

March 2023

Television

Phoenix Rise:
The BBC
goes back
to school



audio network 



● ALYUSHA CHAKRIN (VOCALIST - UK)

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From the CEO



I was thrilled to see a record turnout for the RTS Television Journalism Awards 2023, as more than 620 people attended the marvellous ceremony.

Despite still being on sick leave, after a nasty bike accident, Dan Walker, lead anchor on Channel 5's flagship news bulletin, *5 News*, stepped up to the plate to host the awards with style and a touch of irreverence.

The RTS is extremely grateful to Dan. I'd also like to thank the Society's new Honorary Secretary, Simon Bucks, for chairing the journalism awards judging process and MCing the evening so deftly.

Congratulations to all the winners and nominees, and thanks to the distinguished judges who gave up so much of their time. And a special mention to 22-year-old Vasilisa Stepanenko, who covered the Ukraine war for Associated Press, and won Young Talent of the Year.

We're delighted to have this month's TV Diary written by Dawn Airey, who famously brought football (and two other "F"s) to Channel 5 when she was in charge at the network. These days, she's a tireless campaigner for women's football and something of a soccer mom, cheering her daughter on from the sidelines, whatever the weather.

Don't miss Matthew Bell's Comfort Classic, *Between the Lines*, one of my

favourite cop shows of all time. This warts-and-all perspective on the police was ahead of its time in showing that our police were less than squeaky clean. And wasn't Neil Pearson great as DSI Tony Clark?

I was privileged to attend the Midlands Centre's recent Baird Lectures; Roz Laws reports on page 28 on a pair of scintillating talks.

Finally, the RTS Programme Awards will be held on 28 March at Grosvenor House. I hope to see you there and can promise a glamorous night out.

Theresa Wise

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TV diary

The art of relaxation has always eluded me, which is probably why, in my plural life, chairing three boards and sitting on another three makes my diary resemble a detailed train timetable. I wouldn't want it any other way.

■ I have been looking forward to the CEO meeting of the Women's Super League and Championship Clubs. It's a chance to have a constructive, focused dialogue outside the board about our mission to be the most competitive and innovative leagues in the world.

Ironically, the meeting is at the Andaz hotel in Liverpool Street. The last time I was there was a rather OTT Channel 5 programme launch. Happy days.

■ Four out of five nights a week, my 13-year-old, Matilda, plays football. Tonight, it is my turn to take her to the Brentford ground in Gunnersbury. It is bloody freezing, colder than winter nights in NYC, but I shout encouragement from the sidelines along with other mums and dads.

Little girls in football kits dreaming of becoming professional football players. Their heroines are Steph, Beth, Lucy, Georgia, Leah. It is wonderful to observe and know you are contributing in a small way to this sporting revolution.

■ Tuesday is a National Youth Theatre day. I have always loved everything about the theatre. Despite being rejected as a member of the NYT 40 years ago, I have chaired the company for the past 12 years.

It is lunch at Coutts with our patron of 30 years, HRH Prince Edward, our



Dawn Airey

Soccer mom Dawn Airey cheers on her daughter playing the beautiful game on a freezing February night, and enjoys two big weekend matches

brilliant artistic director and CEO, Paul Roseby, and some of our alumni.

Then it is off to The Duke of York Theatre to watch our rep company in *Much Ado About Nothing*, but interpreted in the style of *Love Island*, as befits a youth theatre. It is quite brilliant. Four- and five-star reviews follow. Our last night is sold out.

■ The evening is topped off with a G&T with All3Media's Sara Geater back in Chiswick. A chat about our teenage children and television of yesteryear. We have been friends since our Channel 4 days – 30 years ago. I thank her for the series tip, Apple TV+'s *Slow Horses*.

■ It is the District Line commute to WeWork by Monument to catch up

with Neelay Patel, the CEO of Digital Theatre+, an educational technology subscription service.

We talk about how we can continue to make our content relevant, contemporary and compelling for students and teachers alike.

We review target acquisitions, as we intend to scale and float the business within the year.

■ One of the joys of having been around a bit are the approaches for speaking engagements. Having worked for tech giants, Murdochs, Gettys, Richard Desmond and been in telly in the 1980s – still pretty much the *Life on Mars* era – I have an encyclopedia of stories to entertain and horrify.

Tonight, Channel 4 has asked me to talk to the indies it has invested in about leadership and change. Lorraine Heggessey and I have a good old natter.

■ A weekend of double football – Matilda is a mascot for Brentford's first team match. Even Dulcie, our eldest, goes to this game.

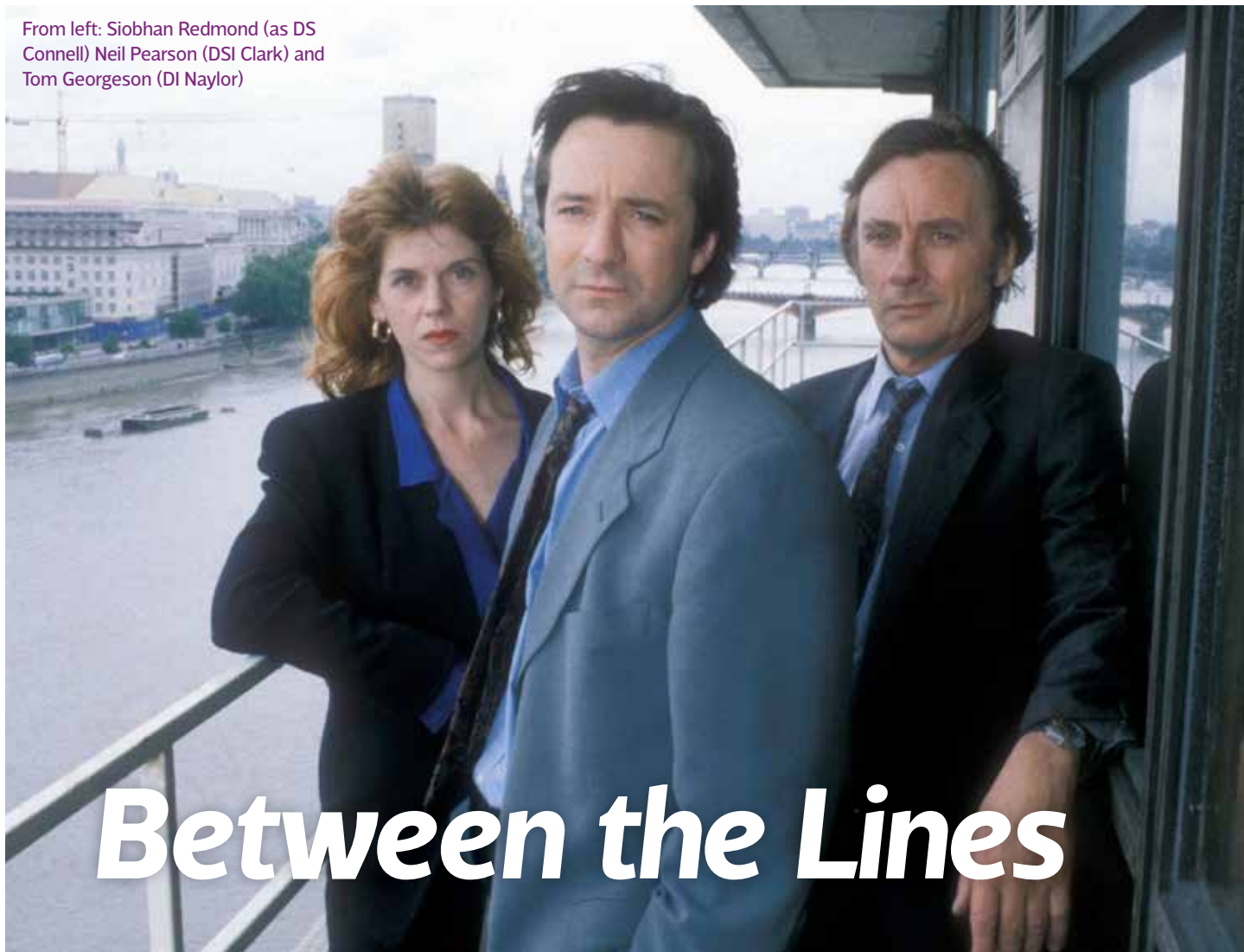
Who is sitting in front of us? Greg Dyke, Peter Salmon and Stuart Prebble. What is it about football and television? It is entertainment, of course.

■ Sunday, we are guests of Arsenal, the sun is shining and there is the usual joyous family atmosphere. Holloway Road is a sea of red and blue. A brilliant match attended by 47,000 at the Emirates for this London derby – Arsenal Ladies vs Chelsea. Life doesn't get much better than a full English followed by a game of footie. ■

Dawn Airey is the former CEO of Channel 5 and has been a senior executive at ITV, Channel 4, Sky and Getty Images. She sits on the board of Channel 4.

COMFORT CLASSIC

From left: Siobhan Redmond (as DS Connell) Neil Pearson (DS Clark) and Tom Georgeson (DI Naylor)



BBC

Between the Lines

Between the Lines is British television's forgotten classic cop series. Its contemporaries – *Cracker*, *Prime Suspect* and *Inspector Morse* – are better known but, arguably, not as good.

Two decades before Jed Mercurio's *Line of Duty* blew the lid off police corruption, Detective Superintendent Tony Clark (Neil Pearson), DI Harry Naylor (Tom Georgeson) and DS Maureen "Mo" Connell (Siobhan Redmond) from the Metropolitan Police's Complaints Investigation Bureau were also hell-bent on nailing dodgy coppers.

On the surface, the corruption portrayed is often small scale; officers

Matthew Bell
rediscovers a classic
cop show ahead of
its time in highlighting
police corruption

roughing up suspects or lining their own pockets. Unlike *Line of Duty*'s Anti-Corruption Unit 12, Clark and Co are not on the trail of an "H", a senior officer in cahoots with organised crime.

Dig a little deeper, or read between the lines if you prefer, and racism, far-right extremism or violent misogyny are often behind the wrongdoing. Add

some conspiracy – MI5 machinations and government skulduggery are to the fore – and you have the *Between the Lines* MO.

Series creator JC Wilsher had cut his teeth penning episodes of long-running ITV series *The Bill*, but *Between the Lines* was a very different proposition to that or TV's other cop shows of the time. Its action is cerebral, rather than played out with car chases and shotguns; its morality is murky; and the bad guys often get off scot-free. Like real life.

Wilsher approached Tony Garnett, a producer with a radical track record, from *Cathy Come Home* and *Kes* in the 1960s to GF Newman's 1970s crime series *Law & Order*, on the failings of the

Ear candy

criminal justice system. Later, he would go on to make the groundbreaking legal drama *This Life*.

Garnett, who had recently formed World Productions, told the *Independent* that he had “had an eye on a police procedural” for some time before Wilsher approached him with a proposal about police corruption. “I knew it was a good idea... because I thought, ‘Why didn’t I think of that?’ It also meant that I could have bent coppers on every week.”

Between the Lines ran for three series on BBC, from 1992 to 1994. To lighten the political load, we see a lot of the team’s private lives. Tony Clark is a ladies man; it’s not for nothing that the show was dubbed “Between the Sheets”. It was a role Pearson was born to play – and one that he was also serving up brilliantly at the same time as the office Lothario in Channel 4’s sitcom *Drop the Dead Donkey*.

Mo Connell is bisexual – a rarity at the time on British TV – and has two serious relationships, first with a man and then a woman, both of which are entirely believable and sympathetically portrayed.

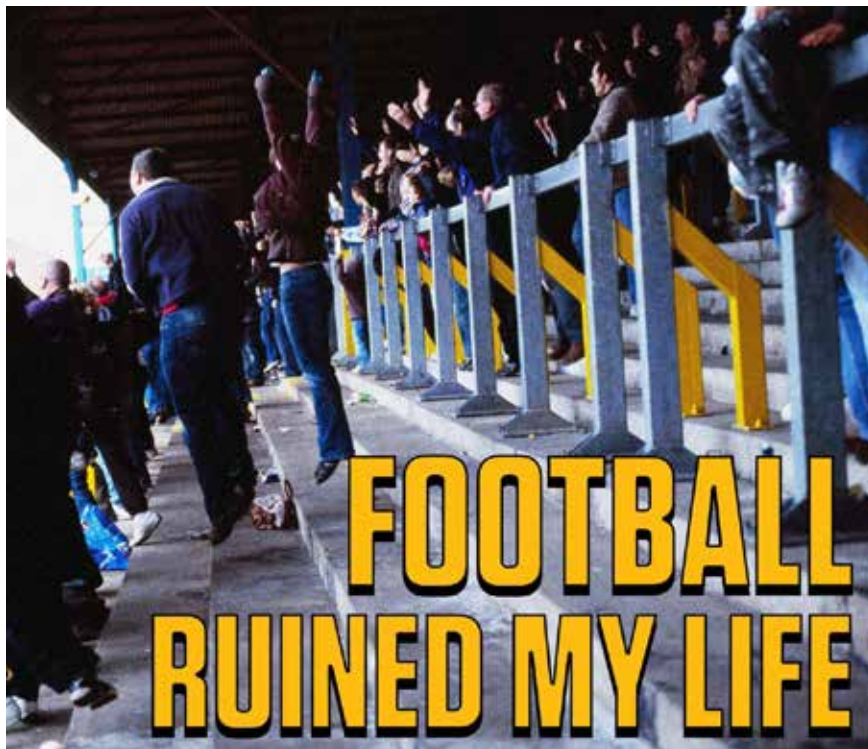
But Naylor is the heart and soul of the series. With a fag constantly on the go, he is a gruff, old-school copper, happy to cut a few corners if the end justifies the means. Yet, he never loses his moral compass, unlike the more ambitious Clark and Connell. His private life, until tragedy intervenes, is happy but humdrum. Has any other TV cop shone at ballroom dancing?

The final series, which saw the team drummed out of the Met and operating in the opaque world of private security, and often unofficially for MI5, slowly runs out of steam and credibility.

Series 1 and 2, though, are crackers, and snaffled awards from the RTS and Bafta. A few years later, *Between the Lines* made the BFI TV 100, a list of the best-ever British programmes.

And then it was pretty much forgotten, until 2021, when, in a clever, if belated, piece of scheduling, BBC Four aired it straight after the current series of *Line of Duty*. Better late than never. ■

All three series of *Between the Lines* are on BritBox.



Rephonic

Football may still be “the beautiful game”, but it has seen some ugly modern developments. That is why author Colin Shindler, journalist Patrick Barclay and football agent Jon Holmes have donned their rose-tinted glasses for a nostalgic look at the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s in a new podcast: *Football Ruined My Life*.

This was a time, says Shindler, “when football represented everything hopeful and optimistic in our lives”, and wasn’t full of “bile and spite, too much money and everyone behaving badly”.

Episode 1, *Our Childhood Heroes*, kicks off their retro punditry about players, games and tournaments that often entails impressive feats of memory.

Episode 2 compares England’s World Cup-winning team in 1966 with the 1970 line-up. Key substitutions are recalled plus their specific strengths: the crosses of West Germany’s right winger Jürgen Grabowski proved to be the difference, according to Barclay, as England lost by one goal in five.

Although such details help colour the nostalgic trip, it’s not all that

interesting or entertaining for Millennials like me. Given its loose structure, at times I feel like I’m listening to a boring uncle rambling on about the good old days.

Even so, I don’t blame them. Those pre-pay-TV days do sound better. And the podcast is at its strongest when our three hosts explain why.

Of particular interest to *Television* readers will be their remarks on the medium’s impact. Holmes reckons that, before football received saturation coverage on TV, most people fell in love with the live game at their local ground. Nowadays, most fans are introduced via the screen, which dilutes any sense of place.

The point is part of a larger theme of the podcast: globalisation. “Football is no longer a local game but a global game,” says Shindler. This has been brilliant for business while robbing the game of its local charm and innocence.

