

June 2019

Television



**Heat
and lust
on ITV**



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From the CEO



A sultry period drama set in the shimmering heat of 18th-century India is our June cover story. ITV's new Sunday night treat, *Beecham House*, looks likely

to be the perfect antidote to our own – so far – less than scorching summer.

In Steve Clarke's interview with the series's director and co-creator, Gurinder Chadha, the film-maker looks back on her extraordinary career and explains why she was inspired to make a long-form, costume drama.

Previously, her films, such as *Bhaji on The Beach* and *Bend It like Beckham*, have focused on Indians living in England. By contrast, the central character in *Beecham House* is an English entrepreneur in India, the dashing John Beecham, played by Tom Bateman, who recently starred in another ITV period piece, *Vanity Fair*.

Returning to the 21st century, Shilpa Ganatra has written a timely feature on how TV coverage of women's sport is gaining a higher profile. I, for one, am enjoying BBC One's coverage of the Women's World Cup and hope the Lionesses can raise their game following their hard-won victory over Scotland.

Elsewhere in this issue, I would like to highlight a new regular column, Working Lives. I'm confident that this will become a popular feature in *Television*. In this month's edition, Pippa Shawley interviews intimacy director Ita O'Brien, who opens our eyes to a job that many readers will not have heard of.

We also carry reports from some recent RTS events. These include a celebration and screening of *63 Up*, and a timely and important discussion about what we need to do to promote wellbeing and mental health in the TV industry.

Recently, I was privileged to be the guest of the RTS's Isle of Man Centre. Every year, the island welcomes around 15,000 motor cycles and 40,000 visitors for the annual TT Races, broadcast by ITV4.

I was told that it takes up to three weeks to transport everyone and their bikes to the Isle of Man. Two intrepid travellers made it all the way from Argentina.

Sadly, bad weather led to the racing being cancelled on the day I was there. So I missed the spectacle this year. The legendary Isle of Man hospitality more than made up for this. What was that again about the Great British Summer?

Theresa Wise

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National events

RTS AGM

Tuesday 25 June

All RTS members welcome. 6pm
Venue: RTS, 7th floor, Dorset Rise,
London EC4Y 8EN

RTS AWARDS

Friday 28 June

**RTS Student Television
Awards 2019**

Sponsored by Motion
Content Group
Venue: BFI Southbank, Belvedere
Road, London SE1 8XT

RTS EARLY EVENING EVENT

Thursday 29 August

In conversation with Jeff Pope

Jeff Pope is head of factual
drama at ITV Studios
Venue: TBC

RTS CAMBRIDGE CONVENTION 2019

18-20 September

**Content, consumers and
everything in between**

Principal sponsor: ITV. Confirmed
speakers include: Jeremy Dar-
roch, CEO, Sky; Howard Davine,
executive vice-president, busi-
ness operations, ABC Studios;
Tony Hall, Director-General, BBC;
Alex Mahon, CEO, Channel 4;
Jane Turton, CEO, All3Media;
Sharon White, CEO, Ofcom;
Rt Hon Jeremy Wright MP,
Secretary of State, DCMS; and
David Zaslav, President and CEO,
Discovery. Chaired by Carolyn
McCall, CEO, ITV.
Venue: King's College CB2 1ST

STEVE HEWLETT MEMORIAL LECTURE 2019

Tuesday 24 September

Speaker Mark Thompson

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

RTS MASTERCLASSES

Tuesday 5 November and

Wednesday 6 November

RTS Student Masterclasses

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

RTS AWARDS

Monday 25 November

**RTS Craft & Design Awards
2019**

Sponsored by Gravity Media
Group

London Hilton on Park Lane
22 Park Lane, London W1K 1BE

Local events

DEVON AND CORNWALL

■ Jane Hudson
■ RTSDevonandCornwall@rts.
org.uk

EAST

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

ISLE OF MAN

■ Michael Wilson
■ michael.wilson@isleofmedia.org

LONDON

Wednesday 4 December

Christmas Lecture:

David Abraham

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

■ Daniel Cherowbrier
■ daniel@cherowbrier.co.uk

MIDLANDS

Monday 7 October

**RTS Midlands TV Careers
Fair 2019**

Book via Eventbrite.co.uk.
Early bird tickets £5 until 1 July,
thereafter £10. Tickets cannot be
purchased on the door. Minors
must be accompanied by a fee-
paying adult. 10:00am-4:00pm
Venue: Edgbaston stadium,
Birmingham B5 7QU



RTS Midlands TV Careers Fair 2019

7 October

10:00am-4:00pm
Edgbaston stadium, Birmingham

Book via Eventbrite.co.uk

Friday 29 November

RTS Midlands Awards

Venue: International Convention
Centre, Broad Street,
Birmingham B1 2EA

■ Jayne Greene 07792 776585
■ RTSMidlands@rts.org.uk

NORTH EAST AND THE BORDER

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

NORTH WEST

Wednesday 19 June

An evening with Judge Rinder

Hosted by Lucy Meacock, *Gran-
ada Reports*. 6:30pm for 7:00pm
Venue: Compass Room, Lowry
Theatre, Salford Quays M50 3AZ

Thursday 26 September

Awards launch party

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

Saturday 23 November

RTS North West Awards

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

NORTHERN IRELAND

Thursday 7 November

RTS NI Programme Awards

Venue: The MAC, 10 Exchange
Street West, Belfast BT1 2NJ

■ John Mitchell
■ mitch.mvbroadcast@
btinternet.com

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

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

SCOTLAND

■ April Chamberlain
■ scotlandchair@rts.org.uk

SOUTHERN

■ Stephanie Farmer
■ SFarmer@bournemouth.ac.uk

THAMES VALLEY

■ Tony Orme
■ RTSThamesValley@rts.org.uk

WALES

3-10 August

National Eisteddfod 2019

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

WEST OF ENGLAND

Tuesday 2 July

AGM

Venue: TBC
■ Belinda Biggam
■ belindabiggam@hotmail.com

YORKSHIRE

Thursday 4 July

**Adjusting perspective: Getting
more BAME crew on set**

Joint event organised by Creative
Diversity Network and RTS
Yorkshire. To attend, please
RSVP directly to: [projects@
creativitydiversitynetwork.com](mailto:projects@creativitydiversitynetwork.com).
4:30pm-6:30pm. Registration
4:15pm; drinks and networking
from 6:30pm.

Venue: John Charles 2 Room, The
Queens Hotel, City Square, Leeds
LS1 1PJ

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

TV diary

Natural history film-maker **Sophie Lanfear** leaves her natural habitat for Hollywood and encounters a television great



It's a lot smaller than the telly makes it seem," I think to myself as I stare out at the infamous Hollywood sign. LA is the last place you'd expect to find a wildlife film-maker who's more accustomed to being holed up in a shack in the Arctic wilderness. I'm on the 10th floor of a Hollywood hotel pondering the events of the last week.

I'm here courtesy of Netflix, which invited me to join its "Rebels and rule breakers" panel as part of its Emmy campaign for *Our Planet*. I didn't want to spoil things by telling them that: a) I am not really a rebel, because b) I'm far too rule-abiding for my own good.

Still, I was honoured to be alongside some of Netflix's leading female talent, including the legendary Marta Kauffman, co-creator and executive producer of *Friends*.

■ **While I wasn't sure about the value of an all-female panel (I feel that true gender equality means gender invisibility), it was inspiring to hear women speak unhindered about the challenges they have faced in traditionally male-dominated industries.**

■ I hadn't appreciated the shortage of female role models in TV (especially at senior producer and executive level), and the impact that can have on trying to develop your own leadership style and other facets of your career.

With only men to look up to, this lopsided influence means that,

without even realising it, a part of your nature gets suppressed.

I came away feeling relieved at having acknowledged this and optimistic that women are gradually reaching those higher places. Hopefully, we will get to a place where gender difference is appreciated and drawn upon, with the result that there is more varied and emotionally complex content.

■ **I have lived and breathed *Our Planet* since early 2015. It has been two months since the series went global (one of the joys of working for a streaming giant), and the tragic walrus sequence that ends my *Frozen Worlds* film went viral.**

■ **Since then, life has been unusually busy. The film helped fuel a global conversation about the impact of climate change.**

■ This morning, I was interviewed for American radio station SiriusXM. They wanted to talk about what people could do to support a more sustainable future. There is so much I learnt while making *Our Planet*. It is especially rewarding to be able to impart some of this knowledge to people who want to do what they can to make a difference.

■ **I have started work on the next big wildlife documentary series for Netflix. We are in the initial stages of production. This requires you to turn into a sponge and absorb everything possible to come up with**

a cohesive structure for a film that a mass audience will understand.

■ **My day is spent assimilating as much information as I can from a wide variety of sources to work out which animal stories/behaviours best fit the narrative.**

■ **From YouTube videos of squeaking frogs, to academic papers that make me remember why I didn't stay on at university to do a PhD, the quest to find the perfect stories often feels relentless and arbitrarily boundless.**

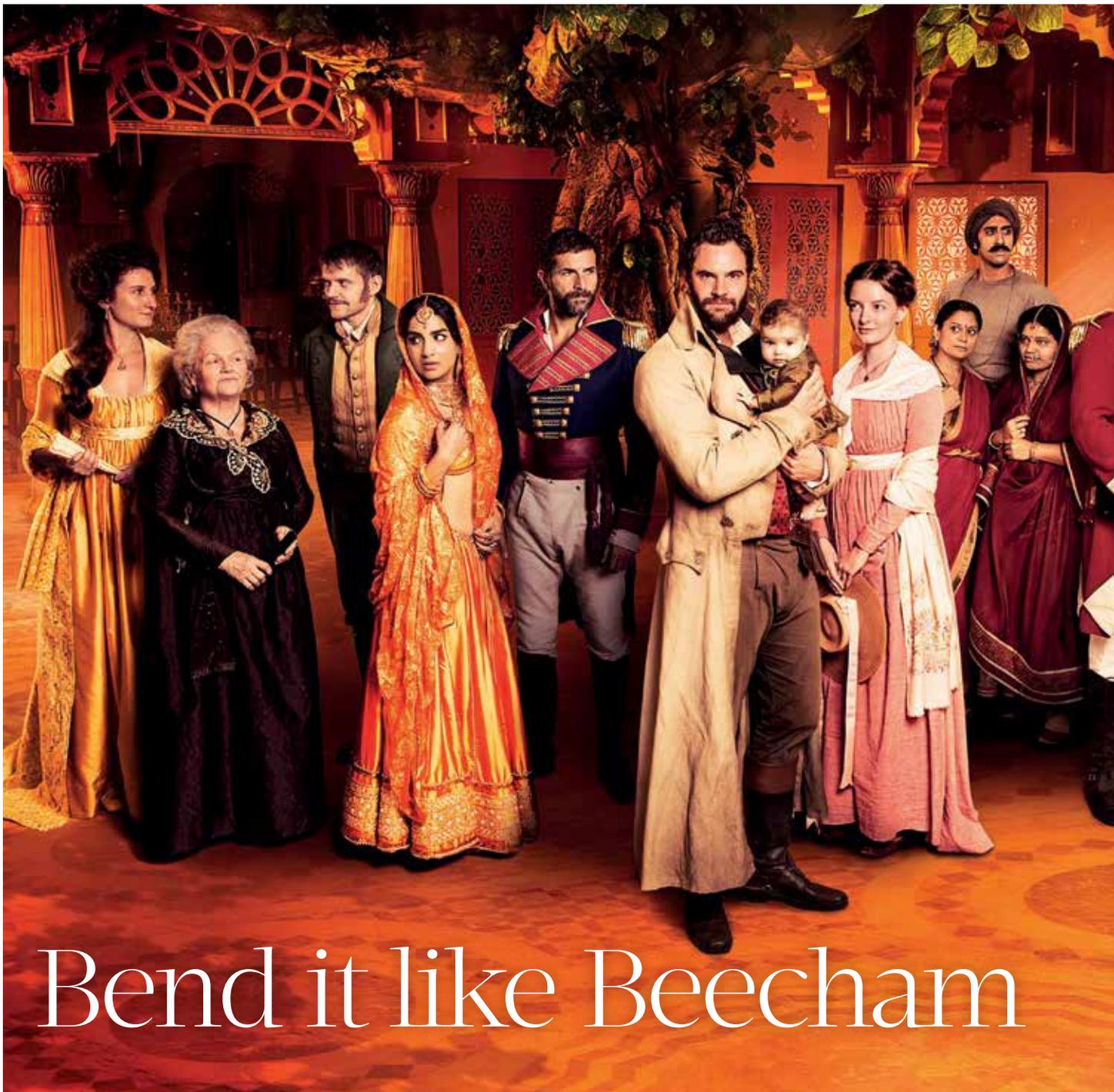
■ **Everything is up in the air. Quite how it will all fall into place, no one knows. From the seeming chaos, one has to trust that order will somehow prevail.**

■ Some form of order has to be presented to Netflix as we meet to discuss the new series and some of the editorial challenges facing us. We question how we can make the series distinctive and deliver the incredible visuals that audiences expect from high-end natural history television.

