is a remake. But there are a lot of remakes, adaptations and spin-offs. They feel quite safe. There's nothing I am jealous of”

Morris adds: “Everything is execution dependent. *The Durrells* could have been rubbish. We could have made it in a way that wasn't the joy it's been.”

Woodward Gentle remembers the time, not that long ago, when she worked at BBC drama. People were demoralised during the reality boom, especially when reality formats won higher ratings than their own shows.

“In the drama community, people didn't know what to do, because drama costs three times as much as reality,” she recalls. “Today, thankfully, drama is selling worldwide and it's selling for lots of money.”

Small may no longer be beautiful in a consolidating entertainment landscape. Sid Gentle, which employs a full-time staff of six (including Woodward Gentle and Morris), looks to be bucking this trend. What, then, is their end-game: a sale to a broadcaster or a big studio?

“It isn't why we set up,” insists Woodward Gentle. “If something came along and wanted to buy us for lots of money, of course we'd have to think about it very seriously....”

“We don't have to fulfil any demands from a big distribution machine. Had we been owned by someone else, I don't know whether we'd have been allowed to do such a small-scale production as *Neil Gaiman* for Sky Arts...”

“We don't need that distraction at the moment. Also, we'd want to partner with the right people, because you would probably have a fantastic 12 months but then, once the excitement had worn off, I am sure people would want their pound of flesh.”

Testing time ahead for Ofcom

Ofcom built its reputation as a high-powered competition and market-oriented communications regulator.

It is capable of facing down telecoms titans, mobile-merger tycoons and the ambitious Murdoch family.

But, as it starts the run-up to becoming the BBC's first external regulator, it faces the need to change its culture and skills base.

The decision to transfer regulation of the BBC to Ofcom was confirmed by culture secretary John Whittingdale on 12 May. His judgement was informed by Sir David Clementi's review of the governance and regulation of the BBC, which was published in March. This emphatically handed the task to Ofcom: "It is clear that Ofcom, in addition to its role as the economic regulator of the broadcasting industry, is also a public service regulator."

Whittingdale's decision, the official death knell for the BBC Trust, has been widely welcomed. Professor Jean Seaton, the BBC historian, says: "Ofcom has turned itself into a very good regulator." Patrick Barwise, Emeritus Professor of Management and Marketing at the London Business School, notes: "The good news is that it's a genuinely evidence-based regulator."

However, the considered view of many observers is that its new role will be a huge challenge for an organisation run by economists, and that prefers metrics and light-touch regulation (wherever possible) to softer, quality-based value judgements. As Barwise observes: "The most important issues around broadcasting are not economic ones, but editorial."

A senior industry observer says: "Content regulation is not unknown ground for Ofcom – it does it for everyone else [but the BBC]. But this is a whole new order of magnitude; it is a very, very big job and a change of scale for Ofcom. This is more than just

Regulation

Ofcom is about to become the BBC's first external regulator.

Maggie Brown considers the impact this will have on the organisation

expanding. It will need more of the right people."

And it will need them fast. Ofcom is light on people with expertise in broadcasting. The regulator recently lost a clutch of experienced content executives, notably Peter Davies, Director of Content Policy.

Previous cutbacks deprived it of a senior partner post covering content regulation and standards, last occupied by Stewart Purvis. Its Content Board is currently chaired by non-broadcaster Bill Emmott, ex-editor of *The Economist*.

In April, it recruited former Sky News chief Nick Pollard to the Content Board on a three-year term.

"This is a considerable challenge for the Ofcom Board, and for the Content Board that sits beneath it," adds our industry observer. "It will need to set up a new set of relationships. It is a

THE BBC TRAILS CLOUDS OF POLITICS. THERE ARE FAR GREATER PRESSURES ON IT THAN ON OTHER PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTERS

magnification of what it does, and more than just expanding the present area of operation of the Content Board."

Regulating the BBC may require the recruitment of up to 50 new staff to augment Ofcom's current 787-strong ranks, all by 1 January 2017.

One key issue will be how it discharges the duty to ensure BBC impartiality and accuracy. Seaton observes: "The BBC trails clouds of politics. There are far greater pressures on it than on other public service broadcasters. Channel 4 doesn't face a relentless attack from the right."

Ofcom's apparent lack of readiness may be partly explained by a reluctance to take on the job. As the BBC Trust's reputation dimmed, Ofcom's top brass – former Chair Dame Colette Bowe, ex-Chief Executive Ed Richards, the current Chair, Dame Patricia Hodgson, and Chief Executive Sharon White – all began singing from the same hymn sheet. They did not seek or want to regulate the BBC, they said, but would do the Government's bidding.

Ofcom has been careful to show respect to the BBC Trust and its Chair, Rona Fairhead: it welcomed the decision to let her remain as the head of the new BBC unitary board until October 2018. This will give continuity and stability to the transition.

Also, Ofcom does not appear to have prepared a scoping plan for its new duties ahead of the BBC Charter renewal white paper – to the apparent surprise of the BBC Trust. "Ofcom seems very cautious," muses one source familiar with the BBC body.

This is in contrast to the DCMS, which aims to have finished its draft BBC Charter by the summer recess.

Ofcom will have the task of issuing the BBC with an operating framework consistent with the revised Charter. This will set out the BBC's obligations.

The framework will include operating licences for BBC broadcasting and describe in some detail what it should be delivering in television, radio and



Sharon White

Ofcom

programming from the nations and regions, out-of-London and independent production.

It also conducts market-impact assessments. Under the new system, Ofcom would be the final arbiter of public-value tests.

