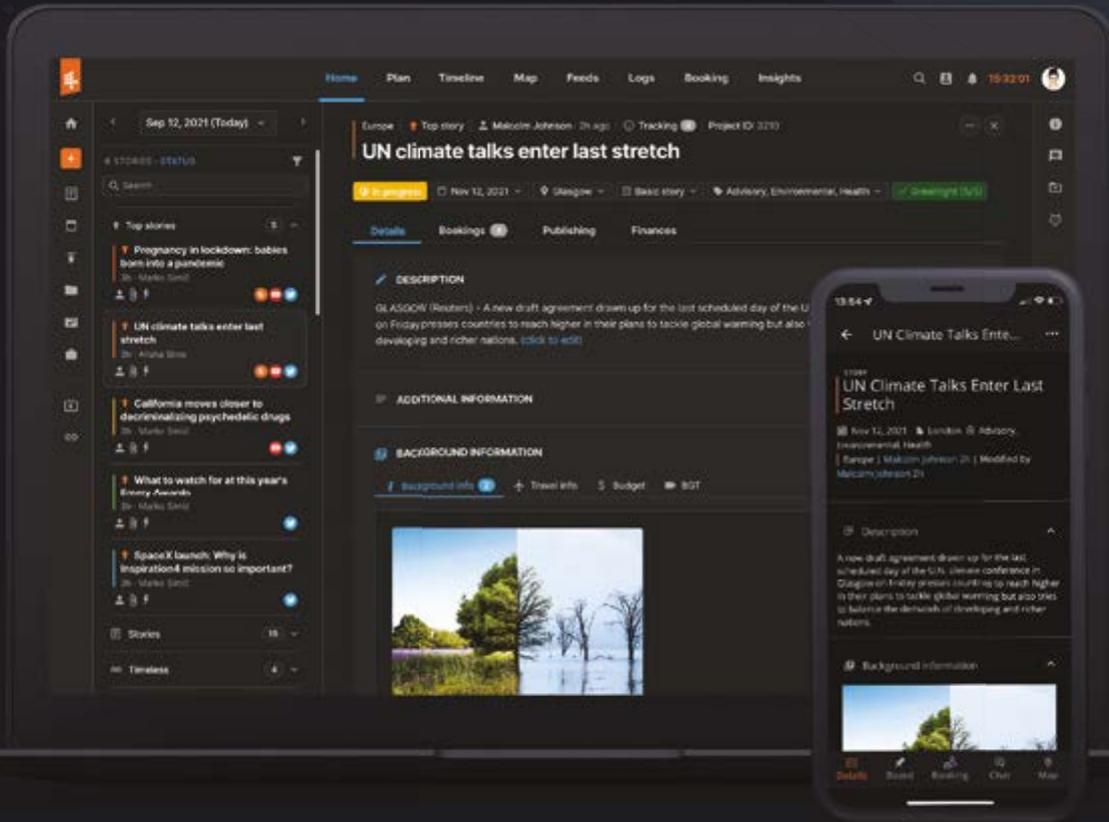


Television



The eyes of the world

- John Ryley's conflict diary
- The reinvention of war coverage
- RTS Television Journalism Awards



Wolftech News

Storycentric planning for storytellers, by storytellers



Idea



Story

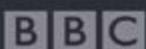


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From the CEO



The war in Ukraine is rightly dominating news agendas. I'd like to thank all the international correspondents, their producers and camera crews for their heroic efforts in bringing us eye-witness accounts from this shattered country and neighbouring states.

John Ryley's heart-wrenching TV Diary recounts how Sky reporter Stuart Ramsay and his team escaped with their lives after being attacked by gunmen on the outskirts of Kyiv.

Huge thanks to John for finding the time to write such a moving piece.

Ex-Sky, ITV and NBC newsman Julian March provides his analysis of why, with Telegram and TikTok now key sources of information and misinformation, for news broadcasters, this war is unlike any other.