Demand for natural history content has never been higher; Apple, Netflix, the BBC, BBC Earth, Discovery and Nat Geo are all after their slice of the pie. Which is great for us, but one consequence is that the industry has become much more clandestine.

So it will be several years before I am able to divulge all the exciting details.

Sophie Lanfear is a producer/director at Silverback Films.



Bend it like Beecham

Drama

Steve Clarke talks to **Gurinder Chadha**, who explains the background to her Sunday-night ITV costume drama set in 18th-century India

It's 4pm on a Friday afternoon, a time of the week when most of us are preparing to wind down the working week. Not Gurinder Chadha, co-creator and director of ITV's new period drama, *Beecham House*, otherwise known as "Downton in Delhi".

She's at work in a Soho edit suite, putting the finishing touches to another project, her latest movie, *Blinded by the Light*. The film is based on journalist and broadcaster Sarfraz Manzoor's memoir, *Greetings from Bury Park*.

It sounds like familiar Chadha territory – the story of a how a British Pakistani teenager marooned in Luton during Thatcher's Britain finds solace in the music of Bruce Springsteen.

The director first found acclaim for her award-winning debut, *Bhaji on the Beach*, followed by *Bend It Like Beckham*, a low-budget comedy whose central character is a football-obsessed Punjabi girl living in Southall.

Both were backed by Film4; *Bend It Like Beckham* became an unlikely global box office hit and turned Chadha into a



TV

hot property in cinema. By contrast, her TV career is less celebrated. Here, too, she has form – the two-part 1995 BBC One drama she directed, *Rich Deceiver*, achieved an audience of more than 10 million viewers. And, two years ago, she presented *India's Partition: The Forgotten Story* for BBC Two.

Now comes *Beecham House*, a gorgeous-looking, quintessential Sunday-night drama set in late-18th-century India, when the imperial British were vying with the French to take control of India.

It stars Tom Bateman as the apparently morally scrupulous ex-East India Company trader John Beecham. His swaggering portrayal is likely to give *Poldark's* Aidan Turner a run for his money in any summer tabloid contest for hot costume-drama action hero.

So why has Chadha forsaken modern Britain for a lavish TV period piece? Part of the inspiration for *Beecham House* was her recent feature film, *Viceroy's House*, which was set in post-Second World War India. In common with the TV series, the film was co-written with her husband Paul Mayeda Berges.

"I was thinking that we'd like to do some long-form TV. We'd done all this research for *Viceroy's House* and were waiting for the money to kick in," she says, picking at an improvised late lunch of grated cheese and Brazil nuts. "Wine?" she offers. "It is Friday," as she takes a swig from a plastic cup.

"At the time, *Downton Abbey* was flying high. I said to Paul: 'We could do that. Let's do our version set in India in 1795.' *Viceroy's House* was the end of the British Raj. Let's start at the beginning."

In common with the Julian Fellowes hit, *Beecham House* takes an *Upstairs Downstairs*-style perspective on events chez Beecham, but the parallels with *Downton Abbey* should not be overstated. One of the show's attributes is the way it captures India's indelible beauty, especially the subcontinent's exquisite Mughal architecture.

Much of the series was shot in India, where Chadha directed all six episodes. In any case, it was *Downton's* success that motivated her, rather than the show itself: "I didn't really watch *Downton*. But I loved *Upstairs Downstairs*, I remember so many of the scenes. I still have the storylines in my head. I remember Pauline Collins coming in with a feather and lording it over the lady of the house.

"I always wanted to do a show like *Upstairs, Downstairs*, but not as formal as *Downton Abbey*. With *Beecham House*, I wanted to go back to the point where Delhi is still Indian, and ruled by the Mughals, though their power is waning.

"This Englishman arrives. No one knows what is going to happen to India. He's an English immigrant 250 years ago. What I'm asking the audience to do is to be in his position. In many ways, he is quite a modern guy trying to make the right decisions, but trying to do them at a time when, politically, Europeans in India were at a crossroads."

There is nothing new in India being used as eye candy for TV period drama. While *Beecham House* lacks the gravitas of, say, *Jewel in the Crown*, its characters and storylines have an infectious quality that may well secure several series.

When the programme was pitched to ITV drama head Polly Hill, the executive immediately saw its potential as Sunday night drama. "Polly liked the stories," says Chadha. "Initially, ITV was a little nervous because of *Indian Summers*, which wasn't that successful. I felt its stories were very muddled."

As mainstream as *Beecham House* undeniably is, the show's political undercurrents are obvious and seem especially relevant as we continue to grapple with Brexit and hot-button issues such as immigration.

Chadha's ascent via local radio and TV to pre-eminence as a film-maker seems unlikely in today's less egalitarian age. Opportunities for those without wealth or contacts to succeed in the entertainment world are, to say the least, limited.

The daughter of an Indian shop-keeper who was regularly racially abused, she began her media career in the 1980s after reading development studies at the University of East Anglia in Norwich. "The only other Indian I met there was my driving instructor," she recalls.

A career working for a charity such as Oxfam beckoned but, following voluntary work in India, where she read some feminist journalism, she started to wonder if the media might provide a more rewarding career. Returning to the UK and seeing Stuart Hall's seminal BBC documentary, *It Ain't Half Racist, Mum*, sealed the deal.

"That film opened my eyes, it was a Eureka moment for me.... Now I get it, the power the camera has to define who we are and how society sees us. It was at that moment, and seeing Stuart Hall's work, that I started looking at TV differently. I thought the way to change things was to become a news journalist."

She trained in broadcast journalism at what was then the London College of Printing, before joining BBC Radio West Midlands. "I worked in the newsroom but I wasn't able to tell my stories, our stories," Chadha remembers.

More satisfactory was a spell employed as a researcher on one of Channel 4's early successes, *The Media Show*, a genuine trailblazer. Eventually, directing short films led to Film4 >

› nurturing her as a director. The studio put her together with Meera Syal. The two co-wrote *Bhaji on the Beach*. The film showed she had an unusual ability to make entertaining, humorous films that engaged head-on with racism, sexism and patriarchy.

Beecham House may be prime-time ITV but, from the beginning of the series, it is clear that here is another Gurinder Chadha film full of feisty, empowered women.

"I'd like to think none of the women are docile. They have all got a bit of attitude, certainly by the end of the first episode," she suggests. "That's why it's so important to have different people telling these stories. Diversity is not 'Let's stick a person of colour behind the camera'... That's important, but true diversity is when you allow someone to tell their story or show the world from their [own] perspective, because it's the same but different.

"The success of some of my films isn't because it's only Indians watching them, or people like me. They are mainstream, commercial movies.

"I am one of the few British filmmakers who has made a ton of money back for the BFI and the National Lottery by making very commercial films. I just happen to have people in them that most people wouldn't think of as commercial." *Beecham House's* cast includes British Indian actors, British Caucasian actors, Indian actors, and an Indian Australian actress.

As for her own female role model, look no further than her 93-year-old mother. "When you looked at her you wouldn't think she was feisty, because she did everything right. A nice, traditional Indian wife, but the strength and spirit and belief in justice for humanity that my mum embodies is where I get it all from.

"She has had relentless commitment to empathy for everybody.... For her, the world is connected. People might not know it but the world is connected because there is one God, it's just different guises. Whether you believe in God, or a spiritual force, or whatever, there is one way that we are all connected.

"We can call it religion or we can call it human empathy, but my mother believes that it is very important that



Gurinder Chadha

'THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BRITAIN AND INDIA DIDN'T JUST START IN THE 1960S'

'Why I prefer nice to nasty'

'There's a push towards more genre-led drama,' says Gurinder Chadha. 'Shows such as *Bodyguard* and *Line of Duty* are very popular. I can't watch them because I've got so much stress in my life already [she is the mother of 11-year-old twins]. If I watch those shows, I'll get too tense and I don't want to be tense.

'I don't like movies that are thrillers. I've always been like that. Some people love being made to feel scared and anxious. It's never been my cup of tea.

'I abhor violence on TV. I don't like [starting to laugh] people being nasty to each other. That sounds crass. I see it on the news, I don't want to see it on TV. I don't want to feel ashamed of how the world is when I am trying to relax.'

you live your life acknowledging that oneness. That's what makes us human."

She believes this? "That rubbed off on me. Everything I've done, every film I've made counters prejudice of any kind!"

Produced by her own company, Bend It TV (in which Fremantle is an investor) Chadha says that *Beecham House* is "probably the first prime-time commission from ITV for a Sunday from a company of colour. Hats off to ITV for doing that."

She adds: "I'm not going out there saving people's lives by making a TV show. What I am doing is creating a TV show that is genially subversive. In a small way, it is saying: 'Mate, this is actually what happened from my point of view. Come on the journey with us with these great characters, who will entertain you but also inform you about the world then and the impact that world has had on today.'"