The BBC Trust Unit is an obvious source of expertise for Ofcom. It has some 60 staff positions and spent £2.5m of its £10.2m annual budget on Ofcom fees in 2014-15, according to the last BBC Annual Report and Accounts.

The unit oversees editorial standards, guidelines, monitors compliance, manages the Trust's impartiality seminars and reviews, and conducts audience research.

Defining distinctiveness is a real worry. There is widespread fear that competitors, which are also regulated by Ofcom, will use it to attack the BBC's range and popularity.

The BBC white paper says it is "a requirement that the BBC should be substantially different to other providers across each and every service, both in primetime and overall".

It describes distinctiveness as a mix of quality, original UK programming, together with a level of risk-taking, innovation, challenging audiences, creative ambition and range.

Tait is an optimist: "I am sure the BBC board will not want to be in dispute with Ofcom. Neither will Ofcom want to be seen to be trying to force the BBC board to do things it doesn't want."

Alex Towers, Director of the BBC Trust, says: "The details of the new regulatory structure have to be inked in. We want to get on with this urgently, to provide some certainty and allow a smooth transition."

Ofcom's track record suggests that it would be very unwise to underestimate the organisation.

If it succeeds in adapting to being the BBC's external regulator, the watchdog will emerge as a supremely powerful media and communication regulator.

online. For the first time, there will be operating licences for the devolved nations, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The new unitary board will be responsible for all BBC activities.

"The really interesting question is how Ofcom proposes to hold the BBC to account for the delivery of its remit and the additional duty of distinctiveness," says a former Ofcom insider. "The regulator is going to have to make sure that the BBC board exercises that responsibility.

"Ofcom will not be running the BBC. It will have to develop a new way of working with the board, but that board doesn't yet exist. It will be a massively scaled-up version of what Ofcom does to regulate Channel 4, but this is new territory [and] so much bigger."

Ofcom, according to a spokesman, is "confident that, with the right resources and planning, we can undertake our new responsibilities effectively and independently". There is no plan to set up a special BBC unit.

By way of comparison, Channel 4 and Ofcom have a considerable amount of contact. Their executives meet frequently, with formal sessions and regular in-depth reviews.

Ex-BBC Governor and Trust member Richard Tait points out, meanwhile, that "there is already a degree of co-operation between the BBC Trust Unit and Ofcom". The two bodies have a memorandum of understanding. The regulator is responsible for overseeing a range of targets and quotas in news, current affairs, original productions,



Facebook

The lost generation

Carol Thompson, 26, spends her day battling to get the attention of a classroom of small children. She gets up at 6:15am, runs to work, starts preparing for meetings and adds her finishing touches to lesson plans. At 9:00pm she relaxes on the sofa. Watching the news is the last thing on her mind.

"I generally watch television that I have recorded, rather than watching anything live or simply watching things because they happen to be on," explains Thompson, whose viewing choices tend towards All 4, iPlayer, ITV Hub and Sky Go.

Even if she had the time, she says that she wouldn't spend it watching the news on TV. She struggles to relate to the newsreaders and the topics, which are often reported in ways that, she says, she finds difficult to connect with.

Thompson's responses are typical of her generation. A recent report from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (RISJ) showed that people aged 16-35 are rapidly losing interest in viewing television news.

"There's no evidence to suggest that

Television news

A growing number of under-35s are ignoring TV news. Can they be persuaded to watch broadcast bulletins, asks **Sanya Burgess?**

young people today are less interested in news than they were in the past. What has changed is that they have more options to choose from, and news is losing out in that competition," explains Rasmus Kleis Nielsen, Director of Research at RISJ and co-author of the report, "What is happening to television news?"

In the UK, the number of households owning TV sets is declining. Average TV viewing per head of the population has decreased by 10% in three years, from a high of 241 minutes per day in 2012 to 216 minutes per day in 2015, according to the report.

The authors also found that the

average number of hours of television news watched during 2014 by all adults was 108; for those aged 16-24, a mere 25 hours. Worse still was the speed of change: the average time spent viewing television news by UK adults has fallen 9% since 2010; but, for those aged between 16 and 24, it was down 25%

Tom Sanderson, a 23-year-old who lives in London and works in marketing, avoids scheduled TV, let alone the BBC's flagship *Ten O'clock News*.

"I never watch it," he says. "It's something that I guess I would like to say I'd do to keep up to date... but I feel there's never any point in catching up with TV news. By then, something else has happened and it's old news."

The report notes that, for younger people in the UK, beyond-the-box video accounts for half of all viewing. But for young renters with limited disposable income such as Sanderson, owning a TV isn't always possible.

This means that he can't flick over to watch the news if he happens to be watching TV at the right time, something that he used to do when he lived with his parents.

Sanderson finds out about the news through word of mouth and social

media. He adds: "I no longer watch the news, usually due to a lack of time and not being at home in the evenings.

"I do think that it's something that could become a problem. I wonder if we will become a generation of oblivious youths, who don't know what is happening around them unless they are tempted by click bait or it's compressed into a message 140 characters long. As much as I hope not, it's exactly how I act."

This sort of response doesn't come as a surprise to Nielsen, who says: "The most interesting thing for us is that there are many broadcasters that are trying to think about how to do new forms of television news."

He adds: "But even the most innovative and forward-looking organisations probably recognise that no one has cracked it yet. There is no one recipe at this stage, but there is a growing realisation that things have to change."

The Brownlow sisters, Jess, 17, and Maya, 19, who live in Reading and Oxford, both watch television mainly through on-demand services. They keep up to date with the news online.