In recent weeks, British television has lost two hugely influential independent producers, Roger Graef and Beryl Vertue. Both were pioneers. Sincere condolences to their families. In their very different ways, Roger and Beryl helped to make our thriving

sector what it is today. They were both friends of the RTS. We publish obituaries of these two television giants, whom we shall miss greatly.

It was wonderful to see so many of you in person at last month's RTS Television Journalism Awards, and I look forward to seeing even more at the RTS Programme Awards on 29 March. I can promise you a very celebratory night out.

Theresa

Theresa Wise

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TV diary



Sky

the story of what happened to show the sheer scale of the mayhem and violence meted out to the Ukrainian people. And because it makes me angry that the public doesn't understand the lengths to which journalists go to report the news.

One colleague described the story as "the most powerful piece of war reporting and camera work ever seen". Over the following days, more than 3.5 million people read the article and the video was viewed more than 6 million times.

■ I salute the professionalism and courage of those who try to see the truth with their own eyes.

At least Stuart's visceral report caught the eye of No 10. The Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, tweeted: "The courage of these journalists, putting themselves in terrifying and dangerous situations, is astonishing to watch. They're risking their lives to ensure that the truth is told."

■ This hot and cold war is throwing up complex editorial, ethical and logistical issues to balance the safety of our colleagues with the need to independently report first-hand a significant story. News organisations have become much sharper at protecting their people.

I recall the lack of training when I set out as an ITV producer to cover the Bosnian civil war. Thirty years on, our audiences have changed, too. This is a TikTok war. An interview we did with a lone soldier guarding a bridge in Kyiv now has more than 30 million views.

User-generated content is increasingly used in our coverage, but only

The accuracy of the fire was surprising," was the laconic observation of Sky News camera operator Richie Mockler. He was explaining what

happened when gunmen, thought to be a Russian sabotage and reconnaissance squad, ambushed Sky's chief correspondent Stuart Ramsay and his team. They were driving in a rented Hyundai saloon car on a major road from Bucha to Kyiv, about 20 minutes from the centre of the capital.

The gunmen fired hundreds of bullets. Up close. Stuart was hit once. Richie was hit twice, but his body armour saved him. It took the team 22 hours to get to safety. They are all right.

As a news boss, it's a gut-churning moment when you first hear a team is in serious trouble, often only moments after the incident begins and well before it's resolved. The news gyre stops turning.

Things do fall apart. Yet the centre must hold, I told myself. The loneliness of leadership was striking, not for the first time in 16 years at the helm.

■ When I saw the video of the ambush, three days later, I felt sick. Very sick. The rights and wrongs of broadcasting and publishing the video were discussed at length with my senior colleagues in the newsroom in west London.

In an email to staff, I described the report as a "hard watch" – a hard listen, too – with the crackle of the bullets, the team's desperate shouting, and their heavy panting as they escape. In the end, we decided to tell

John Ryley salutes the courage and professionalism of journalists reporting on the war in Ukraine – including a Sky News team who narrowly escaped with their lives

after it has been checked by our verification team.

The flow of such content has slowed as the war has gone on and people flee the fighting. The refugee crisis is now the biggest in Europe since 1945. Heavy times.

■ “What would you pack in a light suitcase as you leave your home in a hurry,” I asked a colleague. “Running shoes,” was his swift answer.

Initially, I was frustrated by our inability to use maps effectively on screen to explain to our digital and TV audiences the military tactics: maps explain why battles are lost and won.

There is a strange gap between the strategic assessments of the slow advance of the Russian forces and the grievous pictures from cities such as Mariupol, Mykolaiv and Kharkiv, where thousands of people are trying to escape fierce bombardment.

■ “Delay means death” was the response from the UN Secretary General to the latest report on climate change – one of a very few other stories we have focused on since the start the Ukraine war.

The 3,500-page report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is a grim read. We need to rapidly cut back our emissions. The report’s authors say more than four out of 10 people live in areas that are “highly vulnerable” to climate change – but there is still a brief window to avoid the very worst. Time to agitate.