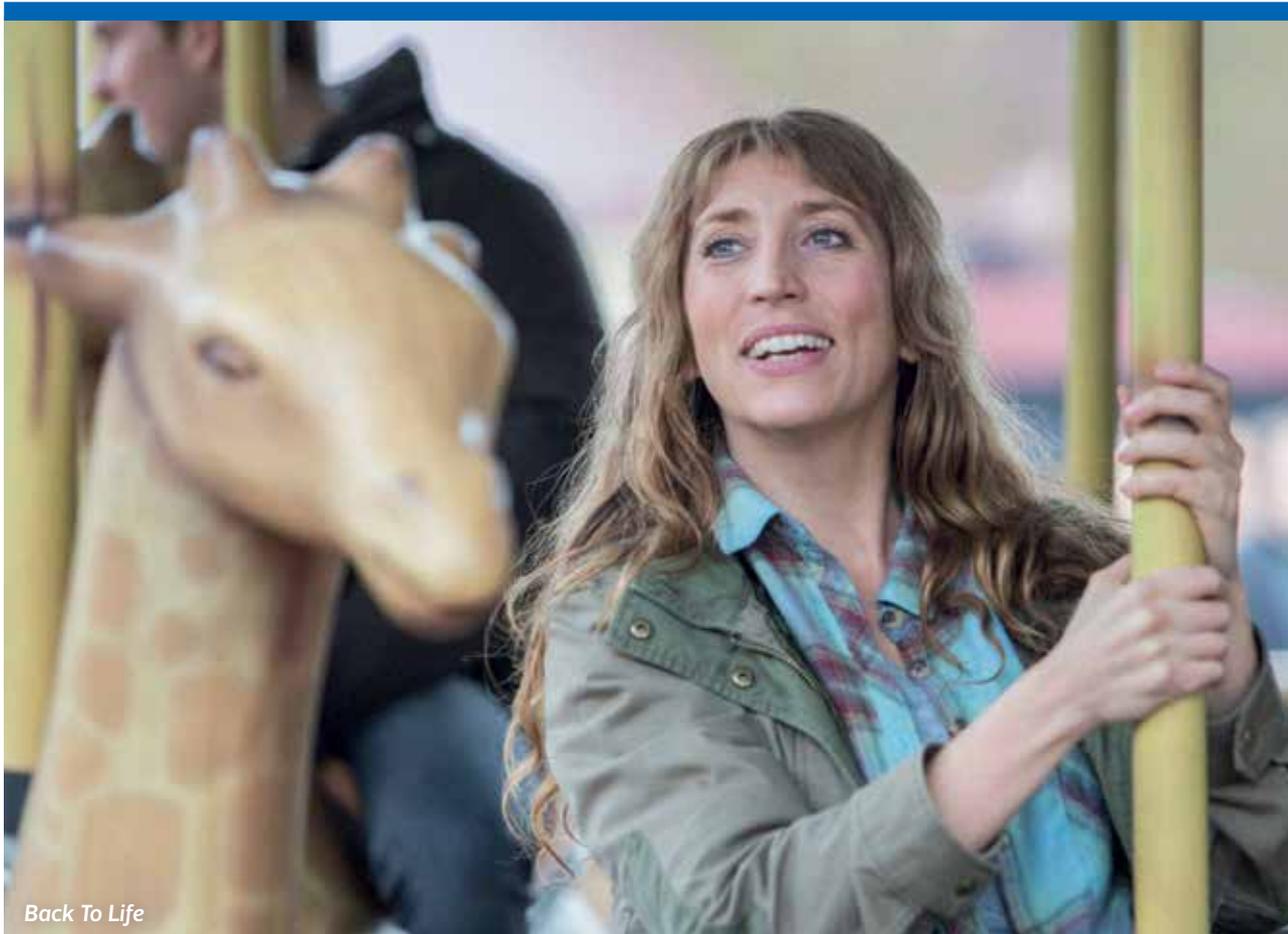
What does *Beecham House* have to say about our own dark times? "Hopefully it will expose some of the lies that people are being told. The relationship between Britain and India didn't just start in the 1960s, when people like my parents got off the plane. A lot of Britain's wealth was built purely off the back of their – and my – Indian ancestors."

What advice would she give to young women of colour determined to succeed in the film and TV sector? "Don't take no for an answer, because there's strength in numbers. You have to believe that now's our time, you deserve that, and you have to own that. Go for it. Tell your stories because there are people who want to see them. You're going to have to hold on to that and keep pushing for that.

"I'm sitting here now but it's taken a long time for me to be in this position, and it's not all milk and honey for me. My movie [*Blinded by the Light*] got turned down by the BBC and Channel 4....

"I think it's a great time to be creative. There's a lot of choice. There's a lot of drama out there. And the more there is, the more important it is to have your own, unique voice. Nowadays, people want uniqueness." ■

Beecham House starts on ITV on 23 June.



Back To Life

BBC

The dramady comes of age

Comedy, the late, great Tony Hancock would often tell his dinner guests, was simply “frustration, misery, boredom, worry – all the things people suffer from”.

This may go some way to explaining the success of a crop of deceptively simple, single-camera comedy-dramas that have all but replaced our more traditional idea of the sitcom in the television schedules.

Toby Jones cemented his status as the standard bearer for such fare with *Don't Forget the Driver*. Jones's character, a humble driver for a coach company, is burdened as a single parent by a teenage daughter, a frail mother, helpless colleagues, and a twin brother living the dream Down Under.

Comedy

Caroline Frost hails a style of show, typified by *Mum and Home*, that is reinvigorating the comedy genre

And that's all before he accidentally brings a stowaway refugee back to his Bognor Regis home following a day trip to Dunkirk. This is one string in a story that touches on dementia, disability, maternal neglect, the threat of human slavery – and yet somehow succeeds in providing plenty of chuckles along the way.

Tim Crouch, who created the show and co-wrote the script with Jones, explains: “We're looking at the world from a small person's perspective, the view of a lowly character. He wants to live quietly and peacefully. Events prevent that happening and he's thrust into confrontation with the world's wider issues. The comedy exists in the contrasts – someone trying to do great things but being small.”

Other “dramedies” seem similarly unafraid to use writing flair, acting talent, standout visuals and laughs to illuminate what could be very dark subjects. Rufus Jones's *Home*, on Channel 4 recently, followed a middle-class family's discovery of their own Syrian stowaway refugee. Ricky Gervais's *After Life* explored the grief of a middle-age widower, while *This* >



'IN LIFE, NOTHING IS EVER JUST FUNNY OR JUST SAD'

Channel 4

› *Country* and *Mum* took on rural alienation and widowhood, respectively. Similarly, *Car Share* and *Fleabag* effortlessly combined humour with lumps in the throat.

Does all this signal the death knell of the traditional sitcom? *Mum*'s creator, Stefan Golaszewski, says no. He is adamant that his award-winning creation sits firmly in that canon: "It is a sitcom. If people consider that too limiting, it's because they have a demeaning view of the sitcom. Just because there have been some banal and inane sitcoms doesn't mean the sitcom has to be.

"I think we've actually gone full circle. If you think of *Steptoe and Son*, *Ever Decreasing Circles* or *Porridge*, the humour may have been broad by today's standards, but the subject matter, the level of characterisation and subtlety of performance, were all where we're at now. Humour changes fashion in 20 years, but the things that matter to us don't."

Daisy Haggard created and stars in BBC Three's *Back To Life*, which she describes as "a dark comedy drama", about a woman returning to her home town after serving a prison sentence. She agrees that shows such as hers

are part of a British drama tradition: "Things of this tone have always been around – a good Mike Leigh would have similar components – but they weren't called comedies.

"We're realising that, in life, nothing is ever just funny or just sad. It's always a bit of everything. Today, there's more confidence in commissioning things that have many colours rather than just one. I never thought for one moment that I was going to make something that was a mixture of all these things, I just wanted to tell the story."

Don't Forget the Driver's Tim Crouch puts it more succinctly: "I didn't know about genre, but I've been told what we've written is a drama but made on a comedy budget."

Simon Mayhew-Archer produced *This Country*, a show that gave us unlikely laughs from the distinctly downbeat lives of Kerry and Kurtan Mucklowe, a pair of underoccupied teenage cousins causing havoc in a Cotswolds village.

He credits our fondness for Kerry and Kurtan as being crucial to the show's success: "When people first watched it, everybody goes through the same kind of process – 'Oh, I know what these people are going to be like.'

You're laughing at them. But I'd be amazed if, by the end of the first episode, you haven't come round to the fact that these are fully rounded, three-dimensional people. The art of a good sitcom is that the 'sit' is neither here nor there, it's the characters you have to care about."

Home co-star Rebekah Staton believes our enjoyment of these shows is symptomatic of the evolving TV audience experience. She says: "We want to watch comedy in the same way that we watch our dramas. As we've come to expect from our dramas, they have strong narratives, but with laughs as well. *Home* has 26 minutes to give a beginning, middle and end, pack some punches, get some laughs. All that requires a level of precision maybe not called for in previous years."

If technology, good cameras and editing have improved the quality of production, something noticeable by its absence in these shows is the laughter track – once considered essential in all things labelled TV comedy.

Staton reminds us: "That was more to do with who was watching at that time. It helped audiences, bringing families together and supporting viewers sitting at home on their own. It helped having



Don't Forget the Driver

BBC

that audience around them laughing along. These days we're quite content to sit on our own watching TV."

Mayhew-Archer adds: "A laughter track is no bad thing on a show that's funny. *Only Fools and Horses* had a laughter track and was also tremendously sad in places, but you're laughing and crying with them. It's only when it's a bad show that it jars."

The generally slower pace of these titles and the lack of any obvious comic punchlines requires writers, directors and performers to flex different muscles.

For Golaszewski, it's all about creating something more authentic than the stagey sitcoms of old. He elaborates: "I often ask the editor to make the wrong edit out of a scene, to edit it like a bad editor, leave the scene mid-moment, hold stuff longer than we should, so there's a kind of roughness, but a feeling of truth. I want it to feel like you're watching people, not a TV show."

"You can't have plot twists or huge revelations, because real life isn't like that. Instead, you find the drama from somewhere else. Balancing serious with the funnies is instinctive. Because it's a sitcom, I tilt towards the comic, but I don't really plan the narrative, I feel my way through it."

Haggard sounds slightly more aware of the need for balance in the writing: "When we were writing it, there were moments when we realised it needed more jokes, or the opposite. We were very sure of the tone, and if we knew it had gone too far one way, too heavy or too light, we'd pull it back."

'SOMETIMES, IT MEANS TAKING THE RISK NOT TO BE FUNNY'

For Staton, acting such a role is a delicate balancing act. "They could be deemed dramatic performances, but we have to be acutely aware of the comedy underneath. Sometimes, it means taking the risk not to be funny, [though] the word on the tin says 'comedy', but it's more orchestrated than people might think."

For many of those involved in creating these small-screen delights, it's no coincidence that their success comes at a time of political chaos, extremism and uncertainty. Crouch contrasts our

"deep state of national bewilderment that has become sharper and sharper" with the coach-driving Everyman of his show's title.

"Nobody knows what's going on, even at the highest levels of political organisation; so, to follow that tale to a fella at the seaside, there is where the 'sadcom' resides."

Golaszewski points out: "As the world starts to feel less safe, the art has become more humane. Nowadays, who wants to turn on the telly and see someone being horrible to other people for laughs? It's difficult being a person."

Sure enough, between the gentle narrative twists, the true delight of all these shows lies in the humanity on display and the tiny, everyday delights – a shared bag of chips on the beach in *Back to Life*, a clapped-out car finally starting first time in *Don't Forget the Driver*. Or a familiar tune on the radio in almost all of them. These are stories of quiet lives well lived, or at least glorying in the attempt to do so.

Crouch sums them up: "These aren't action heroes, as those aren't funny and don't win our hearts. Ordinary human beings have superhuman powers. It's about finding the extraordinary in the ordinary." ■

WORKING LIVES

TV JOBS YOU NEVER KNEW EXISTED

Intimacy director

Intimacy director Ita O'Brien started her career in musical theatre as a dancer and actor, before becoming a movement teacher and director. After devising a play that explored the dynamics of abuse in society, O'Brien looked at how she could help keep her actors safe while dealing with such a challenging subject.

The intimacy guidelines and workshops that she developed have led to her working as an intimacy director in TV, film and theatre. In TV, she has worked on Netflix's *Sex Education*, BBC One's *Gentleman Jack* and Amazon Prime's *Hanna*.

O'Brien produced the "Intimacy on set" guidelines. These offer advice on best practice when working with intimacy, simulated sex scenes and nudity. She also provides training for those wanting to follow in her footsteps.