Jess, who is a student at an independent school in Berkshire, regularly uses All 4, Netflix, Amazon Prime and iPlayer, but rarely watches the news.

"Usually, Facebook will show something's going on and, if it's interesting to me, I'll look it up," she explains.

Maya, an undergraduate at Oxford, describes her viewing routine as "erratic and often based on how much time I have. I can binge-watch TV or not at all. I like to keep up with the major news events but I often find it all quite overwhelming."

She adds: "News on the TV means that you only see what has been chosen for you. Certain events are decided to be not worth covering, which I don't like, even if I understand the necessity of it.

"Broadcasters should definitely use more social media as an outlet; Twitter and Facebook are how the vast majority of people my age stay afloat with the news. Any news on TV should be kept short and to the point, and perhaps be published on social media after it has been aired."

Video on social media and video-sharing platforms have clearly poached viewers from traditional television. YouTube has reported more than 8 billion daily video views. The messaging app Snapchat claimed 8 billion daily views by the end of February.

Facebook evolved from posting links

to showing clips, to hosting clips, which now auto-play. By the autumn of 2015, the site reported more than 8 billion video views per day.

NowThis News, another brand built around online viewing, also revealed dramatic growth, going from 1 million views in 2014, to 50 million per month early in 2015, to 200 million by the summer and 600 million a month by the end of the year.

Looking back at his own experience, Sam Kemble, 34, a research associate from Rugeley in Staffordshire, believes that people don't grow up until they hit 30, become homeowners and start a family of their own.

"It's only then that the likes of politics and school development, for example, become important," he says. "People need to pay more attention to their own lives and not what Kim and Kanye are doing."

Kemble adds: "I don't think that it is an issue with broadcasters, it's society." He watches *BBC Breakfast* news on weekday mornings before work, and reads a free newspaper during his commute.

Tali Boswell, 17, from Wrexham in north Wales, agrees with this somewhat harsh verdict. He says: "Although it is not fair to categorise young people, as there are many who are very interested and concerned by current events and news, I would say that the majority are not interested in news because they are distracted by social media and other things."

Boswell is a student and part-time tennis coach. He watches drama on Netflix. When he does watch live TV, it's sport. He admits that he should do more to keep up with the news. He finds out what's happening in the world via social media or by listening to the car radio.

"I think that broadcasters should promote news on social media, such as having a news live stream that could be accessed on Facebook or Twitter news feeds," he suggests. He also thinks that television news does not try hard enough to appeal to younger audiences.

"There is a growing realisation that things have to change if you want to move beyond serving a shrinking and ageing audience," warns Nielsen.

"Television news providers have to think about providing a digital-first experience that works for mobile media, social media and that bring the moving image and audio-visual news into the 21st century."



Rasmus Kleis Nielsen

THERE IS NO ONE RECIPE AT THIS STAGE, BUT THERE IS A GROWING REALISATION THAT THINGS HAVE TO CHANGE



Maya Brownlow

TWITTER AND FACEBOOK ARE HOW THE VAST MAJORITY OF PEOPLE MY AGE STAY AFLOAT WITH THE NEWS



Sam Kemble

I DON'T THINK THAT IT IS AN ISSUE WITH BROADCASTERS, IT'S SOCIETY

Where next for RTÉ?

When Dee Forbes arrives in Dublin to take up the position of Director-General of Irish national broadcaster RTÉ, she will be the first woman to hold the post and the first to come from outside the organisation in almost 50 years.

Moreover, Forbes, currently on gardening leave as President and Managing Director of Discovery Networks, Northern Europe, will be returning to Ireland on something like half her present salary.

“Although it was a tough professional decision to leave Discovery, the personal decision to return to Ireland and lead its biggest broadcaster, RTÉ, is the opportunity of a lifetime,” said Forbes on her surprise appointment.

She was first approached for the RTÉ job five years ago but said then that the time wasn't right. It is probable that the only job in the Irish media that she would ever have accepted is the one she will now take on as soon as agreement can be reached with Discovery.

Forbes, whose parents used to run the East End bar in the village of Dri-moleague, West Cork (population 468), has lived and worked in London for 26 years. But, in a sense, she has never really been away.

For years, her usual routine has been to spend the week working in London and then commute to her home in West Cork. Her partner is also Irish.

Jeff Ford, former Director of Content at TV3, the commercial channel that is RTÉ's main rival, concedes that her appointment may have been unexpected “but it's a fantastic appointment for RTÉ. Her standing in the industry is second to none. The experience and different view she brings will enable her to take a fresh look at what RTÉ does.”

Ford, now Senior Vice-President for Content Development for Europe and Africa at Fox International Channels, adds: “She's a girl from rural Cork and she has all that international broadcasting experience. It's the best of both worlds. It's a coming-home story.”

When Forbes finally takes over, there

Irish broadcasting

Raymond Snoddy assesses the challenges facing **Dee Forbes**, the Irish national broadcaster's first female Director-General

Picture redacted

will be no shortage of challenges. Apart from the strong presence of Sky and the availability of all the British channels via cable, RTÉ is likely to face intensified rivalry from TV3. The company was bought last July by Virgin Media and its owner, Liberty Global, for €80m (£62m).

To add to this complexity, UTV, the Northern Irish commercial broadcaster, launched UTV Ireland at the beginning of last year. Then, in October, UTV sold its television channels to ITV for £100m, including UTV Ireland, which continues to broadcast despite making heavy losses and, so far, a limited impact.

