

Television



2007



2024





4 February 2025
10am-4pm

RTS FUTURES CAREERS FAIR 2025

Venue: Business Design Centre,
London N1 0QH

Tickets: non-members £10
RTS Members free

IMG

NFTS

NATIONAL
FILM AND
TELEVISION
SCHOOL



From the CEO



Congratulations to all the winners at the RTS Craft & Design Awards, a night where we celebrate the extraordinary work of those behind the screen.

Huge thanks to *Good Morning Britain's* Charlotte Hawkins for hosting with such warmth and charm.

The Nations and Regions brought 2024 to a storming conclusion with ceremonies that reflected the wealth of TV talent in the UK. I was at the recent RTS Midlands Television

Awards, where *Peaky Blinders* creator Steven Knight deservedly won the Best Writer Award among a hat-trick of prizes for the brilliant *This Town*.

The RTS North West Television Awards and the RTS Northern Ireland Television Awards also celebrated their own TV heroes.

It's that time of year again. What could be more festive than *Gavin & Stacey*, the sitcom that stole Christmas. As we await the finale to a TV comedy classic that forms the centrepiece of BBC One's seasonal viewing menu, we look back and select six of the best episodes of James Corden and Ruth Jones' much-loved creation.

Also inside, Simon Bucks asks if Jilly Cooper's tale of ITV franchise battles in *Rivals* – a huge hit for Disney+ – reflects what really happened in the 80s. Don't miss Caitlin Danaher's insight into the starry new Netflix thriller, *Black Doves*, in which Keira Knightley plays a spy determined to avenge her lover's death.

Finally, I'd like to send seasonal greetings and wish a happy and peaceful New Year to all our readers.

Theresa Wise

Contents

Cover: BBC

- 5 Elan Closs Stephens' TV diary**
The former Acting Chair of the BBC finds that the delights of Aberystwyth compensate for a creaking train service
- 6 Comfort classic: *The Fast Show***
Matthew Bell salutes the groundbreaking 1990s sketch show that spawned catchphrases galore
- 7 Ear candy: *Rivals: the Official Podcast***
Harrison Bennett goes behind the scenes to hear all the latest gossip from Jilly Cooper's Rutshire
- 8 Working lives: Factual producer**
Stuart Prebble tells Matthew Bell of his journey from top-flight 'suit' to toiling at the coalface of production
- 10 What occurred?**
The superlative sitcom *Gavin & Stacey* finally bows out on Christmas Day. So what has happened so far?
- 13 Our Friend in Devon and Cornwall**
Matt Geraghty tells how he ended up in beautiful South West Britain on a never-ending 'gap year' from Australia
- 14 Dark, crisp and getting even**
Keira Knightley wants revenge in *Black Doves*, an explosive spy thriller from Netflix. Caitlin Danaher goes under cover...
- 16 Give me Five**
As Enid Blyton's young adventurers return for another outing, Matthew Bell talks to the children... and the dog!
- 19 Daggers drawn: the real-life rivals**
Jilly Cooper's saga depicts scandalous TV franchise wars. Was it really like that in the 80s, asks Simon Bucks
- 22 A marriage built to last**
Steve Clarke reports on a hugely productive 10-year liaison between BBC Studios and America's PBS
- 24 Here's one I slayed earlier**
Serial killer Dexter Morgan is back, but this time in a prequel as a callow 20-year-old. Shilpa Ganatra reports
- 26 Are we ready for next-gen sport?**
Young viewers are hungry for digital extras beyond the main event. Our RTS panel lays out the challenge
- 28 RTS London Christmas Lecture**
Acclaimed producer Andy Harries looks back over a career that has changed the face of British TV drama
- 30 Learn from the masters**
RTS Masterclasses on drama, factual TV, journalism and development offer invaluable advice on our industry
- 32 RTS Craft & Design Awards 2024**
All the runners, riders and winners from our celebration of TV talent held at the London Hilton on 2 December
- 40 RTS news and events**
Reports of the Society's screenings, events and awards ceremonies from around the UK and Ireland

Editor
Steve Clarke
smclarke_333@hotmail.com

Deputy editor
Matthew Bell
bell127@btinternet.com

Production, design, advertising
Vernon Adams,
James Bennett

Sub-editor
Sarah Bancroft

RTS, 3 Dorset Rise
London EC4Y 8EN
T: 020 7822 2810
W: www.rts.org.uk

© Royal Television Society 2024
The views expressed in *Television*
are not necessarily those of the RTS.
Registered Charity 313 728



ROYAL
TELEVISION
SOCIETY

RTS PROGRAMME AWARDS 2025

25 MARCH

**JW MARRIOTT GROSVENOR HOUSE
ON PARK LANE**

In partnership with



Cast & Crew

#RTSawards

TV diary

It's Monday morning at 8.30 and I am on the Aberystwyth-London Euston train. That takes four-and-a-half hours on a good day, of which there are not many. I travel through spectacularly beautiful scenery on a spectacularly decrepit line. Why do I do it? No spoilers – you can find the answer at the end.

I am on my way to the Electoral Commission. As a commissioner, I am charged with maintaining trust in the electoral system through the registration of parties, the regulation of donors and spend. It seems to me that trust is the most valuable commodity of our age... and also the most vulnerable. I have been fortunate to work with the Commission and with the BBC, where trust is of the essence.

■ **Before the Commission, I arrive at BBC HQ in Portland Place for coffee with June Prunty. June, the unsung hero of Broadcasting House's fourth floor, is retiring. Her devotion over 17 years as PA to BBC Chairs has been professionally exemplary and emotionally supportive. I doubt whether a long list of Chairs from the Trust to the present Unitary Board could have done as much without her commitment and good humour. Happy retirement, June, and a huge, huge thank you.**

■ **After the (standing room only from Euston to Rugby) journey home, I go for my Covid jab. Later, I join an online briefing as Chair of the Public Leaders Forum in Wales. It's a forum for all Chairs and CEOs of**



Elan Closs Stephens finds that community spirit in Aberystwyth at Christmas easily trumps a poor train service

arm's-length bodies, ranging from Natural Resources to the Arts Council to (yes!) Transport for Wales.

I think back to the support we found in each other's company online during the dark, frightening days of 2020, as we all tried to work out how to survive as public bodies and to keep staff safe and motivated. It all seems now like a curious dream from which we have emerged and don't wish to talk about.

■ **Friday brings a two-hour drive to Hay-on-Wye and the Hay Festival Winter Weekend. I am a Trustee of the Hay Board. It is a time to thank Caroline Michel, our wonderful outgoing Chair for her dedication and to welcome Apple Creative Director Jay Hunt as the incoming Chair. We stand outside Hay Castle in the light drizzle among a large, excited crowd**

to see actor Luke Evans (born in nearby Pontypool) switching on the Christmas lights. I stay in the Rhyd-spence Inn, part of which dates back to the 14th century. The next morning, over breakfast, I look out on a bare apple tree and a huge clump of mistletoe hanging from it.

■ **I have been fortunate to work with young creative people all my life as a professor in the Department of Theatre, Film and Television at Aberystwyth University. Many have become household names. Today, Saturday, was a time to pay tribute to Jeremy Turner, who founded and maintained a Welsh-language youth and children's theatre, standing down after 35 years. The Arad Goch company's work has been seen from Seattle to Seoul (literally). He created an international festival here in Aberystwyth. As befitted a Welsh occasion, we had two poets and two poems written specially.**

■ **As I walk home in the gathering dark, the lantern procession is coming down Great Darkgate Street to help light the square's Christmas tree. I reflect on the sense of community in this small university town, its independent shops and cafes, its arts centre, its magnificent National Library, the squawking scavenging gulls, and the murmuration of starlings now roosting under the old pier after their acrobatic display.**

Despite the train journey, I think of it all with great fondness.

Elan Closs Stephens is a former Acting Chair of the BBC.

COMFORT CLASSIC

Matthew Bell rediscovers a timeless show that veered brilliantly from poignant to ludicrous and back again

If you can judge the success of a comedy show by the ubiquity of its catchphrases, *The Fast Show* was “Scorchio!”. That one was courtesy of Caroline Aherne’s weather girl on Chanel 9, the Euro telly spoof. And they kept on coming on TV’s greatest sketch show: “I freely admit I was very, very drunk” (sozzled QC Rowley Birkin, Paul Whitehouse); “Does my bum look big in this?” (Arabella Weir’s Insecure Woman); and “... which was nice” (Patrick Nice, Mark Williams).

Not forgetting John Thomson’s Jazz Club presenter Louis Balfour, with his drawn-out “Niiiiice” and “grrreat”, introducing the not-so-greats of the genre: “The most popular exponent of ‘Dinner Jazz’ working in America – Stepney Green with his band, the New Headhunters – grrreat.”

Occasionally, it was a little risqué: “Oh, suit you, sir! Were you out with a lady last night, sir? Did she want it, sir?” (the Suit You Tailors, Whitehouse and Williams). Or, in the case of Charlie Higson’s bequipped car salesman and lady-killer Swiss Toni, downright rude: “Being in a car crash... is very much like making love to a beautiful woman. First of all, brace yourself, hold on tight – particularly if it’s a rear-ender.”

But mostly, *The Fast Show* was pleasingly stupid, particularly Simon Day’s characters: pub bore Billy Bleach, eco-warrior Dave Angel and Competitive Dad. Not forgetting Whitehouse’s football pundit, Ron Manager – “Those Brazilians, you know? Circa 1970? Broke the mould.... Far cry from small boys in the park, jumpers for goalposts. Rush goalie. Two at the back, three in the middle, four up front, one’s gone home for his tea. Beans on toast?”

Each episode saw 20-odd sketches, none outstaying their welcome and many lasting seconds – a Williams speciality. His country bumpkin,



Jesse, would emerge from his shed and pronounce: “This week, I have been mostly eating roasted chickens.” Or “bourbon biscuits”. Or “chipolatas”.

The Fast Show ran over three series on BBC Two from 1994 to 1997 (with a few later specials). It was the brainchild of Higson and Whitehouse, who had written for and performed in various Vic Reeves and Bob Mortimer and Harry Enfield shows. “We didn’t want to do just a son of Harry Enfield,” recalled Higson, discussing the show at a British Film Institute (BFI) event a few years ago. “We wanted it to have a different feel and character... and make it a team show. We had friends we wanted to work with and people we were fans of.”

The idea, added Higson, was to “just do the funny bits and cut everything else out”. This meant no parodies of other TV shows or political satire, which could date the comedy.

As Weir told the BFI: “One of the reasons the show has endured and stuck in people’s minds is because it was never of its time... it was timeless.”

The Fast Show could also be poignant, above all in the Ted and Ralph sketches, written by *Father Ted* creators Arthur Mathews and Graham Linehan, in which country squire Lord Ralph Mayhew (Higson) tries to become more

‘THE IDEA WAS TO DO JUST THE FUNNY BITS AND CUT THE REST’

intimate with his Irish estate worker Ted (Whitehouse): “Are you interested in French cinema at all, Ted?” “I wouldn’t know about that, sir!”

The 1990s were a hugely creative time for British TV comedy, notably Chris Morris and Armando Iannucci’s *The Day Today*, Steve Coogan’s Alan Partridge iterations, the aforementioned Vic and Bob, and Aherne’s mock chat show, *The Mrs Merton Show*.

The Fast Show is their equal: laugh-out-loud funny, laden with memorable catchphrases and characters, and no little pathos. Thirty years on, it stands the test of time, unlike other sketch shows from its era, such as the frequently offensive *Little Britain*, which punched down, not up. This week, I will be mostly watching *The Fast Show*. ■

The Fast Show is on BBC iPlayer.

Ear candy

Rivals: the Official Podcast

Tone is a vital ingredient of a TV show but one of the hardest to define. And as far as tonal tightropes go, adapting a Jilly Cooper “bonkbuster” for a modern audience is one of the great high-wire writing acts of recent times.

Turning a TV franchise tussle into a gripping battle of fragile (male) egos, *Rivals* is both a riotous celebration of the 1980s and a depiction of disturbingly backwards sexual politics.

So how do you faithfully adapt such an outrageously fun social comedy, and do it without making light of its social ills? Such questions beg for a companion podcast. Thankfully, the official *Rivals* one is unlike the fawning, superficial fare typical of the genre.

Not that the host, Pandora Sykes, isn’t clearly a huge fan of the series. But Sykes previously presented *Unreal*, a brilliant 10-part “critical history” of reality TV. Here she strikes a similarly assured balance between asking the big questions and revelling in the delicious melodrama.

Right off the bat, she asks writer and executive producer Dominic Treadwell-Collins about the challenges of updating *Rivals*, which leads to a revealing anecdote from the writers room. The scene where local lothario and MP Rupert Campbell-Black gropes Taggie, his new neighbour and love interest, while she serves him dinner, apparently sparked a lot of debate. Some of the younger writers were worried that viewers

wouldn’t be able to believe in their subsequent love story.

But Treadwell-Collins affirms Sykes’ view that it’s an important “comment on the 80s” and also on Rupert’s privilege. The virtue of adapting *Rivals* now, he concludes, is that we can treat it like a period piece: simultaneously “celebrating bits” of the 1980s while “judging” others.

But forgetting the high-minded analysis, it’s just nice to be let in on all

the fun. From the champagne-fuelled writers’ retreat to the actors’ endless spray-tans and “fits of giggles” on set, every part of the production sounds like it could be a scene straight out of Rutshire.

Having said that, some of the funniest insights come

from the two honorary *Rivals* fans who bookend each episode: the comedian Sindhu Vee and the journalist Kat Brown.

As well as the essential breakdown of all the “equal opportunities nudity” and “aggressively 80s haircuts”, Vee is hilarious when discussing the show’s uniquely English portrayal of sex: slightly eccentric and neither prudish nor laissez-faire.

“If you showed *Rivals* to a Scandinavian,” she says, “they’d be, like: ‘What is this? This is, like, comical?’ And if you showed it to a French person, they’d be, like: ‘Yes, everyone’s having an affair – what’s your point?’”

In one word, Vee then manages to sum up not just the ineffable tone of the series but the ethos of an entire country: “It’s a little bit wahey!” ■

Harrison Bennett



WORKING LIVES

Factual producer

An idyllic setting in Snowdonia for the 'joyous' *Landscape Artist of the Year*

Stuart Prebble cut his teeth on Granada's vintage current affairs show *World in Action* before becoming ITV's Controller of Factual Programmes and then the broadcaster's CEO. He has launched two indies, *Liberty Bell*, the company behind *Grumpy Old Men and Women*, and *Storyvault Films*, which produces Sky Arts' hugely successful *Portrait Artist of the Year* and sister show *Landscape Artist of the Year*.

Tell us about producing *Portrait* (and *Landscape*) *Artist of the Year* over the past decade...

They are the most joyous shows I've been involved in. Artists tend to be really nice people, and we don't show, as others do, the humiliation of a competitor packing their bags and leaving the programme, accompanied by sad music. There are scores of artists who [if not for the show] would still be amateur and are now professional – television often gets a bad rap, but we feel that to have

achieved something like that is fantastic.

What are the secrets of the shows' success?

Producing a long-running show means you can develop a team. We've had the same judges from day one, and – until Joan [Bakewell] retired recently – only one change of presenter. Storytelling is hugely important: you need to get the viewer involved in artists and rooting for them. It's also new every time. I've sat and watched hundreds of pictures painted and it's never dull; getting in the heads of the artists is endlessly fascinating.

Did you always want to work in TV?

I always wanted to be a journalist. At Newcastle University, I was news editor of the student newspaper, then editor. I applied to the BBC's news training scheme and was incredibly lucky to get in. That was 50 years ago last month.

What were the first programmes you worked on?

I was at BBC radio news and then television news for five years, including a period as an onscreen reporter. I worked out that I preferred current affairs, which is why I set my sights on *World in Action* and applied to Granada. I went there as a local programmes presenter and producer for a couple of years before they put me on the *World in Action* team. It was a fantastic privilege.

You moved on to commissioning...

Producing is a vocation but it's a bit like teaching: if you're a good teacher, you get asked to become deputy head, then head – all of a sudden you're running the school and not teaching. That's what happened to me; after *World in Action*, I got the chance to become Head of Factual Programmes at Granada, then Controller of Factual Programmes for ITV. Nobody says no to that, but increasingly I was a suit. So when it came to an end, I

went back to working as a hands-on producer. It was so liberating. For the past 20-odd years as an independent producer, I've been sustained by curiosity – you hear something and you think: "I'd like to know more about that". I've never had a bad day.

Is it harder now to make current affairs series?

When I left ITV and started my first indie, Liberty Bell, in 2002, I didn't really want to do current affairs, partly because I'd had enough of being up at 3am in the cutting room, making changes because the situation had changed. And, if you're trying to run

and a couple years after that as a producer. That route still works. You've got to roll with the punches and stick with it. When I started as an independent producer, there were editors who commissioned me because it was easier to [take me on] than not. I was beating their bloody doors down with ideas!

Is the industry open to all?

Factual programme budgets don't [allow for] realistic entry-level salaries for people who don't have another way of supporting themselves. We are making some progress as an industry but we will not solve the scandalous

Action. Another contemporary of mine was Paul Greengrass. What a career – he went from *World in Action* to making feature films. There are so many people I've admired and worked with over the years; Melvyn Bragg continues to be an absolute hero of mine. At Channel 4, another *World in Action* alumnus, Dorothy Byrne, carried the flag for the kind of programmes nobody else would commission.

Is it ever tempting to sell up to a super-indie?

I didn't ever want to sit down and present a profit forecast to an investor. I've always tried my absolute best to get my ideas commissioned; I didn't want the additional pressure of having to explain to a finance director in a suit why I couldn't get my idea away. You are either independent and you swim or sink, or you're answerable to someone else. At heart, I'm still a TV producer – I'm 73, and sitting here going through transcripts of our latest show.

Is the future bright for factual producers like Storyvault?

The time we spend trying to get the money and find broadcasters versus actually making a show can be disenchanting. Budgets are tight but we are fortunate that Sky Arts allows us to make shows we are proud of. It's harder to get new shows greenlit, but there are more outlets for a programme now. I wouldn't want to make a four-parter on Robbie Williams or six hours on Harry and Meghan, but people are producing them and plenty of other shows too. I'm optimistic. If you want to make a show badly enough, you'll find a way to make it.

Is there a programme you'd still love to make?

I have an idea for a gameshow tucked away. It's probably never going to get made, but if you could magic a series, that would be it. ■

Stuart Prebble was interviewed by Matthew Bell. His memoir of 50 years in television, *Still Grumpy After All These Years*, is available on Amazon.



Arthur Smith, Rory McGrath, Sir Tim Rice and Rick Wakeman in *Grumpy Old Men*

Stuart Prebble

a business, current affairs is likely to have a limited life for distribution. So, since I've been independent, I've always pursued a wider range of general interest stuff, sometimes serious like *The Alastair Campbell Diaries* for BBC Two. We've moved more towards the arts in recent years; we made *The Book Show* for Sky Arts for many years, and latterly *Sky Arts Book Club*.

What advice have you for someone wanting to work in factual TV?

Television is tough but we employ loads of incredibly impressive young people. If you get into our company as a runner, and you're any good, you'll come back the next year as a researcher, then assistant producer,

issue we have with diversity unless broadcasters enable companies like ours to hire and bring on people who are not subsidised by mum and dad.

What programmes are you most proud of?

World in Action, the programmes we made with Alastair Campbell after he left Downing Street, and *Grumpy Old Men* and *Women*. For pure joy, though, it has to be *Portrait* (and *Landscape*) *Artist of the Year*.

Which factual programme-makers do you admire?

Everything by my old friend Peter Kosminsky, factual and non-factual. John Ware's reports for *Panorama*; like me, John was a producer on *World in*

What occurred?