What is an intimacy director?

An intimacy director is someone who helps with support, open communication and transparency about intimacy. They then put in place a process and a structure, [which underlies] agreement and consent for touching; and then choreographs the intimacy really clearly so that there is a structure. The actor can then act freely within that.

At what stage of production do you usually come on board?

It depends on the production. Some productions that I'm speaking to at the moment are in the pre-production stage, and they've called me in because there's loads of sex throughout the whole thing.

For me, it's way more rewarding to be part of a team right from the get-go, to

be able to integrate the work and actually be understood and trusted.

How do you make people feel comfortable when they're in these very intimate situations?

I'm from an Irish Catholic background and sometimes the bit of me that's watching me has a bit of a smile about what I'm now doing.

With intimate content, it needs to be dealt with in a professional way, as you would with any other part of the script. It's essential to talk about it in an open and adult way, dealing with everything on the nail, not pussyfooting around anything; using language that doesn't infantilise, objectify or titivate.

Where do you fit in on set?

My work is absolutely to serve the director's vision. I want to know "What's your vision, what do you want from the scene?" Then [it's about] having that open conversation with the director and the actors, so that we're all on the same page. I then put together a structure and choreography to serve that vision, to give the director exactly what they want.

How can directors make your job easier?

I'd like them to look at the process and understand it. If there's a dance in the scene, everybody knows they're going to need to bring in a choreographer.

You need [certain] skills in order to be able to do a physical dance or to be able to have a sword in your hands. To learn how to look like you're fighting without accidentally chopping someone's head off.

With intimate content, the difference is that everybody does sex, so it's not

seen as a skill. We need to shift to understanding that it is, actually, a skill and those moments need to be choreographed in the same way that a dance would be.

What's the advantage of having an intimacy director on set?

Once you get in front of the camera it's way more efficient, the filming time is way quicker and you've got a structure that means, continuity-wise, that it's absolutely repeatable.

In the past, when you have had people speaking about it, one of two things would happen. Either the director would say, "OK, this is what I want, you two jump in the bed and go for it" – and you have a situation where the actors feel really awkward because they don't know what's going to happen or what the other person's going to do to them.

Or the director tells the actors to go away and work it out among themselves. There, you've got a situation where you haven't got an outside eye, and it no longer really serves the writing, the character or the beats of the scene. You have two people trying to cobble together something in a private situation.

One of the new guidelines is that you always have a third person present, so that you keep it professional, not private.

What advice do you have for an actor who gets on set and finds themselves in a situation where they're told to just get on with it?

If you see intimate content in a script, don't just leave it. If you're offered the job and you see intimate content and



Gentleman Jack

the director hasn't already spoken to you about that, you need to have that conversation before you sign up.

Why is it important to have these conversations?

Sixty per cent of women have experienced some form of harassment or abuse by the time they get to 18. That means that, of the actors who come to work with you, a high percentage may have experienced something that can be triggering for them.

We don't need or want to know what those incidents were, but we do need to put in place a structure that allows for agreement and consent. So, if a body part is off limits, we can say "that's out of bounds" and choreograph something else.

Are there any misconceptions about your job or what it entails?

Just a couple of months ago, I tried to check in with this director and he gave me very short shrift on the phone. Then I came in and did the scene and we did a really beautiful, very full-on, intercourse scene.

When I checked back with him a few days later he said: "I thought you were going to be like Mary Whitehouse, coming in with your clipboard, but actually you enhanced the scene."

In some articles about *Gentleman Jack*, I've been described as a "sex expert". I'm not a sex expert. In the same way that a stunt co-ordinator isn't an expert swordsman, but is an expert in how you pretend to be a swordsman, I'm absolutely an intimacy co-ordinator, not a sex expert. ■

BBC

Interview by Pippa Shawley.

TV sport

The profile of women's sport on TV has never been higher, discovers **Shilpa Ganatra**



Uefa World Cup 2019 England squad

Game changers

There's a perfect storm this summer – and it's taking place on our televisions. The rise of women in sport has been gathering pace for years. Now – thanks to commercial pressure, the push for equality and some incredible momentum provided by the sportswomen themselves – they find themselves in their strongest-ever position..

“It's a collision of all these great events,” explains presenter Clare Balding, speaking at the BBC's #Change-theGame launch, marking its summer of women's sport. “When you get a World Cup in our time zone, with England coming in with a great record, we can really believe in it. We also have the Netball World Cup on home soil.

“And [sprinter] Dina Asher-Smith would be the number one in terms of iconic profile. She's the most visible, the most recognised. She's really bright

and eloquent, and that's where, for me, the women are really kicking ass. You put a microphone in front of them and they've got something interesting to say. They understand the wider responsibility.”

It is an exciting time, when gender equality has progressed both on and off screen, from tokenism to something more meaningful, and women's sport is now getting the space it deserves. Once consigned to unadvertised hours on specialist sports channels, it's moved to better time slots, gained more coverage and, most recently, made the jump to primetime on terrestrial channels.

The BBC's push this year is the most significant and comes after the broadcaster claimed to have increased the proportion of women's sport on its channels by around a third over the past five years. Women's competitions now account for around 30% of the

BBC's overall yearly sports coverage. It aired the Women's FA Cup Final live earlier this year, and the Fifa World Cup, Netball World Cup and Women's Ashes will follow.

Channel 4 recently launched *Women's Football World* with Balding to air highlights of women's football from around the globe. And in motor racing, covering the women's W Series is a significant step.

“With something like the W Series, you have to look at what example that might set to women watching a sport where there are no role models,” says Channel 4's head of sport, Peter Andrews. “Hopefully, there are now 18 role models racing in fast cars. Claire Cottingham delivered the first live motorsport commentary on terrestrial TV in May and I think it's really important that Channel 4 is here to make that happen.

“The pressure is then commercial,

but, if you don't put it on air, you never know what audience you're going to get, and you can only build an audience by putting something out there and building it."

Specialist sports channels are continuing to invest in women's sports. Sky Sports has the rights to this year's Women's Ashes and the Vitality Netball International Series and Super-league until 2020, with BT Sport covering the Women's Super League (football) and women's tennis, and Eurosport the Women's Tour of Britain (cycling), among other events.

It's a stark contrast to yesteryear. On pitches and grounds around the country, women have been playing netball, football, hockey and more for decades, yet the lion's share of screen time, especially on terrestrial television, has been devoted to their male counterparts.

A recent pan-European study by Women in Sport and its European counterparts showed that, while the UK was one of the better countries for coverage overall, the volume relied on high-profile events.

It is instructive to look at the yo-yo viewing figures for the Women's FA Cup Final since the BBC took over coverage in 2013 – the average in 2014 was 967,000; 1,449,000 in 2015; and 1,070,000 in 2017. This suggests a lack of loyalty on the part of the audience (which may be down to the time slot, competition from other channels and presence of local players rather than a lack of interest in the tournament), as well as a lack of commitment from the broadcaster. The two may, of course, be interrelated. So the BBC's commitment to screen more than just the big games is important.

"I remember, in 2007, when we got to the quarter final of the World Cup against the US," says Alex Scott, the former football player turned presenter. "That was the only game that was on TV, so it was very easy for people to tune in and see us lose. And then it's all 'same old England, they're rubbish'. But they hadn't followed the journey. They hadn't seen what it took for us to even qualify for our first World Cup in more than 10 years."

While specialist sports channels have aired female sports for years, it arguably "went mainstream" only in 2017, when

more than 4 million tuned in to Channel 4 to watch the Uefa Women's Euro semi-final, in which England were knocked out by the Netherlands. "That was a seminal moment, certainly for Channel 4. It woke everyone up to the potential of the sport," says Andrews.

Then, last year, we had the England netball team's unforgettable win at the Commonwealth Games, where they beat Australia, the hosts, in a down-to-the-wire 52-51 battle. And, earlier this year, England won the invitational SheBelieves Cup, building momentum for the summer's football World Cup in France.

While the profile of women's sport has been raised, there's quite some way to go, however, before it achieves equal status with men's. In a survey published in March, consumer insights company Netfluent identified the main obstacles to people watching more women's sport as: lack of coverage, the quality of commentary and poor advertising of fixtures. Putting these right must be prioritised if we

are to create a more mature women's sports scene. And these changes will not happen overnight: we will see the dividends from those women receiving training and experience in front of (and behind) the camera only in years to come.

Of course, there's a moral as well as a commercial reason to bring female sports up to parity with its male counterpart. It challenges stereotypes, shows viewers the sports within their capabilities, and it provides a positive and healthy body image in this selfie-obsessed age.

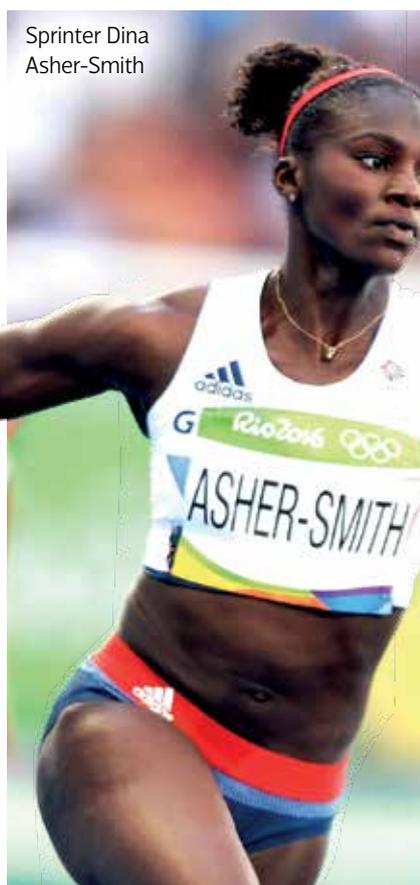
"You will also see women taking risks, and actually not being afraid to fail, and I think that's a really important message that sport can deliver," says Balding. "You've got to go out there, do it in front of a public that is watching you and will judge you, and the result will be that you'll be OK. You'll get up and you'll do it again. That's what it's about."

To this end, the BBC's director of sport, Barbara Slater, promises a 50:50 balance in streaming coverage. "Our live streaming service delivers more than 1,000 hours of additional live sport coverage every year, and we've committed to making at least 500 of those hours devoted to women's sport," she says.

Commercial broadcasters might not be as free to make specific commitments, but they are offering continued support. Jamie Steward, senior director of production and broadcast at Eurosport, says: "Eurosport has been committed to broadcasting women's sport for a number of years and will continue to invest as part of a longer-term strategy.

"We aim to give fans the broadest, most in-depth viewing experience across our key content – and women's sport plays a big role in that, and will continue to do so moving forward."

However it plays out, the momentum gained so far in 2019 means that TV is wholeheartedly embracing women's sports. Increased coverage has drawn in major sponsors such as Barclays, Coca-Cola and Boots, and the *Telegraph* has launched a women's sports section. "Everyone's getting it," says Balding. "It's more than sport – it's business, it's culture, it's education. It changes lives." ■



Sprinter Dina Asher-Smith

Getty Images

'THE WOMEN ARE REALLY KICKING ASS'

Seeing through the secrets and lies



Investigative journalists as heroes – *All the President's Men*

Warner Bros

Arguably, the world has rarely been more in need of investigative journalism. Corrupt politicians; election meddling, state repression, business shenanigans, cheating in sport... the list is endless. An RTS Futures event in May was therefore timely, with leading journalists discussing how they seek to right wrongs and bring the powerful to justice.

Truth seeking is not for the faint-hearted: it requires exhaustive research and dogged patience – and, for those journalists investigating the world's most oppressive regimes, bravery. In truth, it's probably a young person's game.