■ We are living through a period of life that is changing history’s direction. Climate change, technological



Stuart Ramsay having his bullet wound inspected by a colleague after they escaped from a Russian ambush

Sky

change, a big financial crisis, two political upheavals in the US and the UK, a global pandemic and now a brutal war in Europe. Extraordinary events, yet day-to-day journalism isn’t broad enough to capture the scale of disruption.

■ After two years, we are slowly easing the precautions against Covid at the Osterley studios in west London. The news organisation needs more daylight to inspire editorial green shoots – meetings on Teams have democratised access to discussions, but badly blunted creativity.

Face coverings are now optional in the newsroom but mandatory in the edit suites and control room. I realise I am the only person wearing a mask in the newsroom. I tell a colleague you can be in a minority of one and still be right.

■ At the weekend, I try to escape the pressure of the newsroom to meet my children in Newcastle. Now a young widower, I hug my three grown-up children tightly. We walk along the sandy, sunny beaches of Northumbria. I spend much of the eight-mile walk on the phone to London and Kyiv.

The children are understanding. My 27-year-old son doesn’t watch or own a TV. He scans programmes from the streamers on to a white wall of his sitting room. He gets his news from apps.

Coming home on the train from the North East of England on the Sunday evening, I see I am the only passenger in the carriage reading a hard copy of a newspaper. I am in a minority of one, yet again.

John Ryley is head of Sky News.

The reinvention of war coverage

Julian March considers how the conflict in Ukraine, horribly close to home, is being reported like no other



Pitching, in person and in Russian, at the Kremlin for an interview with President Putin was not something I ever imagined myself doing, even in the weird and wonderful world of TV news.

I was working for NBC News at the time, leading its digital operation and, having studied Russian, I was asked to join the delegation to request a one-on-one interview between the President and our lead anchor.

I made all the arguments that we were the right platform with the right person to give Putin the right interview and that it was the right time. Press attaché Dmitry Peskov agreed with everything except my last point: because it was 2014, and Russia's

incursion into Ukraine had just started.

Today, I consume the Ukraine coverage at a distance because I am no longer in journalism. I am now a consultant with a focus on storytelling in business.

It's from this perspective that I note some significant differences in the coverage of the current Ukrainian war compared with previous wars in my time. It strikes me that this war is very different in three ways:

The volume of video

This war is taking place across high-speed broadband connections. While there are still functioning electricity, internet and mobile networks, every smartphone in Ukraine is a potential newsgathering device. This means there is a massive volume of video

documenting nearly every minute of the invasion and its impact on millions of people across Ukraine and other countries, and even in Russia.

Mobile phones have taken on a democratising force when it comes to crowd-sourced journalism.

CNN's Dana Bash broadcasts to the US network from the Kyiv metro with nothing more than an iPhone and AirPods. We've also seen, on Sky News for example, some incredible walkie-talkie interviews with Ukrainians in besieged cities that show us what they are seeing and how they are living day to day.

All this blows "TV news by Zoom", which was what we had become accustomed to during the Covid pandemic, out of the water.

This is TikTok's first war. The

platform barely existed a few years ago, but it is now being used extensively not only by eyewitnesses – mostly civilians at the heart of the story – but also by news organisations. There are also many examples of “re-Tokkers” – curators of video from other sources (anything from Telegram to WhatsApp to Facebook).

This piles on the pressure for the major news organisations to ensure the veracity of the video they put on air. Worthy of mention are teams such as those led by my former Sky News colleague Hazel Baker, now at Reuters, whose role is to verify what used to be called simply user-generated content before putting it out to clients.

TikTok aside, the professionally crafted, on-the-ground, on-the-day video tapes from experienced correspondents such as Orla Guerin, Alex Crawford and Jeremy Bowen still stand because they give us a considered narrative beyond the single-shot, social media post.

The breadth and depth of the propaganda war

Even as a newsroom output producer early in my career, my colleagues and I were always particularly mindful of the need to maintain balance and impartiality.

Today, that requirement to carefully contextualise and source new lines and video has never been more important. It is all too easy to inadvertently publish video from social media purporting to be contemporaneous when it might actually be from military action in Ukraine in 2014, or a recent exercise across the border in Belarus.