As excitement builds for *Gavin & Stacey*'s long-awaited Christmas Day finale, we savour six of the best episodes from one of TV's greatest ever sitcoms



'Laugh-out loud funny': a cracking Christmas in Barry, 2019

Few 21st-century British sitcoms have won classic status, but *Gavin & Stacey* did so with a vengeance. James Corden and Ruth Jones, who'd met as actors on ITV's *Fat Friends*, were new to writing when they began work on the show, yet their fully-realised, relatable characters, superbly cast, have given us what every creator of TV comedy desires – a well-written series that is a genuinely popular success.

In an era of streaming and niche audiences, *Gavin & Stacey* retains a rare cross-generational, mainstream appeal that is now vanishing fast.

Mathew Horne and Joanna Page are delightful as the eponymous couple whose blind date turns into a complex, enduring relationship. Their love story – Essex boy meets Welsh girl – is the narrative arc that is the show's glue. The tenderness between them is fundamental to the show's appeal. Smithy (James Corden) and Nessa (Ruth Jones) are the counterpoint to this, and their on-off relationship has kept us guessing since 2007.

Gavin & Stacey was ahead of its time in having two plus-size characters attracted to one another, and comfortable in how they look. Other taboos are broken too – Nessa's S&M jokes, Smithy's gluttony – and many of the more obvious gags would fall flat in lesser hands. The rest of the cast are also pitch perfect, with Alison Steadman as volatile, self-deluding Pam, and her endlessly accommodating husband, Mick, played by Larry Lamb, both hugely experienced actors.

Rob Brydon shines as Bryn, as do Melanie Walters as Stacey's steadfast mum, Gwen; Julia Davis and Adrian Scarborough as the bickering Dawn and Pete; and Steffan Rhodri as Dave, Smithy's taciturn rival for Nessa's heart. A shout-out, too, to director Christine Gernon.

Series 1, episode 1

Here's a new sitcom from BBC Wales. Cracking! It may be worth a look...

Stacey – a twentysomething from Barry – is on the phone to Gavin, her virtual boyfriend of six months. Tomorrow they will finally meet in the

flesh. "Only 17 hours to go, babes," he tells her. Cut to Billericay, Essex, where young Gavin is equally anxious about tomorrow, and not helped by his wide-boy bestie, Smithy, who fears Stacey will turn out to be a "minger" and her mate, Nessa, a "munter".

Enter Nessa herself, back in Barry: jet-black helmet of hair, leather jacket, skimpy top, cleavage for miles. Is she ready for the trip to London? "I got me sling, packet of feminine wipes and 60 Regal. What more do I need?"

In Essex, Gavin's high-maintenance mum, Pam, announces she's "on the Atkins", which is why she's devouring three steaks. "Bloody hell, woman, you're eating half a cow!" says her long-suffering husband, Mick. The core cast is complete when, back in Wales, Uncle Bryn turns up with a rape alarm for Stacey to take to London.

The big day dawns at last. Travel is via Dave's Coaches. Can they smoke on board? Dave assents: "Fags and weed, glue and speed, but I draws the line at crack."

They meet at Leicester Square. For Gavin and Stacey, the attraction is

instant. For Smithy and Nessa, it's repulsion. Or is it? Soon they're all pie-eyed and Smithy is asking Gavin: "Got any Johnnies?" Nessa overhears: "Don't worry, I got a stash. Ribbed!"

So far, the show is a wild mix of saucy and sentimental. More than 580,000 viewers (respectable for BBC Three) have tuned in. We end with a romantic gesture from Gavin that's on a par with anything in *Casablanca* or *Love Actually...* only it happens at Barry coach station. Then the rape alarm goes off.

Series 1, episode 6

What's occurring? Just three months after meeting, the happy couple are getting married. Last-minute nerves are understandable – let's not forget that Stacey has been engaged five times already. But this is the real thing, and all the ingredients of a fancy white wedding are in place.

Yet this wouldn't be *Gavin & Stacey* without the off-colour jokes: "The only church you'll ever get me inside is Charlotte," says one of Smithy's friends. Nessa, famous for her colourful past, reveals that her ex-lovers have included Nigel Havers and Dodi Fayed. Two of Gladys Knight's Pips have also fallen for her got charms!

Other scenes are full of sentiment. It's hard to stifle a tear as Uncle Bryn reads out a letter Stacey's late father wrote to her: only to be opened on her wedding day. Corden is brilliant as the best man, overcome by emotion and unable to give his speech. Jones, as maid of honour, delivers in spades. When the wedding photographer urges the pair to stand closer together, her lip-curl must be seen to be believed.

There are fabulous cameos from Pam and Mick's friends, Dawn and Pete, who are hilarious as a sexually



Here comes the bride: Uncle Bryn and Stacey

ambitious but constantly rowing couple. The series ends on a cliffhanger as Nessa can't bring herself to tell Smithy she's pregnant with his child.

With series 1 under their belt, Corden and Jones can rejoice that *Gavin & Stacey* is that rare thing – a hit sitcom, a bona fide breakthrough, and one of BBC Three's flagships. It was the most nominated programme in the 2007 British Comedy Awards and, a year later won the Bafta Audience Award. In 2010, the RTS nominated Ruth Jones for the Comedy Performance prize.

Series 2, episode 5

It's the *Islands in the Stream* episode, sung deadpan by Bryn and Nessa at a surprise barn dance for Gwen's birthday. The hilarious duet went on to enjoy a glorious afterlife in 2009, courtesy of Comic Relief, when Tom Jones joins the pair in Las Vegas to clinch the world karaoke trophy for Wales.

The song, re-titled (*Barry*) *Islands in*

the Stream, tops the UK charts, proving that *Gavin & Stacey*, now promoted to BBC One, is a surefire hit.

Yet all is not well with the eponymous couple. Stacey is homesick, stuck living with the in-laws, can't find a job ... and cloth-eared Gavin just doesn't get it. Now she tells him she's going home to Wales.

Can it be over? As much as the humour, the show thrives on this emotional arc, the jeopardy, the attachment to characters that has been

FOR PITY'S SAKE, WHAT DID OCCUR ON THAT INFAMOUS FISHING TRIP?

built up. We truly care about these people, and that explains why, here in 2024, millions are waiting to see what happens on Christmas Day.

That said, the jokes are still, as Nessa would say, "cracking". Many are of the running-gag variety, a particular strength of the show. Gwen's ever-ready omelettes get another outing. Pam, who has long been pretending that she's a vegetarian, is caught red-handed when Stacey finds her secretly pigging an entire packet of ham. But the best running gag is saved for last.

"Islands in the ..." Then silence. An ashen-faced Bryn stops mid-croon as the barn dance door bursts open, framing his nephew, Jason (Robert Wilfort). As always, the shame-faced pair dare not look at each other.

Everyone in the hall, and all of us at home, are wondering the same thing: for pity's sake, what *did* occur on that infamous fishing trip?

Series 2, episode 7

It's classic romcom fare: in Wales, Ness goes into labour a whole month early. In Essex, Smithy goes awol. As if *Gavin & Stacey* didn't already have enough star power, it's Sheridan Smith, as ►



Ipod therapy for pregnant Nessa

All photographs: BBC

► Smithy's sister, Rudi, who helps Gavin find the feckless father.

Cue a madcap motorway dash across the country, including a momentous stand-off at the Severn bridge when the Essex boys find they're 10p short of the toll. Which of us hasn't wanted to storm out of the car, yank up the barrier, and drive off in a cloud of dust?

Back in Barry, Nessa has given away her full name when checking into hospital: "Vanessa Shanessa Jenkins". Contractions quickening, she now lies on the maternity ward bed, legs akimbo and still encased in her kinky boots and fishnet stockings. Bryn has just bought a 60gb iPod (doesn't 2008 seem like a century ago?) and has 60,000 dreadful songs with which to regale mother and baby. The rest of the Welsh contingent and most of the Essex posse are gathered round.

Will Gavin and Smithy make it in time? One is driving towards a birth ... the other towards a death: of a relationship. Stacey has threatened to return Gavin's wedding ring. This is a season finale, and *Gavin & Stacey* again manages a brilliant climax, pulling off the difficult trick of changing tone in an instant. One minute we're chuckling, the next we're sobbing. A radiant Nessa hands the newborn to a dumbstruck Smithy. Then the camera pans to the hallway, where Gavin and Stacey are snogging. Still on her finger is ... the wedding ring.

Series 3, episode 5

It's bank holiday weekend and, unusually, the sun is shining brightly in Barry, tempting Pam and Mick to leave their beloved Essex for a surprise visit to Stacey's family. What could go wrong?



No charred feelings: Dave and Smithy bury the hatchet at a barbecue



For Bryn, the beach demands the full shorts, socks and sandals look – along with a lemon short-sleeved shirt, graced with black piping and matching tie. In her caravan, Nessa is giving baby Neil a reading lesson. He can't walk yet but she's confident he'll be able to tell the difference between Obama and Osama, as in the US President vs the architect of 9/11. She shows him pictures of each in turn, explaining: "Very different people with very different ideas."

Nessa and Dave are to tie the knot in three weeks. Yet she can't keep her hands off Smithy, who is also heading west on the M4. Nessa assures her jealous fiancé that the sex with Smithy is strictly vanilla.

Food jokes proliferate in *Gavin & Stacey* and this episode is no exception. Smithy's car is plastered in junk food wrappings. And the episode ends with a barbecue where Smithy and Dave agree a truce and shake hands.

Before that come some priceless small moments – Elvis impersonators queuing up for a cappuccino on the beach – and some poignant big moments relating to Gavin's infertility. And who can forget Bryn slathering on Mick's suncream – or Gwen's elderly neighbour, Doris (Margaret John), nailing *There Is a Light That Never*

Goes Out on acoustic guitar? In other words, not your average day at the seaside. And not your average sitcom.

Christmas special 2019

Sex, drugs and feelgood festive vibes are thickly laid on in an outstanding festive edition that pulls in an astonishing 17.1 million viewers. Much has changed since the last outing in 2010. Gavin and Stacey have three kids, and Nessa and Smithy's son, Neil, is a charming 11-year-old, living with his mum at Uncle Bryn's.

Nessa and Smithy are still at it, but there's one cloud on the horizon: Smithy's new girlfriend, Sonia. They've been together nearly a year, but Christmas Day will be the first time anyone else has met her.

The action begins on Christmas Eve. Pam doesn't relish Christmas in Wales, where the housekeeping is not up to her own Essex standards. One irritant is Gwen's towels: "It's like drying yourself on a Ryvita," she tells Mick.

Her packing is interrupted by Dawn, who, yet again, is purple with rage at her husband. The marriage is over because she's discovered that

AFTER A FIVE-YEAR WAIT, SMITHY'S REPLY TO NESSA IS JUST DAYS AWAY

Pete's a "junkie". It turns out that she found a spliff in the glove compartment of the family car. Pete, hangdog as ever, arrives on the scene, and explains that the joint was a Secret Santa gift at work. To paraphrase Bob Dylan, everybody then gets stoned, or at least Pam, Mick, Dawn and Pete do.

It's laugh-out loud funny, and we haven't even got to Christmas Day. Sonia (Laura Aikman) turns out to be an attractive blonde with social pretensions. Around her, Smithy talks as if he has a poker stuck up his rear end and has swallowed a dictionary.

Millions of us recall how the episode ends: Nessa asks Smithy to marry her. It's the cliffhanger of all comedy cliffhangers. And Smithy's answer, after a five-year wait, is now just days away... ■

All Gavin & Stacey episodes are available on iPlayer. Reviews by James Bennett and Steve Clarke. Tidy!

OUR FRIEND IN DEVON & CORNWALL

From regional South Australia to Plymouth and becoming Chair this year of the RTS Devon and Cornwall centre, my journey has been a long one.

After arriving in South West England from Australia in 2006 on a late-bloomer's gap year that is still going, I've been freelancing in the region as a camera operator, working in news graphics and floor managing, but primarily plying a trade as an offline editor.

I joined the Devon and Cornwall committee in 2019, helping out with a few edits for the region's student awards, and have since taken on the role of producing this event. I relish the opportunity to help showcase the young talent coming through.

After 27 years working in television, my passion is to give back and try my best to encourage the next generation, helping them break into this wonderful industry. With so many brilliant universities and colleges in the region, there are many opportunities to do this. We have amazing student member numbers in the region.

I've fallen in love with Devon and Cornwall. For me, there's a constant reminder of home in the long sprawling beaches and the tiny towns bursting at the seams in the summer. I do love the familiarity of this, but I also love the year-round lush, green countryside that I'm not so used to. I'm not ashamed to admit that there's nothing quite like a nice Cornish pasty and a pint of Proper Job to help realise how good we have it in the South West.

I want to use the platform of the



Matt Geraghty finds the TV industry in rude health in beautiful South West Britain

RTS to shout about the growing film and television opportunities here. Twofour Post Production, based in Plymouth, is one of the shining lights as it continues to grow and enhances job opportunities across all facets of post-production. Rock Oyster Media is another Plymouth company producing high-quality television and recruiting local talent to help bring to life shows such as *Gary Barlow's Wine Tour: South Africa* and *Ainsley's Food We Love*.

Since 2019, Screen Cornwall has been attracting productions to the Duchy, and training and developing

A NICE CORNISH PASTY AND A PINT OF PROPER JOB... THERE'S NOTHING LIKE IT

local talent. From HBO's *House of the Dragon* and *Beyond Paradise* for the BBC to *Malory Towers* for CBBC, Screen Cornwall does an amazing job of attracting huge productions to the area and securing work on them for locals. It also works closely with partners, including the BFI Network South West, BBC Writers and Falmouth University, to explore opportunities for creatives to connect with professional training, support and funding.

Now Devon wants in! Soon to be launched, Screen Devon, is the new screen agency for the county, promoting the area as a desirable destination for high-end productions while at the same time increasing the skills of the film sector within the county. This sends out a strong message that film and television is alive and well in the South West.

The ambition is to enable local people to continue living in this beautiful part of the world and work in the industry. With companies from the region securing more and more commissions, this is becoming a reality. I'm all for travelling far and wide, but not everyone feels the same way. One positive outcome from Covid has been the growth of remote working for many sectors of our industry, which means that more South West-based TV people are able to pitch for jobs without having to leave their homes. That's what I do, and I love it.

We need a vibrant TV industry in the South West, and the RTS is well-placed to help. I have no doubt that we can do great things. ■

Matt Geraghty is Chair of RTS Devon and Cornwall.



Tousled: Keira Knightley as Helen

Dark, crisp and getting even

Keira Knightley is out for revenge in Netflix's audacious new spy thriller, *Black Doves*.
Caitlin Danaher reports

It's the most wonderful time of the year: frantically juggling work dos with gift shopping and carol concerts. Add to that list the small matter of avenging the murder of your secret lover, and things get wild very fast.

This is where we find Keira Knightley's Helen in the opening episode of Netflix's six-part spy thriller *Black Doves*. Married to Wallace (Andrew Buchan), the British defence minister who's tipped for No 10, she's the picture of domestic bliss as a dedicated wife and mother to two young twins.

Yet her entire life is a lie. Helen is a spy, employed by the mysterious corporate espionage network the Black Doves. Recruited by Reed, a steely chief conspirator played by Sarah Lancashire, Helen has been leaking sensitive information from the heart of British government to be auctioned to the highest bidder.

When she discovers that her clandestine lover, Jason (Andrew Koji), has been brutally murdered, and a target is now on her back, Helen needs help. Enter her friend Sam, a dishevelled assassin played by Ben Whishaw, who has been flown in to protect her. Embarking on a high-stakes manhunt to find out who killed Jason, the pair are soon tiptoeing around a criminal

plot that threatens to bring the government to its knees.

Series creator Joe Barton started writing *Black Doves* on Boxing Day two years ago while trying to escape the intensity of a big family Christmas. He couldn't believe his luck when, on finishing the pilot, his management told him that another of their clients, the Oscar-nominated Knightley, was seeking TV work. "I didn't think anything would come of it, obviously, because it's Keira Knightley," Barton laughs. Still, he sent over episode 1, which was all that existed then. To his surprise, Knightley was on board.

He had pitched the script to his frequent collaborator Jane Featherstone, executive producer and co-founder of production company Sister. She had worked with Barton on *Humans* and *Giri/Haji* and was instantly drawn to his latest script.

"I love his writing, full stop," Featherstone says. "[*Black Doves*] was corporate espionage, but in a very grey, muddy world. Heroes and villains were harder to find. It was just this brilliant character piece."

All that remained was to find a home for the show. Featherstone was out for dinner a week later with Netflix's Anne Mensah, VP of Original Series, who said she was looking for a contemporary

spy thriller. "I had one in my handbag, literally," Featherstone says.

If you were to back anyone's pitch for a spy series, it would be Featherstone, the executive producer behind *Spooks*, the MI5 BBC One mega-hit that ran for 10 series. "Within three weeks, we were greenlit," she says. "I've never known that to happen in my life," she adds, still stunned by the rapid deal.

Spy series have fallen out of fashion in recent years, the exception being the wondrous *Slow Horses*. Instead, streamers have injected cash into high-concept ideas such as *Squid Game* and *Severance*. Barton's audacious spin on the contemporary spy thriller could not be more different to the dour espionage tales of old. From explosive arguments on the M25 to – quite literally – exploding out of a building,

Knightley and Wishaw are an endless source of fun as bantering, bickering besties.

Add in Sarah Lancashire and the series boasts

a stellar leading trio, supported by some of Britain's finest actors, including Adeel Akhtar, Tracey Ullman and Paapa Essiedu. Kathryn Hunter gives a standout turn as the growling Greek mobster boss Lenny, barking orders at her hapless hitman employees Williams (Ella Lily Hyland) and Eleanor (Gabrielle Creevy).

"That's what Joe does. He creates these very specific characters who are very real, very grounded, but exist in this elevated world. It creates such a fresh approach," Featherstone says.

Though Wishaw won his big-screen acting break as Q, James Bond's bespectacled gadget man in *Skyfall*, you

won't find any exploding pens or rocket-firing cigarettes here.

Alex Gabassi (*The Crown*), who co-directed the series with Lisa Gunning (*The Power*), was keen to pare back the spyware. "I'd rather use simple devices that indicate what is [happening] than do crazy VFX with lots of screens that will date in three months," he says.

Similarly, Gunning and Gabassi wanted the many fight scenes to be visceral and emotional, not overly flashy. "I'm obsessed with this idea of epic intimacy," Gunning says of the huge action sequences that unfold in the final three episodes she directed.

"I don't believe in directing big-scale things unless there's a reason – unless they're feeding into some emotional bank account. So that's what I always try and do."

For Gabassi, it was important that the action scenes captured his characters in a scrappy fight for survival. "I love being the one to make Keira's hair go messy," Gabassi

grins. "It was important to always bring real-life domesticity to it: OK, whatever you have at hand, this is what you use. So use an ashtray, or use that statue," he explains.

During a particularly violent fight in her kitchen, Helen threatens to pulverise her assailant in a NutriBullet and turn him into a smoothie.

The series was shot on location in London over the festive period last year. Shooting in the capital is notoriously difficult, not least when filming outside high-security locations like the US Embassy at the busiest time of year.

For Gunning, dealing with curveballs on set was part of the fun. "One

of my favourite things about film-making is that you get to fly by the seat of your pants. That is my comfort zone," she says. "Everyone's on that mission together."

She recalls urgently needing a piece of Perspex for the final shot of the day – an explosive action scene – when someone found a discarded sheet in a nearby skip. "Human beings on set are incredible – that resourcefulness, the need to just get to the end," the director enthuses. It may not be what you expect from the glossy world of Netflix, but the shot made the final cut.

"I knew Joe would do a phenomenal job with the dialogue and the characters, and I felt that London deserved the same type of care," Gabassi says.

The series travels from the upper echelons of the British Establishment to London's gritty criminal underworld. In the visual world of *Black Doves*, greasy caffs and bingo halls are given the same epic treatment as Whitehall's palatial corridors.