"When you're young, you're going to do your best work – you're fearless and you take risks that you wouldn't take when you're older," said David Henshaw, a former BBC reporter and producer who has run his own indie,

Journalism

A panel of investigative journalists share their approaches to unearthing stories with **Matthew Bell**

Hardcash Productions, for almost three decades. The multi-award-winning film-maker received an RTS Fellowship in 2009.

Hardcash has filmed, openly and undercover, in some of the world's most perilous places, including North Korea, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. "There's a kind of illusion now among broadcasters that somehow you can make this kind of journalism risk-free. It is always going to be risky and you only get the

really good stuff by taking risks," Henshaw insisted.

"My happiest and most productive times were getting on a plane with a folder of notes, and going to a civil war not knowing what the hell I was getting into but knowing there was a story there."

"It's my choice if I go somewhere dangerous," said the journalist and documentary film-maker Ben Zand. In 2016, he received the Young Talent of the Year prize at the RTS Television Journalism Awards for his films on BBC Two's *Victoria Derbyshire* programme.

"Certain stories need risk-taking, otherwise you can't tell them, but, at the same time, it's about taking sensible risks," said Zand, who shot a documentary with Venezuela's kidnap gangs.

Zand's films cover a wide spread of subjects. He recently made two films about R&B artist R Kelly, who has been accused of multiple cases of sexual >

Why I chose investigative journalism

David Henshaw: 'I drifted into it – it wasn't a career plan.... I joined the BBC when I was just 30, working on an investigative programme for Radio 4.... I [knew it] was what I really wanted to do. It combined all the things I was interested in: history, geography, culture and current affairs. It hasn't stopped being interesting and that was a long time ago.'

Ben Zand: 'I did journalism at university and knew I wanted to be a documentarist early on, but I didn't know what type of documentaries I wanted to make.... Investigative journalism feels as though you are contributing something valuable

to society – and it is the best form of journalism to have an impact and bring about change.'

Sirin Kale: 'You can genuinely change things, which you can't do in other forms of journalism.... If you see... an injustice... you can [fight] it and even change the law.'

Ed Howker: 'The kind of journalism that we're talking about is romantic – often it completely takes over your life.... It's designed to create high-impact, public-interest stories and I don't see it as distinct or rarefied from regular journalism, except that you have more time.'



All pictures: Paul Hampartsoumian



Sirin Kale

How to get started in TV

'At the heart of [investigative journalism] is spotting a story, and a story isn't something you're going to come across by brainstorming,' said David Henshaw. 'Spotting a story is something that you have to have an instinct for.'

'In 25 years of running [my indie] Hardcash, on two occasions I've got a story, which turned into a commissioned film, from reading the letters column of the *Daily Mirror*. [One of them] was from the National Missing Persons Helpline,

about a bloke who'd gone missing in Tenerife on holiday in the mid-1980s.

'Number one, "Why do you go missing on holiday?" and, two, "Why do people think he's still alive?"' The story was told in the Channel 4 documentary *Looking for Ricky*.

'There's always an appetite for interesting stories,' said Sirin Kale. 'Listen to people, because they often have interesting things to say – so many stories that I've got have come from conversations in the pub....'

'It's really hard for journalists breaking into the industry to get a staff job, but one thing that will never change is that commissioning editors are looking for good stories.'

Ben Zand added: 'Stories are journalism – you don't have a career unless you can come up with stories.'

'You need to figure out what the potential outlets are. If your story isn't [suitable] for *Panorama*, don't go to the *Panorama* commissioner.'

Henshaw advised: 'If you have a story, that's your property and a bargaining tool. So, if you're offering it and you then do a deal with the production company, make sure that you define your role in that film.'

He explained that having access to a story – even if you lack TV experience – can get you on to a production team.

The investigative film-maker Livvy Haydock, who chaired the RTS Futures discussion, added: 'If you've got the key access – or even one bit of it – you're already way ahead of everybody else.'

Contacts are key, argued Ed Howker.

'If you know people who are experts in certain areas or have a very good sense of what's happening in their community, try to keep your relationship with them going. If people have had a good experience with you in the past, they are more likely to tell you things in the future.'

Confidence matters, too, said Kale: 'Don't assume that other people can report a story better than you – don't be intimidated.'

That said, you have to learn to deal with being turned down. 'It's a hard world, so you need to get used to rejection,' said Zand. 'Learn from people who have done it before and try to slowly move up the ladder.'



David Henshaw



‘CERTAIN
STORIES
NEED RISK-
TAKING,
OTHERWISE
YOU CAN’T
TELL THEM’

Channel 4

› abuse, for BBC Three. His latest documentary – Channel 4’s *Confessions of a Serial Killer*, which aired at the end of May – tells the story of Samuel Little, who claims to have killed at least 90 women over 40 years in the US.

Not all risks are physical, as *Channel 4 News* journalist Ed Howker, who works on the programme’s investigations unit, explained. “We often look at big elements of western states to see how we can effectively hold them to account,” he explained. The risks he faces are mostly legal.

Howker worked on the RTS award-winning *Data, Democracy and Dirty Tricks* investigation into Cambridge Analytica.

“I rather like the Ofcom code in a peculiar way because it does force you to constantly think about being fair-minded. And, if we’re trying to do the job properly, we should all be fair-minded,” said Howker. “But, in its worst interpretation by lawyers, it can blunt your spear.”

A few years ago, Howker found himself in court, falsely accused of having “hacked an individual, a twice-bankrupted tax exile, as it happens”. He recalled: “I had to stand up in front

of a judge and not reveal who my source was, while also denying that I’d hacked. The proof that I hadn’t hacked was obviously to reveal my source, but I couldn’t do that.” Howker kept the source’s identity to himself.

Vice UK associate editor Sirin Kale was behind the anti-stalking campaign Unfollow Me and produced a documentary on the life and death of a woman, who had been murdered by her stalker ex-boyfriend. Kale said that her investigations “always start with a human story at their heart”, but she is also a firm believer in using data to help tell stories.

She used the Freedom of Information Act to request information from every police force in the UK: “I asked how many women had reported stalkers to the police prior to their deaths [at the hands of] the stalker.” The results were shocking: 60 women had been murdered by partners, exes or stalkers, despite reporting them to the police.

“You need the data to create a story, but then you need a human story for people to care about. And the human story has to come from the victims

and survivors,” she continued. “You have to amplify their voices, because they are the people who’ve been affected.”

“I wanted the investigation to be picked up by the BBC, on *Woman’s Hour* and *Victoria Derbyshire*, which it was,” she continued. “That’s what people with connections listen to and, if you want to change policy, you need to get into those people’s spheres.”

More than anything, investigative journalism needs the backing of broadcasters – it frequently takes time and money to tease out a story and film the programme. “We had an investigation that went out on ITV about a month ago, *The Priority: Teenage Mental Health Exposed*, which had taken 18 months. It was extremely expensive and I’m very grateful to ITV for funding that,” revealed Henshaw. “Not many broadcasters are prepared to put that kind of money and commitment in.” ■

The RTS Futures event ‘Investigations uncovered’ was held at Rocket Space in London on 15 May. It was chaired by investigative film-maker Livvy Haydock and produced by Reem Nouss and Ed Gove.

Lauren McQueen
played Lilly
Drinkwell (right)
in *Hollyoaks*



Stop harming, start helping

Channel 4

The death of Steve Dymond following his appearance on *The Jeremy Kyle Show* last month is a sombre lesson on the power that television has over people's lives.

The participant on the controversial daytime programme had failed a lie-detector test, having been accused of infidelity by his fiancée. Following his death, the show was initially taken off air and then axed by ITV Chief Executive Carolyn McCall.

Shortly afterwards, ITV announced that it was increasing the levels of psychological support and aftercare to *Love Island* contestants. This followed the death of Mike Thalassitis, and the suicides last year of Sophie Gradon and her boyfriend. Thalassitis and Gradon had appeared on the ITV2 reality show, which began its new run earlier this month.

Belatedly, television has recognised its responsibility for the mental health of the people appearing in its shows. But many argue that it should be doing

Mental health

The way we make TV can make people ill, behind and in front of the camera, hears **Matthew Bell**

more – to safeguard the health of the people it employs and to portray mental ill health realistically on the screen.

Mental ill health “has been ignored as a serious issue in our industry for far too long”, argued Alex Pumfrey, CEO of the Film & Television Charity.

Pumfrey was speaking at a timely RTS early-evening event, held during Mental Health Awareness Week in May and chaired by journalist and broadcaster Caroline Frost.

“We ignore [mental ill health], we enable it and we legitimise it,” argued Pumfrey, who offered an example of the latter. A TV executive told her

recently that the secret of his success was, “We take mad people and turn them into money.”

Pumfrey continued: “There’s a really pervasive idea within our sector that you have to be living life close to the edge to produce your most creative work. By allowing the trope of the mad creative genius to persist, we tacitly condone mental ill health as allowable or, even worse, necessary for creative success.”

The Film & Television Charity (formerly the Cinema & Television Benevolent Fund), said Pumfrey, hears stories every day of the “stress, strain and the toll [mental ill health] takes on bright and brilliant people”.

In 2017, location manager Michael Harm took his own life. “Shortly before he died, he left messages for friends and colleagues, saying that he hadn’t felt supported by his own industry,” she revealed. This provided the catalyst for the launch of the Film & TV Support Line, which has taken more than 2,000 calls since its launch in April 2018. >

Looking after contributors

Kerry Katona, the former Atomic Kitten singer, appeared in the last series of *Celebs Go Dating*. ‘That was a great example of managing someone who, very publically, has mental health issues, while still creating an entertaining television programme,’ said Anna Williamson, who is the life coach on the E4 show.

At the same time, she added, ‘We also had to protect her and make sure she was well, as we do with all the contestants.’

Williamson continued: ‘There needs to be care available at all times before, during and after production. On *Celebs Go Dating* that is very much available.’

She recommended that a care plan should be agreed between the contributor and the production company, which would continue after the programme’s transmission. She said: ‘Contributors need to be aware of how important it is to access help.’

Richard Bentley from Postcard Productions agreed: ‘As programme-makers, we have a responsibility for everybody who participates in our programme – not just through the process but beyond.’

‘There should be a care package in place to run for a certain number of weeks afterwards. And, even beyond that, there should be someone the contributor can speak to and have a relationship with. I don’t think this happens, because [when a programme is finished] the team are off [to their next job].’

› “Mental ill health defined my childhood,” revealed fellow panellist Bryan Kirkwood, the executive producer of Channel 4’s drama for young adults,

Hollyoaks. “My mum took her own life when I was seven and I later lost my dad to addiction,” he said. “More than mental ill health, it was the silence that crippled us. No one ever spoke about it.”

“Fast forward to the job I’m doing on *Hollyoaks* and I take very seriously the responsibility to help people start a really difficult conversation.... There’s an epidemic of ill health that’s happening to young people.

“It’s really important that everyone can grow up seeing themselves on the telly. I’m proud that *Hollyoaks* is getting there in giving our audience themselves reflected back.”

The long-running series, which is made by Liverpool indie Lime Pictures, has been widely praised for its portrayal of mental ill health. Storylines have addressed depression and bulimia and, earlier this year, self-harm, which culminated in the death of the character Lily McQueen from sepsis.

“We took the bold decision,” said Kirkwood, “for Lily to lose her life as a result of her struggle. We’ve shown some triumphant mental health stories [in the past]... but we thought it was important to show that sometimes people lose that battle.”