“Ireland is one of the most competitive TV markets in the world but, in terms of television, RTÉ is in a reasonably healthy position. RTÉ One is still the most popular channel by a long shot, still a lot more popular than TV3,” says Michael Foley, a journalist and academic specialising in Irish media.

“Obviously, people are watching television in different ways but that's no different to where she [Forbes] was,” he adds. “Everybody grumbles but, in the main, the idea of public service broadcasting is actually supported in Ireland. RTÉ has come out of the recession intact.”

RTÉ also owns Saorview, the Irish equivalent of Freeview, which is now the primary broadcast platform following analogue switch-off in 2012. It shows Ireland's most popular soap, *Fair City*, and the long-running chat show *The Late Late Show*.

The first major item to hit Forbes's in-tray will be negotiations with the Irish Government on a new licence-fee settlement.

“The licence fee has been frozen since 2011. Talks with the Government are ongoing,” says Kevin Bakhurst, RTÉ's Managing Director, News and Current Affairs and Deputy Director-General. Bakhurst, former Controller of the BBC News Channel, was one of the favourites to land the top job.

RTÉ is financed by a €160 (£124) licence fee but can also take advertising. The Irish broadcaster has lost around €9m (£7m) because a limit was imposed on a Government licence-fee

subsidy for those on social security. And, at 15%, Ireland has one of the highest TV-licence evasion rates in Europe.

A plan to introduce a broadcasting charge on every household, irrespective of what devices are being used, which was suggested by former communications minister Pat Rabbitte, has been dropped.

Inevitably, Forbes will be seeking state help to do something about an evasion rate that, lost revenue aside, makes financial planning difficult at RTE.

Another big issue is the struggle to protect RTE's sports rights from a potentially well-funded predator in the shape of TV3.

"We have not given up on sport, as the BBC has done," says Bakhurst. "Apart from the Olympics, Champions League and the Euros, we have the GAA [Gaelic sports such as Irish football and hurling]."

But, in what may be the shape of things to come, TV3 outbid RTE in November for the live rights to the Six Nations Championship for the four years from 2018. This was a serious blow in a country obsessed by rugby.

Ford suspects that TV3 will get increased budgets to compete not just on sports rights, but on producing more local programming.

"Liberty is not a company to buy a channel such as TV3 and just not do anything. I think that it obviously has a strategy in play. I am sure it will be funding the channel at a level to get it to the next stage," he says.

One of the things that Forbes may have to consider in future is entering into partnerships to protect access to as much live sport as possible.

Forbes declines to discuss her plans for RTE before she arrives, but it would be strange, given her experience, if she did not bring an international outlook to RTE.

The main focus will have to be delivering a public service broadcasting mandate for the people of Ireland.

She has particular knowledge of the Nordic countries. They have similar-sized populations to Ireland and are the home of successful noir thrillers. Perhaps Nordic-Irish collaborations

WE HAVE NOT GIVEN UP ON SPORT, AS THE BBC HAS DONE

Picture redacted

IRELAND IS ONE OF THE MOST COMPETITIVE TV MARKETS IN THE WORLD BUT... RTE IS IN A REASONABLY HEALTHY POSITION

could be one to watch for in future. While Forbes tends her garden, before moving into RTE HQ, the broadcasting battlefield in Ireland is still fluid. Will ITV axe the loss-making UTV Ireland or decide to invest more to make it a serious player? And why did Liberty invest in the free-to-air channel, TV3? Could it have anything to do with Liberty's minority stake in ITV?

Ford is convinced that the status quo will be hard to sustain. Something has to give, he believes: "The marketplace

is not big enough for that number of commercial broadcasters, given that RTE also takes advertising. The advertising pot is quite tiny and to have another commercial broadcaster [UTV Ireland] in the market is problematic. And why, exactly, is Liberty Global running a free-to-air TV station?"

The only certainty for Forbes is that her weekend commute is about to become more difficult. Given the state of Irish roads, it will probably take her longer to get from Dublin to West Cork than flying to Cork from London.

An RTS Futures workshop gave essential advice to those who want to establish a TV career. **Matthew Bell** sat in



Winstanley's way to win

- Be respectful of your colleagues and remember your personal hygiene
- Be alert to boundaries
- Dress smart casual
- Never save the talent's number on your phone
- Rejection is rarely personal
- Consider each job as a stepping stone
- People have long memories of negative events – it's a small industry
- Keep up with industry events and developments in working practices
- A credit just means a contract, not your name on the actual credit roller

How to get – and

A small group of television hopefuls discovered how to – and, just as importantly, how not to – go about gaining a foothold in the industry at an intimate RTS Futures event held in late May.

Jude Winstanley, an experienced production manager and founder of the industry online jobs board The Unit List, offered her personal dos and don'ts over the course of a revealing two-and-a-half-hour workshop.

Winstanley began her TV career in 1997 as a runner on game and quiz shows, including the ITV series *Dale's Supermarket Sweep* and *Blockbusters*. She moved on to Production Secretary (on Channel 5 quiz show *One To Win*) and then production co-ordinator (on the Sky One dating series *The Villa* and BBC

One live studio show *Test the Nation: The National IQ Test*).

Her first series production manager role came on the 2005 E4 reality show *Beauty and the Geek*. Recently, she worked on the Channel 5 documentary *The Woman with No Face*.

Among the 14 young people at the RTS Futures workshop were would-be producer/directors, editors, programme developers and production managers. They listened to Winstanley explain how to: craft an effective CV; approach production companies; land and perform in an interview; and build a reputation to help secure the next job.