Deviating from the familiar presentation of London as cold, cloudy and grey, *Black Doves'* neon-soaked streets sparkle like a Christmas tree. Setting the series in the run-up to Christmas provided the "emotional scaffolding" for Barton to access the human drama behind his gunslinging heroes.

"It's about people who feel lonely, friendships coming back together, and looking at the past and being quite nostalgic," he says. "There's something about Christmas that [can make you] quite reflective."

Black Doves will return for a second series, Netflix has announced, in a huge vote of confidence from the streamer. With all six episodes having dropped on Netflix in early December, Christmas has come early. Try not to open all your gifts at once. ■

I LOVE BEING THE ONE TO MAKE KEIRA'S HAIR GO MESSY




Steely: Sarah Lancashire as the spymaster, Reed



Dishevelled: Ben Wishaw as Sam the assassin

All photographs: Netflix



Dick (Kit Rakusen), George (Diaana Babnicova), Julian (Elliott Rose) and Anne (Flora Jacoby Richardson). And, of course, Kip as Timmy

Give me Five

The Famous Five return to CBBC this Christmas ... so does that mean lashings of ginger beer and endless twee adventure? Not in this adaptation, which takes Enid Blyton's much-loved books and gives them a modern edge while retaining their original 1940s setting.

At face value, it is an unlikely collaboration between Moonage Pictures co-founder Matthew Read and Danish film director Nicolas Winding Refn, best known for the ultraviolent *Pusher* trilogy and *Drive* with Ryan Gosling, which won Refn a Cannes Festival Best Director Award. Read and Refn are long-term collaborators and friends, having worked together on *Pusher*, the equally brutal *Valhalla Rising* and – another surprise, perhaps – ITV's Agatha Christie adaptation, *Marple*.

A shared love of Blyton's books and British films of the 1940s, particularly

Matthew Bell has a terrific time at the Bristol set of CBBC's returning *Famous Five* series, mixing 1940s nostalgia with a modern-day edge

those of Powell and Pressburger and Hitchcock, led them to buy the rights to *The Famous Five*. "A lot of the values in the books about adventure and friendship are completely timeless – kids are looking for exactly the same things now," says Read.

Two 90-minute films were shot back-to-back in September and October at Bristol's Bottle Yard Studios and in surrounding locations. These follow a successful first series that concluded earlier this year. They are set during

the Second World War when Blyton began writing her 21 *Famous Five* books. Their atmosphere, explains Read, is one of absent grown-ups and children roaming the countryside – but with war casting a shadow over the country.

"Telling a story in which the kids can't use their phones to ring for help makes the adventures more exciting," he says. "Life can be great, exciting and rich, but there are also scary things going on, which is something that kids and adults can connect to now. We were never just interested in doing a period adaptation of the Famous Five."

The Christmas episode, *Mystery at the Prospect Hotel*, reunites the young cast from series 1 (see overleaf), with James Lance and Ann Akinjirin also returning as Uncle Quentin and Aunt Fanny. The second episode, *Big Trouble on Billycock Hill*, will follow in 2025.

The established cast are joined by Spanish actor María Pedraza (*Money*



On the *Famous Five* set in Bristol

Meet Timmy, the ‘best dog in the world’

Kip turned three in October and was treated to a birthday cake of chopped-up chicken on set. The bouncy bearded collie, who made his TV debut last year as George’s dog, Timmy, was cast before any human actors. He greets me enthusiastically in the company of his owner and trainer, Rosie Ison. ‘I’m lucky to have such a great dog. Everyone adores Kip,’ she says.

Ison is an experienced handler, and five of her dogs have appeared in shows, including Rowan Atkinson’s Netflix comedy *Man vs. Bee* and the 2020 film adaptation of *The Secret Garden*.

How does she train a dog to act? ‘I got [Kip] at nine months, and you start with the basic things that you need to go on set – sits, stays and going to a mark. I don’t do an awful lot of specific training until they’re needed to do something on set, and then I’ll put a lot of work into it. You don’t want to overwhelm a dog with lots of things at once because they forget. The last thing I taught him was to cover his eyes.’

It’s not just about teaching tricks; as with the child actors’ chaperones, Ison has a caring role: ‘You have to be mindful of dogs in this environment. Kip doesn’t worry about bright lights but someone shouting can be a problem. He doesn’t understand that it’s acting. When those scenes are playing out, I have to remove him from the set.’

Producer Sophie MacClancy says that Kip has grown as an ‘actor’ since series 1. ‘He’s more attuned to what we’re after. He knows that when we say “action” he is performing, or at least it seems like he does. Rosie has done a wonderful job reading through the scripts and figuring out what Kip can already do and what she might need to train him to do. If there are things she doesn’t think are going to work, we amend the script.’

So, is there anything that Kip can’t do? Ison replies: ‘He doesn’t like water. He’ll run through it and play in the sea, but he’s not keen on swimming.’

Heist), Amir Wilson (*His Dark Materials*), James Wilby (*Poldark*), Rita Tushingham (*A Taste of Honey*) and Jemima Rooper (*Geek Girl*), who played George in ITV’s mid-1990s *The Famous Five*.

Production designer James North – fresh from shooting *Smilla’s Sense of Snow*, a TV adaptation of Peter Høeg’s novel, in temperatures of -30°C on Finland’s frozen seas – was charged with recreating the *Famous Five*’s warm, nostalgic 1940s Britain. The art department immersed themselves in wartime films and photos to help them “visualise and realise what’s on the page”, says North.

“We want to know what is historically correct, but the art [of design] is that we take that information and choose what we wish to take heed of and what we’d rather ignore

– sometimes what’s historically correct doesn’t look cool.” The world of the *Famous Five* “has to have a slightly magical and heightened realism, and it should feel an exciting world to be in. You wish your childhood was like that: endless summer days by the coast, living in a homely cottage full of quirks

and mementos. It’s a colourful family adventure. It needs to feel nostalgic, but most importantly it needs to be fun.”

North adds: “I’ve got three children of my own and it’s lovely making a

show where everyone can get something out of it.”

The stars of the show – numbers one to five on the call list – are the four children and their dog, Timmy. Film lore says “never work with animals or children”, but producer Sophie MacClancy is having none of it. “It’s ▶

‘WE WERE NEVER JUST INTERESTED IN DOING A PERIOD ADAPTATION’



Spanish actor María Pedraza stars as Gabriela

All photographs: BBC

'I could do this for ever'

Television met four of the Five – including Kip who plays Timmy, though sadly not Elliott Rose (Julian) who was busy filming – on the final day of the shoot in Bristol. After eight weeks on set, the young cast were looking forward to a Halloween wrap party.

They are charming and natural, with none of the precociousness you fear in child actors. 'I could do this for ever – it's so much fun,' says 13-year-old Flora Jacoby Richardson (Anne), who made her professional stage debut alongside Keeley Hawes in *The Human Body* at the Donmar Warehouse in February.

At 15, Diaana Babnicova (George), is a relative veteran, having acted since she was eight. She loves the 'vibe on set; everyone's joking and happy'.

'Everybody's always so nice and chatty,' adds 14-year-old Kit Rakusen (Dick), who appeared in Kenneth Branagh's coming-of-age film *Belfast*.

The negatives are negligible: waking up early and wearing heavy 1940s wool clothing is all they can come up with.

How different are their teenage lives to those of Blyton's children? Jacoby Richardson says of her character: 'I go to normal school and people don't really care.' Apart from getting 'to hang out with her friends', she is not looking forward to normal life. 'I'd rather do this for the whole year than be at school.'

Is acting a job for life? 'One hundred per cent,' they chorus. Babnicova says: 'I want to do this for the rest of my life. This is the only job I can think of that makes me want to jump out of bed in the morning.'

Rakusen, though, finds similarities: 'I love playing with my friends in the woods, climbing trees. I did the Duke of Edinburgh scheme at school and loved finding my way with a map and without electronics.'

The young actors have had a good week; half-term means no sessions with tutors. Is it hard combining school work and acting? 'It's not easy because your brain has to be in so many places,' says Babnicova. 'But because our days are so busy, the adrenaline gets you through. It's easier because there are four of us – we bounce off each other's energy.'

Rakusen adds: 'It can be tiring. In the morning, you might do two hours of tuition, and going on set afterwards can be difficult for the first 10 minutes. But with all the lights and the energy, you get untired quickly.'

Is it tough to return to normal life? 'It's not easy,' admits Babnicova. 'I go to a theatre school, so everyone's striving to reach the same goal. It goes one of two ways – they are very supportive because they know how it is, or they get jealous and don't talk to me.'

Jacoby Richardson says: 'I go to a normal school and people don't really care.' Apart from getting 'to hang out with her friends', she is not looking forward to normal life. 'I'd rather do this for the whole year than be at school.'

Is acting a job for life? 'One hundred per cent,' they chorus. Babnicova says: 'I want to do this for the rest of my life. This is the only job I can think of that makes me want to jump out of bed in the morning.'



'It's such fun': the 'happy vibe' on set

► always great fun to work with kids and animals. You don't always know what they're going to be doing but that just makes it more exciting," she says. "Our young cast are fantastic and absolutely professional. They know their lines and where to stand. They're always incredibly well prepared.

"They bring lightness and friendliness to the set. It's also beneficial because we don't shoot late, so everyone who works on the job has a chance to have a bit of work-life

'BLYTON KNEW WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO BE A CHILD WITH A SENSE OF FREEDOM'

balance. People can go home and see their families.

"They're also working on something they can watch with their families, which is lovely."

MacClancy was an avid Blyton reader as a child, hoovering up *The Famous Five*, as well as the *Malory Towers*, *Secret Seven* and *St Clare's* series. "I was a huge fan. Blyton really captured what it was like to be a child with a sense of freedom."

She says that it's "a thrill" to be "taking something that so epitomises old-school Britain and making it accessible for a modern audience.

"This is a children's show but it's something the whole family can watch together. The films are darker than the original books – there's jeopardy, there's proper peril." ■

The Famous Five: Mystery at the Prospect Hotel airs on **CBBC** and **BBC iPlayer** on **23 December**.



The young adventurers at work



Deadly enemies:
David Tennant,
Nafessa Williams
and Aidan Turner
in *Rivals*

Disney+

Daggers drawn: the real-life TV rivals

Was television really like that in the 1980s? That was the question from a thirtysomething producer, asked a little enviously perhaps, after seeing *Rivals*. “All that sex, drinking and smoking?” Yes, it absolutely was.

The raunchy Disney+ series is based faithfully on Jilly Cooper’s 1988 “bonkbuster”, one of the *Rutshire Chronicles*, set in a county inspired by the Cotswolds. Life here is dominated by rutting, closely followed by smoking, drinking and feuding.

Aside from abundant fornication and adultery (more on that later), for *Television* readers the interest may be the plot. It centres on a vicious ITV franchise battle between two companies slugging it out for an unfeasibly

Does Jilly Cooper’s tale of franchise battles in *Rivals* reflect what actually happened in the 1980s? Absolutely, writes **Simon Bucks**

large area of central and southern England. For younger readers, ITV was not, as now, a single company, but divided into regions, each served by a standalone operator (except London, which had two: weekday and weekend). The franchises – monopolies awarded by the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) – were hugely profitable and thus hard fought for. In the famous phrase of Roy Thomson, the founding Chairman

of Scottish Television, they were a “licence to print money”.

This was the big attraction for Dominic Treadwell-Collins, *Rivals*’ executive producer and Chief Creative Officer of Happy Prince (part of ITV Studios), which made the show. “Reading *Rivals* as a young adult, it opened my eyes to the sexy, powerful and at times cut-throat and ruthless world of independent TV in the 80s,” he says. “We thought the high stakes – which seem so alien to us now – would intrigue audiences unfamiliar with the industry during this period.”

In fact, by 1986, when *Rivals* is set, the stakes were about to get even higher. The old system of the IBA simply assessing the franchise bids – as portrayed in the show – would soon be scrapped. Sarah Thane, then a young IBA regional officer in ►



Long live the 80s: Oliver Chris, Alex Hassell, Katherine Parkinson, Danny Dyer and Lisa McGrillis in *Rivals*

Disney+

► Norwich and later Head of Public Affairs, says: “I could already sense how anachronistic and paternalistic the system was. I’d be sitting there with a seasoned programme controller who had way more experience than me, telling him what he should be doing to meet their franchise terms. I could see how the wind was blowing.”

Soon afterwards, the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, ordered that franchises should be auctioned off to the highest bidders – a handy revenue raiser. That provoked a noisy resistance campaign, and the system was eventually modified to require bidders to also meet a quality threshold and have a sound business plan.

In *Rivals*, the warring parties are led by the nominatively-determined Lord Baddingham (David Tennant) and ex-showjumper-turned-Tory MP Rupert Campbell-Black (Alex Hassell). The plot is littered with underhand tactics, including poaching key staff and stealing bid documents to skewer the opposition. Baddingham sums it up crisply: “Revenge is a dish best served on television.”

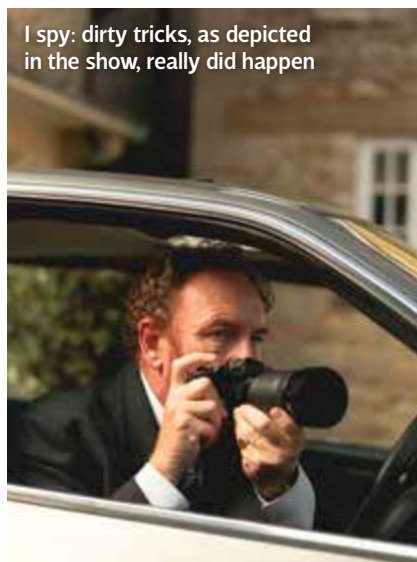
Campbell-Black was, according to Cooper, partly inspired by Andrew Parker Bowles, the current Queen’s first husband. TV executives with long memories say Baddingham could have been based on several ITV bosses with reputations for flamboyance and skulduggery. Chief among the candidates is Peter Cadbury, the uber-wealthy,

thrice-married, buccaneering boss of Westward Television, covering Devon and Cornwall, who died in 2006.

Like Baddingham, Cadbury was a paradoxical character. “He had his own plane and would fly down to Plymouth,” recalls former top executive David Lowen, then Westward’s

‘WE USED TO SWEEP THE ROOM FOR BUGS WHEN WE DISCUSSED THE FRANCHISE BID’

I spy: dirty tricks, as depicted in the show, really did happen



Disney+

Head of News. “After the regional news programme, we were all instructed to go to the bar, where he would serve copious amounts of champagne. He’d laugh and hug everyone, then disappear.”

Cadbury’s *Guardian* obituary noted, however: “He was blunt to the point of rudeness, picking quarrels throughout his life with policeman, politicians, neighbours and motorists who fell foul of his splendid cars.”

There were rumours, without evidence, that Cadbury used private detectives to spy on rivals. Lowen says he almost certainly adopted a common practice of anonymously setting up a shadow bidding company to flush out or deter the opposition. “Quite often, there would be a fake licence bid put up or partly funded by the incumbent licensee. If you’ve got an arm’s-length organisation gathering information for you, it’s like having a private detective.”

In 1991, under the new auction system, dirty tricks still abounded. Greg Dyke, then Chief Executive of London Weekend Television, recalls: “We used to sweep the meeting room for bugs when we discussed the bid. There was a lot of excitement one day because they found a stray cable, but I think someone had put it there as a joke.”

Dyke was deadly serious, though, about gathering his own information. “I spent two weeks finding out as much as I could about the bidding

against us, and I concluded that they were not going to pass the quality threshold. “I talked to people who had been offered the job of Chief Executive, so I knew that their financial structure wasn’t strong enough. We therefore assumed their programme bid wasn’t either.”

Dyke remains coy about his other methods but his calculations were spot-on. LWT kept its franchise despite bidding far less than its rival, which failed on both counts.

Central TV, based in Birmingham, ran the smartest franchise war. “They did all sorts of intelligence work,” says Dyke. “They went around and signed up every independent producer in their region exclusively, guaranteeing them production deals, so that no one else could do it.” It allowed Central to bid a mere £2,000 and win by default.

The pervading theme of *Rivals* – worthy of a Shakespearean tragedy – is duplicity and betrayal, and it’s not wrong. Talent-poaching was common: challengers aimed to lure top creatives from incumbent companies with lucrative job offers. Some hedged their bets by secretly allowing their names to be put in the rival’s “brown envelope”, for the IBA’s eyes only, never to be revealed if the bid failed.

“It was a byproduct of the system,” remembers Thane. “The competing consortiums were obviously desperate to show they had first-rate talent to have a chance of making a credible bid, and there wasn’t a limitless supply. It wasn’t viewed as disloyal, but fairly pragmatically. It was understood that top creatives feared they would lose their jobs if their side lost.”

A pivotal event in *Rivals* is the public meeting when both sides present their plans. Declan O’ Hara (Aidan Turner) sways the viewers and the IBA Chair, Lady Gosling (Maggie Steed) – a formidable Lady Plowden figure, a force to be reckoned with at the real IBA – with

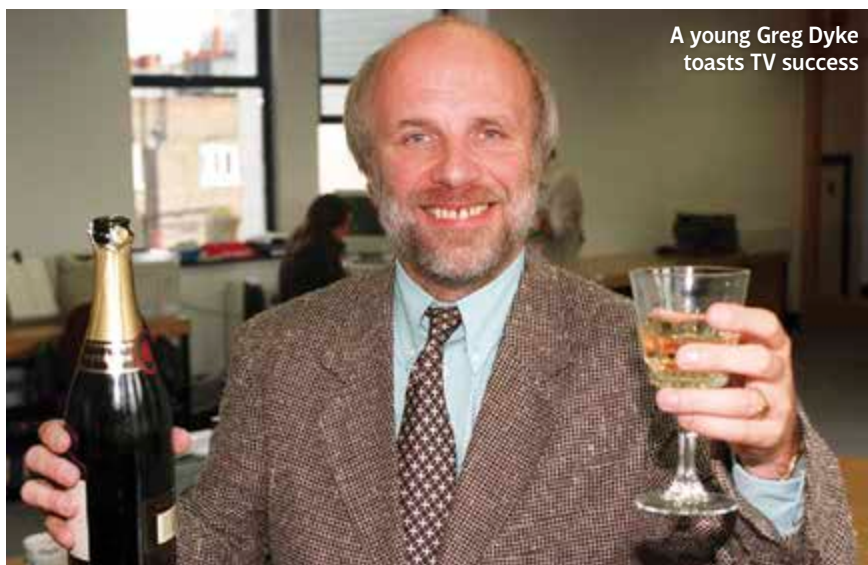
an emotional speech, declaring: “Television has the power to bring us together. It is, I believe, the greatest art form mankind has created.”

Steve Morrison, then Director of Programmes at Granada, remembers a similarly powerful moment at a public meeting when the rival bidder, Phil Redmond of Mersey Television, argued for more local daytime programmes.

“A guy at the back put his hand up and said: ‘I like local programmes, but I don’t like *only* local programmes. Granada makes programmes like *Brideshead Revisited* and *World in Action* that

Generally, the women in *Rivals* display libidos at least equal to those of the men. As Treadwell-Collins told *The Telegraph*, the show has “a female gaze”. However, there is one very dark moment when a vicar who sits on Baddingham’s board rapes a production assistant. In real life, Thane believes that not all the TV affairs were consensual. “I think there was a mixture of people being taken advantage of, and others trying to sleep their way to the top. It was evident everywhere in the industry in the 70s and 80s.”

Lewis remembers making her first



A young Greg Dyke toasts TV success

Alamy

can compete with anything around the world. And I want that scale as well as local.’ That was the shrewdest thing said during our run-up.”