“There’s no vampiric, romantic quality in our storytelling. We’re not suggesting to any vulnerable teenagers that this is the way to get your mum’s or boyfriend’s attention. We work closely with [mental health charity] Mind.”

And Kirkwood said those episodes



Mike Thalassitis appeared in *Love Island*

in which the soap addresses mental ill health are the most popular: “When *Hollyoaks* goes super-serious, that’s when more people watch and we

have more viewer interaction.”

Julia Lamb, from Mind’s media advisory service, advises soap writers on their storylines and character development. For *Coronation Street*, Mind “provided a case study who could talk about her own experience of psychosis to the production team and the actor Ali King” to ensure that the deteriorating mental health of her character, Carla Connor, was accurately portrayed.

“She’d had a trauma in her life and psychosis had come out of the blue for her... and she was a woman of a similar age as the character and we felt they could relate well to each other,” said Lamb.

Jessica Fox, who has played Nancy Osborne in *Hollyoaks* for 14 years, discussed the stress of working on the soap. “It’s amazing but it’s crazy,” she said. “We have no time to call our own – we are on call five days a week.”

“It doesn’t matter if you’re having a bad day, tired or sick, you’ve got to be there, know your lines and turn out an amazing performance. That’s a really tall order to ask a lot of young people to do.”

“When you do really challenging, upsetting, hard-hitting storylines, being able to say, ‘That is work, this is me now’ is a weird psychological thing that we ask actors to do, which is why so many actors are vulnerable to mental health problems.”

The final two members of the panel assembled for the RTS event – Richard Bentley, the creative director of



Alison King plays Carla Conner in *Coronation Street*

'MENTAL HEALTH HAS BEEN IGNORED AS A SERIOUS ISSUE IN OUR INDUSTRY FOR, FAR TOO LONG'

Mental health in television

'We know nothing of the prevalence and nature of mental ill health within the [UK] TV sector,' argued Film & Television Charity CEO Alex Pumfrey.

A 2016 study in Australia revealed that the incidence of moderate to severe anxiety in the general population was 4% – but in TV it was 42%. For depression, the figures were 3% and 17%; for suicidal thoughts, 2% and 19%, respectively. 'If those were true in the UK, they would be really alarming statistics,' said Pumfrey.

'We [do] know that we send people off to work very long hours, often away from home and to tight deadlines; in newsrooms, they're exposed to traumatic material. They're in work one moment and out of it the next, never being able to commit to family and friends.'

'Two-thirds of the industry is freelance; life can be exciting but precarious. There's rarely anyone to talk to and there's the risk of being seen as difficult and [thus] jeopardising your next gig. So, you keep your game face on and you shut up.'

At the RTS event, Pumfrey announced that the charity would be running an industry wellbeing survey to provide, for the first time, a comprehensive picture of the state of mental health in TV.

Need someone to talk to?
Samaritans: Call free on 116 123, email jo@samaritans.org or visit www.samaritans.org

Postcard Productions, and Anna Williamson, who has worked in front of and behind the camera – have both experienced mental ill health.

Bentley has obsessive-compulsive disorder, which creates "a huge amount of anxiety that lives just under the surface. I covered it up with odd quirks." Working as an assistant producer more than a decade ago, he became ill. "One day I woke up and my funny little ticks had changed. My intrusive thoughts that I could manage and compulsions that I experienced had flipped and multiplied. It [had reached] a crisis point.

"I was really unwell and I didn't take a minute off work. No one asked if I was all right and I think it would have been very obvious from my behaviour that I wasn't very well.

"My boss said, 'Something's happened. You've been here for over a year and we want old Rich back – we don't like new Rich.' Those were his exact words."

Yet, Bentley "still didn't feel safe enough to be able to disclose what was going on". He underwent therapy while working and decided to make a film about his experiences. Bentley pitched the idea to a broadcaster: "I was told that I was too well and that it was a shame I hadn't come when I was sicker. Also, I was too middle-class looking, so it wouldn't get the ratings. From that point, I decided that I would use the skills I had acquired in

television to make films that would have a social impact."

Bentley and Sam Forsdike set up Postcard Productions in 2010 and made *The Stranger on the Bridge*, the story of Jonny Benjamin's search to find the stranger who talked him out of jumping off Waterloo Bridge, for Channel 4. Postcard, said Bentley, only "works on projects that have a good social purpose".

More than a decade ago, Williamson, currently the life coach on E4 reality show *Celebs Go Dating*, had a breakdown in front of her colleagues while working as a presenter on GMTV children's strand *Toonattik*.

"I was experiencing a lot of troubles in my private life and was working in an industry where we put a lot of pressure on ourselves," she recalled. "I felt I needed to be at the top of my game.

"I've been managing generalised anxiety disorder, depression and panic disorders ever since – and I've managed it really well. I'm passionate about showing and proving to people that you can work with a mental health issue."

She concluded: "We're not there yet – I think it still takes a lot of guts to openly admit [a mental health condition, but] I do think we've made some massive headway in the past few years." ■

'Promoting wellbeing and mental health in the TV industry' was an RTS early-evening event held at Channel 4 in London on 14 May. It was produced by Jonathan Simon, Terry Marsh and Briony Robinson.

‘Give me the child for his first seven years, and I will give you the man.’ This nature-nurture Jesuit maxim has been the lodestone of the legendary documentary series *Up* since it began in 1964.

Originally intended by Granada as a one-off, *Seven Up!* looked at the lives of a group of seven-year-olds from a variety of social backgrounds and areas of the UK, breaking convention by interviewing just the children.

Michael Apted – who researched *Seven Up!* and has directed all the subsequent series – and the other programme-makers have been charting the fortunes of the same children ever since, checking in with them every seven years to take a snapshot of their lives. Remarkably, it is still going strong 56 years later.

ITV celebrated the series in early June with *7 Up & Me*, in which famous fans of the show – including Richard E Grant and Michael Sheen – watched the show and talked about their own lives at the same age. This was followed by the first episode of the latest instalment, *63 Up*.

Ahead of the new series, three key members of the production team and one of the participants, Sue Sullivan, came together at an RTS North West event in mid-May to talk to *Granada Reports* presenter Lucy Meacock.

Claire Lewis, who joined as a researcher on *28 Up* and has produced the show ever since, likened the team and the participants to “members of a family. We pick up after seven years as if nothing has happened. When things go wrong, we are all affected.”

It hasn’t all been plain sailing. One contributor, Jackie, who was in the audience at the Lowry Theatre, took Apted to task in *21 Up* for his “sexist questioning”. She recalled: “I was angry [at Apted].” He asked the girls about men and marriage, but “he’d ask the boys what the Tory party was doing”.



Carole Solazzo meets the team behind one of factual TV’s most iconic experiments, *63 Up*

Documentary

Private lives lived in public

Sullivan said [being on the show] felt as if “I’m living my life in seven-year segments... Every seven years... Michael comes along and asks questions... and I reflect on my life.” She continued: “With the trust that we have in Michael and [director of photography] George and everyone – we can be ourselves.”

Because of the trust that has developed over the years, Lewis insisted she

had no reservations about following the participants around with cameras. She spoke of “the privilege of being a part of... such an extraordinary project”, calling the show “pure, old-fashioned documentary film-making”.

She added: “Talking heads [are] the most powerful thing.”

George Jesse Turner, who has worked on the series since *21 Up*, agreed: “I’ve kept to the original *cinéma vérité* style,

Left: Jackie, Lynn and Sue in the original *Seven Up!*

where the camera becomes people's eyes. A lot of people who work in TV now will find it refreshing."

Editor Kim Horton, who made his series debut on *28 Up*, gives context to each of the characters' lives by cutting in some of the extensive archive footage. "A mammoth task," he admitted. "[But] *Seven Up!* always yields some wonderful lines and pictures."

Meacock noted the "incredible symmetry" of the images, which was illustrated by Nick, who was shown as an adult walking down the same farm track that we saw him walk along as a seven-year-old child. Turner added that he tried to "get as much information [out of the images] as possible" to convey time as well as place.

So are the Jesuits right? Lewis believes so, with Neil the exception that proves the rule. "He was the most lovely, vivacious charming seven-year-old," she said. "And at 21 [after a breakdown], he was labouring on a building site and living in a squat."

Lewis said it was because of Neil that *28 Up* won a clutch of prizes, including an RTS award and a Bafta: "It was the one, after *Seven Up!*, that really put us on the map."

Neil had gone missing. She tracked him down, after three months of searching, to a caravan in the Highlands, interviewing him by the side of a loch. "It was possibly the most profound and moving interview with a young man I've ever done," she said, praising Neil's courage and honesty. It resonated with the general public, too: "Homelessness meant something because it was someone they'd seen as a child."

Will there be a *70 Up*? "Seven years is a long time," admitted Lewis. "Who knows?" ■

The RTS North West event 'A celebration and screening of 63 Up' was held at the Lowry Theatre, Salford, on 16 May and produced by Rachel Pinkney.

From researcher to director

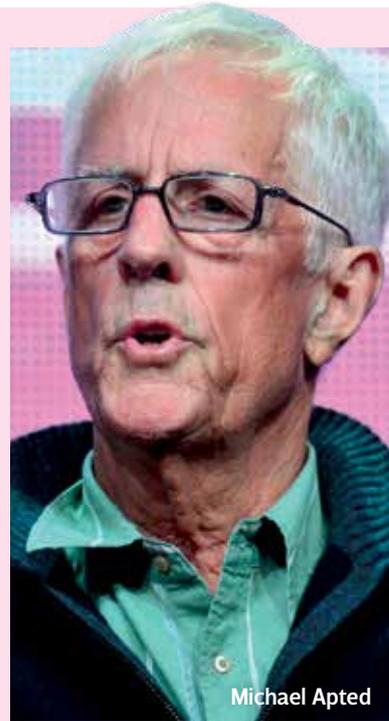
Michael Apted joined Granada straight from Cambridge University in 1963 on a six-month apprentice contract. One of his first jobs was as a researcher on *World in Action – Seven Up!*, which became the first of the ground-breaking documentary series *Up*.

"There were two of us researching it, myself and Gordon McDougall," Apted recalls of the 'fairly haphazard' process. "He dealt with the north of England, I did the south. The brief was to find children who weren't embarrassed or who closed up when asked questions.

"If I found someone I liked, I checked with the teacher whether they had the nerve to be in front of a film unit.

"We were both looking for different branches of the population – upper, middle and working class – to make sure all were represented... We had less than four weeks to choose the children, [and] would constantly review them to see which stayed in the mind. Since there was no thought of continuing the series, we didn't do a lot of research.

"We had to trust our memories... beyond some note-taking and the occasional still, we had no film of the first round. So a lot depended on our memory of the 20 to 30 minutes we spent with them."



Michael Apted

WP Film

Apted went on to direct news, football and *Granada Reports*, moving on to *Coronation Street* and dramas written by the likes of Jack Rosenthal, then into movies.

Then one day, in the Granada canteen, the broadcaster's de facto head of programmes (and later its Chair), Sir Denis Forman, walked up to Apted and asked if he'd ever thought of revisiting the seven-year-olds to see how they were getting on, this time to direct the show? Apted directed *7 Plus Seven* and all its successors.

How it all began

As an Aussie, Tim Hewat, then editor of Granada current affairs programme *World in Action*, 'was absolutely horrified... at the rigidity of social class in England', said producer Claire Lewis. 'His inspiration [for *Seven Up!*] was: "Does social class predetermine how children turn out?"'