For those who miss that innocent game, *Football Ruined My Life* will be a pleasant reminder. But probably not for those of us who don’t know what we’re missing. ■

Harry Bennett

WORKING LIVES

Behind the scenes
shot of Idris Elba
appearing at the Fifa
Football Awards

Collective Media Group

Creative director

Matt Wilkinson of Collective Media Group is currently teeing up the opening and closing TV ceremonies for the Ryder Cup in Rome this autumn. Recently, he brought the golfing games of Harry Kane and Michael Phelps to a television audience for the Ryder Cup-inspired Icons Series.

What does the job involve?

At Collective Media Group, which has been going for 18 months, I look after all sport and sports entertainment projects, which includes developing and producing formats, series and live events for a global audience.

My background is in big sports entertainment shows such as Sky's *A League of Their Own* and ITV's *Soccer Aid*. We also work with governing bodies, such as Fifa, on its Football Awards, and the Ryder Cup, and rights holders such as Sky Sports, ITV and the BBC.

What have you worked on recently?

The Icons Series, a Ryder Cup-style event pitting the US against the rest of the world in a team golf event. We had stars such as Harry Kane, Ash Barty, James Milner and Ricky Ponting taking on a team that included Olympic swimming legend Michael Phelps, NBA stars and Super Bowl winners. It was on FreeSports [now Viaplay Xtra] in the UK, NBC in the US and FoxTel in Australia, and 20 or so other territories.

Is sports entertainment growing in the UK?

We are still miles behind our friends on the other side of the Atlantic. You think we get a lot of sport over here? It's everywhere in the States. If you're a Yankees or 49ers fan, they're serving you content every day of the week.

We think we're getting served too much football content here but, if I'm a

Liverpool fan, I only get content about my club when Liverpool are playing on Sky or BT – which is a tiny amount in comparison with what happens across the pond.

What was your route into television?

I did a degree in economics and politics and I fell into television almost by accident. My first job as a runner was stuffing application forms into envelopes for *Big Brother* and then I was a locations assistant on *Changing Rooms*.

I also worked on *The Pepsi Chart Show*, *They Think It's All Over*, *Big Brother's Little Brother* and *The Games*. I was in charge of the trials and challenges on *I'm a Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here!* for six years and loved every minute of it.

What makes a good creative director?

Ideas are the lifeblood of TV – you need to come up with ideas and know

how to execute them. Good contacts help, too – what gets you to the front of the queue in a world of sharp elbows is personal relationships with talent, agents, decision-makers and buyers.

Who are the most famous people in your phone's contact list?

Robbie Williams, Niall Horan, Roberto Carlos and Idris Elba.

So you're bringing razzmatazz to sport?

It's not about bringing in Ant and Dec and firing confetti canons! A great sports entertainment show is fast-moving, with high-quality items and is aimed at the "casual" sports fan.

The content we make for the Ryder Cup is a good example. There are golf fans who watch events all-year round, but, every two years, sports fans go nuts for this event, as it's America against Europe.

It is the third most-watched event in the world after the Olympics and the World Cup and our aim is to make the content as mainstream as possible but without turning off the hardcore fans.

But you can't mess with the purity of a sport, can you?

There are limits. For example, I could reduce the number of holes in a golf event to fit a specific broadcast window but I can't put jelly in the bunkers! Harry Kane or Pep Guardiola don't want to play in a "hit and giggle" contest; they want to play in a credible event. However, no one wants to watch them play 18 holes of golf. You need to find a balance.

It must go wrong sometimes...

I've done a lot of sports entertainment formats, but asking people to put themselves out there in a sport they're not professional at is a big ask. Jimmy Nesbitt and Piers Morgan took part in a golf event and both nearly took someone's head off in the crowd.

What are the best and worst parts of the job?

The best thing is the people I get to meet, the things I get to do and the buzz of making live television. There is a misconception, though, that these big shows are easy to produce and have huge budgets – they're not and they don't.

What people watch on the TV is the culmination of three to six months' hard graft. The reality is that I'm usually at my wits' end in a truck between

the toilets and the catering van at my wit's end – I'm not sat in the front row.

The worst parts are the disappointment when you've come up with an idea that you think is brilliant but which doesn't work out.

I don't mind a straight "no" but it is dispiriting when a project gets put on ice or dropped.

sport is ready to be the next *Drive to Survive*. That show is a cut above because of the nature of Formula One.

I took a call recently from a football-club owner asking whether a documentary could be made about him running the club, like the Ryan Reynolds documentary, *Welcome to Wrexham*.



The Icons Series golf competition

Collective Media Group

Are there any secrets to making good sports entertainment shows?

Have a small team of good people who you enjoy working with. I've worked on productions with a cast of thousands – that's when stuff gets missed.

Which programme are you most proud of?

The opening ceremony of the 2018 Ryder Cup in Paris. We really took a risk on doing something different, but I'm confident that what we've got in store for this year in Rome will take it up a notch again.

How have sports entertainment shows changed since you started?

They've changed for the better. Rights holders and governing bodies are much more open to new formats and behind-the-scenes content. The downside is that everyone thinks their

I told him "no", because you're not a famous actor like Reynolds – at best, local TV might want to cover it! The number of times I hear people say, "Netflix would love this", and I'm thinking to myself, "No, it wouldn't!"

What advice would you give to someone wanting to work in sports entertainment?

Look for running jobs on big events – there are lots of events and they need lots of people. When you get your foot in the TV door, start in entertainment and move into sports entertainment later.

There's no better place to learn how to develop ideas, format shows and script VTs than the world of entertainment. ■

Matt Wilkinson was interviewed by Matthew Bell.

Phoenix Rise (from left): Alex Draper (Billy), Imogen Baker (Leila), Lauren Corah (Summer), Tara Webb (Rani), Jayden Hanley (Darcy) and Krish Bassi (Khaled)



Kids' drama rises from the ashes

BBC

Children's TV hasn't been the same without *Grange Hill*, Phil Redmond's seminal series, but the new kid on the block, *Phoenix Rise*, is taking up the baton for teen drama.

It's singularly British: realistic and gritty, but also laugh-out-loud funny – and never patronising. With an urban soundtrack and a diverse cast, American high-school glamour thankfully feels a world away.

As Matt Evans, co-creator of the 20-part BBC iPlayer series, admits, "There has been a *Grange Hill*-shaped hole in the schedule."

Evans and writing partner Perrie Balthazar were talking to *Television* on location in a disused and freezing school hall last November.

The pair met in the *EastEnders* writers room and discussed working together again when their paths crossed scripting Channel 4 school drama *Ackley Bridge*. Both had been asked independently to pitch ideas for a new BBC teen drama and they decided to write

New children's show *Phoenix Rise* tackles exclusion, bullying and anxiety but still manages to be funny.

Matthew Bell was on set

in tandem. "We felt strongly from the beginning what we wanted the show to be – the themes are friendship, loyalty, sticking together and the underdog," recalls Balthazar.

Phoenix Rise follows six misfit teens taking their first steps back into mainstream education after being excluded. The series is available on iPlayer, rather than CBBC, as it is skewed slightly older than the channel's target audience.

At the writers' insistence, the show is set in Coventry – it's "slap bang in the middle", says Evans, between his home town, Shrewsbury, and Northampton, where Balthazar was raised.

The title takes its name from the mythical bird, the immortal Phoenix, which rises again from the ashes of its predecessor. The creature is the symbol of the new Coventry, rebuilt after much of the city was flattened during the Second World War.

Writers often leave kids' drama behind when they start penning adult series, but not these two. "It's a time in your life when so much is going on: it's so exciting but scary at the same time," says Balthazar. "You never really have those feelings again with that intensity – first love, making your first best friend, realising your parents aren't perfect. Those firsts are what's always excited me about writing for young people."

"Matt and Perrie really had something that could reflect the experiences of lots of different kids and champion the underdog," says Tali Walters, creative director, BBC Studios Productions Kids & Family. "There were some other shows in the running... but *Phoenix Rise* stood out as original and relevant to this generation.

"British children are watching so ▶



From left: Alex Draper (Billy) and Frankie Minchella (Casper)



Jessal Kullar-Bell (Cassidy)



From left: Joshua Cullinane (Nathan) and Krish Bassi (Khaled)

All pictures: BBC

No grandstanding in Coventry

'There was a real effort to cast in the local area. We didn't want to get everyone from drama school in London and ship them up to Coventry – that would have changed the whole feel of the show,' says the BBC's Tali Walters, creative director at BBC Studios Productions Kids & Family.

The production worked with a casting agent, recruiting via social media and visiting schools and theatre groups. All 35 principal roles were cast from the Midlands, with many from Coventry itself. 'As local and as unpolished as possible,' was the casting motto, recalls co-creator Perrie Balthazar.

Phoenix Rise's main character, 15-year-old Billy Hopkins – who is left to look after his 11-year-old sister after his father (ex-*EastEnders* actor Paul Nicholls) fails to return from a lorry driving job – is played by Alex Draper, who was discovered at a Nottingham workshop. 'He's a proper little star, really authentic, very naturalistic and that's what we wanted to go for – no jazz hands,' says co-creator Matt Evans.

'A lot of the aspects of Billy I recognise in myself at 15 years old... I can relate to him,' says Draper, who is now 19.

'I can be serious with [the role]; I don't have to go too over the top comically and I can put on a performance that I

'AS LOCAL AND AS UNPOLISHED AS POSSIBLE,' WAS THE CASTING MOTTO

believe is real – that's my favourite kind of acting.'

Has *Phoenix Rise* given him a taste for acting? 'I feel very blessed and lucky. It's a good feeling,' says Draper, who has appeared in the BBC One soap *Doctors*. 'I'm going to keep pushing myself out there and whatever happens, happens. I would love more jobs like this... I'm going

to keep doing my thing and see where it leads me.'

Jessal Kullar-Bell and Josh Cullinane play a couple of troublesome kids. Kullar-Bell, who is from Kenilworth and recently turned 20, describes her character, Cassidy Dhillon, as 'horrid; she's so rude. She doesn't care about anyone or their feelings... she's a bully.'

Cullinane, 18, plays Nathan. 'He has layers to his character. Obviously, he is a bully but there are reasons behind it... he has different sides.'

Cullinane, who is from Coventry, says: 'It is a nice city and I do think *Phoenix Rise* will help to show it in a more positive light instead of grey.'

And, adds Kullar-Bell, smiling, 'Miserable'. She says the series portrays the city in all its vibrant diversity: 'It's so nice, especially as we've both grown up in and around Coventry, that it's getting the recognition it deserves.'

'Hopefully, *Phoenix Rise* will inspire a lot of young people from Coventry and the surrounding area that you can always have a second chance.'



Phoenix Rise (from left): Krish Bassi (Khaled), Lauren Corah (Summer) and Alex Draper (Billy)

BBC

► much content on TikTok, YouTube or Netflix and that's great... but they are consuming so much American experience.... It's really important that they get a chance to see their own lives reflected on screen and something that's uniquely British."

The estate where lead character Billy Hopkins lives, says Balthazar, is "really similar to where I grew up in Northampton. We wanted to show the fullness of that kind of childhood, but also that it's not all misery and poverty. You can be poor but still have strong family ties, a sense of loyalty and purpose, and a sense of community.

"The class element was huge for both Matt and me. We felt that these kinds of children are not represented [on TV] and, if they are, it's not very authentically."

The pandemic, although not part of any storylines, had an effect on the writers' thinking. "We talked a lot in our pitch about the euphoria kids felt when they were finally allowed to go back to school and we wanted to capture that," recalls Evans.

"School is not always a terrifying place; for some children, it's a sanctuary," adds Balthazar.

The pair scripted eight episodes

and set up a writers room to produce the other episodes. "We got writers from different ethnic backgrounds, writers with disabilities, young and working-class writers," says Balthazar.

Phoenix Rise was shot during the second half of last year in and around Coventry, largely at a former secondary school, Woodlands Academy. "There's not a huge amount that gets shot in Coventry, so this was a huge commitment to the area," says Walters.

The BBC Studios Kids & Family production worked with ScreenSkills to bring trainees on set and with local schools to find 300 extras. "We've had such nice feedback from teachers in those schools, about how it's changed behaviour and aspirations. Local kids got experience of what it's like to be on set and think of television as a possible career," says Walters.

Coventry is the home of Two-Tone acts such as The Specials, and *Phoenix Rise* features contemporary Coventry music talent. "We set out to get young, unsigned artists from the local scene and give them an opportunity to create our soundtrack," says Walters. "Goodness me, we found some talent."

Both writers plump for *Grange Hill*, which ran for a staggering 600 episodes from 1978 to 2008, as their

favourite children's show, although Evans also picks the BBC's mid-1990s stage school drama, *The Biz*, starring Paul Nicholls, who also appears in *Phoenix Rise*.

Early in his career, Evans wrote for *Grange Hill*: "It was a pinch-me moment to get to work with Phil Redmond. I learnt a lot from him about how to write kids' drama... that you should always tell the story from the kids' point of view."

Balthazar adds: "We always said we didn't want to talk down to the kids and we wanted to make a show that they wouldn't feel patronised by. *Grange Hill* did that in my era."

Can *Phoenix Rise* become as significant to today's kids as *Grange Hill* was to their parents and grandparents? "That's the ambition, that *Phoenix Rise* might leave such an indelible mark on this generation that it's something they talk about to their kids or reminisce about with friends later in life," says Walters.

"*Phoenix Rise* is unique. It isn't a copy and paste *Grange Hill* in any way – but we would like it to be as impactful." ■

The first 10 episodes of *Phoenix Rise* come to BBC iPlayer on 21 March; the second 10 episodes in the autumn.

OUR FRIEND IN THE THAMES VALLEY

What makes it to our screens, whether large or small, trickles

out to influence the national psyche. In particular, this affects young people's views on everything from diversity to their own self-image. Consciously or unconsciously, they absorb opinions and beliefs based on what they see in films and on television.

As audiences, we look to the content on our screens to create a positive impact. We want to be uplifted and entertained, of course, but, for younger audiences, it's also about seeing what's possible. Films and television are where the next generation glimpses potential futures. Seeing someone who looks like them on screen can have a huge impact on a young person.

The effect of what's on TV or TikTok is not always rosy. The promotion of a certain look or body shape, and the objectification of men, as well as women, by shows such as *Love Island* and other reality series featuring a lack of body diversity, can create a false ideal that young people feel they have to strive for. *Love Island* came in for criticism in a report by the Mental Health Foundation, which contained some worrying statistics.

Add to that, the mushrooming number of heavily curated social media feeds that give a very skewed view of real life, and young people's self-image can take a battering, regardless of gender.

Jennie Marwick-Evans wants young people considering a career in TV to seize new opportunities in the Home Counties



Jennie Marwick-Evans

But it is not all doom and gloom. Behind the screen, there's a brilliant opportunity to show young people from all backgrounds that our industry has much to offer them.

Here, in the Thames Valley region, over the last few years we have seen significant investment in new studio facilities. Not only is this preparing our region to become still more important for the screen industries, it is creating new jobs and opportunities for young people.

Due for completion in 2024, the 18-stage Shinfield Studios Film and TV Production and Innovation Hub in Berkshire has already opened four of its sound stages. Disney was its launch customer.

Also in Berkshire, Pip Studios, which opened its doors in 2020, is a purpose-built audio post-production

facility. Its six Dolby Certified Atmos stages feature a number of leading-edge technologies and support all aspects of audio services for feature films, TV, gaming and streaming.

The county's Bray Film Studios, known for its association with the iconic Hammer Films, is investing in a major expansion project. Plans include four workshops, a rehearsal building, offices and even accommodation. The studio expects to generate an additional 1,500 full-time jobs.

Also in the works is Marlow Film Studios, in Buckinghamshire. This 168,000m² production facility will be a major new centre for British film-making.