Those who worked in 1980s TV agree that *Rivals* has got the lifestyle details perfectly: the clothes, hair, smoking and drinking, and incessant sex. “It might be exaggerated, but it was like that. It was very sexist, of course,” says Susan Lewis, a novelist who worked as a production assistant at Thames Television (famously outbid by Carlton) before becoming a full-time writer.

“It wasn’t unusual to be grabbed. And people *did* smoke and drink all the time. On *Thames News*, wine would be brought up to the news desk at quarter to six, and everybody would be drinking just before going on air.”

“Way too many people in the industry drank too much,” agrees Thane. “I remember when I joined the IBA in the Midlands, going for lunches, and people were consuming half a bottle of spirits and two bottles of wine. And everyone seemed to be having affairs. It was just all over the place.”

live programme. “I was counting down to air – 5, 4, 3 – and as I got to 2, the director grabbed my hand and put it on his crotch. Everybody thought it was madly hilarious, so I laughed as well. I was too young to object, and I probably played into it a bit – you felt kind of honoured to be chosen as the butt of a practical joke. It wasn’t until I was much older that I looked back and thought it was so not funny.”

The libertine days of television portrayed in *Rivals* have mostly gone for good, finished off by legislation and modern mores. And restructuring of the industry meant that people no longer had the time, money or energy for all that bonking and boozing.

“It has taken decades, it’s progress, and, in some instances, it’s for the good and we applaud it,” says Lewis.

“But perhaps it’s not as much fun. And I think it’s why a lot of people enjoyed *Rivals* as a TV series – because it shows a world that just looks like bloody good fun.” ■

Rivals is streaming on Disney+.



‘Buccaneering’: Westward boss Peter Cadbury has been cited as an inspiration for Baddingham

Alamy

In television, co-production deals come and go. Sometimes they turn sour as the conflicting demands of both parties lead to endless compromise or messy divorces. One of the most enduring – and productive – is the little-heralded partnership signed 10 years ago between BBC Studios and US public broadcaster PBS.

The arrangement has led to the making of more than 250 hours of content and embraces such celebrated shows as RTS award-winner *The Green Planet*, *Big Cats 24/7*, *Lucy Worsley Investigates* and the RTS award-winning *Fight the Power: How Hip Hop Changed the World*, Chuck D's history of rap.

In other words, a range of shows that includes both landmark specialist factual and returning series. Significantly, the relationship has also been responsible for the deeply insightful and award-winning documentary *Once Upon a Time in Northern Ireland*, distributed by BBC Studios but made by Keo Films and Walk on Air Films, also an RTS award-winner.

What, then, is the secret of this collaboration that continues to thrive in harsh times for those who produce and commission factual shows? Jack Bootle, Head of Commissioning, Specialist Factual, BBC, puts it like this: "It's a way of uniting forces to do work that is even bigger and better than we could do by ourselves. It makes sense that two big public service broadcasters on opposite sides of the Atlantic would work together in this way.

"Over the last 10 years, the ambition of the projects has just got bigger and bigger. That's because we've become more used to working with each other. Like a marriage, we've settled into it. We've become more collaborative, and that has made us more creative and confident. They've gone from being great shows to being some of the best shows on the BBC."

He singles out Brian Cox's recent BBC Two documentary series *Solar System* as one of the programmes he is most proud of. It would not have been produced, he says, without BBC Studios and PBS getting into bed together. "It's not only a great show, it has also been a huge hit," he says.

The first episode won a consolidated audience of 4.2 million, which Bootle says is the highest-rated BBC Two factual series for two years. "*Solar System* proves there is a big audience out there for science storytelling. It

A marriage built to last

Steve Clarke talks to the team who have kept a dynamic 10-year liaison between BBC Studios and America's PBS firing on all cylinders



Power player: Public Enemy's Chuck D

BBC

wouldn't have been made without the BBC's relationship with PBS. It's not cheap to make, so you've got to find a co-commissioner who shares your vision. PBS get that. It's in their DNA. They believe that grand, ambitious science is at the heart of what they do. Other UK channels don't feel that way, and neither do the streamers."

Sylvia Bugg, Chief Programming Executive at PBS, stresses that any partnership is only as good as what those involved can bring to the table. "Mutual respect has been the foundation for a solid business partnership

that has allowed us to do this important work," she says.

Kate Ward, Managing Director, Factual Productions at BBC Studios, says the relationship gives both the BBC and PBS the ability to create "purposeful content" of scale, citing *The Green Planet*, *Big Cats 24/7* and the return of *Walking with Dinosaurs* next year, after a 25-year absence. "The BBC and PBS are so aligned in terms of our values," she notes.

Having said that, there are times when American tastes don't align with British ones and adjustments need to

be made. Physicist and erstwhile rock star Brian Cox may be a national treasure in the UK, but on the other side of the Atlantic he is not a household name. For domestic audiences, Cox's role in presenting *Solar System* was critical. However, the PBS version dispensed with his services and instead hired the actor Zachary Quinto. "Large chunks of the show are the same but the wrapping is slightly different," says Bootle diplomatically.

While PBS considered Cox to be too British for US tastes, Lucy Worsley's quintessential Englishness is something that viewers across the pond can't get enough of.

Bugg says: "American audiences love Lucy. Her perspective is one reason why her shows are so successful in the US. I've often said: 'Are there more Lucy-type formats out there that we can lean into?' Audiences love her intelligent take on history."

Looking to 2025, highlights from the partnership include *Human*, a five-parter telling the 250,000-year story of our species, presented by paleoanthropologist Ella Al-Shamahi; *Matriarch*, a two-parter fronted by chimpanzee specialist Dr Jane Goodall; and the return of *Big Cats 24/7*, described by Ward as bingeable natural history.

When it comes to producers pitching shows for this collaboration, Bootle wadmits that finding a project that resonates with UK and US audiences can be challenging. "There are certain things that aren't going to translate, but you would be surprised how



Transatlantic appeal: Lucy Worsley

PBS

VIEWERS IN AMERICA LOVE LUCY WORSLEY AND HER TAKE ON HISTORY'

overlapping the two Venn diagrams of PBS and the BBC are."

Other factors include timing (why do it now?) and a unique offer. This could be freshly discovered archive footage, or an original take on a subject or story. "There's got to be something that's fresh," he says. "It's a story that you need to know about now."

Bugg adds: "We're always thinking about how relevant the subject is to our audience and their viewing trends. It could be something our

audiences have never been exposed to before or that provides new insight, or that we can build around our larger content pipeline."

Programme budgets have risen dramatically over the past decade. In scripted content, in some cases, they

have doubled. Of course, the kind of shows that BBC Studios and PBS are making are not as expensive as high-end drama, but they don't come cheap. "There has been a big rise in production costs," says Bootle. "Natural history has always been an expensive genre, and a boom in the sector (with the streamers entering the market) has driven costs up."

So how difficult is it to compete with the streamers' generously-funded factual shows? Ward says: "As a producer, it's not my job to compete [with the streamers], but what I will say about this partnership is that the consistency over a decade of specialist factual programming – natural history, science, history, art – is unique.

"We want to entertain, inform and be intelligent without being patronising. We've been able to deliver amazing cinematography. Others do produce content in the specialist factual genres, but none of them do it with the same passion, commitment and consistency."

Bugg adds: "With respect to streamers, we're in a different business. Competing with them is not something that keeps me up at night."

On top of appealing to UK and US audiences, shows made under the co-production deal also need global appeal. "If we're looking at something like *Walking with Dinosaurs*, although it's a co-commission by BBC Studios and PBS, other co-producers are involved, which gives us the ability to do things of scale that we couldn't do alone. That is truly exciting," says Ward. "In the Natural History Unit and the Science Unit, we are making programmes for the world that are universal." ■



Dual presenters: *Solar System*

BBC

Here's one I slayed earlier

Shilpa Ganatra discovers the dark secrets of Dexter Morgan, now depicted as a fledgling serial killer in a prequel to the hit crime series



Apprentice butcher: Patrick Gibson as young Dexter in *Original Sin*

The last time we saw Dexter Morgan, it seemed that his creators were finally killing him off. Starting in 2006, Michael C Hall had played the vigilante serial killer through eight series of *Dexter*, followed by an apparently fatal reprise in *Dexter: New Blood*. But not so fast...

In US television, it's a bold network that kills off a profitable idea, so the story of a sociopath who masquerades as a forensic expert and channels his bloodlust towards slaughtering evil-doers was too rewarding to end.

Next summer, fans can look forward to Hall's return in *Dexter: Resurrection*. But first comes a prequel, *Dexter: Original Sin*, with a younger actor depicting the making of the murderer. "The Dexter universe is expanding in both directions [backward and forward]," explains Clyde Phillips, the show's original showrunner, who has now returned to the franchise.

Why has *Dexter* lasted so long? "It's important to give the audience credit for being smart and attracted to the complexity of it all," says Phillips, citing

Jodie Comer in *Killing Eve* and Jason Bateman and Laura Linney in *Ozark* as examples of anti-heroes who charm the audience despite their crimes.

"Michael C Hall's voiceover is important too – [it is] Dexter's inner monologue, and [the reason] why we invite a serial killer into our home every week," he adds. "It brings us his vulnerability, his fears, his process, and it lets us in as he tries to blend into normalcy."

The prequel takes us back to the start of his grisly path. A 20-year-old Dexter – played by *The OA*'s Patrick Gibson – joins his father, Harry (Christian Slater in a feat of inspired casting), in the fictional Miami Metro Police Department as a forensics intern. This allows Dexter to indulge his bloodlust while Dad drills him at home in a

'IT'S PARAMOUNT'S TOP FRANCHISE. NOW WE NEED THE DEXTER-NEXTERS'

code to kill master criminals while staying under the radar.

The idea to return to the first kill came from Paramount Co-CEO Chris McCarthy. "Chris had worked on *Yellowstone*, where they thought to show how all the characters got there," recalls Phillips. "So, they did *1883*, and then *1923*, all leading up to what we already know with *Yellowstone*."

"*Dexter* is Paramount's biggest franchise, and one of the ways to grow is to get those 'Dexter-Nexters' – that's not my phrase, but they're right." While the younger cast appeals to a new generation, a prequel also lets longstanding fans delve into the lead character's psyche, discovering more about what shaped him.

Irish actor Gibson, as the young Dexter, leads a star-studded cast featuring Christina Milian, Patrick Dempsey and Sarah Michelle Gellar. "We got all our first choices," says a satisfied Phillips.

As a natural chameleon, Gibson has won many varied Stateside roles. He relished the challenge of *Dexter*: "It's an unconventional role in the sense

that Dexter doesn't feel anything, and usually the [actor's] job is to channel emotions," he says.

"I was interested in the idea that, although Dexter is an outsider, we can empathise with that. Most of us have experienced that kind of feeling where you're outside, looking in. Like a lot of people at that time in life, Dexter is trying to understand himself and his place in the world. It's a defining moment in his life."

In other words, as well as blending the genres of horror, drama and police procedurals, *Original Sin* contains a coming-of-age element. As a 20-year-old trying to fit in, we see Dexter take on challenges like attending a dance and double-dating, all with the show's deliciously dark humour that lifts what otherwise might be a weighty watch.

Narration is still provided by Michael C Hall. He passed on to Gibson his knowledge about the character before shooting began in June. Gibson says: "I spent a lot of time watching the eight seasons, especially the first, as that's the closest link we have to *Original Sin*. But nobody knows Dexter like Michael C Hall. He said Dexter was relatable because every interaction he has is an act. As humans, we do that a lot. We're all different around different people, and we wear a lot of masks."

"But Michael also gave me permission to make it my own. So even though I studied Dexter's exterior manifestation, it needed to be an essence rather than a complete impression because Michael was so comfortable and free in the role."

Gibson used a dialect coach to perfect his young Dexter - to impressive effect. Uncannily, he adopted key



A stellar cast includes Sarah Michelle Gellar

mannerisms: head tilts, wry smiles, dead-eyed feigning of emotion.

Filming for the first series continued until the end of November, just days before the December launch. It was cutting it fine but, with "a generous budget" and Phillips at the helm, the production was a well-oiled machine.

Phillips was the showrunner for the four first Emmy-winning seasons, after which he returned from LA to his New York home. "I realised I was working for a life I wasn't living," he says. As well as working on *Original Sin*, he is overseeing *Resurrection*. How does he manage the workload?

"I have the bandwidth of an elephant, and I don't get flustered. I

delegate and only hire people to whom I can delegate. If something big and gnarly comes along, I'll deal with it, but usually I just have other people deal with it until it gets to me."

Such as? "The most difficult decision is killing off an actor, like when we killed Rita (Julie Benz), Dexter's wife, at the end of season 4. That was a really hard thing to do."

To create *Original Sin*, Phillips, who was a showrunner on *Nurse Jackie*, used a tried-and-trusted process. It began with a writers room and plenty of whiteboards. "I write mystery novels too, and it's the same in that we start with the ending and build towards it."

"Anything can happen between the beginning and the end, and in the writers room we have a board called 'NPO' - No Particular Order - where we write scenes we'd like to see: a subway crash; this character falls in love; a building explodes. About a third of them make it into the show, but they also trigger other events. For example, if you have a subway crash, it's because they're running from something."

Once the scripts are complete, he hands over to his directors, Michael

Lehmann and Monica Raymund, and production designer and long-time collaborator Eric Weiler, who helped create the aesthetics of the two eras in which

'THE CHARACTER IS RELATABLE - AS HUMANS, WE ALL WEAR MASKS'

the action happens: 1991 (with student-era Dexter) and 1973 (when Harry meets Dexter's mother).

"Everything is different in those eras - you can imagine how big the computers were. The music and cultural references are completely different too," says Phillips.

Following *Resurrection*, there are rumours about a spin-off focusing on Dexter's son, Harrison, and there's every chance we could return to Dexter's murderous youth. Phillips says: "Obviously, the network is going to wait to see how *Original Sin* performs. We in the writers room think it's going to perform magnificently, so we've been noodling out some ideas and growth for Dexter. He'll only be 21, after all."

That's plenty more time to make a killing - or several. ■

Dexter: *Original Sin* is streaming now on Paramount+



Like father, like son: Gibson as Dexter with Christian Slater as his mentor

All photographs: Paramount+

Whether it's athletics, football or boxing, young fans now want more than just the main event. Our RTS panel asked how the industry can meet that challenge



'Dismal spectacle': Tyson vs Paul

Netflix

Are we ready for next-gen sport?

More than 24 million people tuned into ITV and the BBC to watch Spain beat England in the Euro 2024 final in July. A month later, Warner Bros. Discovery streamed 3,800 hours of live Olympic competition, consumed by UK and European audiences to the tune of 7 billion minutes.

Clearly, sport still pulls in huge audiences, whether broadcast on linear TV or streamed on platforms such as Discovery+ and Max. But rather than resting on their laurels, platforms are looking to attract the next generation of fans via social media and YouTube.

"Linear channels are important for a certain audience who like to sit down and watch traditional television... it's here to stay for a long time," said Scott Young, Group Senior Vice President,

Content, Production and Business Operations, Warner Bros. Discovery Sports, Europe, who was speaking at an RTS event in November entitled "Next-gen sports fans: new trends shaping the future of sports viewing".

But Young said the Paris Olympics was a "turning point" in sports broadcasting, marked by huge engagement on social media, with competitors allowed to post on their personal accounts from the athletes' village and venues for the first time. "The story is

'WE SAW WHAT ATHLETES HAD FOR BREAKFAST AND WHO THEY TALKED TO'

not just the athlete competing," he said. "We saw them go on social media and share their passion for the games. We saw what they had for breakfast, who they were talking to, who they ran into in the athletes' village."

Young argued that, having got to know the athletes via social media and whetted their appetite for sport, the younger digital generation would now watch the live coverage to see them compete for medals.

Digital production company After Party Studios makes Sky Sports' series *Scenes*, which is available on its Premier League YouTube channel. It features YouTubers Specs Gonzalez and Morf, who are given behind-the-scenes access at grounds to offer an alternative "yoof" perspective on the football. Managing Director Joshua Barnett recalled: "[Sky Sports] came to us last year with a brief for hitting a

next-gen audience... last season we hit 72 million views across the series.”

“People want to connect on a human level,” said Claire Valoti, a former Snapchat executive and now Non-Executive Director at sport technology and data company Genius Sport.

Authenticity was key, she said: “During Paris, I was obsessed with [the social media of] Simone Biles because my household loves gymnastics. It was just her, being normal – there was a connection. It’s another element of fan engagement... to understand a person you’ve put on a pedestal as a human and getting to see their real self.”

Young agreed, adding: “We have told all our on-air talent that we want them to be themselves. Joe Cole and Peter Crouch are our Ant and Dec – our two

As an example, he explained how leading players George Furbank and Finn Russell wore TNT Sports player mics during June’s Premiership Rugby Final, bringing the “raw emotion” of the match to the TV audience.

Young added that live sport was becoming “the meat in the middle”, sandwiched between social media content.

Valoti predicted that content will be increasingly defined by athletes “wanting to take control and [building] a direct relationship with their fans and community. We’re starting to see more of that.”

Sport entertainment, as the Tyson-Paul fight (see right) recently proved, is becoming big business. A charity football match – scheduled for March



Panelists Joshua Barnett, Claire Valoti, Scott Young and Jaydee Dyer

Paul Hampartsoumian

football pundits get on like a house on fire. When we send them out to do anything together, it’s hilarious. Peter tried to recreate a goal he’d scored – he landed on his head, it really hurt him and [we got] 31 million views.

“It was authentic; Joe is standing there laughing his head off at his mate. That was something you couldn’t possibly create.

“The content that we see catch fire is the stuff where the talent are enjoying themselves. They’re [often] behind the scenes; Rio [Ferdinand] has started to do this in the Champions League matches, where he’ll start live broadcasting from the make-up room at five o’clock, two hours before we go to air.”

Looking to the future, Young said next-gen fans will want to be told “the whole story” and have “access to everything – they want to be as close to the players as possible”.

2025 and featuring British YouTube group the Sidemen – sold out the 90,000-seater Wembley Stadium within just three hours of tickets going on sale in November.

The 2023 match, held at West Ham’s London Stadium, also with the Sidemen, had 2.6 million live concurrent streams of the action and 30 million catch-up views within 24 hours.

“Yes, the football on the pitch is slightly questionable but we capture it in all its glory and I think it brings in a new generation,” said Barnett. “It fuels people to love live sport.” ■

The RTS National Event, ‘Next-gen sports fans: new trends shaping the future of sports viewing’, was held at the British Museum on 19 November. The host was Warner Bros. Discovery sports presenter Jaydee Dyer and the producers were Kim Chua and Ashling O’Connor. Report by Matthew Bell.

Tyson vs Paul: was it sport entertainment...or neither?

The exhibition fight between YouTuber Jake Paul and boxing legend Mike Tyson in November attracted 108 million live viewers globally on Netflix, making it the most-streamed sporting event ever. The contest in the ring, however, was both a dismal spectacle and a mismatch, with 58-year-old Tyson – who has a history of drug and alcohol abuse as well as mental health problems – no match for Paul, who won the match on a unanimous points decision.

Scott Young ‘It was a bit of a gimmick. Mike Tyson is an absolute legend, and to be caught up in that, unfortunately, I don’t think it was fair game... It made a lot of money but I don’t think the result was a surprise to anybody. The intersection of sport and entertainment is where we’re now more closely aligned for an event like that. But Jake Paul was always going to win.’

Joshua Barnett ‘It was a gimmick, you’d have to be a bit of a schmuck to go into that fight not knowing that there’s a contract that says, “You [Tyson] can’t knock him out, you [Paul] can’t knock him out. Make it go the distance, lads, put on a show, [give him a] slap in the weigh-in”. It’s kind of akin to WWE [wrestling]: you still buy into the characters, and you buy into the drama – it’s sport as entertainment. But, man, they’re [generating] views, they’re printing money and they’re entertaining audiences globally.’