Emails to would-be employers should be written with care. "You have to make sure that the employer has no reason to put them in the bin," said Winstanley. CVs should list hard skills, including the ability to drive, speak

Where to look for work

'As a runner, there are different genres you can look at, such as entertainment, documentary, natural history or factual entertainment.

'There are opportunities for loggers – that's what continuity people used to do – which involves looking at the rushes and making notes, primarily for the edit. Sometimes, this includes making transcriptions, normally a word-by-word record of master interviews.

'There are a few more opportunities in scripted comedy and drama now than for some time. These could include work as a location marshal or as a day runner, which pops up now and then on big entertainment shows. This is often a day's work in a regional location because the [company needs to] draw on local experience.

'Digital companies are another option. They often have a smaller [permanent] workforce and may need freelancers with runner and researcher skills. Kit-hire companies, too, have opportunities for technicians and drivers who check the kit and deliver it to clients.

'Production companies tend not to invest in crew positions [such as in camera or sound], though broadcasters may. But these opportunities are few and far between.

'Getting a mentor can give you a leg up; [this is] somebody who can advise where and how to look for opportunities. They can advise on how to read the industry press and interpret what this means in terms of employment opportunities. This is difficult when you start out.

'You should be reading the industry press and its Twitter feeds. Information about trade fairs would be useful, too – at places such as [content market] MipTV people discuss formats. If a company has entered into a format deal, there may be opportunities there.

'I'm always impressed by people who recognise that TV is not just a "fun" career but a business, and understand what is happening behind the camera and what creates profit.'

foreign languages or use key software, such as Photoshop. Professional work should be included, the most recent first, followed by work-experience placements and university projects.

Over a decade of employing people, and 20 years working in television, the production manager has been sent many CVs with terminal errors – not least, applicants omitting their name or phone number. "The name is really rather important – otherwise, who do I ring?" said Winstanley.

A covering email, she continued, "needs to address everything the employer is looking for. Think hard about the job you're going for and ask what is going to give you the edge?"

But, she added, newcomers to the industry should not overstate their ability or experience: "Be really careful

If all goes well and a position is offered, she advised: "Do the job you're hired to do and do it really well. Build a reputation – when you're in a job, that is the easiest time to find the next one.

"People have to create a reputation for themselves.

Because the pool of people is so great and competition for jobs is so high, you have to do more than just your job."

At work, she advised junior staff to network, ask questions and, if they have a spare moment, offer to help colleagues. Away from the job, Winstanley suggested that TV newcomers should try to build their profile by, for example, writing a

blog or building a popular Snapchat feed.

"Do the job I've hired you for first, and then do more on top," she said.

IF [THE JOB] IS FOR A RETURNING SERIES, MAKE SURE YOU WATCH AN EPISODE AND HAVE AN OPINION ABOUT IT

keep – a job in TV

about what you say your skill levels are." Production companies use social media widely to advertise vacancies, but Winstanley warned the TV hopefuls to take care of "what you post and who has access to it. This is a small industry and negative things tend to get remembered. You might put things on social media that a prospective employer might not feel so positive about."

Winstanley offered simple tests: "Would I like my mum to read this? Would I like this to appear on the front page of *The Daily Mirror*? If the answer to either question is no, don't post it."

For those applicants lucky enough to land an interview, preparing thoroughly is important. "Look up the company and what it does. If [the job] is for a returning series, make sure you watch an episode and have an opinion about it," she said.

Even the most dynamic runner or researcher will have time between jobs.

On the lower rungs of the ladder, and often higher, too, TV production is a freelance career, with inevitable highs and lows. Winstanley advised the RTS Futures members to take a methodical, rather than scattergun, approach to finding new work.

Breaks in work, she said, are also a useful time to top up skills and, perhaps, take on work experience or help out with community projects.

"Give yourself a break," she added. Catch up with friends and family. "It's not good for your mental health to look for work full time."

The RTS Futures event 'How to get that job' was held at the RTS head office, in central London, on 23 May. The producer was Jude Winstanley.

Bristol takes to the air with NHU

BBC Natural History Unit science series *Life in the Air* was put under the spotlight at an RTS event in Bristol in late May, but the insights of the production team were just the warm-up act.

Series Producer James Brickell and episode producers Giles Badger and Simon Bell explained the thinking that lay behind the three-part series, which aired on BBC One in April.

“We wanted to deconstruct the science behind the fundamentals of how animals and birds launch themselves into the air through extraordinary physiology,” said Brickell.

The series was shot in the field and on controlled sets to reveal the science of a wingbeat, how cats leap



three metres from a standing start to catch their prey and how “shy and nervous” sparrowhawks fly low to the

ground at incredible speeds to snatch small birds from feeders in gardens.

The NHU team took the audience through the storyboarding, micro-light shoots, adapted cars and endless hours of patience it took to capture the content. The story captivated the 100-strong audience at the joint RTS Bristol/RTS Wales event as well as the millions who watched the series at home.

The real stars of *Life in the Air* made a surprise late entrance, stage left, in the careful hands of bird handlers Lloyd and Rose Buck.

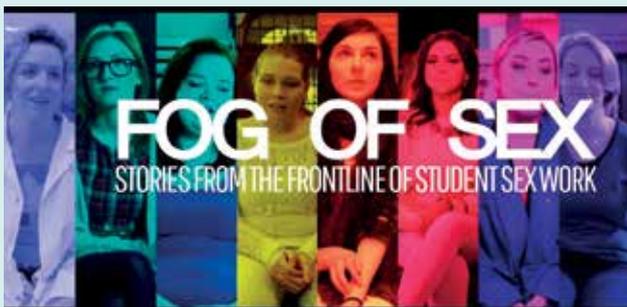
In flew Arnie, one of the celebrity

starlings from the BBC series, who has an IMDb listing that takes in programmes from *Poldark* to *Springwatch*. Arnie leads a family of starlings that has appeared on TV screens since they were fledglings.