Buckinghamshire County Council recently approved plans for a 130,000m² expansion at Pinewood Studios. The investment is expected to create a further 21 purpose-built sound stages, a backlot filming space and an education and training hub. There are even plans for a nature reserve as part of the site.

These new investments are creating a buzz for the media sector in the Thames Valley region. They provide a fantastic opportunity to inspire the next generation with our collective passion and love of innovation.

There has never been a better time to take up a rewarding career in film and television, whether technical or creative. Who knows, one of the new intake might create the next *Black Panther* or *Bridgerton*, breaking barriers and charting new territory for our industry's future evolution. ■

Jennie Marwick-Evans is Chair of RTS Technology Centre.



Channel 5

All Creatures Great and Small

God's own county

Eighteen months ago, like James Herriot dolloping piccalilli on to Farmer Horner's swiftly replenished plates of fat bacon, television decided that you can have too much of a good thing.

At the 2021 Edinburgh TV Festival, Channel 5 commissioning editor Daniel Pearl declared that he wouldn't make "another programme about Yorkshire". Ben Frow, the broadcaster's content supremo, has recently followed that by announcing a reality-heavy slate, replete with a Tim Peake-fronted show exploring space.

Channel 5 may be relocating from God's own county to galaxies far, far away, but is TV's love affair with Yorkshire really over? And how did it ever seem like a match made in Heaven?

"What Yorkshire does well is that big, warm hug," says Yorkshireman – and *Ralph & Katie* director – Jordan Hogg. "*All Creatures Great and Small*, for example, shows the best of what the county is. It has that strong, comforting draw."

Lancastrian cinematographer Liam

Carole Solazzo suggests television's love affair with Yorkshire has not yet run its course

Healey agrees: "Programme-makers use Yorkshire and the North as a way of harking back to older, simpler times."

This nostalgic, escapist outlook was understandably more prevalent during the pandemic, when Channel 5 made big gains in audience viewing figures. During this time, Cy Chadwick's Leeds-based indie, *Atypical*, produced episodes of the BBC's walking show *Winter Walks*, many set in Yorkshire.

Though the producer has filmed walks in the South, as well as in Northumberland, Cumbria, Lancashire and Derbyshire, "we filmed many of our programmes during national lockdowns – therefore, the safest and most practical way to film these was to focus on walks close to the base," says Chadwick.

The resulting shows are comforting,

beautiful and sometimes inspirational. Top of cinematographer Andy McDonnell's list of Yorkshire's virtues is the landscape. Astonishingly, "Yorkshire is twice the size of Wales, with the population of Scotland. It has vastness and variation: the dales, the barren moors, the wolds, the rugged coastline;... urban Leeds... and York if you want an older town look."

Healey would love to film on Malham Cove, with its craggy limestone pavement. "Filming that at sunrise or sunset, it would look ethereal.... In Lancashire, as well as Yorkshire, you get a warm sunlight on the hills and moors and peaks. It's very sepia. Sometimes, [in a drama] colour can be distracting so, when you get that shot, it's a lovely way of getting a more monochrome look, but really natural."

For Lisa Holdsworth, writer, Chair of RTS Yorkshire and proud Yorkshire-woman, the reasons for filming in Yorkshire are twofold: "It's what we've got in terms of natural resources, which is obviously the amazing countryside.... Then there's the practical side of it: we

have a really good production base. YTV – now ITV Yorkshire – was based up here, and the BBC had a strong foothold in Leeds. Which meant that many of those journalists and producers went on to set up their own indies, giving rise to a strong independent sector.”

Hogg has reservations, though: “There’s lots of great talent and crew in Yorkshire, [but] what Yorkshire has been lacking is good film-making infrastructure. Manchester has dedicated studio space and [Salford has] the MediaCity UK studios. But, in Yorkshire, there are no studios of top standard.” He believes quality studio space is essential in order “to grow new talent”.

McDonnell has worked as director of photography on both sides of the border on shows such as *Happy Valley*, *Shameless*, *Last Tango in Halifax* and *Blue Murder*. He concedes that Lancashire and Greater Manchester are “very similar to Yorkshire. They share the Pennines, and both have the countryside, the hills and the moorland.” But what Yorkshire has over neighbours Lancashire and Greater Manchester, as Anna Izza of Marketing Lancashire also acknowledges, is “a well-established screen agency, one of just a handful in the UK, which is advantageous”.

Holdsworth has nothing but praise for Screen Yorkshire. “It is not backwards at coming forwards,” she says. “None of that, ‘We’ll double as somewhere in London’. It is: ‘Yorkshire is amazing. Centre it. Make it the star of your show.’”

Screen Yorkshire has promoted the county internationally, and “that’s been reflected in getting the really big productions here, which keeps that skillset going,” she argues. “We’ve got crews working for a week or so on a Disney or Marvel production, who are then around to work on our own home-grown dramas.”

Put that together with a “very media- and cultural industries-friendly council in Leeds... and the people of Yorkshire who are up for it”, and clearly you have a winning synergy.

But why would two London-born writers set their new BBC One drama, *Better*, in Leeds? For Sam Vincent, it was about believability. Setting a show with gangsters in London “comes with a lot of tropes. The ‘Cockney gangster’ is a well-trodden path.” Whereas, “if you portray a place with accuracy, detail and truth... the drama feels rooted in the real world... and your story works. We’re big believers in the

old cliché ‘the more specific you are, the more universal you are.’”

Sally Wainwright, writer of *Happy Valley*, which garnered an extraordinary 11 million viewers for the much-anticipated finale, concurs absolutely.



In a BBC *Newsnight* interview, she told Kirsty Wark: “It was never a conscious decision to set so many dramas in the North... Authenticity is really important to me... and you can be more explicit about emotions if you’re using authentic language – and, of course, the language that is most authentic to oneself is the language one grew up with.”

But Wainwright goes further, using the Yorkshire landscape as a vital character. Juxtaposing the beauty of the valley with the brutality of Tommy Lee Royce, the Calder Valley becomes an antagonist, a ravine that traps the young people who live there, Royce included. “He’s the sort that thinks Manchester is abroad... He’s like a rat, he’ll never be more than three feet away,” Catherine tells her sister, Clare, when Royce is initially released from prison.

The valley trapped Catherine’s daughter, Becky, when she fell under Royce’s control and the spell of the drugs he dealt her, just as it traps the self-medicating, alienated working-class young people in Jez Lewis’s stunning, soul-stirring 2009 documentary,

Shed Your Tears and Walk Away – Wainwright’s inspiration for *Happy Valley*.

Significantly, Becky’s grave is not in Hebden Bridge but up in Heptonstall, where Sylvia Plath is buried and the closest place in Calderdale to heaven.

It’s young working-class people who concern industry professionals such as McDonnell and Holdsworth. A chronic problem is the difficulty of local travel. “One of the few things [the Yorkshire countryside] suffers from is a lack of public transport,” says McDonnell. “Having spoken to young people wanting to work in our industry, getting around without a car is nigh-on impossible.”

There are other issues, too. “You can have Marvel filming down the road from your house, but,” worries Holdsworth, “can you be the person who becomes a star in the film?”

Her new Channel 4 series, *Dance School*, deals with working-class kids’ access to culture: “We do need to talk about inequality.” *Dance School* has just begun street-casting. “And working class doesn’t mean just white. We have so much diversity in Leeds,” she adds.

With *Dance School* due to start shooting in Leeds in April, and new BBC factual medical documentary *Saving Lives in Leeds* set to air this month, perhaps word of television’s split from Yorkshire comes too soon? ■



Sam Ryder, the UK's 2022 Eurovision entrant

Camp classic comes home

BBC

Last October, the BBC and the European Broadcasting Union chose Liverpool – standing in for war-torn Ukraine, the 2022 winners – to host this year's Eurovision Song Contest.

UK entry Sam Ryder, singing *Space Man*, came a strong second last year. Without the sympathy votes cast for Ukraine's admittedly decent song, the long-haired Essex lad may even have won.

This was a remarkable reversal of recent Eurovision fortune, when the UK entry has generally been closer to *nul points* – last achieved by James Newman with *Embers* in 2021 – than the top of the leaderboard.

In fact, we need to go back 25 years to the time of Britpop, cool Britannia and Tony Blair to find a UK winner – Katrina and the Waves singing *Love Shine a Light*.

The BBC is going big on Eurovision, broadcasting both semi-finals on BBC One in the run-up to the final at the Liverpool Arena on 13 May. As it should – last year's final was watched by

After Sam Ryder's near triumph, can the UK top the leaderboard in Liverpool? The RTS learns how to win Eurovision

more than 160 million people live around the world. In the UK, it was the second-most-watched live entertainment programme of 2022, pulling in an audience of 8.9 million on the night, behind only *Platinum Party at the Palace*, at which Ryder also performed.

Last month, a packed RTS London event at Oxford Street's legendary music venue The 100 Club assembled a panel of Eurovision fanatics to discuss just what it takes to win Eurovision.

It is easy to mock recent UK efforts, Ryder excepted, but winning Eurovision isn't easy. Unlike, say, the Premier League, which is dominated, year in, year out, by the same teams, Eurovision is a wide-open contest.

Twenty-seven countries have

triumphed since the first contest in 1956, with Ireland racking up the most victories, seven. The UK has five: Sandie Shaw, Lulu, Brotherhood of Man, Bucks Fizz and the previously mentioned Katrina and the Waves.

Tribute act Abalicious began the evening, belting out Abba's 1974 winning song, *Waterloo*, before Steve Holden, host of the EBU's *The Official Eurovision Song Contest Podcast*, asked: "What did we do right last year?"

"We had a fabulous joy to our artist, who was a great British ambassador. He was humble and kind," said Paddy O'Connell, Eurovision fan and irreverent presenter of BBC Radio 4's Sunday morning current affairs programme *Broadcasting House*. "And he had 8 million TikTok followers."

Before the Covid-19 lockdowns, Ryder had been working as a wedding singer but, after posting his music covers on TikTok, he caught the attention of the likes of Elton John and ended 2020 as the most-followed UK artist on the platform.

SuRie, the singer-songwriter who represented the UK at Eurovision in

2018, reckoned “authenticity” was the key to Ryder’s success. The song and performance “were true to Sam and true to his artistry”.

Chris West, author of *Eurovision! A History of Modern Europe Through the World’s Greatest Song Contest*, described the anthemic *Space Man* as “three minutes of magic”.

Holden said that his and many Eurovision singers’ favourite all-time winner is Sweden’s Loreen, who triumphed in 2012 with the Euro banger *Euphoria*. “There’s something so captivating about the performer, the song and the TV design, that it’s impossible not to be drawn into it – she creates a world for three minutes,” reckoned SuRie.

Her Eurovision experience extends beyond her 2018 appearance in Lisbon, which saw the singer’s performance disrupted by a man who ran on to the stage, grabbed her microphone, and proclaimed: “Nazis of the UK media, we demand freedom.”

She was also a backing vocalist and dancer for Belgium’s 2016 entry and musical director for the same country a year later, which came fourth.

SuRie finished well down the leaderboard in Lisbon, but said: “I feel like I won in many ways, not from a voting point of view. As a performer, to be on that stage representing your country, which you are so proud of for all our faults and foibles and fuck-ups, is an absolutely incredibly thing.”

Holden argued that there are three key elements to winning Eurovision: “The song, the performer, the performance.”

West said Eurovision was now “slap bang in the middle of a golden era” of songs. And he identified a current “tremendous” trend for songs in native languages. “[I think] five of the past six winners have been in their native languages, and this is after years and years of people almost always doing it in English.

“There’s also a trend towards people writing their own songs winning, which is great, because authenticity is very important.”

Was there a secret to penning a winner? “Trying to write for Eurovision in my experience doesn’t necessarily come out with the healthiest results,” argued SuRie. It was better to concentrate on simply writing a good song.

She did, though, approve of Eurovision’s three-minute limit on songs – “otherwise we’d be warbling for ever” – and she added: “Don’t bore us, get to the chorus.”

Later in the evening, SuRie sang a

West added: “It has suddenly, in the last few years, become a global music event that really does matter – it can make careers.

“In 2012, [with] Loreen, the quality was upped.”



SuRie was a panellist – and a performer – at the RTS event

Phil Barnes

short set, including a spine-tingling version of Ryder’s *Space Man*. Abalicious then ran through Abba’s greatest hits, including the glorious disco stomp of *Gimme! Gimme! Gimme!*

Discussing classic Eurovision performers, O’Connell said: “I want to work them like a pit pony... I want them to be talented, but I want them to work very, very hard.... They’ve got to have a love, like Sam had, for music.

“Sam told me [at Eurovision last year], ‘Just think what the UK can do now.’ Now that we’ve taken the stigma away, now that we’ve come out of the closet after 25 years, just think who can follow. Just send an authentic artist, put professional people behind them and remember it’s a TV show. Trust the artist – let them sing from the heart.

“In the last 25 years, the UK did not take Eurovision seriously enough”

He continued: “It was in an awful wilderness.... The turning point has happened and the British now see it in a different way. There’ll always be people who think it’s rubbish and, actually, large parts of it are rubbish but... it’s a very important TV show.”

Yes, Eurovision is a song contest, but it’s also the campest thing on the telly. A clip of the UK’s 2007 entry, *Flying the Flag (for You)* by bubblegum pop act Scooch, reminded the audience of its awful lyrics, liberally dosed with sexual innuendo, including: “Would you like something to suck on for landing, sir?”

“I love men singing about oral sex as much as anyone else [but] it came second last,” said O’Connell. Only two nations, Malta and Ireland, gave the song any points at all, and both were well known for favouring UK acts at the time.

Most ridiculous of all, and perhaps the epitome of Eurovision, was Poland’s 2014 entry, *My Słowianie (We Are Slavic)* featuring a woman dressed in traditional costume, recalled O’Connell, performing “simulated sex with a butter churner, which, I think, is appropriate to Eurovision.” ■

Report by Matthew Bell. ‘How to win the Eurovision Song Contest’ was an RTS London event held at The 100 Club on 13 February. The producers were Phil Barnes and Damien Ashton-Wellman.

‘H ere’s a statistic that’s pretty mind-blowing: in recent years, the [creative] industries have delivered more economic value than life sciences, aerospace and the automotive sectors combined. And yet skills, and the people who have the right ones, are currently the biggest single inhibitor of growth.’ So said Kimberly Godbolt, founder of TV recruitment company Talented People, in her introduction to an RTS panel discussion on the skills shortage.

Creative-industry jobs are growing at three times the UK average – a trend to be proud of in these tough economic times. But finding the right people to meet that demand – as well as retaining them – is a challenge.

“We are actually physically lacking the people to do the jobs,” said Godbolt. “There’s too much work and too few people. People are getting promoted quickly and we don’t have that pipeline underneath.”

Seetha Kumar, Chief Executive of ScreenSkills, which centralises training and recruitment resources across the screen industries, explained that “we’re still in rapid catch-up mode”. She added: “It’s not something that you can just put in an oven and bake like a cookie.”

Joining Godbolt and Kumar on the panel were Alison Small, manager of Netflix’s Grow Creative, Sonny Hanley, director of the recently launched ITV Academy, and Kevin Blacoe, head of partnerships at Channel 4’s 4Skills.

Each of these initiatives is designed to encourage the recruitment, training and retention of British TV’s creative and technical talents.

While all the panellists champion partnerships, diversity and inclusion, and promote data-driven decisions, each aims to alleviate the skills shortage in complementary ways, rather than by competing with one another.

For example, Grow Creative focuses on training freelance talent in the sought-after fields of production management, production accounting, visual effects, post-production and music supervision.

4Skills, meanwhile, focuses on apprenticeships and training schemes at Channel 4 and the indies it commissions. The ITV Academy is geared towards training mid-level workers while also having one eye on entry-level recruits.