Claire Valoti ‘If you think of Logan Paul and his brother [Jake]... they have a very Gen-Z following. So for boxing, even though it was gimmicky, has that brought a new audience of the next-generation into boxing? All in all, I think that’s a really positive thing for the sport, and it has expanded the fan base, so that’s a win.’

It would be no exaggeration to say that British TV drama and comedy over the past 30 years would have looked very different without Andy Harries, a producer with his finger on the popular pulse, but never at the expense of quality.

While working in-house at Granada and then for his own production company, Left Bank Pictures, Harries' hits have included *Cold Feet*, *The Deal*, *Quiz* and, of course, *The Crown*. There have also been acclaimed films, most notably *The Queen* and *The Damned United*.

Harries also ran Granada's comedy department, giving Steve Coogan, John Thomson and Caroline Aherne their first major TV exposure in *The Dead Good Show*, then producing Aherne's acclaimed *The Mrs Merton Show* and *The Royle Family*.

In conversation with former BBC One Controller Lorraine Heggessey, Harries, an RTS Fellow, looked back over almost five decades in television. His career began as a researcher at Granada in 1976 but was almost stillborn; early on, while making documentaries, an exec told Harries he had no future in television. "That sent me crazy – nothing fuelled me more than that. I was absolutely determined to prove him wrong," he recalled.

Harries enjoyed an eclectic 1980s, making documentaries in Africa and films for arts shows including *The South Bank Show* and *Omnibus*, as well as working with the likes of Lenny Henry and Jonathan Ross.

On returning to Granada in 1992 as Controller of Comedy, Harries discovered that Manchester was a hotbed of creativity, with the music of the Happy Mondays, Tony Wilson's Factory acts and the Hacienda, along with a burgeoning comedy scene.

Recalling working with the late Aherne on *Mrs Merton* and *The Royle Family*, Harries said: "Caroline was enchanting, amazing, extraordinary... [but] at the end of the day, she was ill-prepared, unfortunately, for fame."

Harries has produced series and films about the (other) Royal Family, politics and contemporary history, often in the same piece of work. His interest in the Royals began, he said, in the aftermath of Princess Diana's death, when both he and writer Peter Morgan (who penned *The Deal*, *The Queen*, *The Damned United* and *The*



Meet the crown prince of TV drama

The RTS London Christmas Lecture

Andy Harries reveals how his glittering television career almost ended before it began

Crown) were in London. "There was this stillness, [it was] eerie," he recalled. Harries started to think about the "extraordinary outpouring" of emotion from the British public. "The [memory] stayed with Pete and me."

Almost a decade after Diana's death, Harries and Morgan (with Stephen Frears directing) made *The Queen*, starring Helen Mirren as the British monarch. Harries was working with Mirren

on a new version of *Prime Suspect* and recalled how, on a read-through of the crime drama, the actor "swept into the room... and everybody gasped and sort of bowed to her naturally. I thought: 'Christ, she's just like the Queen.'"

He returned to the Windsors with *The Crown*, his six-series Netflix opus, which portrays the life of Elizabeth II from 1947 to 2005, and, with it, tells the story of contemporary Britain. "We

were the perfect project for Netflix at the perfect time,” he recalled. “Netflix wanted a big show that would, hopefully... win them some Golden Globes.”

In his conversation with Heggeseey, Harries tried to pinpoint his producing modus operandi: “I’m pretty dyslexic and I made a right balls of my A-levels – I got three Ds... because I find reading quite difficult. I operate on my instincts – what appeals to me; I have a short, sharp reaction to things.”

He said he had always been

“attracted to talent”, whether it was “the frighteningly bright” director Paul Greengrass on *World in Action*, Jonathan Ross,

Helen Mirren or Caroline Aherne. “I got consumed with excitement about working with them.”

He also “loves selling shows”, usually with success. One that got away, perhaps fortunately, early in his career, was a “talking dogs show”. His pitch to the BBC featured a dog, bought from a toy shop, which “spoke” when you pulled its tail, with Harries adding a recording of the toy dog saying:

“You’ve got to buy this talking dog show because it’s fantastic.”

Harries said that the BBC’s then head of comedy described it as “the most ridiculous pitch he’d ever had. It’s one of my great unmade shows”.

Heggeseey suggested that he was “a huge risk-taker”.

Harries said he never gambled on football or horse racing but, at work, he admitted: “I gamble every day. If you don’t take a gamble, you’ll never know whether [a show] is going to

work. It’s the only way good shows get made. I never worry about money or risk – what’s the point?”

Referring to the

cost of making *The Crown* at some £10m an episode, Harries added: “Our business is bonkers – it doesn’t make any sense. I’m not changing the world – just trying to entertain people.” ■

The RTS London Christmas Lecture was held on 4 December at the Cavendish Conference Centre. It was produced by Terry Marsh and Phil Barnes. Report by Matthew Bell.

‘OUR BUSINESS IS BONKERS. IT DOESN’T MAKE ANY SENSE’

Imelda Staunton in *The Crown*



Netflix

How long can Britain reign?

The UK’s creative industries, said Andy Harries, have been ‘leading the world’ over the past 20 to 30 years, but ‘we’re under real pressure now. The impact of the streamers – the globalisation of television – is having and will have a severe impact on our creative industries’.

He went on: ‘Most productions are bought by Americans... almost every streamer is American-owned. I’ve benefited from this, so I’m not attacking it, but we have to accept that public sector broadcasting in the UK is definitely under threat.

[BBC Chief Content Officer]

Charlotte Moore is doing a very good job – the quality of a lot of BBC shows remains extremely high, given the challenge to resources. But it doesn’t get to make all the shows it wants nowadays because it can’t compete with Netflix.

‘It’s a very challenging time. We will survive, but what the nature of the business will be in five years’ time is a concern. We might have to put some protection in for our businesses. I’m not a protectionist at heart, but we can’t be asset-stripped.

‘We have fantastic talent. There always will be production here. It’s not about being anti-American. We should welcome people investing and making shows here. It’s just that it can’t be to the point that our own shows, our own culture, withers away.

‘We were quick to realise that Netflix was probably a good option [for *The Crown*] but it was a big gamble. You’ve got to be prepared to embrace change, but not to abandon the traditional networks. I still make stuff for ITV and the BBC and I’m happy to [do so] if they’ve got the money for the right show.’



TV *Roylety* in a classic show commissioned by Andy Harries

BBC

Never give up. Don't be too precious. Build up your contacts. Educational qualifications are not the be-all-and-end-all. Be yourself. Be real. Those were just some of the words of wisdom from masterclasses focusing on these four areas of the industry...

Drama

Drama director Jordan Hogg had an epiphany. He was a young man coping with cerebral palsy and a difficult home life in Scarborough following his parents' divorce. One Sunday afternoon, he was watching David Lean's epic movie *Lawrence of Arabia* on Channel 4. The experience took him so far out of himself that, from that moment, he knew he wanted to become a film-maker.

"I completely forgot all the chaos around me. I got lost in the desert with Lawrence. This is proper magic."

Hogg has always had an iron determination to overcome the obstacles life throws in his path. Despite leaving school with no qualifications, he now has more than 70 hours of broadcast TV to his credit. He trained through Channel 4's 4Talent scheme after simultaneously working as a fitness instructor and studying film at university. "I graduated, and the next day I was working on *Shameless* as an apprentice director. I'd never even been on a professional set before," he told the students.

Hogg added: "There's no straight way into the industry. We've all come into it from different backgrounds and in different ways."

Grabbing every opportunity that arose, Hogg always kept the contact details of everyone he met, and recommended that students use the same strategy. To succeed in the industry, it was important to be proactive and not sit around waiting to be offered employment, even when you've got an agent. "I'm an arsehole, that's my biggest disability," Hogg joked.

Shameless led to work on *Hollyoaks* via another contact and eventually to directing jobs on *Doctors* and *Casualty*, where he won a Bafta for an episode starring Hollywood actor Sharon Gless.

Another career highlight was directing the pioneering BBC One drama *Ralph & Katie*, British TV's first mainstream drama to feature two learning-disabled lead actors. He said: "It



Diederick Santer talks to drama director Jordan Hogg

Learn from the masters

From drama to factual TV, journalism and development, RTS Masterclasses offer invaluable advice on our industry

was the most inclusive and happy environment I've ever worked in."

Jordan Hogg was interviewed by Diederick Santer, content creator.

Factual TV

"My mother loves the title CEO but it means fuck all," is how factual producer Camilla Lewis described her job in a compelling masterclass that had the audience eating out of her hands. Spontaneous applause broke out at several points, including when the joint CEO of Curve Media told students that she failed her maths O-level but was very good at business.

The fast-talking, supremely confident Lewis set up unscripted specialist

Curve Media in 2014 after an impressive career at the BBC and Fremantle, working on some of British TV's most enduring factual shows, such as *Great British Railway Journeys*, *Escape to the Country* and *Grand Designs*.

Lewis left school after failing her exams and attended Oxford Poly rather than Oxbridge; her father was a GP and her mother was a social worker. Her message to the students was clear: self-confidence, hard work, resilience (accepting lots of rejections went with the territory of being an independent producer), and the ability to think up and pitch ideas were all key to a successful TV career.

"I can recognise a good idea... but

am very self-critical," she said. Never short on ambition, Lewis revealed that she had wanted to be Britain's first female Labour PM but had always loved TV. She once appeared as a contestant on ITV Saturday night dating show *Blind Date*.

Despite the slowdown in factual commissions, Curve remains busy. Among the seven returning series on its books are Channel 4's fly-on-the-wall *999*, *On the Front Line*, spotlighting medical emergencies, which has already run for 11 series.

"I've been making programmes like this for 25 years. I get access because institutions like the NHS know we can be trusted to make them ethically," said Lewis.

A new BBC Two series, *Chess Masters*, was inspired by her teenage daughter suffering from mental health problems during the Covid epidemic. With the help of chess.com, she was able to turn her life round.

Camilla Lewis was interviewed by Tim Hincks, co-CEO at Expectation.

‘YOU NEED SELF-ESTEEM AND RESILIENCE. YOU HAVE TO KEEP GOING’

Journalism

Ria Chatterjee, a correspondent specialising in social affairs, described working for the "fearless" *Channel 4 News* as her "dream job". Her upbringing in Porthcawl, Wales, where her family was one of just three South Asian households, informed her desire to become a journalist. "I was made to feel aware of my difference," she recalled. At primary school, classmates ridiculed the Indian snacks she brought in – "there was no curiosity".

On another occasion, her father took his employer to a tribunal. "I remember seeing him stand up in court to talk about his experiences of racism at work. I thought: 'This is what we do as a family – we speak up, we fight injustice.' I've always been interested in people's lives that are different to mine and also in having an understanding of... marginalised communities. A lot of these people... are barely on the radar, and I wanted to have a go at bringing their voices into the news narrative."

After studying at Cardiff University's School of Journalism, Chatterjee worked for Sky News, BBC Regional News and ITV News London before joining Channel 4 in 2022. Students in

the audience saw clips of Chatterjee reporting from a drug-ravaged estate in Marseilles and a heartbreaking encounter with the family of James Bascoe-Smith, a teenager left with life-altering injuries after a random knife attack.

Chatterjee said that reporting harrowing stories has had an impact on her mental health. While at ITV London, she visited the scenes of many stabbings and met grieving families. She praised the counselling provided by ITN, but revealed: "I had to learn quite quickly to switch off."

Asked to identify the key attributes of a news correspondent, Chatterjee highlighted "empathy and humanity, and being able to connect with people". She added: "Be yourself and be real – that is a huge deal to a person who is taking a risk in sharing their story with you."

Ria Chatterjee was interviewed by Ben de Pear, founder, Basement Films.

Development

Quiz and factual entertainment specialist Dorsa Nam from MultiStory Media, one of two development executives giving the masterclass, told students: "I come up with things all the time in my head – whether they're any good is another question!"

She was joined by Dan Omnes from Blast Films, who developed Netflix series *The Man with 1000 Kids* and BBC One film *Big Gay Wedding with Tom Allen*.

The key skills, he said, were a facility for writing, brainstorming and pitching – "it's like a real-life *The Apprentice*".

Nam developed BBC daytime quiz *Bridge of Lies* and Dave's *Big Zuu's Big Eats*, in which the grime artist cooks for celebrities and stand-up comics. The idea for the latter came from Nam's love of grime, and from a researcher in her team who had seen Big Zuu cooking on YouTube. She made a sizzle reel "to sell Big Zuu's talent... and took it to UKTV". The show was snapped up.

The job, explained Nam, is "half creativity, half salesman – you have to convince people". Those "people" include potential talent for the show, the production company you work for or the channel commissioner, all of whom must see your idea as a winner.

Rejection may come but is part of the job, said Nam: "You get 'No' more than 'Yes'. You need self-esteem and resilience. You can't let it affect you for too long – you have to keep going."

Compromise, especially at a time when factual TV commissions can be scarce, is often needed to get a show over the line. "You can't be too precious," said Omnes. Television, added session Chair Emma Read, "is a huge collaborative process... anyone's idea matters if it makes sense and [leads to] a better end product".

Dorsa Nam and Dan Omnes were interviewed by Emma Read, MD of Emporium Productions. ■

All RTS Masterclasses were produced by Diana Muir and Helen Scott and held at Kings Place, London, on 7 November. They are available to watch at www.youtube.com/@RoyalTelevisionSociety/videos. Reports by Steve Clarke and Matthew Bell.



Dorsa Nam and Dan Omnes discuss their careers in development

All photographs by Paul Hampartsoumian

RTS Craft & Design Awards 2024

The awards were hosted by ITV presenter **Charlotte Hawkins** on 2 December at the London Hilton on Park Lane

Coldplay at Glastonbury 2024
Director – **Multicamera**

BBC

Casting Award

Rosalie Clayton – *Boarders*

Studio Lambert for BBC Three

‘A clearly rigorous casting process delivered a brilliant young cast brimming with authenticity. Creating a team of relatively new performers who gelled together so well was no mean feat and was achieved perfectly.’

Nominees

- ▶ **Lauren Evans**, *Lost Boys & Fairies*, Duck Soup Films for BBC One
- ▶ **Jill Trelvellick**, *Mr Bates vs The Post Office*, ITV Studios and Little Gem for ITV1

Costume Design - Scripted

Orla Smyth-Mill – *The Long Shadow*

New Pictures for ITV1

‘Impeccable research, authentic textures and even deliberately ill-fitting costumes which brought characters to life in a story that wasn’t an easy one to tell, but a hugely important one.’

Nominees

- ▶ **Suzanne Cave**, *Eric*, Sister/Little Chick for Netflix
- ▶ **Andrew Cox**, *Lost Boys & Fairies*, Duck Soup Films for BBC One

Design - Programme Content Sequences

Oliver Smyth – *The Battle to Beat Malaria*

Wingspan Productions, HHMI Tangled Bank Studios and Arte France for BBC Two

‘This entry was so impressive that it was selected as an outright winner. There was a softness and humanity to this sequence, lifting it out of the normal genre of “science graphics”, beautifully matched to the warmth and tenderness of the narrative.’



Peter Kosminsky with Mark Rylance in *Wolf Hall, The Mirror and the Light*

RTS Outstanding Contribution Award

Peter Kosminsky

'The Outstanding Contribution Award is exactly that: an award for an outstanding contribution of creative craft or design in the industry. This year it goes to a producer, writer and director. He began as a current affairs journalist and documentary-maker but made his name by telling contemporary social and political stories through television drama.

'His work has covered a multitude of challenging subjects including Northern Ireland, British soldiers in Bosnia, the death of Dr David Kelly, and the radicalisation of British Muslims.

'After studying chemistry at Oxford, he became a BBC general trainee before moving to Yorkshire TV and eventually establishing himself as an independent. He says he favours working on drama because – in his words – you get a much bigger audience and a much more competitive slot on terrestrial television for a

high-profile drama than you would for a documentary on a similar subject. The size of the audience, he says, is important if you are interested in alerting people to things they might not know about, and perhaps changing minds.

'He should certainly be satisfied with the ratings for his most recent work, which focuses on the politics of the 16th century – the third part of Hilary Mantel's *Wolf Hall, The Mirror and the Light*. This year's RTS Outstanding Contribution award goes to Peter Kosminsky.'

BBC

Design - Titles

Intermission Film – *Boiling Point*

Ascendant Fox, Matriarch Productions and It's All Made Up Productions for BBC One
 'A stylish sequence, with a frantic pace but without being an assault on the senses. Retro, yet with a modern feel, this title sequence hit its brief perfectly.'

Nominees

► **BBC Sport, BBC Creative, directed by Raman Djafari and Balázs Simon, Match of the Day UEFA Euro 2024**

BlinkInk/BBC Sport for BBC One

► **Andy Johnston, Spent**

Various Artists Limited for BBC Two

Director - Multicamera

Janet Fraser Crook – *Coldplay at Glastonbury 2024*

BBC Studios Music Production for BBC One

'It brilliantly communicated the creative ambitions of the band but also reflected the joy and emotion of the event at large. The dynamic range of intimacy versus epic scale made this one of the most memorable pieces of television from Glastonbury.'

Nominees

► **Andrew Swift, Match of the Day Live: FA Cup Final** BBC Sport for BBC One

► **Paul Dugdale, *Raye at the Royal Albert Hall*** Aldgate Pictures for BBC One

Director - Non-scripted

Paddy Wivell – *Hell Jumper*

Expectation TV for BBC Two

'The apparently simple use of UGC helped the story feel rich and ensured an intimate connection with the subject. The use of voice notes to drive the narrative was original and made for a powerful tool in the storytelling.'

Nominees

► **Tom Green and Tommy Forbes, *Me and the Voice in My Head***

Hungry Bear Media for Channel 4

► **Colette Camden, *Six Silent Killings: Ireland's Vanishing Triangle*** Five Mile Films for Sky Documentaries

Director - Scripted

Molly Manners – One Day

Drama Republic Production with Universal International Studios and Focus Features for Netflix
‘Gorgeous, subtle directing, allowing viewers to be swept away by the tenderness and humour of the piece.’

Nominees

▶ **Rosco 5, Juice**

Various Artists Limited and BBC Three

▶ **James Strong, Mr Bates vs the Post Office** ITV Studios and Little Gem for ITV1



Boorders
Casting Award

BBC

Editing - Sport

Nicholas Perry and Mandii Kuller – Andy Murray: Will to Win

BBC Sport for BBC One

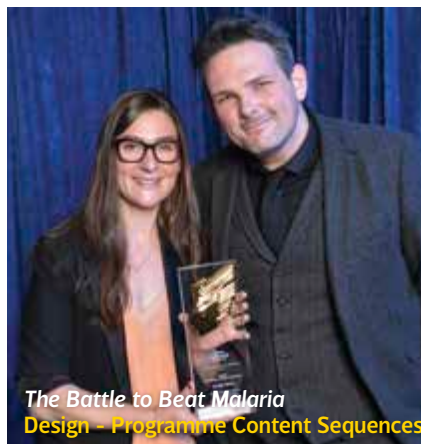
‘A fantastic piece of sports editing. The skillful use of archive, music, sound and graphics expertly crafted in the edit was captivating and emotive.’

Nominees

▶ **Harry Cambage and Scott Cassidy, Jude Bellingham Feature - Euro 2024**

ITV Sport for ITV1

▶ **Steve Wakeford, Sky Sports Cricket - The Late Cut** Sky Sports



The Battle to Beat Malaria
Design - Programme Content Sequences

Richard Kendal



Hell Jumper
Director - Non-scripted

Editing - Entertainment and Comedy

Gareth Heal – Peacock (series 2)

Big Talk Studios in association with Bullion for BBC Three

‘A fast-paced, cleverly edited show. Building to a real crescendo, the pace – with jump cuts – helped paint a picture of panic but with humour. You felt like you were there at the party, experiencing the chaos with them.’