“We have a special licence to keep the starlings in captivity and they get more confident as they get more experienced being filmed for all kinds of programmes, from drama to natural history,” said Lloyd. For more information, see: www.lloydbeck.co.uk

The NHU celebrates its 60th birthday next year. It has spawned a thriving ecology in Bristol of natural history independents, which are collectively responsible for almost 40% of global programming about the natural world.

Lynn Barlow



Students make a splash at Welsh film festivals

Last month, RTS Wales hosted screenings at the Carmarthen Bay Film Festival and the inaugural Wales International Documentary Festival.

The docu-drama *Fog of Sex* was shown at Carmarthen.

Three years in the making, the film tells the stories of nine female students who combined their academic studies with sex work.

Producer Chris Britten said that the film featured

actresses for reasons of privacy. ‘It was of the utmost importance that none of the details of these people’s lives were recognisable, from accents, names, locations or courses. However, male students have also taken up sex work and a future film could focus on men,’ he said.

Fog of Sex was directed by Christopher Morris and made by students from the University of South Wales.

The documentary festival, held at the Blackwood Miners’ Institute, screened *That’s That: The Three Loves of Vala*, one of the winning films from this year’s RTS Wales Student Television Awards. Set in an isolated mental-health institution in Latvia, the film explores the life of its central character,

Vala, and her relationships with her brother, husband and closest friend.

Although Latvia has been independent since 1991, a ‘Soviet attitude’ lingers, with misconceptions about mental health, and patients kept in remote institutions away from the public gaze.

The film’s producer and co-director, Santa Aumeistere, told the audience during the Q&A session: ‘It is not a film about “crazy” people. It is a film about people and humanity.’ *That’s That: The Three Loves of Vala* won the Best of Festival award.

RTS Wales also took a stand at the Pathways Creative Industries Fair, which was held as part of the documentary festival.

Hywel Wiliam and Tim Hartley

North East puts focus on youth

The University of Sunderland hosted the North East and the Border Centre's long-running Young Peoples' Media Festival in mid-May, celebrating film-making at schools and colleges across the region.

Katie Stubbs from Cleadon, Tyne and Wear, took the Drama Award for *YOUunique*, which the judges praised for its use of music and sound. She was also commended in the Factual Category for *Wartime Memories*.

Emily and Beth Moorby from Hartlepool Sixth Form College took home the Entertainment Award for *Twenty One Pilots*, which the judges said was intriguing and told a good story well.

Three winners were chosen in the Professionally Supported category, which is for entries from courses that benefit from industry support. Carlisle College's Kasia Staniecka, Lucy Adam, Simon Little, Daniel O'Connor, Hannah Kay and Sam Horton, scooped the Drama Award with *Subjected to Happiness*.

The same college's Charlie Stone won the Entertainment Award with *The Demon Barbers: Disco at the Tavern*. The Factual prize went to Northern Stars' Lauren Johnson, Georgia Middlemiss, Matthew Wilson and Joe Helm for *Closure*.

The event for young filmmakers aged five to 19, which has been running for more than two decades, attracted some 35 entries involving



Katie Stubbs receives her award for *YOUunique*

2 Tone Photography

more than 140 young people this year. BBC Senior Producer and RTS award-winning presenter Chris Jackson hosted the festival, with CBBC *Wolfblood* star Rachel Teate also attending.

"We are passionate about creativity and believe young people should be given every encouragement to grow their talent. Bringing together the students of the future with the professionals of the present was a real privilege," said Graeme Thompson, Dean of Arts, Design and Media at the

University of Sunderland, and Chair of the North East and the Border Centre.

"This year's entries have showcased the talent that the North East has and some of the work has been truly exceptional," added Festival Director Tony Edwards.

The festival was held in the David Puttnam Media Centre at the University of Sunderland. It was sponsored by Gateshead College, Teesside University, Northumbria University and the RTS.

Matthew Bell

With the dust settled on April's NAB, Thames Valley assembled a panel of experts to dissect Las Vegas's annual broadcast technology fair.

The event – organised by the RTS Centre and IABM, the trade association for suppliers of broadcast technology – was chaired by Dick Hobbs. It featured luminaries from a cross-section of the industry: Mike Knowles from Ericsson; Bruce Devlin (Mr MXF); Broadcast Innovation's Russell Grute; former BBC executive Keith Nicholas; and IABM's John Ive.

The May event reflected on the disparity between what vendors wanted to sell and what customers wanted to buy. For the former, NAB was all about abbreviations – SDN, VR, UHD, 4K, HDR and IP. The

Thames Valley throws light on US tech fest



From left: Mike Knowles, Bruce Devlin and John Ive

panellists broadly agreed that: HDR (high dynamic range) is key to Ultra-HDTV; virtual reality (VR) is interesting but

gimmicky; and that internet protocol (IP) will not replace the standard serial digital interface (SDI) any time soon

– but it is gaining traction with cross-vendor standards bodies such as AIMS.

The customers' wish list was summarised as: "Greater efficiencies, better return on investment, more interoperability, better network and viewer analytics, and content monetisation".