My 11-year-old son asked me whether the Ghost of Kyiv, a supposed Ukrainian “Top Gun” fighter pilot credited with shooting down at least six Russian planes in the early days of the conflict, was real. The TikTok stream of clips about the Ghost of Kyiv is a startling mixture of footage. Some are obviously from computer games. These clips are just some of the particulates in the fog of war.

Even as someone who started visiting Russia when it was still part of the Soviet Union, it is disturbing to see the Putin regime seeding the alternative

truth. It makes the former Trump administration look like amateurs.

The laws recently introduced in Russia that effectively outlaw the words “war” and “invasion”, and threaten any journalists attempting to tell a story other than the narrative emanating from the Kremlin, mean that Russians’ access to independent information is heavily restricted. But



journalists are finding ways to subvert the propaganda machine.

I have been following the independent Russian publication *Novaya Gazeta*, which points readers towards its Telegram account, as well as Instagram, as it continues to defy government orders.

BBC News Ukrainian is still up and running outside Ukraine. As is BBC Russian, which has released a video showing viewers how to access the service via VPN or on dark web browsers such as Tor. News outlets are also returning to short-wave radio frequencies to broadcast the news; media channels both brand new and

very old are taking adjacent places in the struggle to inform.

The war's proximity to home

Not since the Balkans war of the 1990s have we seen conflict in Europe. Much has changed since then, not least the advances in digital media, to make this war feel much closer to home than any other this millennium.

Until two weeks ago, Ukrainians were living lives very similar to ours. They bought furniture at Ikea, they went to cocktail bars. We even worked together – many UK businesses use developers in Ukraine.

It's worth us all spending some time to reflect on why this war feels closer to home than others before it. Is it because Ukraine borders the EU? Is it because we can so closely relate to the lives Ukrainians used to live? Is it because of the mass of social media video voiced and captioned in English emanating from the war zone? Or is it because they are a nation for the most part made up of white Caucasians?

What biases, subconscious or otherwise, are at play in both our consumption and our production of the news? And why did the events in Grozny and Aleppo not hit us with the same impact?

Are we all willing to pay the price for supporting the Ukrainians and upholding democracy and the sovereignty of independent states with a massive surge in energy bills and the cost of living, not to mention a potentially increased security threat?

These are some of the questions beyond the reportage that I look to my former profession to explore, in part along the three axes I have enumerated above. Television news and video storytelling has a particular gift for doing this, with its power to make emotional connections that could help make us more compassionate people in the future.

As for that sit-down interview with Putin, that would be the scoop of the century. ■

Julian March is a former head of digital at Sky News, ITV News and SVP of Digital at NBC News.

The ultimate newsman

ITV News chief **Michael Jermey** speaks to Steve Clarke as ITV launches its expanded early-evening news



If you want to hear a convincing argument that traditional TV news remains in rude health, despite the onward march of digital services, speak to Michael Jermey, ITV's director of news and current affairs. He is the executive overseeing the launch of ITV's extended, hour-long early evening news.

Many insist that the exit of newsmen such as Jon Snow, Andrew Marr and Adam Boulton, who have recently quit, respectively, *Channel 4 News*, BBC TV and Sky, and not forgetting Emily Maitlis and Jon Sopel's surprise move to LBC, is proof that broadcast news is in terminal decline.

Not Jermey, a news veteran of almost four decades, whose entire career has

been spent either at ITN or *ITV News* in one form or another. "I think there's been a narrative that's largely inaccurate about bulletin programmes on the big channels," says the softly spoken news boss. "*ITV Evening News* has more viewers, not just more share, than it did five years ago." Today, about 3.5 million viewers tune in five evenings a week.

He recalls that, in the early 1990s, when some of the day's leading news anchors – Alastair Burnet and Sandy Gall, for example – abandoned the autocue, commentators said much the same thing as they are saying today, when so many get their news via social media.

"At the time, people were saying, 'This is the end of TV news as we know it', but TV news continues to evolve," Jermey insists. "There is something about television news that... digital media and newspapers can't do – [it has] the ability to come into people's homes and provide eyewitness reporting from locations and communicate it in a way that feels accessible and, in the case of our programmes, feels warm and very human.