Plugging the skills gap

An RTS panel considers how the TV sector can do more to recruit and retain the workers it needs



BH Learning the job in Bristol

When it comes to attracting new talent, a question from the audience teased out a major issue: poor pay – reports of just £130 a day were cited – is a key factor in the skills shortage.

Said Small: “We always pay at least the London Living Wage to trainees, which is more than the minimum wage. And they’re only trainees for a certain [amount of time] – they do move up.

“We can help with additional [outlays beyond] just their wages – whether that is about transport or accommodation on location. Some trainees say they need a laptop. We’re open to the things that we can support. But I agree, London rents are just horrendous. We have not cracked that problem yet.”

Short-term contracts make things worse: they make financial planning – vital for those on low incomes,

especially during the cost-of-living crisis – near-impossible. But the panellists agreed that it was the nature of the beast and unlikely to change in a project-based sector.

Advice on how best to manage freelance life can help. Said Blacoe: “It’s about giving people the skills, the knowledge and the ability to plot their way through things.”

To encourage industry newcomers, recruiters are using a variety of initiatives, starting in schools. Careers advisors are being trained to understand the breadth of jobs available. ScreenSkills provides a resource pack for high-end TV industry professionals to return to their school to spread the word.

Godbolt recalled: “I went to my son’s school and tried to convince a bunch of Year 5s that they should all be production managers.”

There seems to be no shortage of training opportunities. The idea is to equip people to work across broadcasters, streaming services and production companies. ITV Academy has seven initiatives up and running. These include a news traineeship and a continuing drama initiative for those who want to work on shows such as *Emmerdale* and *Coronation Street*.

Blacoe said that 4Skills invested £5m last year to support around 23,000 people. Netflix is bankrolling its Grow Creative scheme to the tune of £1.2m.

Mentoring was singled out as an important method to foster confidence and build networks – both for the mentor and the mentee. Kumar explained: “You don’t necessarily have to be senior to do it. It can be almost peer-to-peer and you don’t have to be in the same job.”

It’s particularly useful to those from diverse backgrounds. ScreenSkills has a formal mentoring network, but other approaches are available. Said Hanley: “If you want advice, just say, ‘I’m looking for an industry mentor. Would anybody be up for a chat?’”

There are also efforts to minimise nepotism. Channel 4’s “No CV” recruitment policy at entry levels aims to encourage the hiring of people for their talent and not their connections. Instead of being presented with a CV, the broadcaster looks at applicants’ work. “It could be a film, it could be design, or it could be written,” said Blacoe.

Retention is another important issue. Experienced, talented people often leave TV for a mix of reasons. It’s not only the freelance nature of work, but

they can find long, unsociable hours difficult, especially once they start having children.

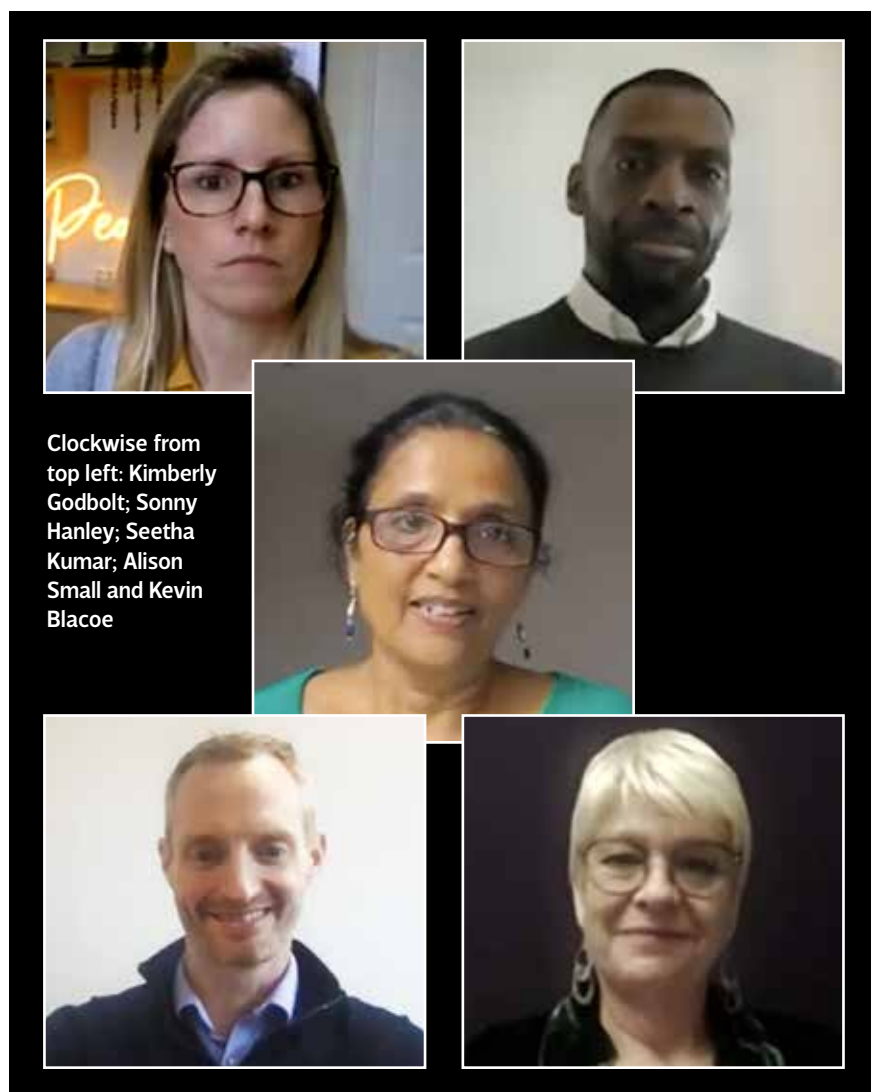
Another factor is that TV production remains “pretty notorious” for bullying and harassment, according to Godbolt. These issues are being addressed. For example, ITV has a mandatory training module for freelancers and full-time staff. “We also have an anonymous number where people come and report these incidents,” said Hanley.

“It’s about calling it out, but it’s also taking action,” added Small. “The

slowly. Said Kumar: “There is quite a lot of leadership, management and behavioural change that we’re all working collectively on.”

ScreenSkills is exploring solutions around the work-life balance – for example, by encouraging companies to do more job sharing and pay for a sixth day to facilitate any overlap between two job sharers.

Together, Kumar and the other panellists hope that these modifications will foster a more attractive and accessible industry.



people who are creating that [toxic] atmosphere have to stop behaving like that. I do think it’s changing.”

Covid has had an impact, with many people finding other work or retiring early: The Film and TV Charity has calculated that the screen industry would add 35,000 people to its workforce if it was able to retain staff who are over 50.

But things are progressing, albeit

“I know this industry can sometimes appear hard to navigate,” said the ScreenSkills CEO. “But, if you’ve got the skills and you love the industry, stay with it because we need you.” ■

Report by Shilpa Ganatra. The RTS national online event ‘Fixing the skills shortage: Recruiting for the future of the industry’ was held on 21 February. The producers were Terry Marsh and Sally Quick.



Inspector Morse:
John Thaw (left)
as Detective Chief
Inspector Morse with
Detective Sergeant
Robbie Lewis
(Kevin Whately)

Morse: his final bow

John Mair investigates the appeal of one of TV's greatest crime series as the franchise finally concludes

British television marks the end of an era on 12 March. The *Inspector Morse* franchise finally comes to an end after close to four decades on screen. The last *Endeavour* on ITV is the finale after 102 films concerning the Oxford detective.

Inspector Morse, starring John Thaw as the eponymous policeman, has been a staple of ITV's drama offering since the late 1980s. At its peak, up to 18 million people tuned in to watch the sullen sleuth on Sunday nights. In 2018, *Radio Times* readers voted it "the greatest crime drama of all time".

It is thought to have been seen worldwide by 1 billion people in 200 countries. *Morse* was one of the first big British drama series to successfully cross the Atlantic, where its final iteration is part of the *Masterpiece* strand.

Closer to home, *Morse* was Oxford and Oxford was *Morse*.

Its creation was a combination of a wet Welsh holiday and an Oxford pub meet. Colin Dexter wrote the first

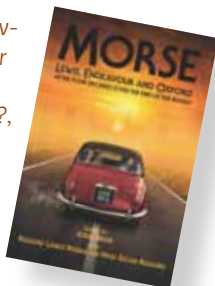
novel, *Last Bus to Woodstock*, sheltering from the Cambrian rain while producer Kenny McBain and scriptwriter Anthony Minghella commissioned the first TV film, *The Dead in Jericho*, from Dexter in the Dew Drop Inn in Oxford's Summertown. They had already written the script and recced the locations. It was shown in 1987.

From the beginning, the Morse franchise has been a showcase for a galaxy of stellar acting talent – with Thaw, his daughter, Abigail, Kevin Whately (who plays sidekick Lewis), Laurence Fox, Shaun Evans, Roger Allam and Anton Lesser all to the fore. Big-name actors queued up to be on screen with them – Sir John Gielgud, Richard Wilson, Patricia Hodge and Zoë Wannamaker, to name a few.

Behind the camera were such luminaries as Minghella, Ed Childs, Danny Boyle, Julian Mitchell, Jack Gold and Adrian Shergold.

Dexter played 30-odd Alfred Hitchcock-style cameos in the TV adaptations. He was Morse in miniature: reluctant to buy his round and a crossword addict. Yet he was a crime

Morse, Lewis, Endeavour and Oxford: After Four Decades is this the End of the Road?, edited by John Mair, is published by Bite-Sized Books, priced £14.99. ISBN: 978-1739152451



writer who had not seen the inside of a police station until well into the first series of his creation.

What was the series' appeal? There are the characters: particularly, the morose Morse (named after Lloyds Bank chairman Sir Jeremy Morse) and his bagman Lewis, not the brightest apple in the picnic basket, but willing

cloisters and quadrangles were his perfect setting in life and death.

Morse treated Oxford with huge respect. The city – both town and gown – has not always repaid that. Television is a bit infra dig for the gown. For the town, thousands of tourists every year arrive to explore Morserland. But, without any signage, they

was promoted from sergeant to inspector. His sidekick was DS James Hathaway, played by Laurence Fox, now a contrarian culture warrior on GB News.

When that concluded, the franchise rose from the dead with the prequel, *Endeavour* (Morse's first name, not revealed until the end of the original series). The copper told the curious that it was "Inspector". By the end of its decade, *Endeavour* will account for 36 films out of that total of 102.

A common thread in the brand extension has been Russell Lewis. Actor, then writer, then producer of many of the later films, he is strangely camera-shy and now busy on his new hit drama *Grace*.

In terms of genre, Morse can best be seen as police procedural, but a slow one. There is a link between *Dixon of Dock Green* and *Line of Duty* via *Cracker*. No rough stuff, no terrorism, no corruption, just the use of brain power and crossword anagrams to solve complex crimes. It embodies a police world of the 1960s and 1970s that we have lost. Peter Neyroud was the real chief constable of Morse's force – Thames Valley Police. He was a BA (Oxon) and treated with huge suspicion by ordinary coppers. To them, he was a "clever bugger" and called "Morse" behind his back.

Oxford CID used to have a cardboard cut-out of Morse at the head of the table at their annual dinner. They called crimes inside colleges "Morse jobs".

ITV is surprisingly unproud of its oldest long-form drama. It is almost sneaking out the last *Endeavour* series. I repeatedly tried to persuade it to have a red-carpet premiere in Oxford, and was met with a stone wall. Local cinemas, too. Thaw would be turning in his grave.

His daughter, Abigail, who established her on-screen *Endeavour* niche as Dorothea Frazil, the editor of the *Oxford Mail*, is not. She is very much alive and was the star of our 4 March Oxford Morsefest, which featured five walks, a drink in the Morse bar in the Randolph Hotel and ended with a meal in the Bookbinders, another Morse watering hole.

British TV's drama legacy is much richer thanks to the Morse franchise. A fine example of the value of making and exporting British TV creativity. Morse will live on in archive channels worldwide. Adieu Endeavour Morse. ■

John Mair is a former BBC producer who has edited 53 books on the media and current affairs.



Endeavour: Shaun Evans (right) as the young Detective Sergeant Endeavour Morse, with Detective Inspector Fred Thursday (Roger Allam)

to be Morse's gofer, with an ever-open wallet to buy his boss drinks.

Then there's the testy relationship with police superiors and, of course, the vintage red Jaguar – reg 248 RPA. It had been an Audi in the books but Thaw insisted that this was not sophisticated enough. Plus, simply good stories and classy direction over two hours, which remains an unusual length for an episode of TV drama.

But perhaps the biggest hero was the Oxford setting. One thousand years of history, beautiful stone colleges, full of bright people who enjoy intrigue. Oxford colleges can be vicious places – intellectually and physically. At some points in the 1990s, when *Morse* was on air, Oxford was briefly the murder capital of the world, with one murder a week. The true figure was two per year. Nevertheless, former *Guardian* editor Alan Rusbridger was warned by his children to walk carefully, when he took over as Principal of Lady Margaret Hall.

Never has a setting been better chosen. Inspector Morse was an intellectual, a classical-music lover, aesthete and BA (Oxon) – failed. Oxford college

need to be a detective to find it. My book can help guide them.

That is why I am pushing the city to create a "Morse Code" – 10 or so white plaques for a Morse trail for all, for ever.

And yet much of *Morse* was not actually filmed in the city of dreaming spires. Exteriors, yes; interiors, not always. Television economics got in the way – union strictures on overtime meant it was simply too expensive to keep crews away from base for long periods. *Inspector Morse*'s "film house" was in Ealing, London. Another example: in the first film, Morse and Lewis go into the Old Bookbinders in Jericho, "his first pub", for a snifter, but the inside was filmed at Bray Studios. Morse fanatics get very confused when they come into my local pub.

One of the secrets of the franchise's longevity is how it has been extended and deepened. Dexter wrote just 13 novels; they became the bedrock of 33 Morse films. When Morse died on screen in 2000 – and John Thaw in real life less than 18 months later – ITV extended the franchise with *Lewis*, which ran from 2006 to 2015. Lewis

In pursuit of authenticity



I Am... Ruth

BBC

The RTS hears how **Kate Winslet** and **Dominic Savage** collaborated to create a heartbreaking story of a mother's struggle with her alienated teenage daughter

If you've seen it, you'll know. The impact of Dominic Savage's anthology series *I Am...* depends on something beyond even its roster of acclaimed female leads – luminaries such as Samantha Morton, Letitia Wright and Leslie Manville. It's also the way each self-contained episode devastates with its all-too-realistic vignette of the female experience told in a way that teases out the very best from these talented actors. It could be mental health, toxic relationships or middle-age invisibility.

Even so, the newest addition to the fold, the first feature-length edition since Channel 4 began screening the series in 2019, hits a different note. As with all the *I Am...* episodes, *I Am Ruth* saw Savage write the story with its lead actor, on this occasion Kate Winslet.

It's often said that women are best placed to tell women's stories but Savage, who is also the director, cultivates the female perspective at the heart of the story. At an RTS event examining "*I Am Ruth* Q&A", Savage said: "I made a film with Gemma Arterton [*The Escapel*], and I remember someone asking her what was it like, with a man making a female film. She said, 'Well, Dominic isn't like most men', which I took as a great compliment. Perhaps that's why I make them – because I'm not like most men."

The topic of Winslet's episode is ostensibly "the effects of social media". But it's so much more: it sensitively illustrates the loneliness of single parenting and the realities of anxiety and depression.

Explaining how their collaboration began, Winslet told the RTS, "Dominic initially sat down with me and said, 'Tell me, what is something people wouldn't expect you to be passionate about? Or is there something that means a great deal to you that perhaps you haven't experienced within any role that you have played?'"