Nominees

▶ **Gareth McEwen, Big Boys (series 2)**

Roughcut TV for Channel 4

▶ **Christopher Bird and David Head, Dodger: Coronation**

BBC Studios for CBBC



The Long Shadow
Costume Design - Scripted

ITV

Editing - Non-scripted

Otto Burnham – Atomic People

Minnow Films for BBC Two

‘Consummately constructed, with archive and testimony expertly woven together to create a deeply moving experience.’

Nominees

▶ **Garry Crystal, Me and the Voice in My Head**

Hungry Bear Media for Channel 4

▶ **Hamit Shonpal, Kanwaljeet Thind and Asim Ali, The Body Next Door**

Raw TV for Sky



Intermission Film: Boiling Point
Design - Titles

BBC



Andy Murray: Will to Win
Editing - Sport

Richard Kendall



One Day
Director - Scripted

Netflix

Editing - Scripted

Mark Sanger – Masters of the Air

Apple Studios with Amblin Television/
Playtone for Apple TV+

‘Work of an extremely high standard made this a very competitive category. Fantastic aerial sequences of style and flair helped make this a standout entry.’

Nominees

▶ **Peter Oliver, Mike Holliday and Benjamin Gerstein, Baby Reindeer**
Clerkenwell Films for Netflix

▶ **Ben Yeates, This Town**

Kudos, Nebulastar, co-produced with Mercury Studios, in association with Stigma Films for BBC One

Effects - SFX

Becky Johnson and Paul Vincett (Stitches & Glue) – Eric

Sister/Little Chick for Netflix

‘Innovative suit technology, emotional puppetry and strong production brought the 80s-inspired character to life with impressive animatronics.’

Nominees

▶ **Real SFX, Doctor Who**

Bad Wolf, a co-production with BBC Studios for BBC One

▶ **Neil Corbould, Caimin Bourne, Stuart Heath and Glen Winchester, Masters of the Air**

Apple Studios with Amblin Television/
Playtone for Apple TV+



Eric Effects - SFX and Photography -
Scripted and Picture Enhancement

Netflix

Effects - VFX

Alan Church, Simon Giles, David Schneider and James Hattsmith – The Tattooist of Auschwitz

Synchronicity Films with Sky Studios and All3Media International for Sky

‘Brilliant use of VFX with 600 expertly crafted shots that sensitively enhance the storytelling.’

Nominees

▶ **VFX Team, Eric**

Sister/Little Chick for Netflix

▶ **Ben Turner, Reece Ewing, Framstore & Rumble VFX, The Crown**

Left Bank Pictures for Netflix



Masters of the Air
Editing - Scripted

Apple TV+

Lighting for Multicamera

Nigel Catmur, Joe Phillips, Oliver Lifely and Martin Higgins – Gladiators

Hungry Bear Media and MGM
Alternative UK for BBC One

‘The complexities of lighting a 360-degree arena were embraced well and gave the show a wonderful, dynamic live event look.’

Nominee

▶ **James Tinsley, The Traitors**

Studio Lambert for BBC One

Make-Up Design - Non-scripted

**Suzi Battersby and Megan Thomas –
Secrets of the Neanderthals**

BBC Studios for Netflix

‘The team produced a real wow moment, undertaking meticulous research and working in challenging conditions to produce standout work.’

Nominees

▶ **Jacqui Mallett, Gladiators**

Hungry Bear Media and MGM Alternative UK for BBC One

▶ **Debbie Dannell, Sophie Roberts, Lewis Pallett and Lisa Houghton, Hannah Waddingham: Home for Christmas**

Done + Dusted in association with Apple for Apple TV+

Make-Up Design - Scripted

Sharon Miller, Kym Menzies-Foster and Kelly Taylor – Three Little Birds

Tiger Aspect Productions/Douglas Road Productions for ITVX/ITV1

‘Authentic and believable looks, with the make up team drawing on their own family histories to faithfully depict the lives and looks of the 1950s Windrush generation.’

Nominees

▶ **Emma Cowen, Lost Boys & Fairies**

Duck Soup Films for BBC One

▶ **Frances Hounsom and Vincent Van Dyke, The Tattooist of Auschwitz**

Synchronicity Films with Sky Studios and All3Media International for Sky

Multicamera Work

Camera Team – Celebrity SAS: Who Dares Wins (series 5)

Minnow Films for Channel 4

‘With only six cameras and a drone, the camera team captured not only the scale but also the high intensity and pain of a show of this nature.’

Nominees

▶ **Danny Tate, Banged Up**

Shine TV for Channel 4

▶ **Camera Team, The Traitors**

Studio Lambert for BBC One

Multicamera Work - Sport

Sean Randle – World Darts Championship Final 2024

Sky Sports/EMG for Sky Sports

‘An exceptional job – it felt like a shiny floor entertainment show, not a darts match! Excellent timing, attention to detail and shot calling.’

Nominees

▶ **Jamie Oakford, Amazon Prime Football: Luton vs Arsenal**

Sunset+Vine for Amazon Prime

▶ **Matthew Griffiths, London Marathon**

BBC Sport for BBC One



Richard Kendal

RTS Special Award

The TV Collective, The Film and TV Charity and The TV Mindset

‘The last 12 months have been especially challenging for television freelancers. The latest figures from Bectu suggest that just over half the UK’s film and TV workforce are still out of work. So this year the RTS has decided to recognise three organisations which are helping to alleviate the difficulties that TV freelancers face.’

‘The TV Collective is a community of networking TV professionals of colour, connecting its members to paid opportunities, the industry and each other. The Film and TV

Charity provides practical support with mental and physical health and financial wellbeing, as well as working to bring greater equity and inclusion to the industry. And TV Mindset aims to provide professional and peer support for freelancers, particularly in the area of mental health, as well as bringing meaningful change to working practices in the industry.’

‘All three share this award in recognition of the important work they are doing in support of the very hard-pressed freelance sector.’



Atomic People
Editing - Non-scripted



Peacock (series 2)
Editing Entertainment and Comedy



The Tattooist of
Auschwitz Effects - VFX



Gladiators Lighting
for Multicamera

Richard Kendal



SAS Who Dares Wins (series 5) Multicamera Work

Channel 4

Music Original Score - Non-scripted

Morgan Kibby – Queens

Wildstar Films and National Geographic for Disney+

‘To find a new way of characterising wildlife is no mean feat, and the music in our winning entry does it in a unique and surprising way.’

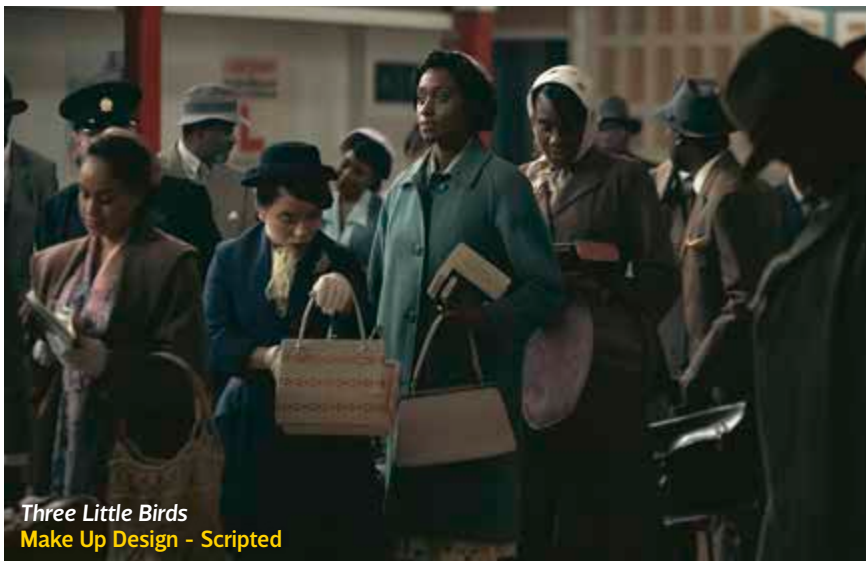
Nominees

▶ **Ed Harcourt, Otto Baxter: Not a F***ing Horror Story**

Story Films and Archface Films for Sky

▶ **Hans Zimmer, Jacob Shea, Sara Barone and Russell Emanuel, Planet Earth III: Extremes**

BBC Studios Natural History Unit with BBC America, ZDF, France Télévisions and the Open University for BBC One



Three Little Birds
Make Up Design - Scripted

ITV

Music Original Score - Scripted

Shez Manzoor, Nida Manzoor, Sanya Manzoor and Benjamin Fregin – We Are Lady Parts (series 2)

Working Title Television, part of Universal International Studios, a division of Universal Studio Group for Channel 4

‘Creating a believable sound for a fictional Muslim female punk band is integral to this show. It smashes its way through the screen.’

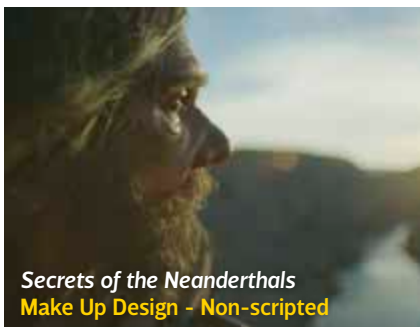
Nominees

▶ **Oli Julian and Nick Foster, Renegade Nell**

Lookout Point for Disney+

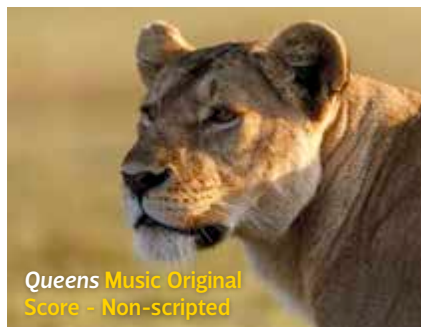
▶ **Vince Pope, True Detective: Night Country**

HBO Entertainment for Sky Atlantic



Secrets of the Neanderthals
Make Up Design - Non-scripted

Netflix



Queens Music Original Score - Non-scripted

Disney+

Photography - Non-scripted

Photography Team – Earthsounds

Offspring Films in association with Apple for Apple TV+

‘Over three years of chasing elusive animals across landscapes and global climes, the photography team captured the stunning visuals that give an added dimension to the soundtrack, revealing the unexpected, unfamiliar and untold ways in which animals communicate.’

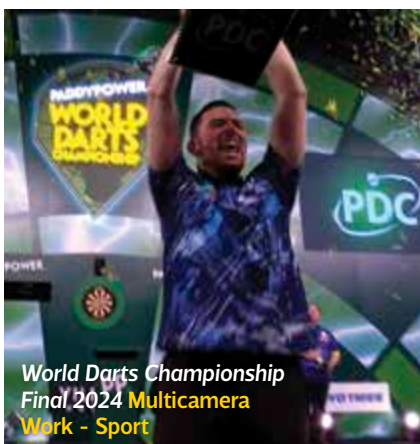
Nominees

▶ **Camera Team, Animals Up Close with Bertie Gregory**

Wildstar Films and National Geographic for Disney+

▶ **Simon Fanthorpe, Sarah Hunt, Steve Anderson and Nick Tanner, JFK: The Home Movie that Changed the World**

Shearwater Media/Passion Distribution for ITV



World Darts Championship Final 2024 Multicamera Work - Sport

Sky



We Are Lady Parts (series 2) Music Original Score - Scripted

Channel 4

Photography - Scripted

Benedict Spence – Eric

Sister/Little Chick for Netflix

‘The cinematography worked beautifully with the performances, allowing them to sing. The aesthetic was as close to art as you can get.’

Nominees

▶ **Krzysztof Trojnar, *Baby Reindeer***

Clerkenwell Films for Netflix

▶ **Philipp Haberlandt, *Lost Boys & Fairies***

Duck Soup Films for BBC One

Picture Enhancement

Toby Tomkins – Eric

Sister/Little Chick for Netflix

‘Expertly graded to create a sharp, immersive period feel that maintains authenticity, delivering a beautifully crafted and precise visual experience.’

Nominees

▶ **Picture Finishing Team,**

Mammals: Dark

BBC Studios for BBC One

▶ **Duncan Russell, *The Jetty***

Firebird Pictures for BBC One

Production Design - Non-scripted

Natalie O’Connor –

The Enfield Poltergeist

MetFilm/Concordia Studio in

association with Apple for Apple TV+

‘An original take on a famous story that was brought to life with exceptional vision, flair and richness.’

Nominees

▶ **Matthew Button, Daniela Faggio,**

Peter Arnold, Gavin Morris, Rachel

Hubbard and Lennie Beare, *D-Day:*

The Unheard Tapes

Wall to Wall Media, BBC iPlayer/BBC Two/

The Open University/History Channel for

BBC Two

▶ **James Dillon, *Taskmaster***

(series 16 and 17)

Avalon for Channel 4

Production Design - Scripted

Phil Sims – *Doctor Who*

Bad Wolf, a co-production with BBC Studios for BBC One

‘A portal into a world of pure imagination and creative ambition, which was beautifully executed.’

Nominees

▶ **Martin Childs and Alison Harvey,**

***The Crown* (series 6)**

Left Bank Pictures for Netflix

▶ **Stevie Herbert, Pilar Foy and**

Phil Noall, *The Tattooist of Auschwitz*

Synchronicity Films in association with Sky Studios and All3Media International

for Sky



Apple TV+

Earthsounds
Photography - Non-scripted



Apple TV+

The Enfield Poltergeist
Production Design - Non-scripted
and Sound - Non-scripted



Richard Kendall

Eric Photography - Scripted



Eric Picture Enhancement



Squid Game: The Challenge
Production Management Award

Netflix

Production Management Award

The Production Management Team – Squid Game: The Challenge

Studio Lambert and The Garden for Netflix

‘Highly impressive and a world first in scale and ambition for unscripted reality shows.’

Nominees

▶ **Planet Earth III Production**

Management Team, Planet Earth III
BBC Studios Natural History Unit with BBC America, ZDF, France Télévisions and the Open University for BBC One

▶ **The Production Management Team, Race Across the World**

Studio Lambert for BBC One



Awards host
Charlotte Hawkins

Richard Kendall

Sound - Non-scripted

Nick Ryan, Ben Baird and Sound Team – The Enfield Poltergeist

MetFilm/Concordia Studio in association with Apple for Apple TV+
‘Creative use of sound design at the heart of the storytelling. Excellently crafted and brilliantly managed to capture the sound of the period. It used all the drama tropes of a horror film and cleverly wove them into a factual space.’

Nominees

▶ **Tristan Powell, Patrick Fripp, Claire Ellis and Greg Gettens, Robbie Williams**

RSA Films for Netflix

▶ **Sound Team, Secret World of Sound with David Attenborough**

Humble Bee Films and Infield Fly Productions for Sky



Doctor Who
Production Design - Scripted

BBC

Sound - Scripted

James Ridgway, Matt Skelding, Jake Whitelee and Tom Jenkins – Baby Reindeer

Clerkenwell Films for Netflix
‘The sound design was meticulous and immersed the viewer in the psychological experience of the protagonist, creating a crushingly intense experience.’

Nominees

▶ **Sound Team, Kaos**

Sister/Anthem for Netflix

▶ **Sound Team, The Gentlemen**

Moonage Pictures in association with Miramax for Netflix



Baby Reindeer
Sound - Scripted

Netflix



Watch highlights from the RTS Craft & Design Awards 2024, at: bit.ly/3CWWZFX

Laughter rang out and a few tears fell as hundreds of viewers, cast and crew gathered at an RTS Midlands event to bid farewell to the BBC soap *Doctors*.

Fans had travelled from as far afield as Essex and Wigan to celebrate the Birmingham-made daytime drama, set in a GP surgery and axed after nearly 25 years on screen. Memories were shared during an emotional evening, held the week before the final episode was broadcast.

On the panel were actors David Perks (security guard Barry Biglow, 2010–2024), Liz Bower (Dr Melody Bell, 2007–09), Stirling Gallacher (Dr George Woodson, 2003–09), Tom Butcher (Dr Marc Eliot, 2001–05), Kia Pegg (receptionist Scarlett Kieran, 2022–24), Elisabeth Dermot Walsh (Dr Zara Carmichael, 2009–2024) and Joanna Bending (Dr Michelle Walton, 2024). They were joined by executive producer Mike Hobson, series producer Peter Lloyd and writer Claire Bennett.

The evening began with the highlights film, “24 Years in 14 Minutes”, which was played at the wrap party. It showed some of the actors who had their first roles on *Doctors*, including Eddie Redmayne, Emilia Clarke, Phoebe Waller-Bridge and Claire Foy, and a few of the many guest stars from Richard Briers, Andrew Sachs and Sylvia Syms to Les Dennis and Anton du Beke.

Hobson said: “We got these brilliant people in who enjoyed doing the story of the day. Eric Sykes was a joy. With Lionel Blair, we couldn’t get a word in with all his showbiz stories or get him on set as he had the whole production office watching his song and dance routines.



David Perks, Joanna Bending, Elisabeth Dermot Walsh, Peter Lloyd, Liz Bower, Claire Bennett, Stirling Gallacher, Tom Butcher, Kia Pegg and Mike Hobson

Vivienne Bailey

Doctors: a fond farewell

After 4,500 episodes, the BBC soap’s GP surgery has seen its last patients. **Roz Laws** hears cast and crew reminisce

Brian Blessed’s wife actually said, ‘If Brian starts messing around, call me’. But he was great at recording people’s answerphone messages.”

Doctors employed more than 8,900 actors in 4,500 episodes, not counting all the non-speaking extras. Some played multiple characters, returning every couple of years. Joanna Bending had played six roles since 2007 before becoming a regular this year.

Lloyd said: “One of the fantastic things about working on the show was the breadth of stories we could do. We had wonderful actors who could pull off anything on a tiny budget. I’m proud that we took risks and did extraordinary things. My highlights include a real-time episode, two weeks based on

Shakespeare, a pantomime, a Jane Austen week, “Valerie in Wonderland”, an entire production of *A Christmas Carol*, four music videos and one of the first pandemic episodes on Zoom.”

Kia Pegg picked the death of fellow receptionist Karen Hollins as her most memorable episode. Filming had to be paused when Jan Pearson, who otherwise was “a stellar corpse”, was visibly crying at the moving performance of her screen husband, Chris Walker. She added: “I was always teased about my Brummie accent and had never used it before at work. But *Doctors* gave me a real love of my city and how I actually talk, and gave me confidence.”

Stirling Gallacher recalled

her very first scene. “We only did two takes and the director called cut and moved on. I turned to the late, great Andy Payne, on camera, and said, ‘I was shit!’ He said, ‘Yes, bab, but you’ll get better quicker.’”

Bennett added: “The thing that always astonished me as a writer was that there was literally nothing off the table. It could be hilarious or harrowing but there were never blinkers about any subject. And it was such a joyous place on set. It’s pretty amazing what we did, the little show out of Birmingham.” ■

‘Doctors: a celebration’ was held at Midlands Arts Centre in Birmingham on 6 November. It was hosted and produced by Claire Bennett and Jayne Rae.

The first episode of *Our Oceans*, a new five-part Netflix nature documentary narrated by Barack Obama, opens with the story of a humpback whale protecting her calf in the Pacific. Reflecting on the show, series producer Jonathan Smith found himself relating to the whales: “A bit like the humpback at the beginning, this is our baby... that we’ve spent six years nurturing, and we’re about to send it out to the world.”

Creating *Our Oceans* involved over 100 filming trips and a global team of more than 700. Some of them were in the room for a November preview screening at Bristol’s Watershed, followed by a panel discussion, sharing experiences of working on the show.

As senior producer Rachel Scott said: “Everybody in this room will have a different story to tell.”

An early obstacle to the show’s development was Covid. Some six months in, the pandemic hit while the team were still in their research phase. “The difficulty was that all the scientists you’d normally reach out to were no longer going out in the field,” explained series researcher Inka Cresswell. “That was a huge challenge for us, from a research perspective, to gain the most up-to-date data.”