Vendors, customers and panellists agreed that quality content, whether that was *House of Cards* on Netflix on a smartphone or BBC One's *The Night Manager* on a 4K screen, was key. The challenge was to get content to the right places and the right people at the right time, in the format they wanted. "Television is now the content, not the distribution channel," said Devlin.

Rob Ettridge

Indies score at Scottish awards



Elaine C Smith won the On-screen Personality Award

Paul Reich Photography

The work of 15 production companies was recognised at the RTS Scotland Awards in late May, demonstrating the strength of the independent sector north of the border.

The RTS Scotland Award went to *The Beechgrove Garden* presenter Jim McColl and the Tern TV production team to celebrate 1,000 episodes of

the BBC gardening series, which first aired in 1978.

Elaine C Smith was named On-screen Personality of the Year for the STV series *Burdz Eye View*, which followed the actress and comedian across Scotland as she performed her one-woman show.

The BBC had a good evening. *Stonemouth*, produced by BBC Scotland

Drama and Slate North and based on Iain Banks's novel, won the Drama Award. *Burnistoun's Big Night* (The Comedy Unit and Bold Yin) scooped the Comedy Award.

Other winning BBC programmes included: Leopard Drama's CBBC series *Eve* (Best Children's Programme); Raise the Roof Productions' *The TV That Made Me* (Day-time); BBC Scotland Factual's *Scotland's War at Sea* (History); BBC Scotland Science's *Earth's Natural Wonders: Living on the Edge* (Documentary and Specialist Factual); and BBC Scotland Arts Production's *Handmade* (Arts).

Channel 4's *Supershoppers*, produced by Firecrest Films, took home the Factual Entertainment and Features Award. BT and producer Sunset+Vine won the Sport: Best Live Event category.

STV's Bernard Ponsonby picked up the Television Journalist of the Year Award for the second year running. In the other news and current affairs categories, *STV News at Six: Central* won the

News Programme Award, while *BBC Scotland Investigates: The Dog Factory* took home the Current Affairs prize.

"Nearly 300 people came together to celebrate the excellent work of the 15 different production companies that received awards," said RTS Scotland Chair James Wilson. "Jim McColl's gracious acceptance speech concluded the proceedings beautifully. Commenting that no man is an island, he thanked the many professionals, in front of and behind the camera and microphone, with whom he shared his success."

The awards, which were held at the Oran Mor in Glasgow, were hosted by *Reporting Scotland* presenter Catriona Shearer and comedian Sanjeev Kohli.

April Chamberlain chaired the judging panel. The awards ceremony was produced by Cheryl Strong, and supported by post-production company 422 and students from City of Glasgow College.

Matthew Bell

ONLINE at the RTS

Our short feature on raunchy period drama *Versailles*, which began its run on BBC Two on 1 June, caused an online stir. We reported on the controversy that's dogged the 10-part Franco-Canadian production, including the fact that it was filmed in English, not French. Sensing a hit, we also put together a handy guide to who was who in Louis XIV's court. More than 20,000 page views on the RTS website suggest there's a lot of interest in the series, which cost £20m-plus to make (www.rts.org.uk/Versailles).

We're delighted to unveil a brand new membership section on the website, which includes a range of new benefits for RTS members. We've also streamlined the process for joining online and made it easier to renew your membership. www.rts.org.uk/membership

Fresh from its premiere at the RTS's AGM last month, we've got a new showreel featuring the best of the Society's activities across the British Isles over the past year: www.rts.org.uk/RTS2015



Versailles

BBC

Another exclusive RTS online feature is access to a state-of-the-industry report commissioned by Liberty Global. 'The value of content' analyses the changing consumption habits of consumers and offers strategies for companies working at every level of content production.

The 96-page report is available to download or read online at www.rts.org.uk/valueofcontent

If you have any thoughts about what we should be covering online, please contact Digital Editor Tim Dickens (TDickens@rts.org.uk).

Ofcom was in the firing line during London Centre's panel discussion of the TV coverage of London's mayoral election in May.

The executives in charge of election coverage at ITV London News and local TV channel London Live criticised the impartiality rules imposed by Ofcom.

Rachel Corp, Editor of *ITV News London* at ITN, said that the Ofcom rules made its coverage harder: "Ofcom decided that London was just one big constituency and declared five of the parties standing as the major candidates, so those five had to have equal coverage."

This decision led to serious logistical problems for a local news programme with limited resources and airtime.

"If we had to do five interviews in a day, it meant that some other stories just couldn't be covered. It also meant that we couldn't do a head-to-head between leading candidates Zac Goldsmith and Sadiq Khan. We had to do all five together," said Corp.

"Since only two candidates stood a chance of winning, it meant that the audience was not well served," she added.

Jim Grice, Head of News and Current Affairs at London Live, agreed that Ofcom's rules made a difference to its coverage: "We only do five hours' news a day, so we had



From left: Jim Grice, Antony Dore, Rachel Corp and Steven Barnett

Kristin Mason

TV election coverage under the microscope

to balance it and keep a careful running score of the airtime each candidate got."

As well as covering the Tory, Labour, Lib Dem, Green and Ukip candidates, as instructed by Ofcom, London Live also ran interviews with Respect's George Galloway and Sophie Walker, the Women's Equality Party candidate.

London Live broadcast two debates. The first featured eight candidates plus a moderator; the second just Goldsmith and Khan. "That did lead to a problem with the Ofcom ruling," said Grice.

The BBC stuck to its own guidance on impartiality in the election coverage – not Ofcom's – so it established a

different balance in covering the candidates.