That's when Winslet, a mother of three, picked up on the shift in dynamics that social media has engendered within the family. "As parents today, we are faced with these challenges, where you sometimes look at your child and think, 'You are worlds away from where I'd hoped you might be mentally right now, and I don't know what to do to help you or best support you,'" she said. "I think we wanted to honestly open up that conversation, because it's a very strange thing, as parents, when you're on a

white-knuckle ride for a moment and you think, ‘My God, I wish there was a manual. How do we do this?’”

This fresh perspective on a common subject (think *Black Mirror* and *Years and Years*) has made it resonate profoundly. “Every single one of the friends who came to our screening said, ‘That’s me,’” said Winslet. “We were lost for Kleenex, there was just not enough to go around. We were able to capture what it feels like as a mother, and show it in a way that was both sincere and messy – because being a parent is really fucking messy sometimes.”

Savage fleshed out their conversations into a script, which included

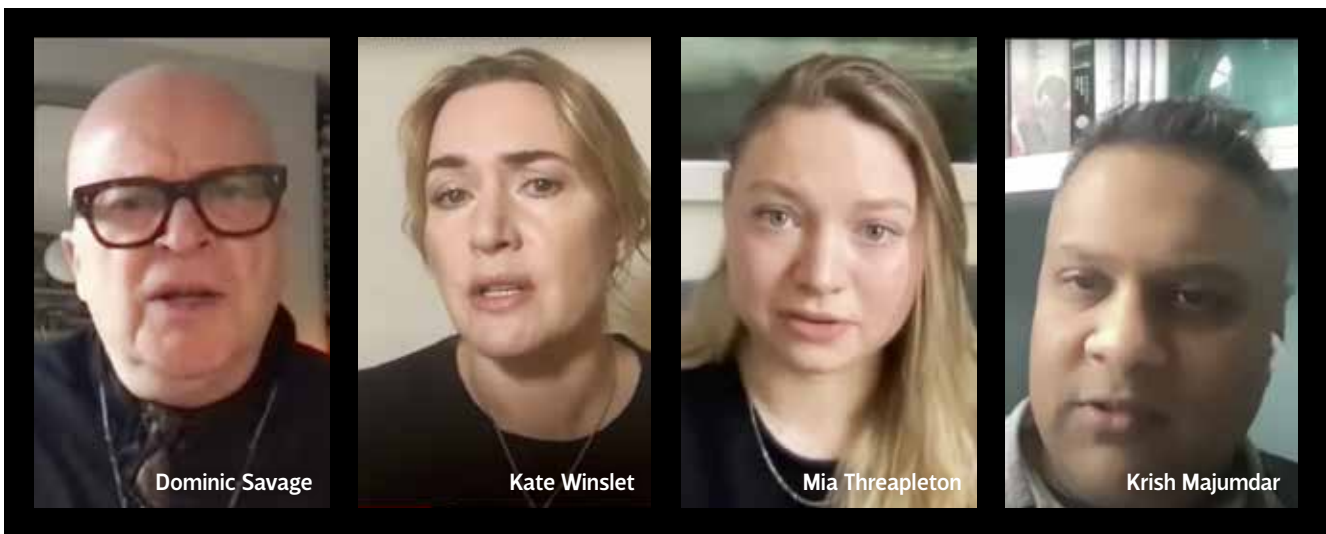
was so long that we had to stop in the middle, change the camera battery, and then keep going again.”

Although the 22-year-old had the right credentials for the role of Freya, she still had to meet Savage to audition. Said Majumdar: “It was all done properly, and there was separation between them knowing each other.”

Added Winslet: “I wouldn’t have wanted it for her if it was her first job, because I would have absolutely understood people saying, ‘Oh, it’s nepotism.’ People are going to say those things anyway – one just has to tune it out –but, for me, the most important thing is that she doesn’t

That experience also informed Winslet’s depiction of Ruth, particularly around her denial of their problem. “One of Mia’s wonderful teachers did say to me, ‘It’s anxiety. She has got anxiety.’ I absolutely remember saying, ‘No, she hasn’t’. She took my hand and she said, ‘I’ve seen it many times before. She has anxiety.’ I had to acknowledge that this was something we were about to enter into and would fix. Fortunately, we were able to.

“Mia and I have always been fortunate in having a close relationship, so it wasn’t something that came about as a result of something I had done, but I had nevertheless missed it. It was



RTS

directions and actions, but not dialogue. Filming then took place in chronological order, with improvised dialogue on an intimate set. For even greater authenticity, Winslet plays mum to Freya, the character of her real-life daughter, Mia Threapleton, (*Dangerous Liaisons*, *Shadows*).

Krish Majumdar, producer of the series for Me+You Productions, explained that it made shooting challenging. “My main job is to create this hermetically sealed space where Dominic can work with Mia, Kate and the actors,” he said. “It’s all in the pursuit of authenticity and truth, and that creates an atmosphere in which they can create something different and special.

“As there’s improvisation, the takes are very long – some of the takes are 20 minutes, 30 minutes.”

Threapleton recalled that the longest take was 58 minutes. “I will never forget that as long as I live,” she said. “That was the scene where we first meet Freya, and she is in front of her mirror trying on different outfits. It

need me to do the job that she is capable of doing.”

Threapleton’s performance as a troubled teen proved a hit. When the episode aired in December 2022, *Radio Times* echoed many of the other reviews when it wrote, “It could go so badly wrong. But, from the moment she appears on screen, Threapleton puts those fears to rest.” It helped that she had first-hand knowledge of the issues that play out in the drama – social media pressures and, primarily, experience of teenage anxiety.

Threapleton explained that, for her, it began at 18: “A lot of that anxiety did actually come from my phone. I didn’t have any social media on it but it was connected to lots of other different things. I had legitimate anxiety, for which I did, genuinely, have to go to a mental health professional. It was really, really hard. And I was also dealing with A-Levels, and I just wanted to be done. I know what it’s like, having panic attacks randomly at lunchtime,” she said.

important for us to show how, as parents, we do miss it. We do say the wrong thing.”

With the *I Am...* series continuing to gain momentum with time, Savage promises that other dramas will follow suit. “I’ll keep trying to make female stories for as long as I can,” he said. “The men have had their go, haven’t they? The men have had enough stories about them.”

Added Majumdar: “The great dramatist Tony Garnett said to me that, when you get to his age, you want to look back on your career [and find a] film that mattered, that said something to society. Most people won’t be lucky enough to make one. I really believe this is one of them. When we all grow old, we’ll all look back at this and say, this was really special.” ■

Report by Shilpa Ganatra. The RTS national event ‘I Am Ruth Q&A’ was held on 28 February. The producer was Mira Ryness, publicity lead for scripted (drama and comedy) at Channel 4.

Broadcasters unite for royal funeral

British broadcasters were praised for their coverage of Queen Elizabeth II's death and its aftermath. The RTS discovers how it was done

We all know that broadcasters had spent decades preparing for the death of Queen Elizabeth II, whose 70-year reign ended last autumn at the age of 96. Yet, as anyone who's ever worked in a newsroom knows, even the best-laid plans can come unstuck.

This was the case last September when heavy rain disrupted live aerial TV coverage of the cortege containing the monarch's coffin, which had been flown from Edinburgh to London.

It was evening when the procession made its progress from RAF Northolt to Buckingham Palace, watched by tearful, cheering crowds. "Due to bad weather, our helicopter couldn't fly," recalled the BBC's Jon Whitney, deployment editor for UK news-gathering. This left TV networks without any aerial pictures. "We had two hours to solve a problem that, normally, we'd have two days to fix."

By the BBC pooling its resources with ITV News and Sky, a solution was found. Extra cameras were hastily positioned along the route as film crews from ordinarily competing organisations set up on hotel balconies and receptions to create a seamless live feed. "We came together to make

it work," said Whitney. "It was a responsible time for everybody."

Whitney was one of four panellists speaking at an RTS event, "Operation Lion: Broadcasting a once in a nation's lifetime event". Chaired by presenter Anila Dhami, it provided a fascinating insight into the organisation of the TV coverage of the Queen's death and its aftermath.

There were stories of ingenuity, stress and long hours as, by common consent, British broadcasters, especially the BBC, rose to the occasion. Kiko Itasaka, the producer at NBC's London office in charge of royal coverage, said: "Thanks to the brilliant coverage of all the UK broadcasters, the world, including your international

partners at ZDF or CBC, all benefited.... That's what enabled us to tell the story to the US. Those are images that went around the world to millions and millions of people."

Tami Hoffman, head of news and archive, ITN Productions, noted that, "It was incredibly

collegiate – and not just between broadcasters, but within our own newsrooms, as well. We realised that the way we'd serve our own purposes best was by pulling together." More than 26 million watched the funeral in the UK, according to Barb figures, with millions more tuning in overseas.

**'I OFTEN
COULD NOT
SLEEP... I
CONSIDERED
EVERYTHING
THAT COULD
GO WRONG'**



Just after noon on 8 September, when it emerged that members of the Royal Family had started to gather at Balmoral, where the Queen was said to be "under medical supervision" but "comfortable", ITN began the first stage of its reporting.

"We got people on planes up to Scotland and reached out to our satellite-truck providers," said Hoffman. "From an operational perspective, the worst that could have happened was that we could have chucked a bit of money at it and been wrong. That was a much better thing to do than to sit, twiddling out thumbs and thinking, 'Should we press go?'"

Itasaka remembered thinking, "This is it – because, the day before, the Queen had missed a virtual Privy Council meeting, which she tended to attend even when she was unwell.



BBC

Without even thinking about it, I put on a black dress to go to work.”

In the event, the Queen’s death was announced later that day, at 6:30pm, to a stunned country whose monarch had survived 15 prime ministers but was no more. It was the end of an era. A period of national mourning was about to start but news broadcasters needed to get on with the job.

For the panellists, the news and the fallout from it would dominate their every waking moment for the next 10 to 12 days. “I don’t think I got any sleep for two weeks,” said Tim Forrest, a content editor at ITV News, who had spent the previous three years preparing for the Queen’s death, much of it holed up in his loft during lockdown.

Itasaka admitted that the monarch’s presence at Balmoral, rather than London or Windsor, caused her some

‘REASSURING YOUR TEAM IS IMPORTANT: “YOU’RE GOING TO BE FINE, JUST STICK WITH THE PLAN”’

anxiety over logistics. “I’d spent loads of time on the Scotland plan,” countered Forrest. Similarly, the Scottish location was not a problem for the BBC. “Our colleagues in Scotland were excellent. They all had a plan,” said Whitney.

The panel agreed that it had been important to reassure colleagues.

“When you get a big story like this, people can be a bit rabbit in the headlights,” said Hoffman. “Reassuring your team is important: ‘You’re going to be fine, just stick with the plan.’”

Whitney added: “It was important to stay calm so that other people in the office stayed calm. On the whole, people were calm. There were a lot of stories that were more stressful [to cover] than this one. People had clear instructions about what they were doing. BBC Scotland was the major focus when the story happened.”

Itasaka revealed that for the previous three years she had been reluctant to take holidays in case the Queen died while she was away. When she did take a break, the NBC producer always carried hard copies of the funeral plan in her hand luggage.

“It was important that everyone ▶



BBC

► got all the briefing material we had prepared.

“A lot of American reporters had familiarity with the British Royal Family, maybe it was from the TV series *The Crown*.... We spent a lot of time ensuring that the right information was distributed to the right people. It had to be short enough that they could read it on the plane.”

What was the mood like in TV newsrooms when the monarch’s death was announced? “The office was really quiet, no shouting or screaming.... There was so much about to happen,” said Whitney.

“Our office was similarly quiet,” remembered Itasaka. “Even though we had had hours to prepare, I was shocked. ‘Oh, do I want to cry? Oh, I don’t have time to cry.’”

She emphasised: “In London, we felt an extraordinary amount of responsibility to ensure that our American colleagues got everything right. They weren’t steeped in the history.”

Said Hoffman: “I wouldn’t underestimate the fact that we really did have a few hours to get our own heads together on it. It wasn’t a JFK moment. We had a few hours to absorb it. When the news was announced there was a strange sense

‘IT WAS ONE OF THE MOST COLLEGIATE THINGS I HAVE EVER DONE’

of calm. The newsroom went quiet as everybody watched the screens.”

This didn’t last for long, as reporters, producers and their crews were deployed. To help with logistics, WhatsApp groups were set up to enable broadcasters to communicate with one another as resources were pooled. This avoided a situation where people such as Tim Forrest could find themselves overwhelmed by phone messages. He explained that, “during the coverage of Prince Philip’s death, I couldn’t read my phone because there were so many messages”.

What, then, were the panellists’ reflections on being involved in organising the coverage of such a seminal event, asked Dhama. “I’d always dreaded it,” confessed Hoffman, “It was a genuine sleepless nights thing. Often, I couldn’t sleep, or I would wake up, because I was worrying about it.

“It was a heavy burden to shoulder, certainly in the months leading up to it. I always considered everything that could go wrong.

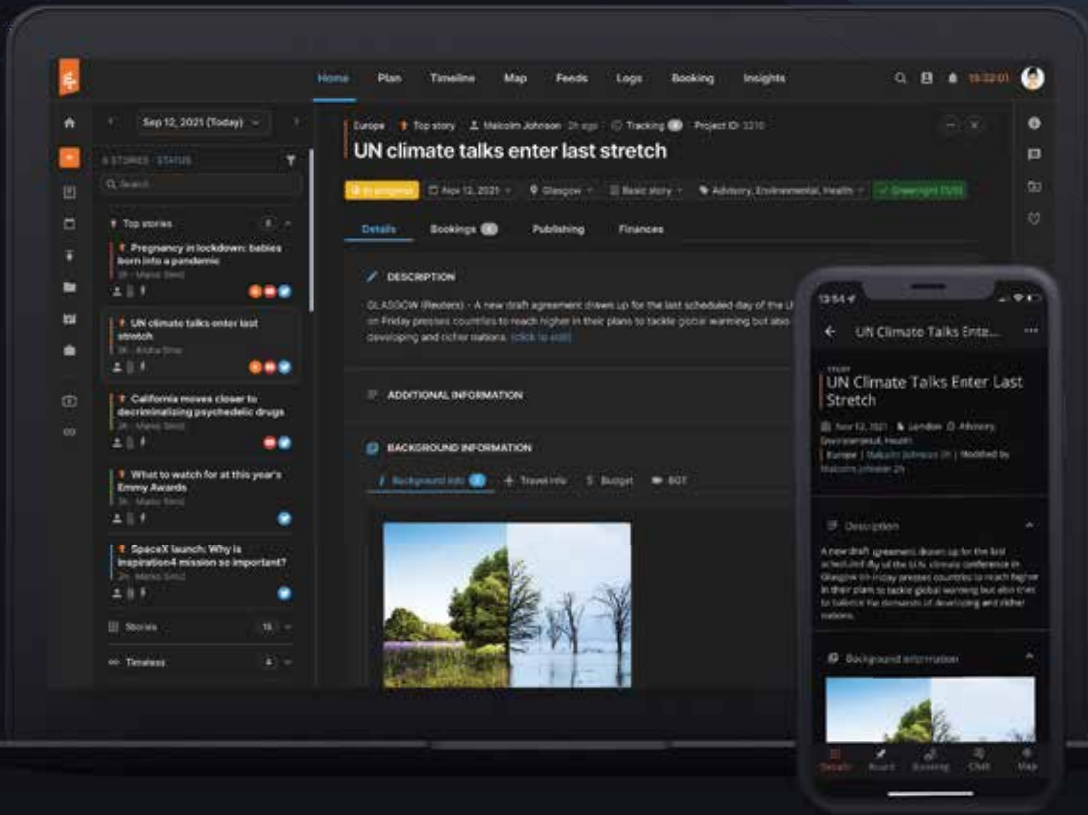
“I never thought [that] I could bring all that I’d learnt in my career – the relationships, the knowledge I’d built up – to bear in a two-week period. I came away from it feeling proud of myself and my team.