Fortunately, the team adapted well to working together online and were soon out filming. Episode 1, which focuses on the Pacific Ocean, showcases some incredible uses of technology, including shots from a camera mounted on a humpback whale, and drone footage of spinner dolphins.

Some of the most intimate moments come from the



‘You shoot with your whole soul’: a scene from Netflix’s *Our Oceans*

All photographs: Netflix

episodes that follow the global ocean current. Scott described the episodes as “five parts of one story”.

Smith said of the series: “The ocean isn’t a scary place; it’s not full of slimy alien life. It’s full of relatable animals that actually face the same everyday challenges as every one of us. It’s not all about hunting – there’s love, there’s romance, there’s dancing!”

Ultimately, this is the goal of *Our Oceans* – to bring the oceans closer to the viewer. Scott explained: “Our main aim on the series was to get the audience to connect and care with the oceans, because they can seem so far away.”

Sharing his hopes for the series, which was made for Netflix by Wild Space Productions in association with Freeborne Media and Higher Ground, Smith said: “I would like people to be amazed and entertained, and I’d like a global audience to be inspired, and – fundamentally – to have hope.” ■

The RTS West of England screening of Our Oceans was held at Bristol’s Watershed cinema on 18 November. The host was ITV News West Country presenter Sabet Choudhury. The producer was Suzy Lambert.

‘An octopus sat on our camera’

West of England Seraphina Allard-Bridge is beguiled by the beauty of Netflix’s new series

close-up camerawork of series directors of photography Roger Horrocks and Roger Munns.

“It was just such a joy to watch Roger and Roger’s rushes,” said Scott. “These guys just have such tenderness when filming.”

Both DoPs were on the panel and spoke about their filming processes. “You shoot with your whole soul, you shoot with your whole being,” said Horrocks.

Munns explained how he aimed to bring out the anthropomorphic features of each animal, citing the humpbacks as an example: “I kind of noticed quickly that it’s the pectoral fins that really express the emotion of the whale.”

There was also praise for the local experts around the world who helped with the filming.

“It was amazing how familiar the marine life gets with you,” Cresswell added,

recalling a shoot where an octopus became very friendly with the crew. “At one point, he mounted himself on top of Roger’s camera... putting his tentacles inside the buttons, trying to take over the controls.”

Six years of researching, filming and editing have produced five incredible



‘It was amazing how familiar the marine life gets with you’

This Town, Steven Knight's pitch-perfect and loving recreation of the early-80s music scene in Birmingham and Coventry, took home three awards from the RTS Midlands Television Awards in late November.

Jordan Bolger won the prize for Best Supporting Acting Performance and Paul Whittington was named Best Director for the BBC One drama, which was made by Kudos and Nebulastar.

On receiving his Best Writer award from RTS CEO Theresa Wise, Knight said: "However good we think we are, we have got to be better. We have to really believe that we are the best – better than London and better than Manchester – because we can be. We don't have to hide any more."

There was another hat-trick on the night, this time for the children's animation *Tweedy & Fluff*, which is the first stop-motion show of its kind to be made in Birmingham. The show, part of Channel 5's *Milkshake!* strand, is made by Second Home Studios and Stitchy Feet. It won the Animation and Craft Production prizes, and creator and writer Corrinne Averiss took the Breakthrough (Offscreen) award.

ITV drama *Three Little Birds*, created and written by Dudley-born comic and actor Lenny Henry, won the



This Town won three awards, including a supporting actor prize for Jordan Bolger (centre)

BBC

On top of the Town

RTS Midlands Steven Knight's BBC One drama nabbed a hat-trick of awards in Birmingham. **Matthew Bell** reports

Scripted prize. The series was based on his mother's experiences on arriving in Britain as part of the Windrush generation in the 50s.

The Acting Performance award went to Deja J Bowers for BBC One and Netflix musical drama *Champion*.

Veteran actor Ricky

Tomlinson received a huge round of applause when he accepted the Popular Factual award for *Ricky, Sue and a Trip or Two*. He said: "Thank you for the welcome. I'm delighted to be here – though, at 85, I'm delighted to be bloody anywhere."

Tomlinson was called a

"national treasure" by Jazz Gowans, Creative Director of Nine Lives Media, which made the Channel 4 series with LA Productions. She said: "We've managed to do what HS2 will never do – bring Birmingham and Liverpool together."

Welcoming guests to the ICC Birmingham, RTS Midlands Chair Kully Khaila revealed that the awards had a record-breaking number of entries. He said: "There's strength here in the Midlands. Many productions are being made here and there are many more to come. The *Peaky Blinders* film for Netflix being filmed in Birmingham is a huge step forward."

BBC Radio Leicester's Summaya Mughal and Ed James from Heart West Midlands hosted the ceremony. ■

RTS Midlands Television Awards winners

Chair's Award - Reel Brum

Scripted - *Three Little Birds* - Tiger Aspect and Douglas Road Productions for ITV

Acting Performance - Déja J Bowers, *Champion* - New Pictures and Balloon Entertainment for BBC One and Netflix

Supporting Acting Performance - Jordan Bolger, *This Town* - Kudos and Nebulastar for BBC One

Writer - Steven Knight, *This Town* - Kudos and Nebulastar for BBC One

Director - Paul Whittington, *This Town* - Kudos and Nebulastar for BBC One

Documentary - *Don't Ever Stop* - Restless Films

Popular Factual Series - *Ricky, Sue and a Trip or Two* - Nine Lives Media and LA Productions for Channel 4

News Programme - *Maternity Crisis*, ITV News Central

Journalist of the Year - Navtej Johal, BBC News

Onscreen Personality - Des Coleman, ITV Central

Breakthrough (Onscreen, Scripted) - Jack Gouldbourne, BBC Studios

Breakthrough (Onscreen, Unscripted) - Nicola Goodwin, BBC

Breakthrough (Offscreen) - Corrinne Averiss, *Tweedy & Fluff* - Second Home Studios and Stitchy Feet for Channel 5

Children's - *Game On!* - BBC Studios for BBC Children in Need

Animation - *Tweedy & Fluff* - Second Home Studios and Stitchy Feet for Channel 5

Short Form - *The One Note Man* - Cusp Films

Diversity Champion - *The Kanneh-Mason Family* - MacLarty Brown Media and Wag Entertainment

Promotional - *Acorns Children's Hospice: The Sahara Desert Journey* - Ark Media Group

Craft - Production - *Tweedy & Fluff* - Second Home Studios and Stitchy Feet for Channel 5

Craft - Post-production - *Travel Man* - North One TV

Coronation Street veteran Helen Worth – who announced earlier this year that she would be leaving the soap after 50 years playing Gail – was honoured with the Judges' Award at the RTS North West Television Awards.

Jack P Shepherd, who plays her onscreen son, David, presented the trophy to Worth, who admitted: "I don't know how I did it. It just flew by. One day someone told me I'd been here 50 years, and I thought: 'It's time I left.'"

Coronation Street collected two other awards on the night: Peter Ash, who plays Paul Foreman, took home the Best Performance in a Continuing Drama prize, while "Paul's Motor Neurone Disease" won the Continuing Drama Storyline award.

Lucy Meacock – who presented ITV's flagship news programme *Granada Reports* for 36 years before her final show in August – received the Tony Wilson Award For Exceptional Contribution to the Industry.

Meacock said: "This award is named in memory of a really special presenter – without Tony Wilson, Manchester would not be the place it is today. He was the guy who said: 'This is Manchester, we do things differently here.' But that goes for the whole of the North West."



Jack P Shepherd and winners Helen Worth and Lucy Meacock

All hail Gail... and Lucy too

All photographs: ER Photography

RTS North West Matthew Bell reports on the centre's awards ceremony, which saw two long-serving local legends honoured

Channel 4's Liverpool-set drama *The Gathering*, made by World Productions, was a big winner on the night, taking home three awards: Best Drama; Best Scriptwriter for novelist Helen Walsh on her TV writing debut; and Best Performance in a Drama for Eva Morgan in her first professional role.

BBC One's campaigning magazine show *Morning Live* also scored a hat-trick of awards: Best Factual Series, Best Inclusive Practice (for programmes with deaf,

disabled and/or neurodivergent contribution) and Best Presenter for Gethin Jones.

Hollyoaks actor Isabelle Smith won the Caroline Aherne Award for Best Breakthrough Talent, and the Kay Benbow Award for Best Pre-School Programme, in honour of the former CBeebies Controller who died in March, went to the BBC Philharmonic's *Musical Storyland*.

Radio 1's Katie Thistleton and CBBC presenter Rhys Stephenson hosted the ceremony in November at

Manchester's Kimpton Clocktower Hotel, which welcomed 600 guests. *RuPaul's Drag Race UK* winner Danny Beard opened the show, which also featured a DJ set from former Pussycat Doll Kimberly Wyatt.

RTS North West Chair Cameron Roach said: "The awards have become an important event... not only to celebrate the phenomenal creative talent that is producing world-class programming in the region, but also for the screen community to come together and connect." ■



Eva Morgan with her drama performances award

RTS North West Television Awards winners

Judges' Award - Helen Worth

Exceptional Contribution Award - Lucy Meacock

Drama - *The Gathering*, World Productions for Channel 4

Best Performance in a Drama - Eva Morgan, *The Gathering*, World Productions for Channel 4

Script Writer - Helen Walsh, *The Gathering*, World Productions for Channel 4

Continuing Drama Storyline - *Paul's Motor Neurone Disease*, *Coronation Street*, ITV Studios for ITV

Performance in a Continuing Drama - Peter Ash, *Coronation Street*, ITV Studios for ITV

Comedy - *The Power of Parker*, Boffola Pictures/Lookout Point for BBC One

Performance in a Comedy - Joe Gilgun, *Brassic* - Calamity Productions/Sky Studios for Sky

Entertainment - *The Voice*, Lifted Entertainment for ITV

Factual Entertainment - *Abbey Clancy: Celebrity Homes*, Salamanda Media for ITVBe

Factual - *Morning Live*, BBC Studios for BBC One

Single Documentary - *There's Only One Rob Burrow*, BBC Breakfast

Current Affairs Programme - *No Place to Call Home: A Newsround Special*, CBBC

Best Presenter - Gethin Jones, *Morning Live*, BBC Studios for BBC One

Regional Programme - *BBC North West Tonight*, BBC

Best Journalist - Katie Walderman, *BBC North West Tonight*, BBC

Breakthrough Talent - Isabelle Smith,

Hollyoaks, Lime Pictures for Channel 4

School-age Children's Programme - *So Awkward Academy*, Channel X North for CBBC

Pre-School Children's Programme - *Musical Storyland: The Enormous Turnip*, BBC Philharmonic in association with Sustain Video for Cbeebies

Daytime - *Four In A Bed*, Studio Lambert for Channel 4

Sport's Programme - *Hatton*, Noah Media/Sky Documentaries for Sky

Best Inclusive Practice - *Morning Live*, BBC Studios for BBC One

Digital Creativity - *Hollyoaks: Death of An Influencer*, Lime Pictures for Channel 4

Audio Post-production - *Harry Tully, Domino Day*, dock10 for BBC Three

Visual Post-production - *VFX, Domino Day*, dock10 VFX for BBC Three

BBC One psychological thriller *The Woman in the Wall* won three prestigious prizes at the RTS Northern Ireland Television Awards in November, with Ruth Wilson and Daryl McCormack picking up the Best Actor awards, and David Holmes and Brian Irvine triumphing in the Original Music Score category.

Writer Joe Murtagh's six-part gothic drama, made by Motive Pictures, tells the story of lives ruined by Ireland's Catholic church workhouses, the Magdalene Laundries.

Another BBC One drama, *Blue Lights*, which is made by Two Cities Television and Gallagher Films in Belfast, took home two awards, the coveted Drama Award and the Writer Award for Declan Lawn, Adam Patterson, Bronagh Taggart and Noel McCann. The series follows rookie police officers on patrol in a city still coming to grips with the fallout from the Troubles.

The Brian Waddell Award, which recognises an outstanding contribution to the TV industry, went to UTV *Life* presenter Pamela Ballantine.

She said: "I am honoured to receive this award, especially as I remember Brian Waddell, who was Director of Programmes and an imposing and hugely respected figure when I started at UTV 40 years ago. He was a



A breakthrough for Daryl McCormack and Ruth Wilson in *The Woman in the Wall*

BBC

Wilson drama hits hat-trick

Northern Ireland Matthew Bell reports on the centre's all-star award evening, held amid the maritime heritage of Titanic Belfast

legend and trailblazer for TV in Northern Ireland."

RTS Northern Ireland Chair Sarah McCaffrey

added: "Pamela is the ultimate professional, a brilliant presenter with a unique gift for making those she

interviews feel like they are talking to a good friend."

Gerard Stratton, a Director of Triplevision, a disabled-independent production company based in west Belfast, was the recipient of the new Hidden Hero Award.

James Blake took home the Breakthrough Award for fronting Strident Media's BBC Three documentary about identity theft, *Hunting the Catfish Crime Gang*.

The 2 Johnnies Late Night Lock In, made by Green Inc Film & Television for RTÉ, was awarded the Entertainment and Comedy Award, while Waddell Media's BBC Two film, *Coronation Tailors: Fit for a King*, which was presented by *The Great British Sewing Bee*'s Patrick Grant, won the Best Factual Entertainment

Award. Belfast-based Afro-Mic Productions won the Lifestyles and Features Award for Channel 5 food show *Big Money Munch*.

Belfast indie DoubleBand Films took home two awards: Specialist Factual with *My Name is Otilie* for BBC Four and Post-production for Channel 4 documentary *Ukraine: Holocaust Ground Zero*.

TV presenter Vogue Williams hosted the awards – which were sponsored by Belfast post-production studio Ka-Boom and partnered by BBC Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland Screen and Channel 4 – at Titanic Belfast. ■



PressEye

Pamela Ballantine

RTS Northern Ireland Television Awards winners

Brian Waddell Award - Pamela Ballantine
Hidden Hero - Gerard Stratton

Drama - *Blue Lights* - Two Cities TV and Gallagher Films for BBC One

Actor: Female - Ruth Wilson, *The Woman in the Wall* - Motive Pictures for BBC One and Showtime

Actor: Male - Daryl McCormack, *The Woman in the Wall* - Motive Pictures for BBC One and Showtime

Writer - *Blue Lights*, Declan Lawn, Adam Patterson, Bronagh Taggart and Noel McCann - Two Cities TV and Gallagher Films for BBC One

Entertainment and Comedy - *The 2 Johnnies Late Night Lock In* - Green Inc Film & TV for RTÉ

Factual Entertainment - *Coronation Tailors: Fit for a King* - Waddell Media for BBC Two

Lifestyle and Features - *Big Money Munch* - Afro-Mic Productions for My5/BET International

Specialist Factual - *My Name is Otilie* - Doubleband Films for BBC Northern Ireland and BBC Four

Documentary: Singles - *The Secret Army* - BBC Northern Ireland

Documentary: Series - *Once Upon a Time in Northern Ireland* - Keo Films and Walk on Air Films for BBC Two and BBC Northern Ireland

Current Affairs - *Blood on the Dance Floor* - BBC Northern Ireland

News Coverage - *BBC Newsline: Lough Neagh Day* - BBC Northern Ireland

Breakthrough (On and Offscreen) - James Blake, presenter, *Hunting the Catfish Crime Gang* - Strident Media for BBC Three and BBC Northern Ireland

Children's/Animation - *A Kind of Spark* - 9 Story Media Group for CBBC

Original Music Score - *The Woman in the Wall*, David Holmes and Brian Irvine - Motive Pictures for BBC One and Showtime

Post-production - *Ukraine: Holocaust Ground Zero* - DoubleBand Films for Channel 4

Everyone Else Burns, which returned for a second series to Channel 4 this autumn, has been called the saviour of the sitcom thanks to its gag-heavy script and warm, likeable characters.

And the tribute is deserved, despite an offputting setting within a doomsday religious sect in Manchester, the Order of the Divine Rod. At its heart are the Lewis family: old-school patriarch David (*Friday Night Dinner's* Simon Bird, sporting a ludicrous pudding bowl haircut); his trapped wife, Fiona (Kate O'Flynn, *Landscapers*); and far wiser children, Rachel (Amy James-Kelly, *Gentleman Jack*) and Aaron (Harry Connor).

Everyone Else Burns pulls off the trick of having its characters – in particular, David and his fellow religious zealots – say and do horrible things while remaining engaging.

“The heart of the show is weirdly progressive and liberal. Despite some of the humour having an edge, it feels like a family sitcom. I love that, and [love] being involved in shows that can be watched by many generations,” Bird told the RTS.

O'Flynn added: “The warmth of the show is what has been so surprising and a thrill for the people I know who've watched it – being pulled into an unusual world that, for many, seems alienating – and then really rooting for people.”

Series creators and writers Dillon Mapletoft and Oliver Taylor met as students and started performing comedy together, but always with an eye on writing. Taylor became a doctor but switched to television. Mapletoft had been Armando Iannucci's assistant before the debut series of *Everyone Else Burns*, which is produced by Jax Media UK and Universal International Studios, aired in January 2023.



On a crusade for laughs: at home with the Lewis family in *Everyone Else Burns*

Channel 4

Praise be for zealots

National Event Channel 4's *Everyone Else Burns* proves the sitcom is alive, kicking and still very funny. **Matthew Bell** reports

Taylor lives in Cambridge and Mapletoft in London, so the two writers outline the episodes, divvy up scenes and write together on Zoom. “Ollie needs less reassurance than I do – he writes a joke and we move on; whereas I'm not sure which [joke] works so [I offer] 10 of the same kind of jokes,” revealed Mapletoft.

“I love discovering that our draft is now 45 pages long because there's 30 versions of one joke,” added Taylor.

The second series brings a new character – love rival Maude (Sian Clifford from *Fleabag*), who, unlike Fiona, is at ease with the church's strictures. “She's the dark mirror of Fiona,” explained Mapletoft. “She weaponises her... domesticity. She's a strangely warped trad wife who somehow knows exactly how to push David's buttons.”

O'Flynn, who was in the same year at Rada as Clifford, added: “I knew she was going to be sensational. Casting is everything. If you get the casting wrong, that can hide how good the script is.”

As with series 1, the laughs keep coming. “We aspired to have a gag rate like an American sitcom, which you don't get so much in this country. There are a lot of dramadies, traumadies, sadcom, whatever you want to call it, but we wanted to keep the jokes flowing,” said Mapletoft.

This ambition led to last-minute tweaks of the script to cram in more jokes. Taylor recalled “one occasion when [the director] Jamie [Jay Johnson] leaned over to see me typing away on my MacBook to say, with a big smile on his face, ‘Am I going to need to cut off your hands?’”

Bird concluded: “I would

say this as somebody who's livelihood depends on the sitcom, but I do think comedy is both the hardest and the most vitally important genre to get right.

“It's telling that the most beloved and universally praised TV series of the last few years, like *Succession*, have come from writers who cut their teeth in TV comedy.

“There's a strong overlap between being funny and understanding how and why people behave the way they do. Both those things require a generosity of spirit. It's really important that we cherish, protect and nurture the sitcom.” ■

The RTS online event with cast and creatives from *Everyone Else Burns* was held on 14 November, hosted by TV and film critic Rhianna Dhillon and produced by NBCUniversal.

‘Homegrown story-telling – that’s something we do... like no other.’ BBC Director-General Tim Davie made the claim while giving the Dan Gilbert Memorial Lecture at the Belfast Media Festival in mid-November.

One hundred years after the first BBC broadcast from Northern Ireland, Davie was launching the BBC Economic Impact Report for Northern Ireland. It revealed that the corporation invested £112m in the nation during 2023/24.