"People react very well to that, which doesn't mean that people don't want to read news or see a bit of video on their phone or, indeed, read newspapers.

"Lots of people do all those things. But, in the same way that people predicted the end of cinema and the end of radio, predictions of the demise of television news are, to misquote Mark Twain, greatly premature."

Jermey, relaxed and immaculately suited and booted, is speaking at a largely deserted ITV HQ in Holborn, central London (staff are still working from home), three weeks before the debut of the expanded early evening programme on 7 March.

The move is part of a larger change to the scheduling, which ITV describes as the biggest in two decades. It sees *Emmerdale* moving to a later, 7:30pm, slot and *Coronation Street* following at 8:00pm, with hour-long episodes on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

The early evening news might be doubling its length and featuring more out-of-London stories but viewers will otherwise see no significant differences to the current 30-minute programme.

Mary Nightingale, having presented the *ITV Evening News* since 2001, remains on board to front the extended broadcast. The studio and set remain identical.

"It's building on what we do well," explains Jermey. "I think we are the

least metropolitan of the big news services and this will emphasise that.” He rules out more analysis or longer reports – or turning the programme into a soft magazine show. In other words, why rewrite a hit?

He says: “It’s going to take the essence of the 6:30 news, which is rapid-paced news of the day nationally and internationally and build on it by offering viewers a few more stories and more news from outside London.

“To use the analogy of a newspaper, if, at the moment, the programme is pages one and two, the extra half an hour is pages three and four.”

ITV News’s journalistic presence is being beefed up in Wales, Scotland and the north of England, with more correspondents. Overall, 27 new members of staff are being hired across editorial, production and technical areas.

“Our early evening news is the most watched commercial TV news programme in Britain and sits very comfortably alongside our strong regional news programmes.

“Far from it being in decline, we think it’s a successful product. This is the thinking behind offering viewers an hour-long show,” emphasises Jermeý, who began his career in Central Television’s Birmingham newsroom in 1985. He joined ITN as a trainee a year later.

His parents were teachers, but Jermeý got the journalism bug early on. He still remembers the effect on him as a teenager of seeing a young Jon Snow reporting the tragedy of the Vietnamese boat people for *News at Ten*. “I’ve always been fascinated by eyewitness reporting, which is something that is unique to television news,” he says. At Oxford, he edited the university newspaper *Cherwell*, following Evan Davis and preceding Robert Moore as editor.

More than four decades later, *ITV News’s* determination to put eyewitness reporting at the heart of its bulletins was one reason it dominated this year’s RTS Television Journalism Awards. The remarkable storming of the Capitol coverage collected four prizes out of *ITV’s* total of nine.

This was a notable achievement by any yardstick. *ITV News at Ten* was declared Network Daily News Programme of the Year, a reflection of the fact that many consider it the go-to late-evening newscast in preference to *BBC News at Ten*. Of late, it’s won widespread praise for a succession of Partygate scoops and frequent exposés, including its reports on the appalling

state of social housing in the UK.

What, then, is *ITV News’s* secret sauce? Part of it stems from a culture that allows editorial teams a high degree of autonomy. “We’re happy to encourage the individuality of the people who work for *ITV News* and, in lots of cases, their independence of decision-making,” says Jermeý. “Robert Moore is a case in point. He’s a highly experienced correspondent who made a set of very sensible judgements on 6 January last year that led to a world-beating exclusive and to coverage that no US, British or European network could match. That happens within an enabling context from a broadcaster.”

in an accessible and interesting way.

“*ITV News* has always put people at the heart of our broadcasting. If you go back decades, the mark of news on *ITV* has always been people-centred stories, which is what we’re still doing today. Our newscasters make a connection with people.”

Tom Bradby’s style is particularly distinctive. I suggest that he wears his heart on his sleeve in a way that no other British newscaster does. “That’s probably a fair description but he’s politically impartial and doesn’t give favour to one side or another in a controversy. However, he does sometimes react how viewers do to extraordinary



How, then, would he define *ITV News’s* style? “We’re as authoritative as anyone else in the market and as impartial, if not more so, than any other service you can find.