“It was one of the most collegiate things I’d ever done, both with my colleagues internally and with other broadcasters.

“I was privileged to be in the gallery on the day of the funeral watching those beautiful pictures.”

Itasaka confessed that she, too, had experienced many sleepless nights, fretting over the challenge of covering the Queen’s death. “I remember relief when I realised that everything was working and that our 17 locations were up and running,” she added. “It was the largest international event we’d ever done.” ■

Report by Steve Clarke. ‘Operation Lion: Broadcasting a once in a nation’s lifetime event’ was a joint RTS London and RTS Technology event held on 23 February at London’s Regent Street Cinema. The producer was Kim Rowell, managing editor, news production, ITN.



Wolftech News

Storycentric planning for storytellers, by storytellers



Idea



Story



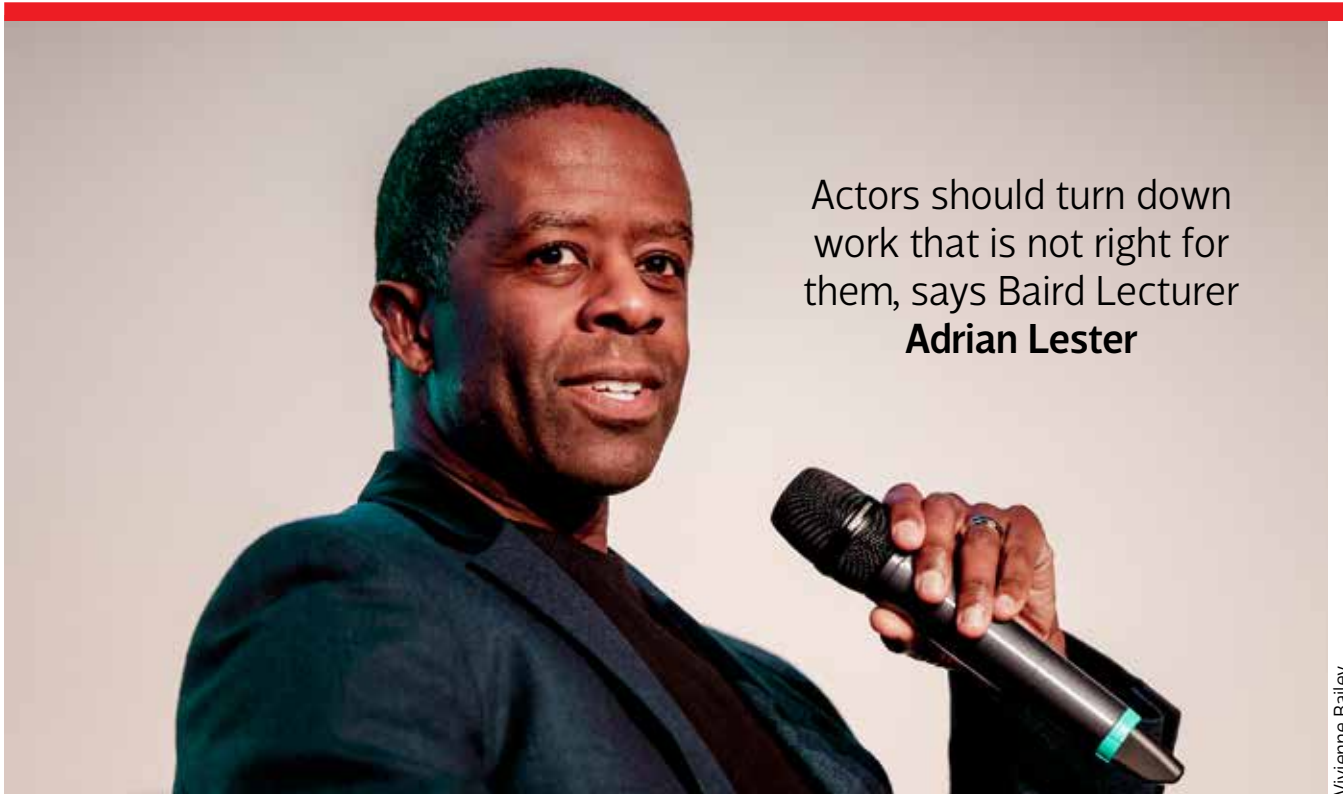
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Vivienne Bailey

Actors should turn down work that is not right for them, says Baird Lecturer **Adrian Lester**

‘Be more tomato’

Adrian Lester and Will Trotter (opposite) delivered thoughtful and entertaining lectures, after they received the prestigious Baird Medal from RTS Midlands for their outstanding contributions, on- and off-screen.

Actor and director Adrian Lester captured the attention of his audience by urging them to “be more tomato”. Sprinkling his inspiring talk with references to the fruit, the *Hustle* star said: “A tomato tastes just as good whether you call it a fruit or a vegetable. Labels define you and are a bad thing for creatives, so, in that sense, we should be tomatoes. We can be anything, hot, cold, spicy or cool to the tongue, and it’s up to the rest of the world to catch up.”

The event was held where it all began for Lester as a teenager, the Midlands Arts Centre in Birmingham. He said: “I had an empty pocket and a curious mind, and the MAC gave me access to all sorts of performance styles. I will always be truly grateful. Please keep

the doors open for people like me.”

Lester signed up for a ballet course (“where I stuck out like a sore thumb”), had his “mind blown” by theatre productions, joined a drama club and sneaked his way into studios to practise breakdancing and play piano.

After Rada, and aged 28, he won a leading role in a major Hollywood movie, *Primary Colors*, alongside John Travolta, Emma Thompson and Kathy Bates. Lester returned to the UK, hoping to get good parts, but was unemployed for a year. He was surprised to learn that Bates was also out of work, but that she taught herself to play the harp in her downtime.

“When you are not being paid, that’s when the real work starts. I read plays and I took up a hobby that keeps me fit, positive and balanced – in my case, martial arts,” said Lester, a black belt in taekwondo.

“There are long periods of waiting, and the real devil you have to fight is frustration. Don’t let it make you less, let it make you more.”

Lester agreed that it was no accident that he had played so many different roles, from a conman in *Hustle* to the Prime Minister in *The Undeclared War*, from a surgeon in *Trauma* to an art

dealer in *Riviera*. “I don’t want to be that kind of actor where you know you’re going to get the same accent, mannerisms and turn of phrase. That bores me. I like people who twist and make themselves different.”

Lester stressed the importance of refusing jobs if they’re not right, declaring, “Saying no is the actor’s only power”, and of expanding his talents into writing and directing.

He confessed that he initially turned down what would appear to be a dream job, starring alongside Julia Stiles in the south of France in the glamorous Sky drama *Riviera*. He accepted only when the producers came back and asked him to also direct two episodes. Despite a budget of £3m an episode to play with, he still faced challenges.

He told the RTS: “One pivotal scene was particularly tricky, a handover in a square in Nice involving an assassination by a sniper. There were two camera teams and I asked for two more and a drone. I thought I could do it in three days, then they came back and said I had one day. I panicked on the inside and said, ‘Yeah, no problem’. We did 56 set-ups in one day and it was my proudest moment.” ■

‘Don’t kiss in the gallery’

Baird Lecturer **Will Trotter** explains his secret prescription for *Doctors*’ longevity

Executive producer Will Trotter told the RTS audience how he took a side-ways route into drama. The head of the BBC’s Drama Village in Birmingham is the man behind *Doctors*, *WPC 56*, *Father Brown* and *Shakespeare & Hathaway*. But it was a struggle to get his first job in TV.

After drama school in his home city of Manchester – where he played in a punk band that supported Buzzcocks – he received no replies to any of his letters to TV producers. Fearing it was too hard for a working-class lad to break into what he considered an elite of Oxbridge graduates, he took an alternative path. He wrote to the head of regional news in Birmingham and was hired after spending a week shadowing the production team on *Midlands Today*.

Trotter revealed that he fell in love with a trainee vision mixer while directing the show, which nearly led to his firing. He was too distracted by his developing relationship to push the button at the end of the national news to switch to regional output, so everyone in the Midlands watched *South East Today*.

“I kept my job but, when the opportunity came to move to drama, I seized it. Alex and I are still married, 32 years on. But my advice is, don’t kiss in the gallery!”

Of his break into TV, Trotter added: “It taught me the importance of giving people a chance if you’re in the position to do so.” That has been his mission in Birmingham, giving opportunities to hundreds of creatives, including Claire Foy and Eddie Redmayne.

Asked if he had any unfulfilled ambitions, Trotter replied: “I was very jealous of *Happy Valley*. I wanted to do a Fargo-type drama set in the Black

Country years ago, but Sally Wainwright beat me to it.”

One of his proudest achievements has been embracing the new technologies that can make digital video look like film for a fraction of the price, which allowed him to develop the daily daytime soap *Doctors*.

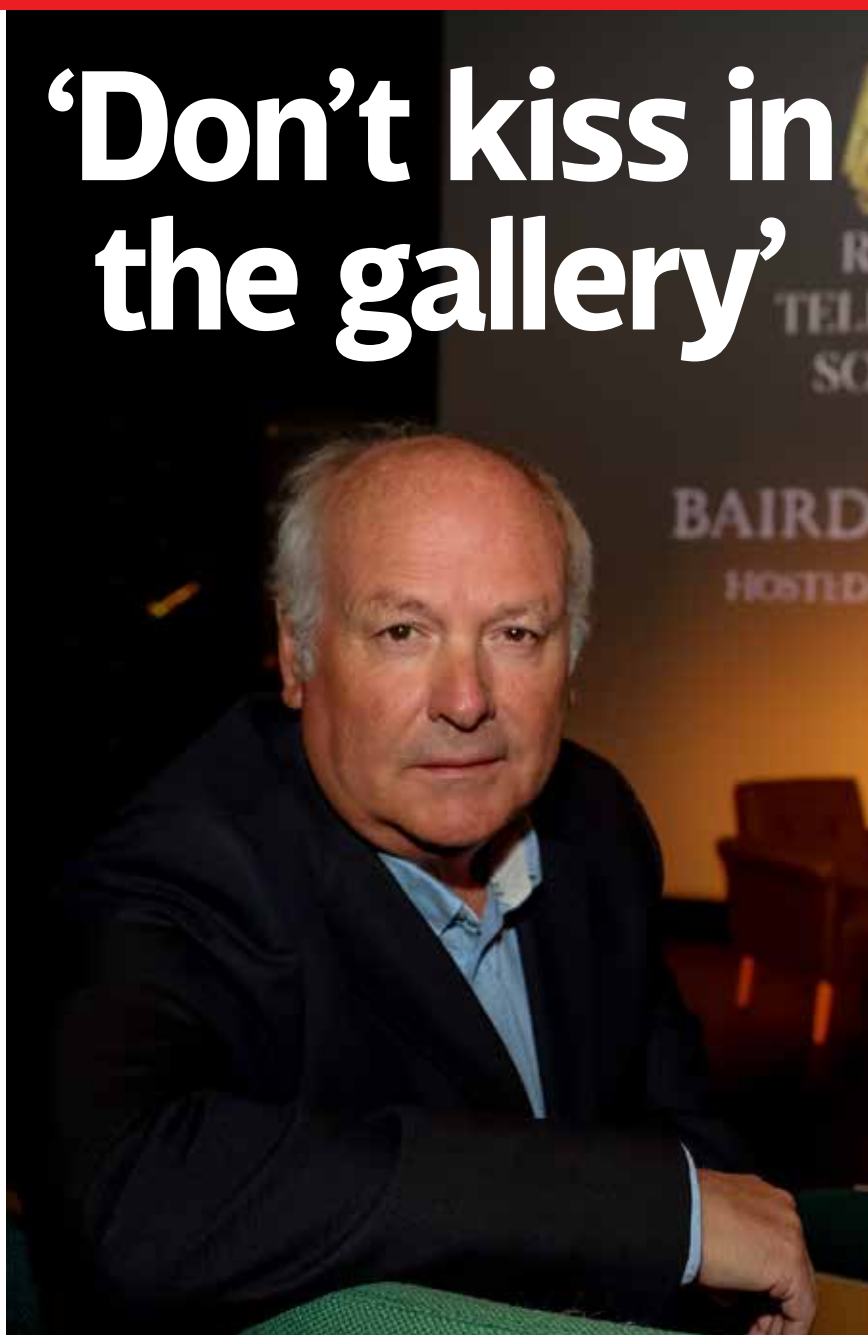
“When we first pitched the idea it was pretty much laughed out of London,” he recalled. “We were told it would look terrible and no one would watch. But, 22 years and 4,000 episodes later, the show is as strong as ever. *Doctors* has continued to win audiences and awards while other, far better funded, continuing drama series have fallen away.

“Over the years, *Doctors* has covered

numerous challenging subjects, including paedophilia and rape. To tell these really difficult stories and get the tone right in daytime is something I will be for ever proud of.

“*Father Brown* is another great achievement, sold to more than 230 territories around the world, including China. The teams at the Drama Village are innovative, fearless and incredibly creative. I am really proud of our ‘can do’ attitude.”

Report by Roz Laws. The Baird Lectures 2023 were held on 16 February at the Midlands Arts Centre in Birmingham. The event was produced by Dorothy Hobson and hosted by TV and radio presenter Nikki Bedi.



Vivienne Bailey

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

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

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

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

Application procedure

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

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





RTS Television Journalism Awards 2023

In partnership with:



WOLFTECH

Dataminr

The awards were presented on 1 March at the London Hilton on Park Lane and hosted by journalist and presenter Dan Walker

Breaking News

Russian Invasion of Ukraine

CNN International

‘By any definition [of what a breaking news story is], the entry stood out from a list of strong contenders for its speed of response, exceptional eye-witness reporting and comprehensive coverage.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Liz Truss Resigns**, BBC News for BBC News Channel
- ▶ **Death of HM The Queen**, BBC News for BBC One

Camera Operator of the Year

Mstyslav Chernov

The Associated Press

‘The judges placed on record their admiration for the skill and courage of all the camera operators and news journalists covering the conflict. The winner [showed] intimate knowledge of this theatre of war combined with visual storytelling excellence.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Darren (‘DC’) Conway**, BBC News for BBC One
- ▶ **Natalie Thomas**, Reuters

Current Affairs – Home

The Crossing – Exposure

DM Documentary Productions for ITV1

‘A stupendous piece of film-making, displaying great bravery and compelling storytelling. This treatment offered an original insight into the migrant journey and the evil forces behind people smuggling.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Abuse of Power – Tim Westwood**, BBC News and BBC Current Affairs for BBC Three
- ▶ **The Post Office Scandal – Panorama**, BBC Current Affairs for BBC One ▶

Current Affairs – International

Under Poisoned Skies –

BBC World News

BBC News Arabic Investigations for BBC News Arabic

‘The winner explored many aspects of this story: a deeply moving human side; a corporate and finance dimension, exposing the legal loopholes used by global oil companies; and the consequent environmental damage to the planet. An enterprising and original piece of journalism.’

Nominees:

► **Mariupol – The People’s Story –**

Panorama, Top Hat Productions/Hayloft Productions for BBC One

► **Afghanistan – No Country for Women –**

Exposure, Quicksilver Media for ITV1

Innovation

BBC News: Undercover Voters

BBC Newsnight/Americast – BBC News for BBC One/BBC Two/BBC World and BBC News Channel/BBC Sounds

‘This category replaced the News Technology award and attracted a wide range of entries. Many [are] reaching younger audiences in ever-increasing numbers. The winner was a multimedia project [that] tackled a really important issue in an interesting and original way.’