"Goldsmith and Khan got the most coverage, with the next three – Liberals, Ukip and Greens – slightly less," revealed Antony Dore, Editor of *BBC London News*.

The BBC held a debate between the top five candidates and also did some *Apprentice*-style interviews with them. "The power of the mayor is not enormous, so the personality and character of whoever fills that role is important," said Dore.

The TV coverage was criticised from the floor of the event, which was chaired by University of Westminster Professor of Communica-

tions Steven Barnett, for the relentless focus on Khan allegedly having shared platforms with Islamic extremists. The broadcasters replied that this was the campaign fought by the Conservatives.

"We asked many times of Goldsmith, why are you conducting the campaign you are? That particular focus on Khan was the main part of their campaign," said Dore.

All the panellists called on Ofcom to look again at its impartiality rules. "The political landscape has changed – the rules might have worked when there were just three parties – but they don't work now," said Corp.

Nick Radlo

Shiers Trust to fund STV oral history

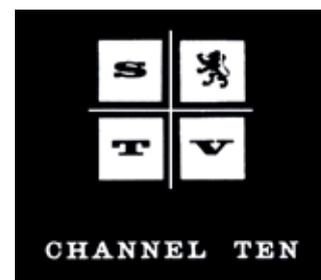
The 2016 Shiers Trust Award will be used to record the memories of people who worked at and watched STV from 1957 to 2017. The company celebrates its 60th anniversary next year.

The award of £2,000 has been made to the Scottish Broadcasting Heritage Group, which plans to start work on

the oral history this summer. "The recordings will be held in perpetuity at archives in Scotland and England, and, through the generosity of the Shiers Trust, we will provide relevant transcripts for future historians as well as the audio-visual records," said SBH Group Chair and former STV dubbing mixer Tim Amyes.

Since the first award was made in 2000, the Shiers Trust grant has funded projects such as the digitisation of back issues of *The Radio Times*.

The grant is funded by a bequest from the late US TV historian and long-standing member of the RTS, George Shiers. Grants of up to £2,000 are made by the RTS each



year to projects that would make a valuable contribution to conserving TV history.

Matthew Bell

OFF MESSAGE

Does Off Message detect a small spoonful of sexism in the row over BBC online recipes being removed from the main BBC website?

Imagine the kerfuffle if the men responsible for the move – messrs Hall and Purnell, apparently – had announced that they were scaling back web coverage of football or cricket.

Yes, it's true that there is no shortage of digital recipes. Few, though, are as helpful or as clear as the BBC's.

And it's not as if cooking doesn't provide the Beeb with some of its biggest shows. Think *MasterChef* or *Bake Off*.

■ **From culinary matters to the dramas taking place behind the scenes as the BBC firms up a successor to its departed drama doyenne Polly Hill. The attractions of such a big job are enormous, as are the pressures.**

One likely candidate is Channel 4's Head of Drama, Piers Wenger, a former drama leader at BBC Wales. His track record at Channel 4 is impressive. His biggest hit to date is the excellent *Humans*.

But wasn't it a mistake for the broadcaster to schedule the star-studded *Indian Summers*, axed after two seasons, on Sunday nights, when both BBC One and ITV were full of fiction?

■ **TV casting directors hunting for new BAME acting talent have already noted the exceptional abilities of 25-year-old Paapa Essiedu. He played Demetrius in Russell T Davies's bold reworking of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for BBC One, but is still to land a lead TV role in an original drama. The actor's run as a remarkable Hamlet at the RSC in Stratford ends in August. If you haven't seen him, do try.**

It's regrettable that Essiedu's performance as the dithering Dane has been, to some extent, eclipsed by Benedict Cumberbatch playing Hamlet at the Barbican; incidentally, Cumberbatch's Richard III in *The Hollow Crown* was spellbinding.

The BBC white paper's words on diversity are all fine and good, but they need to be put into practice.

And if TV drama bosses really are serious about diversity, acting talent such as Essiedu must be employed in high-profile roles. Frankly, initiatives such as giving Lenny Henry a part in *Broadchurch* don't really deal with the diversity issue.

■ **By definition, PRs at TV companies tend to be peripatetic. There are, of course, exceptions.**

One of these is the redoubtable Sky spin doctor Robert Fraser. For years, Fraser has been as much a part of the firm as satellite dishes or *The Simpsons* on Sky One.

All good things come to an end and, following 16 years at the broadcaster,

Fraser is finally off to pastures new. Where he works next is anybody's guess, but few practitioners of the dark arts of spin have been as loyal to Sky as Fraser. Off Message wishes him well.

■ **Talking of ex-Sky people, don't be surprised if Mike Darcey returns to the TV sector later this year.**

The affable Antipodean ran News UK for three years prior to the rehabilitation of Rebekah Brooks. Darcey knows more about subscription-based services than most. And his experience of successfully negotiating sports rights is nigh on peerless.

The erstwhile RTS Chairman is likely to be in pole position on head-hunters' lists. With the prospects for print-based news media looking grim, don't expect him to return to the newspaper world.

■ **The lines between TV and radio are becoming even more porous. Off Message was pleased to see a video version of John Wilson's recent and revealing Radio 4 *Mastertapes* encounter with Paul McCartney made available on iPlayer.**

The dulcet-toned Wilson is a brilliantly empathetic interviewer. He succeeded in getting the much interviewed ex-Beatle to open up. There were plenty of fresh anecdotes plus some charming musical interludes.

Surely, it's time we saw more of the *Front Row* presenter on TV. He'd be a big asset to BBC Four's arts coverage.



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