The Belfast police drama *Blue Lights* has boosted the Northern Irish economy by £20m across its first two series, while other shows, including the cosy crime drama *Hope Street* (£17.5m) and *Mastermind* and its celebrity offshoot (£6m), have also brought noteworthy investment.

“These things make you laugh, cry... but we’ve also got a really hard-edged economic story [to tell],” said Davie. The report reveals that more than 80% of the production budget for *Blue Lights* was spent within Northern Ireland, and that 87% of the almost 250 crew were local.

“The journey began with our groundbreaking partnership with Northern Ireland Screen... it was the first of its kind across the UK,” recalled Davie.

The BBC’s 10-year partnership with the screen agency has produced hit dramas such as *Line of Duty*, *Bloodlands* and *The Fall*, as well as *Blue Lights*. Recent unscripted successes include *Once Upon a Time in Northern Ireland* (made by Keo Films and Walk on Air) and *The Fast and the Farmerish* (Alleycats TV).

Northern Ireland has also been used as a location for many dramas, including *Showtrial*, *World on Fire* and



Tim Davie speaks in Belfast

PressEye

like *Hope Street* are vital in both showcasing the skills on offer here and providing career pathways for individuals to develop.

“Shows like these are telling the unique and authentic stories of this place and its people.

“Authentic portrayal, not tokenism, is what our audiences want and value most, but also it has huge international appeal, helping to attract more investment from the global streamers, which in turn can help the whole ecosystem to grow.”

Davie announced that the BBC’s Hot House develop-

‘AUTHENTIC PORTRAYAL, IS WHAT AUDIENCES VALUE MOST’

Bringing it back home to Belfast

Northern Ireland On the BBC’s centenary in Northern Ireland, its Director-General saluted recent success. **Matthew Bell reports**

The Woman in the Wall. Davie pointed to “significant growth... [of] nearly 20% between 2019 and 2022” in the nation’s screen industries. “Today, the sector accounts for 4,000 jobs and over 450 businesses. Politicians at the moment, as you may have noticed, are desperately shopping around for those sectors that deliver this kind of growth and these kind of opportunities.”

In the past, most BBC programmes in Northern Ireland were made in-house;

now local independent producers are dominant. Davie said: “Last year, indies supplied 100% of our drama and comedy... and nearly 60% of our factual programming.” He continued: “We have successfully moved on from the image of Northern Ireland as simply a low-cost production centre.

“Big, multi-series BBC dramas like *Blue Lights* and others have played a key role in helping to drive and embed that change; and, critically, returning series

ment scheme, in which indies are invited to pitch for network commissions with support from Northern Ireland Screen, would return. Second time around, he said, there would be nine opportunities across three genres: documentary, factual entertainment and daytime.

The Director-General also revealed that Belfast is to host the BBC Comedy Festival in May 2025, “kickstarting a year of development and production opportunities”. This year’s festival in Glasgow drew top names from the world of comedy, including Armando Iannucci, Dawn French, Robert Popper and the cast of hit Scottish sitcom *Two Doors Down*. ■

The Dan Gilbert Memorial Lecture, held on 14 November at the Belfast Media Festival, is given in memory of Gilbert, a major figure in current affairs broadcasting. It was organised by RTS Northern Ireland.

The late Queen's phrase "recollections may vary" is something documentary-makers know all too well as they try to tell real-life stories.

In the case of new BBC two-parter *Hunting Mr Nice: The Cannabis Kingpin*, an added challenge was that several of the interviewees were frequently high on drugs during the times they were trying to recollect.

The audience at the RTS Cymru Wales screening and Q&A learned about the difficulties of assembling and questioning members of notorious cannabis smuggler Howard Marks' inner circle, some of whom had never spoken before.

Gwenllian Hughes, founder of Kailash Films, who directs the series with Nick Leader, said: "Half the contributors would have been stoned for most of the years with him. Their memories were all slightly different, so we had to feel our way through.

"It was challenging to find these people to talk to. I really wanted to get one guy who had known him since university but who had never spoken before. While putting out feelers, everyone said he had died, so I gave up.

"Then one night at 10pm my mobile rang and a voice said, 'This is Brian.' He had faked his own death so he could live a normal life. I spent a month getting him to take part, anonymously. He would turn up to meetings in disguise – it was crazy.

"It's what film-makers live for, these untold stories, and it felt really special. But it was also a massive pressure. We set up the filming, really hoping he would turn up, and he did. He told us everything then just disappeared without saying goodbye."

Hunting Mr Nice: The Cannabis Kingpin, a co-production between Passion Pictures and Kailash Films, aired on



High times with Mr Nice

Roz Laws hears how a BBC documentary on cannabis smuggler Howard Marks was brought to the screen

BBC One Wales and BBC Two in late November. It tells the story of the charming Welsh criminal who smuggled tens of millions of dollars' worth of cannabis across the globe. The Oxford graduate was a master of disguise with up to 43 aliases, including Donald Nice, hence his nickname.

Law enforcement agents

circle and the agents involved in the cat-and-mouse pursuit.

BBC Wales commissioner Julian Carey said: "Howard holds a unique place in Welsh culture and is still part of the landscape. He's a charming chameleon; cheeky but a criminal with a weird Robin Hood good guy/bad guy personality. We

criminality." Former BBC Wales journalist Penny Roberts had interviewed Marks about the effect of his actions on his family, who he called "unnecessary casualties of the insane war on drugs".

Executive producer Hamish Fergusson, Creative Director at Passion Pictures, added: "People are conflicted by him. Even DEA agent Craig Lovato, who spent years hunting him, is full of a curious affection for Marks. We can be charmed by him and still know what he did. We leave it to the viewers to form their own opinions of him." ■

'HALF THE CONTRIBUTORS WOULD HAVE BEEN STONED'

tracked him for years before he was eventually caught. He served seven years of a 25-year sentence in the US and, on release, campaigned passionately for the legalisation of cannabis. He died of cancer in 2016, aged 70.

The cleverly crafted documentary brings together for the first time Marks' inner

wanted to get a Welsh character and story on a national network and to show people different parts of our country and culture, even ones as dodgy as Howard.

"No one died, it's not awful, but we wanted to ask how nice was Mr Nice? We explore the consequences and the darker parts of his

'Hunting Mr Nice' was an RTS Cymru Wales event with BBC Wales and BBC Factual. It was held on 18 November at the University of South Wales Atrium in Cardiff, hosted by Radio 6 DJ Huw Stephens and produced by Michele Marsland.

‘**T**here are very few people who really understand the whole puzzle.” So said Bristol-based composer Matt Loveridge, who brought experts from the worlds of composing and TV production together at BBC Studios Bristol in November, hoping to shed light on the complex music commissioning process for TV and film.

Continuing with the puzzle analogy, TV consultant Mark Hill spoke about the process of creating a TV format: “It’s like a jigsaw of bits... and you’re trying to assemble them all together into something that actually connects with an audience. Music is an integral creative part of that identity.”

Composers have the ability to craft music that resonates with the listener. “One of the hardest things to imitate is the human voice... but the next closest thing to the human voice is melody,” said Drew Morgan, a composer, arranger and orchestrator, who emphasised that using live musicians enhances a piece.

“We can’t digitally reproduce that human element of expression and longing.”

While hiring composers may be the ideal for many producers, it is not always viable. Hill noted that “there’s quite a lot of pressure from broadcasters to use commercial music”.

However, the biggest challenge is budget constraints. “There’s never enough time or money to make the shows the way you want to make them,” Hill said, referring particularly to mid- and low-budget unscripted series. When looking for ways to trim the budget, music is often an easy target.

Loveridge, a winner of the RTS West of England Best Composer award, said there is a current model in which “music... in TV needs to pay



Back row: Matt Loveridge, William Goodchild, Drew Morgan and Simon Bell; front row: Karen Spearing, Mark Hill and Alexandra Hamilton-Ayres

Jon Craig

Hitting the right notes

West of England Seraphina Allard-Bridge hears how commissioning an inspired original score can make a show truly sing

for itself”. In this model, royalties generated from transmissions of the show can offer an incentive for productions to use original music rather than drawing from music libraries.

William Goodchild, who recently won a Wildscreen

Ideas like these show the value a composer can bring to a series. The composers also stressed the importance of collaboration – with directors and producers, and between composers. “One thing I love about the Bristol scene is that there’s a lot of

room,” said Hill. “That applies to the whole creative process.” Loveridge added: “You can replace three pages of notes just with someone giving you a look.”

As with every part of the TV industry, the big question is: how do you break into composing? “If we’re going to see new and different voices, we need to make sure that this is a viable career,” said Loveridge, acknowledging the current difficulties in the TV industry.

Offering advice for new entrants, composer and recording artist Alexandra Hamilton-Ayres, who scored recent Channel 4 film *Britain’s Atomic Bomb Scandal*, spoke of finding and trusting your own voice: “You have to be true to yourself.” ■

‘Keeping Score’ was held at BBC Bristol on 4 November. Matt Loveridge hosted and produced.

‘THE SPICE GIRLS DIDN’T COME OUT OF BRISTOL – PORTISHEAD DID’

Panda award for his music in the first episode of Netflix series *Chimp Empire*, discussed his composition process: “One of the important things in this film was to work with this incredible sound design that we get in the [Ngogo] forest ... particularly the chimp vocalisations, in terms of creating a whole palette from that... chimpy flutes and chimpy choirs.”

collaboration,” said Morgan. “Bristol has always had a unique outlook on creating things, certainly music. The Spice Girls didn’t come out of Bristol – Portishead did.”

Collaboration is at its most powerful when the composer can meet the production team in person. “It works by creative dialogue. You can do that remotely but you can’t beat being in the

Bristol hosts Futures festival

RTS West of England

The M Shed in Bristol was full of emerging TV talent for the sold-out eighth year of the RTS Futures Festival.

Indies at the November event included Plimsoll Productions and Offspring Films, alongside ITV News West Country and post-production facilities Doghouse, Gorilla and Films at 59, which brought along camera kit for students to try out.

Sessions covered a host of topics, including directing skills with Ilaira Mallalieu (*Queens*, Disney+) discussing how to craft a story on location and develop narrative arcs, and film-maker Michael Jenkins talking about working with actors.

Tech op Emma Gunnell, office manager Izzy Noone and sound designer Bryn Howells, all from Picture Shop, chatted to host Steph



Post-production houses brought camera kit to the festival

Jon Craig

Wessell, a series producer, about what to expect working in post-production.

“Navigating your TV career” was a popular talk. It featured talent from BBC Studios: Amy Smith, a production

management assistant on *Countryfile*, and camera assistant Jack Rawlinson, both discovered at a previous RTS Futures Festival, plus researcher Anil Olgun. **Suzy Lambert**



Vitor Vilela

Doc goes behind the Paralympics

RTS Southern

Behind-the-scenes documentary *Parallel Lines*, which features top GB Paralympians Lucy Shuker and David Smith, received a joint RTS/Bournemouth University screening in late November.

The film, made by Stephanie Farmer and Kerstin Stutterheim over two years,

explores the athletes’ relationship with sport, attitudes to disability and the importance of media coverage.

The screening was followed by a Q&A with Farmer, Stutterheim, Shuker, Smith and Lewis Coombes, *BBC South Today* Sports Editor, who reported on the Paris games.

“*Parallel Lines* provides a valuable insight into the challenges faced by para-athletes to achieve at the highest level. The screening led to an engaging conversation around funding, perception and media coverage,” said Coombes.

O’Leary probes fake news in Byrne lecture

Republic of Ireland

Writer, journalist and broadcaster Olivia O’Leary explored the theme of fake news in her Gay Byrne Memorial Lecture at Dublin’s Light House Cinema in November.

She looked back at her time presenting *Prime Time*, RTÉ’s current affairs programme, in the early 1990s. “I was the absolute voice,” recalled O’Leary. “Full of authority and institutional certainty.”

She argued that news reporters and journalists were once seen as dependable and trustworthy sources from which to receive truthful information. “[We were] handing down tablets of stone,” she said.

O’Leary went on to suggest that, in today’s world, people aren’t looking for an “absolute” voice any longer. Instead, they want something “relatable and spontaneous”.

Over the following hour,

O’Leary delved into the many ways in which society has changed, and how fake news has become more prevalent.

She discussed the recent AI-conceived Halloween party, which duped hundreds of citizens to come into Dublin’s city centre for a parade that had never been organised, and the re-election of Donald Trump.

In the UK, O’Leary presented *Newsnight* for the BBC and ITV documentary strand *First Tuesday*. Currently, she broadcasts a weekly political diary on RTÉ Radio 1.

This was the second Gay Byrne Memorial Lecture organised by RTS Republic of Ireland in honour of the venerated TV and radio presenter who was the first host of RTÉ chat show *The Late Late Show*. The inaugural lecture was given by Moya Doherty, the former chair of the RTÉ board, in 2023.

Loren Mcnerney

Devon and Cornwall

We've all heard of stereo and surround sound, but what is it called when audio comes from every direction, including above and below, to create a richer, more realistic experience? Wearing silent-disco headphones, more than 70 people were treated to an "immersive audio" experience at Plymouth University in November.

Extolling this "ultimate listening experience" was award-winning sound designer and Twofour Post Production Head of Audio Jeremy Lock, who asked the audience to "close your eyes and be transported to another world – the real world".

During his masterclass, Lock demonstrated how anyone, from media professionals to students, could simply attach two microphones to a cap near each ear to record binaural audio.

"All of a sudden, a simple walk to the shops or a visit to



Immersed in Plymouth sound

the barber has become hugely engaging and totally real, with sounds hitting your ears from different directions, all at different times," he explained. Taking that audio

into post, Lock demonstrated how – by adding more audio such as wind, car sirens or helicopters – you can "take the listener's experience to a whole new level" by using

ITV's *My Mum, Your Dad*, one of many shows that audio expert Jeremy Lock has worked on over three decades in TV

software to position sounds "above, below, left and right, anywhere, anytime.

"Unlike the dusty surround sound system in the loft, immersive audio is on its way to your living rooms and will be here to stay," he said.

"To have someone like Jeremy, who has over 30 years' experience, showing my students these methods is mindblowing," said Plymouth University film-making lecturer Linda Ward. "Some of my class have told me they are so excited to use some of these methods, and I can't wait to hear the results."

The RTS Devon and Cornwall masterclass, "Immersive audio: a new dimension in sound?" was supported by Twofour Post and Plymouth University. **Matt Geraghty**



Paying court to King Peter

Heartfelt congratulations to the great Peter Kosminsky, winner of the Outstanding Contribution Award at the RTS Craft & Design Awards held in early December.

Peter's career has spanned an epic 44 years. Of late, he has been deservedly praised for directing *Wolf Hall*, the BBC TV adaptation of Hilary Mantel's Thomas Cromwell trilogy. He came late to period drama, having spent much of his career making hard-edged contemporary pieces. These have included Yorkshire Television's RTS award-winning drama *Shoot*

to Kill, never shown in Northern Ireland, and Channel 4's *The Government Inspector*, on the mysterious death of Dr David Kelly, the weapons inspector involved in the row over Andrew Gilligan's BBC coverage of the Iraq War.

Peter spoke movingly of his pride at standing in the same room as his fellow creatives: "We're so lucky to be allowed to do this," he said. "I've been lucky to be trusted by the audience to make programmes with people like you. It has been the honour of my life."

Three cheers for the freelancers

Staying with the awards, it was gratifying to see the RTS Special Award going to three bodies – the Film and TV Charity, the TV Collective and The TV Mindset – to

mark their vital support for television freelancers.

It's no secret that freelancers are continuing to find it difficult to secure regular work as the impact of the advertising downturn and the US strikes are still felt across the industry. Let's all hope the production pipeline starts to flow more energetically in the New Year.

Animation for the nation

Children's shows have been hit hard by the squeeze on commissioning, so it was wonderful to see *Tweedy & Fluff*, the first stop-motion show of its kind to be made in Birmingham, score a hat-trick at the recent RTS Midlands Awards. *Tweedy & Fluff* is a series made for Channel 5's pre-school strand *Milkshake!* and is produced by

Second Home Studios and Stitchy Feet. The heartwarming show, narrated by Nina Wadia, won the Animation and Craft Production prizes, while its creator, Corrinne Averiss, won the Break-through (Offscreen) award.

A fab Christmas to all our readers

Good to see rave reviews for Disney+'s feature-length Beatles documentary, *Beatles '64*, helmed by David Tedeschi and produced by Martin Scorsese. The film depicts in affectionate detail and newly restored archive film how the Fab Four conquered America.

For Macca fans, Sky Arts has a Boxing Day treat, showing, for the first time on British TV, *One Hand Clapping*, a video of Paul McCartney and Wings in top form at Abbey Road Studios in 1974. ■



RTS PATRONS

RTS Principal Patrons

BBC

Channel 4

ITV

Sky

RTS International Patrons

A+E Networks International
Apple TV+
HP With Intel
Liberty Global
NBCUniversal International
Netflix

Paramount
Spencer Stuart
The Walt Disney Company
Warner Bros. Discovery
YouTube

RTS Major Patrons

Accenture
All3Media
Banijay UK
Channel 5
Deloitte

Enders Analysis
Entertainment One/
Lionsgate
Fremantle
GB News
IMG Studios

ITN
OC&C
Prime Video
Roku
S4C

Sargent-Disc
STV Group
UKTV
Virgin Media O2
YouView

RTS Patrons

Arqiva
Elevate Talent
FLB Accountants

Lumina Search
PubMatic

Raidió Teilifís Éireann
Sky Ireland

TG4
Virgin Media Ireland

Who's who at the RTS

Patron
His Majesty King Charles III

Vice-Presidents
David Abraham
Dawn Airey
Sir David Attenborough OM
CH CVO CBE FRS
Baroness Floella
Benjamin OBE
Mike Darcey
Gary Davey
Greg Dyke
Lord Hall of Birkenhead
Lorraine Heggessey
Armando Iannucci OBE
Ian Jones
Baroness Lawrence of
Clarendon OBE
David Lynn
Ken MacQuarrie
Sir Trevor McDonald OBE
Gavin Patterson
Sir Trevor Phillips OBE
Stewart Purvis CBE
Brandon Riegg
Sir Howard Stringer

Chair of RTS Trustees
Jane Turton

Honorary Secretary
Simon Bucks

Honorary Treasurer
Mike Green

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Lynn Barlow
Julian Bellamy
Simon Bucks
Mike Green
Yasmina Hadded
Tim Hincks
Kate Phillips
Simon Pitts
Sinéad Rocks
Sarah Rose
Jane Turton

EXECUTIVE Chief Executive
Theresa Wise

CENTRES COUNCIL

Phil Barnes
Agnes Cogan
Michael Donnelly
Rachel Drummond-Hay
Kully Khaila
Sarah McCaffrey
Joanna Makepeace-Woods
Jennie Marwick-Evans
Stephen O'Donnell
Stuart Ray
Cameron Roach
Matt Geraghty
Edward Russell
Rachel Watson

SPECIALIST GROUP CHAIRS

National Events
Sarah Booth

Education
Graeme Thompson

RTS Futures
Alex Wootten

RTS Digital Innovation Bursary
Simon Pitts

Chair IDEA Committee
Joanna Abeyie

AWARDS CHAIRS Awards Policy
Simon Bucks

Craft & Design Awards
Emma Gormley

Programme Awards
Kenton Allen

Student Television Awards
Sinéad Rocks

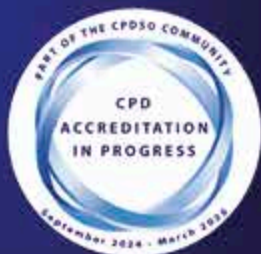
Television Journalism Awards
Adrian Wells

Young Technologist Award
Terry Marsh

Shiers Trust Award
Simon Clark

Turbocharging TV Talent

The RTS Mini MBA in
Television and Streaming Media



Find out more