Nominees:

► **Ros Atkins on... Explainers**, BBC for BBC News Channel, BBC World News, BBC News at Six and Ten

► **Here’s The Story**, ITV News Digital – ITN/ITV News for ITV News Digital/ITV1

Nations and Regions – Factual

The Great Ferries Scandal –

Disclosure

BBC Scotland for BBC One Scotland ‘A genuinely gripping story of a huge and intricate scandal, in which the reporter forensically tried to find the villain in the piece.’

Nominees:

► **Spotlight – The Babymaker**

Uncovered, BBC NI for BBC One Northern Ireland

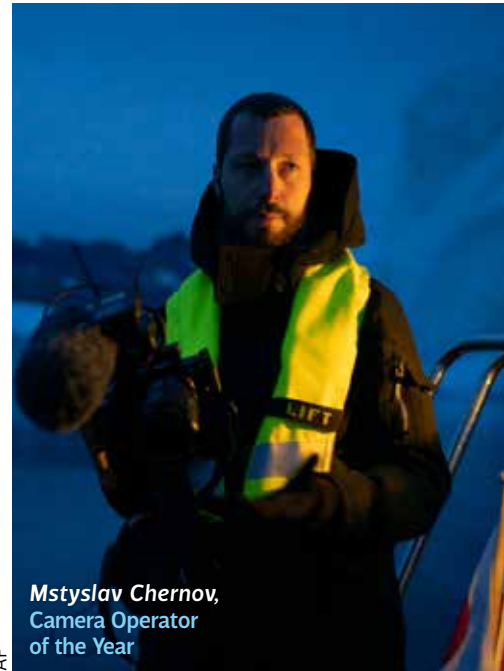
► **The Hidden World of Football – BBC**

Wales Investigates, BBC Wales for BBC One Wales



The Crossing – Exposure, Current Affairs – Home

ITV



Mstyslav Chernov, Camera Operator of the Year

AP



Russian invasion of Ukraine, Breaking News

CNN

Watch the full video of the RTS Television Journalism Awards 2023, at: bit.ly/rtv-TVJ23



Manchester Arena Inquiry, Nations and Regions – News

ITV



Under Poisoned Skies,
Current Affairs –
International

BBC



Dan Walker, Host

Richard Kendal



BBC News at Ten,
Network Daily News
Programme of the Year

BBC



The Great Ferries Scandal
– Disclosure, Nations and
Regions – Factual

BBC



BBC News: Undercover Voters, Innovation

BBC



*Colin Campbell – BBC
South East Today,*
Nations and Regions
Reporter of the Year

BBC



Richard Kendal

Outstanding Contribution Award Jeremy Paxman

‘There are very few TV journalists of whom you could say without fear of being ridiculed that they are legends in their own lifetimes. Our winner of the Outstanding Contribution Award is one of those few – although I expect he will ridicule us for using such a ghastly cliché.

‘He said recently his job had once been a daily grind of trying to make sense of the latest tomfoolery that passes for government. He did

it with such panache, humour and irreverence that his programme, *Newsnight*, was a must-watch event.

‘More recently he has hosted – brilliantly – the toughest quiz on TV, *University Challenge*, dismissing daft responses with the same despairing disdain he once reserved for politicians, while giving the distinct impression he, personally, doesn’t even need the cards to know the answers.’

Nations and Regions – News

Manchester Arena Inquiry – Emergency Response – Granada Reports

ITV News Granada for ITV1

‘The finalists all produced exceptional programmes with impressive storytelling that shone a light on controversial and contentious issues. The winner was an outstanding, powerful and well-constructed watch.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **The East Kent Hospitals Baby Scandal – ITV Meridian East**, ITV Meridian for ITV1
- ▶ **Dying on the Streets: News Special – UTV Live**, UTV

Nations and Regions Reporter of the Year

Colin Campbell – BBC South East Today

BBC South East for BBC One

‘All three nominees would be worthy winners. The winning reporter produced an impressive range of original journalism, as well as being a skilled self-shooter and editor, and an authoritative studio performer.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Rags Martel – ITV London News**, ITN/ITV News for ITV1
- ▶ **Amy Welch – ITV News Granada Reports**, ITV Granada for ITV1

Network Daily News Programme of the Year

BBC News at Ten

BBC News for BBC One

‘The quality of journalism and production of the main news programmes on all channels was very strong. The winning programme was chosen for its consistently high standard of reporting from an outstanding team of correspondents, on location and in its new studio.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Channel 4 News**, ITN for Channel 4
- ▶ **Sky News at Ten**, Sky News

Network Interview of the Year

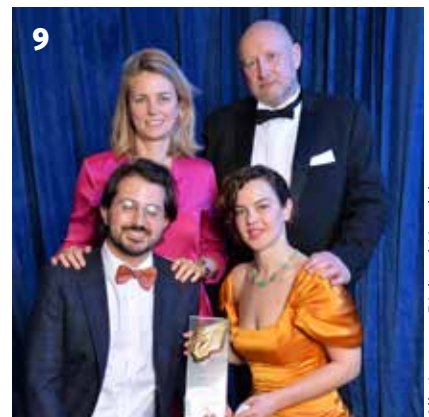
Lukashenko Rosenberg

BBC News for BBC News Channel

‘The winning interview was brave, exemplary, an electric piece of television and a masterclass in interviewing a megalomaniac tyrant. The interviewer calmly nailed attempts to lie and mislead and, at the same time, extracted new information that made headlines. What’s more, he did it in his second language.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Jason Farrell Interviews Leona Whitworth**, Sky News
- ▶ **Beth Rigby Interviews Prime Minister Boris Johnson**, Sky News ▶



1 *Clive Myrie*, Network Presenter of the Year

4 *Michael Buchanan*, Specialist Journalist of the Year

7 *Lukashenko Rosenberg*, Network Interview of the Year

2 *Partygate* – ITV News, Scoop of the Year and News Coverage – Home

5 *The Crossing* – Exposure, Current Affairs – Home

8 *BBC News at Ten*, Network Daily News Programme of the Year

3 *Vasilisa Stepanenko* – Ukraine War, Young Talent of the Year

6 *Sky News*, News Channel of the Year

9 *Under Poisoned Skies*, Current Affairs – International

All pictures: Richard Kendal

Network Presenter of the Year

Clive Myrie

BBC News for BBC One

‘A presenter of extraordinary range: whether anchoring news programmes live from Ukraine or announcing breaking news from the studio, he radiates dignity and calm under the most intense pressure. He brings empathy as well as authority to his distinctive broadcasting.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Huw Edwards**, BBC News for BBC One
- ▶ **Susanna Reid** – *Good Morning Britain*, ITV Studios for ITV1

Network Television Journalist of the Year

Stuart Ramsay

Sky News

‘A visual storyteller whose professionalism shines through in all his work. His standout report was a graphic and terrifying illustration of what it’s like to be a civilian in Ukraine – a remarkable account of what happened when his team’s car was shot up by Russian forces.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Jeremy Bowen**, BBC News for BBC One
- ▶ **Paul Brand**, ITN/ITV News for ITV1

News Channel of the Year

Sky News

‘The winning entry was simply outstanding – with an impressive range of coverage, strong presentation, creative production and it showed a commitment to reporting the issues that matter most to the audience beyond daily events.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Al Jazeera English**
- ▶ **BBC News Channel**

News Coverage – Home

Partygate – ITV News

ITN/ITV News for ITV1

‘The standout entry consisted of a succession of scoops that sparked headlines around the world and changed the course of British politics.’

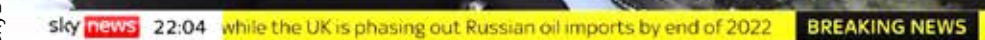
Nominees:

- ▶ **NHS on the Brink** – *Newsnight*, BBC News for BBC Two
- ▶ **Violence Against Women and Girls**, Sky News



Sky News, News Channel of the Year

BSkyB



Stuart Ramsay, Network Television Journalist of the Year

BSkyB



Lukashenko Rosenberg, Network Interview of the Year

BBC

Partygate – ITV News, News Coverage – Home and Scoop of the Year



ALLEGRA STRATTON

(laughs) This is recorded. This fictional party was a business meeting... and it was not socially distanced.

News Coverage – International War in Ukraine

BBC News for BBC One

'The winner combined vivid and brave frontline reporting with insightful coverage of the refugee problem and the politics driving the Ukraine conflict. It displayed strong, authoritative reporting from some of the UK's best known and most respected journalists.'

Nominees:

- ▶ **Ukraine: On the Frontline**, Sky News
- ▶ **20 Days in Mariupol**, The Associated Press

On-Demand Journalism

Should I Tell You I'm Trans? Disclosure – iPlayer Shorts

BBC Scotland for BBC iPlayer

'The jurors welcomed the diversity of first-class video submissions from non-traditional broadcasters and praised their quality. The winner tackled a difficult subject, which polarises opinions and elicits strong emotion, but treated it sensitively and calmly.'

Nominees:

- ▶ **Ukraine: Frontline Medics**, BBC News for BBC
- ▶ **The Saudi Prince: How Dangerous is MBS?** – *The Economist*, Economist Films for YouTube

Political Journalist of the Year

Paul Brand – ITV News

ITN/ITV News for ITV1

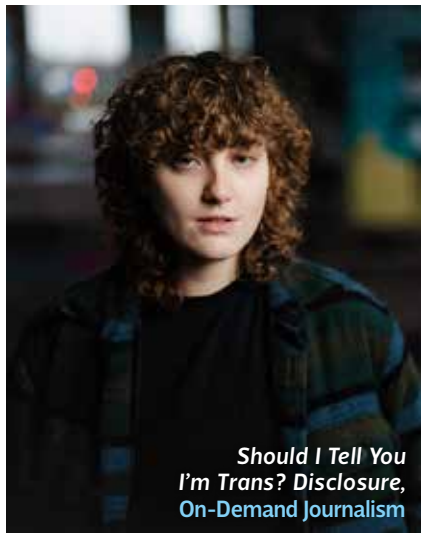
'In an eminent field, the winner's work stood out. It moved the dial so decisively that it was pivotal in the demise of a prime minister. The winner had an amazing array of scoops and, in one case, didn't just get the story, but the video as well.'

Nominees:

- ▶ **Anushka Asthana – ITV News**, ITN/ITV News for ITV1
- ▶ **Beth Rigby**, Sky News



Paul Brand – ITV News, Political Journalist of the Year



Should I Tell You I'm Trans? Disclosure, On-Demand Journalism



War in Ukraine, News Coverage – International



BSkyB

RTS Special Award *BBC, ITN, PA and Sky News* – *Cameras in Court*

‘On 28 July 2022, cameras were allowed into Crown Courts for the first time to televise judges’ sentencing remarks.

‘This award recognises an outstanding contribution to the advancement of video journalism during the awards year, when the Cameras in Court campaign finally secured access to the Crown Courts.

‘The Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales, Lord Burnett, accepted the case made by TV news organisations, when he said, “The sentencing of serious court cases is something in which there is a legitimate public interest.”

‘This is now an integral part of court reporting.’

Scoop of the Year

Partygate – ITV News

ITN/ITV News for ITV1

‘Painstaking nurturing of sources produced not just one but multiple scoops [and was] followed up by the entire news media. The journalism contrasted the behaviour at the heart of government with the way the general population was expected to act.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Pincher: What the PM Knew**, BBC News for BBC
- ▶ **20 Days in Mariupol**, The Associated Press

Specialist Journalist of the Year

Michael Buchanan

BBC News for BBC One

‘The winner is a journalist who has devoted several years to pursuing and exposing appalling failures that wrecked many lives. Despite the emotional nature of his stories, he never loses his focus and clarity.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Paraic O’Brien – The Refugee and Migrant Crises – Channel 4 News**, ITN for Channel 4
- ▶ **Dan Rivers – War Crimes – ITV News**, ITN/ITV News for ITV1

Young Talent of the Year

Vasilisa Stepanenko – Ukraine War

The Associated Press

‘Several judges were in tears while watching our winner’s entry. She showed amazing bravery and incredible tenacity. Everything we know about the terrible events in Mariupol started with her work, and she was only 22 at the time. An astonishing young journalist.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Marianna Spring, Disinformation and Social Media Correspondent**, BBC News for BBC One and BBC Two
- ▶ **Inzamam Rashid**, Sky News ■



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#RTSawards

The RTS Futures Careers Fair made a triumphant return to the Business Design Centre in Islington, London, last month, after two years of Covid-enforced absence, during which time it was held virtually. Some 1,300 people attended the fair and around 300 received expert advice from a CV clinic. There were 45 exhibitors in the hall plus an “Ask me anything area”.

The day began with a masterclass on *House of the Dragon*, the *Game of Thrones* prequel, in which director Clare Kilner and cinematographer Catherine Goldschmidt discussed their work on the HBO fantasy drama, and how they broke into the industry and built their careers.

Kilner was a stage manager in the theatre, including at the Royal Court in London. She recalled: “I was working in the rehearsal room, watching directors and I thought, ‘I want to do that – I want to tell those stories.’” She started making short films and then applied to film schools. “I was 29, so I discovered [film-making] quite late.”

California-born Goldschmidt took a BA in film studies and then specialised in cinematography at the American Film Institute.

Directing and cinematography remain male-dominated areas, but progress is being made. Goldschmidt said that, on *House of the Dragon*, it was “a priority to have gender balance wherever possible. The camera crew was essentially 50-50. For me, personally, to be able to walk on to the set and have it in some way representative of the real world, it just makes it easier – you don’t feel like you have to prove yourself.”

Kilner added: “It created a really different feeling. It was the first set I’ve ever been on



The Masked Singer: Tim Simpson and Vanya Barwell

Paul Hampartsoumian

Alive and kicking

RTS Futures TV talent flocked to the RTS Careers Fair to help young people get in and on in the industry. **Matthew Bell** reports

that had that 50-50 [balance].”

Offering advice to young film-makers, Kilner said: “Make personal films. Every single one of you has a different story... use your voice to tell your story.”

Goldschmidt urged would-be cinematographers to shoot: “The more you can shoot films, then the more you are experimenting and finding your voice, figuring out what you like and what you don’t like, and finding the people you like working with.”

Later in the day, some of the key people behind hit ITV shows *The Masked Singer* and *The Masked Dancer*, which are made by factual entertainment specialist Bandicoot, revealed the secrets of

the South Korean TV format.

Costume designer Tim Simpson explained: “I’m in this luxury position of designing ludicrous costumes for celebrities... I then oversee the workshop that puts all those [ideas] together. I’ve got a whole team that works with me, everyone from sculptors to tailors and seamstresses, putting all of that stuff together to bring the costumes to life.”

Both shows are filmed at a studio facility on an old RAF airfield in Hertfordshire. “It takes 350 people to get [the show] to the screen,” revealed production executive Vanya Barwell.

Keeping the identities of the celebrities secret is a

huge challenge, Barwell continued. “We’ve had paps at the side of the airfield trying to take pictures and unveil [the celebrities].”

The other sessions during the day were: an IMG Studios-led discussion of technical and operational careers; “Get ready for your TV job”, which offered advice on equipping yourself for a job behind the camera; “What is television really like? Reports from the first six months”; and a National Film and Television School session on working in a TV studio. ■

The RTS Futures Careers Fair 2023 was held on 7 February and sponsored by IMG Studios and the NFTS.

‘Halifax is the Lourdes for lesbians,’ said producer-director and former Chair of RTS Yorkshire Fiona Thompson at “Celebrating *Gentleman Jack*: Changing lives”.

Not a sentence many would have anticipated hearing, but this is only one of the consequences of the so-called “*Gentleman Jack* effect”.

Anne Lister, Sally Wainwright’s eponymous *Gentleman Jack*, born in 1791, was a Halifax industrialist, landowner, diarist and self-assured lesbian, and hero of possibly the most important TV drama of recent times.