Having commissioned the show, Hewat returned to Australia before he could see it out. However, Lewis added, 'before he went, he made Derek Granger the executive producer'. Granger, who later produced *Brideshead Revisited*, 'assembled whoever they could find within Granada to make it.

'[Michael] Apted and [Gordon] McDougall beavered away to find the

children' and *Seven Up!* 'was shot by David Samuelson, a news cameraman, who'd never shot anything like it before'.

Lewis believes another reason 'why *Seven Up!* was so special is that it was directed by a drama director, Canadian Paul Almond, who happened to be at Granada waiting to direct something else.

'He asked Samuelson... to do all sorts of crazy things... like putting his camera on the floor, following [the children] running across the playground, all sorts of ground-breaking stuff that made *Seven Up!* so different. The edit was then supervised by Granger.

'It was a fabulous team, put together by chance... and [the show] won almost everything when it went out.'

Content

Tara Conlan finds much to chew on at an RTS event on TV food shows

With 87 days' worth of cookery shows airing during the past year on UK terrestrial television – made up of 410 unique titles – the RTS event “Why we love... food” was appositely named.

Revealing the facts to an audience hungry for knowledge about the genre, Pritesh Mody, founder of artisan food producer World of Zing, chaired the late-May event on the day it emerged that Jamie Oliver's UK restaurant chain had gone into administration.

So, there was extra piquancy when Channel 4 head of features and formats Sarah Lazenby confirmed that she had ordered a new vegetarian series with Oliver and a programme looking back at his life on TV.

“We're going to do something this year about Jamie 20 years on – and he's going to do a new vegetarian series because everyone's wanting to go meat-free,” said Lazenby.

With food shows a staple of TV globally, Lazenby explained their popularity: “Food always rates; it's great, everyone needs to eat. It's about how you innovate. I think you can make food programmes for everyone. We've got some amazing cornerstones in our schedule... but I still feel like there's room for a new generation of Instagram food shows.”

Tanya Shaw, Managing Director of Shine TV, which makes *MasterChef*, said that new talent and a digital strategy are key to attracting young audiences to food TV shows. These demographics are used to seeing chefs on social media. However, the panel agreed that no major social media food talent has yet moved over to hosting their own broadcast show.

Shaw added: “*MasterChef* keeps us

Food, glorious food



quite busy and we also do things with Mary Berry and we are starting to look at new talent.... These things are cyclical. Every so often, there is the next Jamie or [a] person who does capture the nation's imagination because they feel really passionately about an issue that feels of the moment or because they are really extraordinary in terms of their character.”

Mody asked whether restaurant culture is being driven by TV or vice versa. Restaurateur Nisha Katona, who is a judge on BBC Two's *Top of the Shop with Tom Kerridge* and founded Indian restaurant mini-chain Mowgli Street Food, said: “I don't think you could possibly commission programmes at the speed we, as consumers, evolve our food on the street. What TV does is produce something that provides a comfortable place for us, as middle-class food intelligentsia, to come and sit and unwind and think, “This is a safe and noble place for me.”

Discussing the collapse of Oliver's restaurant empire, Katona said: “It's interesting with Jamie and the restaurants – what is that nexus, is there a nexus? Is the success of your restaurant dependent on how good you are on TV as a presenter?”

Chefs, Mody pointed out, have a lot of clout: “Delia is still super-influential. Over Christmas, when she and Nigella talk about their key ingredient, Waitrose sells out in half a day, so they still have influence.”

In a crowded market, Channel 4's Lazenby is looking for original ingredients for new shows: “If people bring me something that does, ‘It's this meets this’, I'm like, ‘No, how is this going to surprise me?’ I want the programmes [in which] people are really passionate. The ones that cut through are very simple, very clear, very original; executed by someone who's got a passion for it.”

Shaw noted that if shows “are on for a long time, they have to evolve. If



The Great
British Bake Off
2018 winner
Rahul Mandal

‘IS THE SUCCESS OF YOUR RESTAURANT DEPENDENT ON HOW GOOD YOU ARE ON TV?’

New recipe for Junior Bake Off

Channel 4’s Sarah Lazenby brought news about *Junior Bake Off*, the children’s spin-off from *The Great British Bake Off*, which is following its parent from the BBC to the commercial broadcaster.

Lazenby revealed she had held the first meeting that morning about the new show and had begun discussions about its presenting line-up and look.

When asked how *Junior Bake Off* might change as Channel 4 makes the show its own, in the same way it did with *The Great British Bake Off*, Lazenby was cagey. ‘We’re really excited that it’s coming to us. Obviously, we’re not a children’s broadcaster... 16- to 34-year-olds are our target but – there’s a format that’s [already] there, but there’s also a Channel 4 tone,’ she said.

Two weeks later, Channel 4 announced that comedian Harry Hill would be the main presenter. He will be joined by judges Prue Leith (a former judge in the grown-ups’ tent) and, fresh from hosting *Bake Off: The Professionals*, by one-time *Bake Off* competitor Liam Charles.

Forty bakers, aged 9 to 15 will go through 10 heats during the series of 15 one-hour episodes later this year.

When *Junior Bake Off* aired on CBBC it had different hosts – Aaron Craze, then Sam Nixon and Mark Rhodes – from the adult version, which was fronted by Sue Perkins and Mel Giedroyc.

Channel 4

you’re just following the same formula, series in and series out, people won’t come back.”

Contestants on food shows are driven by skill, observed Lazenby: “They’re not on telly because they want to be on telly; they’re on telly because they love baking or cooking. And, actually, that’s the joy of someone like [*Bake Off* winner] Rahul [Mandal] – he wouldn’t have applied for *Love Island*, would he?”

Shaw said that new outlets such as Netflix “provide more opportunities. Interestingly, *MasterChef*, as a format, doesn’t seem to be suffering, because there are more options to watch on Netflix.... It’s another place we can pitch ideas to, where exciting cookery shows are doing well.”

Netflix US original *Nailed It!* is one such “brash” show – it’s “brave and it works”, said Shaw, adding: “I’m not sure a British broadcaster would take that sort of risk, but I think, having seen it succeed on Netflix, maybe they

will. The more food programmes that work, the better it is for everyone.”

After watching a clip of *Nailed It!* – in which unsuccessful home bakers try to recreate edible masterpieces to win a cash prize – Katona observed: “It’s like *The Generation Game*.” Lazenby noted: “A lot of food programming has joy in it.”

The panel agreed that making cookery shows was hard and required specialist skills such as using the right camera lenses and getting the “sound of the sizzle”, as chef and cookbook author Melissa Hemsley put it.

Hemsley said that sustainability and thrifty tips were current trends: “What can I do with peelings? I wish there were more shows where the farmers were shown cooking the meal.” ■

The RTS early-evening event ‘Why we love... food’ was held at Kings Place in central London on 21 May and produced by Sarah Booth, director of communications at EndemolShine UK.

OUR FRIEND IN WALES

We do enjoy a quiz at the RTS, so here's a question for you: what

notable moments in British television history took place in 1959? You get a point if you knew that it was the year that *Juke Box Jury* was first broadcast on the BBC (or, indeed, *Noggin the Nog*).

Two points to anyone who answered that it was the year that the ITV franchise Tyne Tees Television started broadcasting. But there's another event that you almost certainly didn't know about – and it's why 1959 interests me: it was the year that the RTS formed its first committee in Wales.

Back then, it was known as the RTS Cardiff and South Wales Centre and it had a very specific appeal for its new members. The RTS was created as a forum for engineers to discuss and track the “exciting new medium of television”, and its meetings were an essential way of sharing news about the latest technology.

Intrigued to know more, I tracked down a former local committee member who was one of the most senior broadcast engineers working in Cardiff at the time. He told me that they would invite people from London or Manchester to give a lecture on the latest innovations, which they would then introduce to their own work. What really struck me was how crucial those lectures were to their professional lives. “We always used to say, if you wanted to get ahead, you needed to be part of the RTS. It was

Judith Winnan
celebrates 60 years
of RTS Cymru Wales
and applauds the
help it gives to new
TV talent



BBC

the best way to be up to date with the technology.”

Of course, over the past 60 years, the focus of the RTS has shifted and, while we rightly still celebrate and shed light on the technical side of the industry, we enable and progress careers in television in a much broader way.

One of the main reasons I wanted to be part of RTS Wales was because of the support and advice it gives to the next generation wanting to work in the industry, particularly those who might not have those all-important contacts who can open doors for them. The wealth of advice and information (not to mention the bursaries) that we

offer is a brilliant resource, available to students and young people in pretty much every corner of the UK, thanks to our network of centres.

With that in mind, our 60th year started on a high when we awarded our very first RTS Cymru Break-through and Newcomer Awards in February to two impressively talented young people already making their mark in broadcasting. Seeing how much those awards meant to them and also how valued and appreciated they were by their employers was a pertinent reminder of how much our industry relies on people who are completely driven in what they do.

This year has continued to be a special one in other ways, too: our annual lecture was brilliantly delivered by Jane Tranter, co-founder of *Bad Wolf*, and attracted our biggest ever audience, as well as some great media coverage. Still to come, in the autumn, we are holding an event with one of the biggest names in British TV (watch this space), plus we'll be expanding our industry awards to recognise the rising stars of television here in Wales.

All in all, we've had good cause to celebrate our significant birthday (and, yes, there was cake). Sixty years on, in the spirit of our predecessors, it's gratifying to see that we're still here to give a crucial helping hand to someone's career and to offer a platform to the very brightest and best minds in television. Here's to the next 60 years! ■

Judith Winnan is Chair of RTS Cymru Wales.

North West
Centre

“The BBC’s job is to reflect what’s going on in Britain. It’s hard to watch... but there’s kindness and hope. It’s a really important series for us,” said commissioning editor of documentaries Emma Loach. She was discussing the award-winning *Ambulance* at an RTS North West event in May, sponsored by The Farm.

The Lowry in Salford was packed for the screening of episode 1 of series 5 and to hear from executive producers Simon Ford and Tom Currie, series producer Peter Wallis-Taylor and other members of the team about the work that goes into producing the “stories behind the sirens”.

The Manchester-set programme, which was described by BBC head of documentary commissioning Clare Sillery as “a love letter to the NHS”, returned to BBC One last month. Ford confessed that when he was first approached by factual indie Dragonfly, “having worked on other programmes about ambulances”, he “wasn’t sure there was anything more to say”.

An afternoon spent in a busy control centre persuaded him: “I realised that because the NHS is under unprecedented pressure, so much... could be shown by what was



BBC

‘A love letter to the NHS’

happening in control.” Ford planned to “use that platform to see into the lives (of the ambulance dispatchers), and the [ambulance crews]”.

Dispatcher Laura Pilling is shown guiding a caller through cardiopulmonary resuscitation, leading her to make a life-changing decision.

Wallis-Taylor praised the team’s “love, craft and dedication” to the welfare of patients. “They treat us with such kindness in allowing us to film those moments of intimacy.”

“In 15 minutes we get to know them, get consent and [explain] what it might mean to be on television,” Ford reflected, with Wallis-Taylor adding that afterwards they spend months building a relationship with them.

“Their stories really tell us something about the state of the nation,” said Currie, who explained that “the stories are genuinely happening in real time, simultaneously”.

Series director Stuart Froude has eight producer/

directors, “filming for 15 hours a day in difficult locations” and using drones to bring “a visually stunning cinematic quality [to *Ambulance*]”.