Just how important, to whom, and why, is what was being celebrated. Pat Esgate, lead organiser of the Anne Lister Birthday Week festival (ALBW), grew up at a time “when the only media ‘representation’ of someone like me typically ended in what we now call ‘Death by Lesbian’”. In 1988, the Conservatives brought in Section 28, prohibiting local government in Britain from “promoting homosexuality by teaching or by publishing material”.

In her welcoming address, Esgate contrasted that with what happened when, in 2019, BBC One broadcast the first series of *Gentleman Jack*: “[The drama] shot us into the stratosphere. Not only did we have bold, beautifully written characters, we had a butch lesbian and her polar opposite, enjoying a love story that ended with all the panache of a Jane Austen novel. ... It changed tens of thousands of lives, in a visceral, life-affirming manner, all around the globe.”

Testament to that was the Leeds-based Screenhouse documentary *Gentleman Jack Changed My Life* for BBC One, here given another screening. It followed the journeys of



Gentleman Jack effect

RTS Yorkshire Sally Wainwright’s TV drama has changed thousands of lives around the world, says **Carole Solazzo**

women who, as a result of the drama, came out, some to themselves for the first time, and to their families and friends.

Screenhouse’s CEO Barbara Govan, currently negotiating international sales for the documentary, told of how much she personally had gained by making it. Working with an all-lesbian crew, initially “we used the budget to go in without cameras to establish contact and trust... so important, especially with ‘Trixie’ and ‘Pauline’ being from an older generation”.

These two women had been forced by societal pressures to separate, and “that drama gave two people, who were always meant for each other, the courage, after 33 years apart, to be together”.

Two of the other participants, Yvonne and Sami, updated the audience on their progress. Yvonne, who came out on screen to her children

has since left her church but kept her faith and, encouraged by her son to start dating, now has a partner.

Sami’s story was as much a journey to self-acceptance as her mum’s journey towards accepting her. Before, if Sami was going out on a date she would avoid the subject, which “makes you feel strange and not quite human,” she said. Her relationship with her mum “is now much healthier”.

Gentleman Jack has inspired a huge following – the “Ann(e)dom” – which, according to Esgate, initially “drew people from 14 countries to Halifax [for ALBW], and this year is on track for 18 countries”. It also sparked a worldwide campaign to get the drama recommissioned after the show was axed when co-producer HBO withdrew.

Campaigner Jo Clarke was “so inspired by the documentary to see what a TV

show had done for so many people.... I knew we couldn’t let this lie.” Scores of volunteers, from Nelson, New Zealand, to Nyack, New York, now work round the clock to “keep people connected, morale up, and *Gentleman Jack* trending”, organising events ranging from tea parties to choreographer Helen Hawkins’ flash-mob dance to an extraordinary 24-hour Anne Lister billboard in Times Square.

Esgate reminded the BBC: “You have a high-quality international hit... an incredibly passionate fan base... a programme that absolutely fits within your equality, diversity and inclusion standards... Representation matters.” ■

‘Celebrating *Gentleman Jack: Changing Lives*’ took place at York St John University on 23 February, and was co-produced by RTS Yorkshire’s Jane Hall.

North East & the Border Local actor turned presenter, Robson Green, was honoured with the Outstanding Contribution award at the RTS North East and the Border Awards in late February.

The Northumberland-based star of *Soldier Soldier*, *Wire in the Blood* and *Grantchester*, who accepted the accolade during a visit to Australia, was described as a “tireless champion of TV production celebrating the North East”.

Recently, he has enjoyed success as a presenter of factual shows such as *Extreme Fishing*. His latest series for BBC Two, *Robson Green's Weekend Escapes*, was co-produced by his own production company, Rivers Meet Productions, with ITV Signpost.

Green said: “As an actor, I've helped tell stories. But, as a presenter of documentaries, I can be me. I'm so proud of the team behind this latest series of *Weekend Escapes*. It showcases the North East, but also the behind-the-scenes talent.”

More than 400 guests attended the awards at the Hilton in Gateshead, which were hosted by comedian and screenwriter Jason Cook.

RTS Chief Executive Theresa Wise presented the Centre award to the team behind the North East Screen Comedy Hot House, a comedy co-operative that nurtures regional talent, on- and off-screen.



Robson Green's Weekend Escapes

BBC

Robson Green honoured

The Rising Star award went to former secondary school teacher Anna Costello, who emerged from the BBC Writers Room with scripts for shows that include the Dave comedy drama *Dead Canny*.

Two long-running dramas were honoured at the ceremony: ITV's *Vera* starring Brenda Blethyn (Drama) and CBBC's *The Dumping Ground* (Children's).

A BBC Four documentary hosted by North Shields-born singer Sam Fender, *Lindisfarne's Geordie Genius: The*

Alan Hull Story, picked up the Broadcast Factual prize.

In the news categories, ITV Tyne Tees enjoyed a fruitful night, taking home four awards: News Programme; Presenter, for Amy Lea, Sport Presenter, for Simon O'Rourke; and the Outstanding Journalism prize, for Gregg Easteal. Jonathan Swingler of BBC North East carried off the award for Multiskilled Broadcast Journalism.

Awards Chair Graeme Thompson said: “There's real

momentum right now in the region's screen and production sector.

“We received more than 100 entries for this year's awards and that reflects the increase in film and TV content being made in this part of the UK. Broadcasters and commissioners are waking up to the unique appeal of the North East and Cumbria as locations to tell universal stories.

“New film and TV studios, such as the ones that have just opened in Hartlepool and are planned for Sunderland, combined with commissioning spend and a new £12m production and skills fund are fuelling significant growth in the sector.”

The work of student filmmakers was also celebrated at the ceremony, with awards shared across the region's colleges: Newcastle University, Northern School of Art, Teesside University, University of Cumbria and University of Sunderland.

Matthew Bell

RTS North East and the Border Television Awards winners

Outstanding Contribution - Robson Green

Centre Award - North East Screen Comedy Hot House

Drama - *Vera* - Silverprint Pictures for ITV

Drama Performance - Justin McDonald, *Fist* - Elevator Productions

Comedy and Entertainment - *Angels of the North* - twenty-six03 for BBC Three

Broadcast Factual Production - *Lindisfarne's Geordie Genius: The Alan Hull Story* - Daisybeck Studios for BBC Four

Non-broadcast Factual Production - re:production

Children's - *The Dumping Ground* - BBC Studios Kids and Family for CBBC

News Programme -

ITV Tyne Tees - ITV

Outstanding Journalism - Gregg Easteal, ITV Tyne Tees - ITV

Presenter - Amy Lea, ITV Tyne Tees - ITV

Sport Presenter - Simon O'Rourke, ITV Tyne Tees - ITV

Multiskilled Broadcast Journalist - Jonathan Swingler, BBC North East

Rising Star - Anna Costello

Short Form - *The Wilds: Sea and Sky* - Pictures

Commercial - re:production

Professional Excellence: Animation, Graphics and Titling - Theo Scott, Cuties

Professional Excellence: Photography - Chris Middis - BBC

Professional Excellence: Post-production - Mark Lediard

Student Awards: Animation - *Monster Banquet* - Teesside University

Student Awards: Drama - *Boulder and Pebble* - Northern School of Art

Student Awards: Entertainment - *SU Dance Team* - University of Sunderland

Student Awards: Environmental - *Fox, Friend or Foe* - University of Cumbria

Student Awards: Factual - *To Challah on the Table* - Newcastle University

Trust – how to earn it and how to keep it – was the key word during two panel discussions at an RTS Cymru Wales event on sports documentaries in Cardiff last month. Streamers offer big budgets for sports docs – but only commission if you can guarantee the access. And to get that access, you need trust.

Audiences are lapping up these shows: *All or Nothing* on Amazon Prime, *Welcome to Wrexham* on Disney+, *Drive to Survive* on Netflix, all taking cameras inside the changing room, mic'ing up coaches, following athletes away from the sports arena, being there for the tears, the tantrums, the blood, sweat and glory.

This year already, we've seen Netflix releases *Break Point* and *Full Swing* taking viewers inside pro tennis and golf. Recent data has shown that docs can attract new, younger audiences to a sport, so now there's a commercially driven buy-in from pro sports when it comes to allowing crews inside the inner sanctum.

At the Tramshed Tech building, a drop kick away from the Principality Stadium, more than 80 of the city's creative, long-form film-makers, directors, producers and commissioners gathered to discuss the genre.

More than 20 sports docs were made in Wales last year, so the appetite is there.

BBC Wales factual commissioner Julian Carey described the things he was looking for and urged producers to “think big”, adding that all he wanted was “a top-line email to get a conversation started”.

New S4C head of unscripted Iwan England discussed the season of programmes created around last year's football World Cup. “We no longer commission just for linear schedules,” he said, keen to reinforce the idea that S4C is now a digital



On and off the pitch

Cymru Wales Access-all-areas sports docs are all the rage. **Joe Towns** hears what film-makers and execs are up to in Wales

content platform as much as a traditional TV channel.

Carys Owens, MD of Whisper Cymru (the Cardiff base of the company founded by broadcaster Jake Humphrey, Sunil Patel and ex-Formula One driver David Coulthard), executive produced the recent ITV British Lions documentary, *Two Sides*.

“It was a complex process,” she recalled. “It was during Covid, it was a co-production, and there were several brands and stakeholders involved. And we were in [both the Springboks and Lions] camps.

“There was a lot of trust and partnership needed, and we didn't want to shaft the players who had given us so much but we also didn't want to sanitise the product.”

The second panel of the

evening focused on programme-making, with editor Rahim Mastafa (*Ruck Stars*, BBC Three); presenter Nathan Blake (*Clive Sullivan: Rugby League Legend*, BBC One); director Joseff Morgan (*Race To Be Me*, ITV Wales); and producer Ceri Barnett (*Together Stronger*, BBC One).

“The commissioners have bought the programme,” said Barnett. “They know their audience, their channel, their slot. It's important to remember it's their programme, not yours. So you need to seek their approval on all the big decisions – that honesty and dialogue is key.”

Morgan's doc tells the story of elite Welsh trans cyclist Emily Bridges as she fought for the right to represent her country in a female cycling

category at the Commonwealth Games.

In keeping with the theme of trust, Morgan said the doc was a chance to tell Bridges' “deeply personal story....

Before we started filming, I spent time with her family to build that trust – we wanted the film to have compassion, to take you on her journey and see the obstacles she is facing”

The message to the young film-makers in the room was: if you want to make a behind-the-scenes sports documentary, start building the relationships now. ■

‘Sports documentary’, a partnership between RTS Cymru Wales, Whisper Cymru, Tramshed Tech and Cardiff Met Sport TV, was held on 7 February. The host was Joe Towns.

'Stellar year' celebrated in Bristol

RTS West of England

The University of the West of England enjoyed a good night at Bristol's Watershed Cinema last month, winning three of the four main prizes at the RTS West of England Student Television Awards.

Tova Persson took home the Animation award for *Offerlamm*, which the judges said had "great style and story... memorable and very original". The film-maker also won two Craft Skills awards for the film, Production Design and Writing.

The Entertainment and Comedy prize went to "an engaging film [with] strong performances", *Robbie Wrecked the Band*. *Beached*, which had "great performances" and was "authentic and beautifully

shot", took the Drama prize.

The Factual prize went to the University of Gloucestershire's *Let's Talk Clit*, "an entertaining piece, visually very cool... funny, really watchable, mature and well written".

RTS West of England Chair Lynn Barlow said: "It is a stellar year for new talent... with strong, bold and beautiful work from students across the region making the shortlists in every category."

Matthew Bell



Tova Persson: multi-Animation award winner

Justin Yockney

RTS West of England Student Television Awards winners

Animation - *Offerlamm*, Tova Persson - University of West of England (UWE)

Comedy and Entertainment - *Robbie Wrecked the Band* - UWE

Drama - *Beached* - UWE

Factual - *Let's Talk Clit* - University of Gloucestershire (UoG)

Craft Skills: Animation

Production Design - *Offerlamm*, Tova Persson; *When Cicadas Sing*, HoChing Kwok; *Vergissmeinnicht (Forget Me Not)*, Luzie Ilgner; *The Last Straw*, Cleo Parker - all UWE

Sound - *Throng*, Will Clarke - UWE

Writing - *Offerlamm*, Tova Persson - UWE

Craft Skills: Comedy and Entertainment:

Directing - *Last Item on the Agenda*, Matthew Dudman - Wiltshire College

Editing - *Robbie Wrecked the Band*, Indigo Thompson - UWE

Performance - *Robbie Wrecked the Band*, Blayke Wood - UWE

Production Design - *Blue Sky*, Abi Peszel - UWE

Sound - *Robbie Wrecked the Band*, Doohee Rhee - UWE

Craft Skills: Drama:

Camerawork - *Beached*, Simon Latham; *Scum*, Matthew Feurtado - both UWE; *Neonate*, Billy Evans - UoG

Editing - *Beached*, Indigo Thompson; *Scum*, Joe Noon - both UWE; *Neonate*, Joseph Hulchan - UoG

Production Design - *Beached*,

Niall Richardson; *Scum*, Pheobe Gibson - both UWE; *Devil's Cove*, Chloe Iturbe; *Neonate*, Nat Beardley; *See Me*, Imogen Maguire - both UoG

Sound - *Scum*, Charlie Donovan - UWE

Writing - *Beached*, Chloe Ireland; *My Name is Yours*, Clarenz Gutierrez Badlis and Tammy Intrasena - both UWE

Craft Skills: Factual:

Camerawork - *Alfredo*, Charlie Bush - UWE

Editing - *Let's Talk Clit*, Pimmada Sukawattanakul - UoG

Production Design - *Let's Talk Clit*, Theo Ritter; *The Journey You'll Take* - both UoG

Sound - *Alfredo*, Rose Farrar - UWE

Storytelling - *Let's Talk Clit*, Krissy Finn and Erin West; *My Body*, Matt Luxton - both UoG

Visual Effects - *Let's Talk Clit* - UoG

The UPSIDE

'Innovate or die, but winning helps, too'

What a way to make an exit. The UpSide is, of course, talking about John Ryley, the incomparable Sky News editor, who is about to leave after 17 years at the helm.

But not before his organisation won News Channel of the Year for the sixth year running at the RTS Television Journalism Awards. Sky News saw off the BBC News Channel and Al Jazeera English to win the prize.

Rarely lost for a pithy remark, Ryley told his broadcasting peers that, "Change is good. Innovate or die."

Advice, perhaps, for his successors?

Sky News is being restructured, with David Rhodes appointed Executive Chair; Jonathan Levy is promoted to MD and executive editor of Sky News UK. The UpSide wishes them well.

Politicos cannot be left unscrutinised

Staying with the awards, it was good to hear that old attack dog Jeremy Paxman in such feisty form.

Accepting the Outstanding Contribution award, he warned that many areas of our national life are now "effectively unscrutinised" by the media.

He complained that there would be "fuck all" reporting of the debate on the imminent spring budget and

highlighted the lack of coverage given to councils and courts.

"There'll be two days set aside for the debate in Parliament and there'll be fuck all reporting on [the budget]. If politicians can get away with [claiming] that white is black, they will do so."

Drugs that egg you on to egg an egotist

The ebullient Dan Walker, still recovering from a bad cycling accident, brought a light touch to hosting the awards.

He told the audience that the medication he was taking for concussion had stripped him of all his inhibitions and, "if a weather presenter were to question me in any way, shape or form, I'm liable to storm off stage in an enormous huff. I might

even go as far as to start a new TV channel based entirely on my ego, which no one will watch."

Who on earth could he be referring to?

Proud to work here and proud to party

And, finally, let's return to John Ryley, who was joined on stage by around 40 of his beaming colleagues, all ready to party until 4:00am at the Hilton's Wyld bar.

The Sky News chief generously praised his colleagues across UK broadcasting: "Wherever you work, whatever your organisation, you should be really proud to work for British TV news... you should be proud of the professionalism and courage in the way [we have] reported the war in Ukraine." ■



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