Series producer Sarah Veevers co-ordinates these teams using “30-plus WhatsApp groups... monitored by producer/directors on the ground, feeding back what’s happening”, and generating tens of thousands of instant messages. “It feels like the world’s longest live event,” she added. **Carole Solazzo**

Bristol offers copyright tips

West of
England

Following a successful workshop earlier this year on documentary film-making, Bristol Media and RTS West of England teamed up once again with Abbas Media Law, this time to host a “Copyright in productions” workshop.

In May, around 40 people from the TV and film

production community joined leading media lawyer Nigel Abbas at The Square in Bristol to learn about copyright.

During the two-hour session, Abbas covered the main risks associated with copyright and how to avoid them, as well as licensing copyright works. He also tackled

defences to copyright infringement, including fair dealing with quotations, reporting current events and incidental inclusion.

“It was great meeting so many content producers in Bristol. Everyone seemed really engaged and there was a lot of good discussion and questions,” said Abbas, the

founder of the media law specialist.

“The copyright session was absolutely brilliant,” said Chris Bailey, programme leader of the Digital Media Production BA course at Plymouth College of Art. “Using clear examples and a simplified understanding of case law, he made a very complicated subject as straightforward and easy to understand as possible.”

Kirsty Phillips



Mari Griffith

Mari Griffith

1940–2019

Wales Centre

“Make an ‘L’ with your mouth and blow – it’s phonetic and the town’s called Llanelli!” Mari Griffith was offering advice to, of all people, the BBC’s pronunciation unit in the days when Welsh programmes were opt outs from the

main radio service. It was the measure of her professionalism and wit that she could offer advice while gently chiding her fellow continuity announcers.

Mari, though, was much more than a radio announcer. She was, in turn, a singer,

presenter, independent producer and, in her later years, a successful novelist.

Mari, who has died at the age of 79, was also a long-standing RTS Wales Centre Committee member.

She was born into a Welsh-speaking, musical family in the Llynfi Valley. Her first TV appearance was singing with her sister Ann, an accomplished harpist, on a Sunday night children’s programme, *All Your Own*, broadcast live from London.

When I interviewed Mari at her home in Llantwit Major some years ago, she told me: “Few people in Maesteg had TV sets in those days so they all crowded into each other’s houses to watch. They then crept shame-facedly into chapel late for the evening service, hoping the minister wouldn’t notice.”

Mari went to college in Cardiff, before joining the BBC Northern Singers in Manchester. It was the mid-1960s and the folk scene was taking off: “I just bought a guitar and got on with it.”

She was soon appearing on radio and TV alongside the likes of Tony Hart, and Ray Alan and his puppets Tich and Quackers. It was a busy time for her, presenting children’s programmes during the day and playing folk in

the evenings and recording LPs at the weekend. She even had her own BBC Wales series, *With a Little Help*.

But the lure of Wales was strong. Back home, Mari worked with the comedy duo Ryan and Ronnie, and Max Boyce, sang on the BBC Wales pop programme *Disc a Dawn*, appeared on the BBC Two series *Poems and Pints* and had a residency on Max Jaffa’s *Music for Your Pleasure* on BBC Radio 2.

In 1978, Mari became a bi-lingual continuity announcer at BBC Wales. She started directing promos and set up her own production company, MovieJack, filming in the US and Bulgaria.

Mari was a lifelong member of the RTS and served as secretary of the Wales Centre Committee for more than 10 years. Whether she was minding guests such as former MP Oona King or calming down student awards winners, Mari was always on hand to help ensure the centre’s events ran smoothly.

In her latter years, she turned to writing and published two well-received historical novels, tales of mediaeval romance and intrigue. Mari will be sadly missed but fondly remembered by all who knew her.

Tim Hartley

Awards launched in Leeds

Yorkshire Centre

In mid-May, RTS Yorkshire announced the nominations for its 2019 Awards at a launch party sponsored by Leeds TV and film production facility Prime Studios.

Just under 100 industry professionals gathered at Prime’s new events space, Archive, to discover whether their work had made it on to the awards shortlist. Larry

and Paul, a comedy act who have built up a strong local following on BBC Radio Leeds, hosted the launch.

Nominations for the 18 awards categories reflected the healthy level of production in the Yorkshire region. The hotly contested factual awards earned multiple nominations for Daisybeck Studios, Air TV, True North and True Vision Yorkshire.

The region’s wide range of drama production was reflected in nominations for *Ackley Bridge*, *Emmerdale* and Jack Dee and Pete Sinclair’s ITV sitcom, *Bad Move*. The news categories will see the traditional battle between ITV’s *Calendar* and the BBC’s two *Look North* programmes.

The RTS Yorkshire Awards will be held on 14 June at the Queens Hotel in Leeds.

Later in May, RTS Yorkshire and Screen Yorkshire supported a social media masterclass, also held at Prime Studios. A full house of 30 heard Jo Booth – director and head trainer at Manchester-based outfit Social Media Makes Sense – outline how production companies can get the most out of social media platforms.

“Around half the UK’s population are on Facebook – you’d be mad not to use this tool to talk to your audiences,” said Booth.

Lisa Holdsworth

Making music



Vasco Hexel

Royal College of Music

London Centre Matthew Bell hears how composers and programme-makers can work together in perfect harmony

The composer Vasco Hexel outlined how TV can make the best use of music at an RTS London event in late May. Currently, he argued, this doesn't always happen – with composers and programme-makers often failing to sing from the same song sheet.

Hexel recalled a quote from Rachel Portman, who won an Oscar for her score for the 1996 movie version of Jane Austen's *Emma*. "Many good directors are bad at giving good direction to composers," she said.

Directors, added Hexel, "know what they're doing – they wouldn't be directing a feature film if they didn't know their craft and have a really strong creative view on what they're trying to achieve." It was therefore surprising, he added, "that these people should be bad at communicating with a composer when it comes to creating the music for a film".

Composers and directors need to find common ground, Hexel said. "If you can find a shared language with a vocabulary that both

parties understand, that can go a long way towards a more rewarding process and, perhaps, a more rewarding product at the end.

"When you discuss music, be honest and clear – and that goes for both sides."

Hexel, who teaches TV and film composition at the Royal College of Music in London, has composed for TV, commercials and feature films. His music has featured on the BBC's *Panorama* and *Horizon*, Channel 4's *Dispatches* and E!'s *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*.

Programme-makers often want music to portray emotion, but a viewer's emotional response to music is "not always as predictable as we'd like", said Hexel, who offered an example. "We don't need music to be sad in itself – it has to do so in the context of what's happening. That is how we sometimes get a comedy where the music is dramatic and heavy, but the resulting experience is hilarious."

The amount of music in programmes and films varies hugely, he said. "If you're Ken Loach, you're going to have two minutes at the very end of the film, maybe – I exaggerate a little. If you're Michael [Transformers] Bay, you're going to start [with music] and never stop."

Hexel's new book, *The Film and Media Creators' Guide to Music*, offers more advice to composers and programme-makers alike.

But the future for composers may not be that bright. Hexel revealed that "artificial intelligence tools that would generate music for projects" are being developed.

"There are people working on music software that will fill in music [to a programme] automatically. I'm quite worried about that." ■

The RTS London event, 'How to talk about music' was held at Atos on 22 May and produced by Phil Barnes.

ONLINE at the RTS

■ A rogue coffee cup stole the show in the final season of *Game of Thrones*, making headlines across the world. The abandoned beverage joins a long list of errors that have snuck into some of our favourite TV shows, from *Doctor Foster* to *The Simpsons*. Only the most eagle-eyed viewers will have spotted similar slip-ups, but, if you want to see more, visit: www.rts.org.uk/TVSlipUps.

■ Bear Grylls is a busy man. We tracked him down to a Swiss mountainside from where he spoke about his interactive Netflix show *You vs Wild*, the importance of wildlife shows such as



Bear Grylls in *You vs Wild*

Netflix

National Geographic's *Hostile Planet* in highlighting the global climate crisis and the lessons he's learned from his exploits around the world. The adventurer also offered advice for people wanting to spend more time outdoors, his top survival tip and his biggest fear (www.rts.org.uk/BearGrylls).

■ As a reader of this magazine, you'll know about the RTS's wide range of activities, from regional events and national conferences to our bursary scheme and glitzy award ceremonies. To celebrate another year of growth, we've put together some highlights from the past 12 months at the Society, including video diaries from our bursary recipients and backstage interviews with our award winners (www.rts.org.uk/2019AGMvideo).
Pippa Shawley

OFF MESSAGE

As a rule, regulators lack charisma. Outgoing Ofcom Chief Executive Sharon White, the new Chair of troubled retailer John Lewis, has charisma in abundance.

She was the proverbial breath of regulatory fresh air, unencumbered by any previous experience in broadcasting or the wider communications sector. Since making her RTS debut at the 2015 RTS Cambridge Convention, White's appearances at broadcasting conferences invariably became a highlight of these occasions.

Among her achievements was the impressive way she and her colleagues took full responsibility for independent regulation of the BBC.

She held the Beeb to account on diversity and, with typical frankness, said the corporation had made the wrong call in taking BBC Three online-only.

The plain-speaking and highly empathetic ex-Treasury mandarin will be much missed in these parts.

Off Message can put it no better than Dido Harding. She described the outgoing Ofcom CEO as "a class act". Here, here.

■ **Off Message had a spring in his step after attending an exuberant new staging of *Ain't Misbehavin'*, the 1978 musical inspired by Fats Waller, performed at Southwark Playhouse.**

The show wowed reviewers, with several drawing attention to its first-time choreographer, Oti Mabuse, the South African champion dancer.

Oti is, of course, best known for her role as a professional dancer partnering celebs on *Strictly Come Dancing*. She was also a judge on *The Greatest Dancer*.

The quality of *Ain't Misbehavin'* dance routines suggests that Oti is now destined for an equally dazzling career away from the cameras.

■ Talking of shiny floor shows, Off Message was intrigued to see that ITV reportedly outbid Channel 4 for the UK rights to remake *The Masked Singer*, the series hailed for reinvigorating the reality genre in the US.

The American version of *The Masked Singer* – based on a South Korean format – became a breakout hit for Fox earlier this year. Unusually for an entertainment show, it was especially popular with those hard-to-reach under-35s that advertisers crave.

Described as "outlandish" and "wacky", panellists on *The Masked Singer* have to guess the identity of celebrity singers who appear heavily disguised. "Not very often, a show comes along that seems to abandon all the rules... and this is it," claimed ITV's outgoing head of entertainment commissioning, Siobhan Greene.

ITV viewers sound like they are in for a treat. The series seems destined for a prime-time Saturday slot next

winter. As one of the series's British producers says, *The Masked Singer* is "less of a whodunit and more of a whosungit".

■ **Congratulations to Lee Raftery, newly promoted to run NBCUniversal's European channels across Europe, the Middle East and Africa, which include Universal, E! and Syfy.**

Lee is a friend of the RTS and worked in Kevin MacLellan's team to produce a wonderful RTS London Convention in 2016. Off Message is therefore shamelessly delighted.

■ And, finally, political turmoil continues to stalk the nation, with the Brexit Party and the Lib Dems on the rise. Yet, compared with the early years of Margaret Thatcher's reign, Brexit-divided Britain looks a remarkably tranquil place.

Viewers of the excellent five-part BBC Studios documentary *Thatcher: A Very British Revolution* were reminded of what the UK was like in the early 1980s. High inflation, unemployment in the millions, inner-city riots and a protracted and bitter miners strike that split communities.

Shown on BBC Two, it is documentary making at its finest – a compelling mosaic of well-chosen archive and riveting first-hand accounts from key players. If you haven't seen it, watch the series on iPlayer. It might even prove to be a distraction from the Tory leadership contest.



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