“But we’re also very much peer-to-peer broadcasters. We think of our viewers as highly intelligent people who want more information from us, and they want it put across

events. Quite a lot of our viewers like the honesty of that.”

As do, it seems, Jermeý’s peers, judging by *ITV News’s* success at the RTS Television Journalism Awards. The betting is that the expanded early evening news will boost *ITV News’s* credibility in a period when the value of informed, impartial public service news has never been greater. ■



ITV *Trigger Point*

Sound recordist

WORKING LIVES

Kieron Wolfson recently recorded the sound for two highly regarded but very different ITV series: the explosive thriller *Trigger Point* and the true-life drama *Anne*, about the Hillsborough campaigner Anne Williams.

What does the job involve?

Recording the best possible sound for the script – acquisition of dialogue is king. I'm striving to capture actors' performances, often in a challenging location, to cinematic standards. You could record their words later in a Soho studio using automated dialogue replacement (ADR) but, without sweat on their brow and out of costume, their performance wouldn't be the same.

Did you always want to work in sound?

As a teenager, I'd record dance music

off the radio for my Walkman and then I got into drum machines, synthesisers, sequencers and [Avid music software] Pro Tools. I did the sound for a friend's stop-frame animation and enjoyed the process – but I didn't get great results, which was frustrating. I decided to give up my job, sell my house, move to London and go to film school to learn about sound, which I did at the age of 30.

What did you study?

Sound recording for film and TV at the National Film and Television School (NFTS). A great film I worked on, *Tanju Miah*, won an RTS Student Television Award. I then did a master's in sound design at Bournemouth University.

What was your first TV programme?

After training, I worked in film. My first

TV production was the 2017 BBC drama *Against the Law*, starring Daniel Mays and Mark Gatiss.

What advice would you give to someone wanting to become a sound mixer?

I went to the NFTS to give myself the best chance of getting into the industry, given the sacrifices I was making. These days, you can do a foundation course in sound at lots of universities.

Do your homework and find a university with a good film pedigree, such as Ravensbourne in London, where I'm now a tutor. ScreenSkills offers good training, too; I take a trainee from it on most jobs.

How much technical know-how do you need?

You have to be friends with tech; you

don't necessarily need great technical prowess. Working your way up from third to second to first sound assistant, to becoming a sound mixer, will give a good knowledge of sound.

Do you need a "good ear"?

You don't need pristine hearing, but a "good ear" enables you to hear the background noise, as well as the dialogue. As a sound mixer, you're constantly listening for sound that is extraneous to the dialogue that you're meant to be recording.

When do you join a production?

I usually get a week's prep: a day for a production meeting, two or three days for a recce and a day to prepare kit. That week is typically four or five weeks before principal photography. I break down a script so I know everything about the characters and the scenes, and what equipment I will need to record the sound. Preparation is everything.

Can you give an example?

For a chase scene on a motorbike, I would rig the engine of the bike to get a really clean engine sound; I'd put a mic in the driver's helmet to capture dialogue; and I'd use a long rifle mic to pick up the sound of the tyres on the road and an open mic, pointing away from the bike, to record atmospheres.

How big is the sound team on a drama?

Normally, we are a four-person team: the sound mixer, two boom operators (the first and second assistants) and a trainee to run cables and organise kit.

What do you bring to work with you?

My drama sound kit. And carpet. We use a lot of carpets to muffle sound – we can't have someone walking in stilettos on a marble floor.

Where do you set up?

I'm with my sound equipment to one side. The boom operators, who work closely with the focus pullers and the director of photography, are on set. I only come on set if there's a big problem to sort out – I like to give my team as much autonomy as possible.

What are the best and worst parts of the job?

Seeing a performance come off the page and acquiring pristine sound is fantastic. The hours are the worst part. In the summer, there are 12 hours of usable daylight and productions want

to use every one of them. That means I often work 16- to 18-hour days.

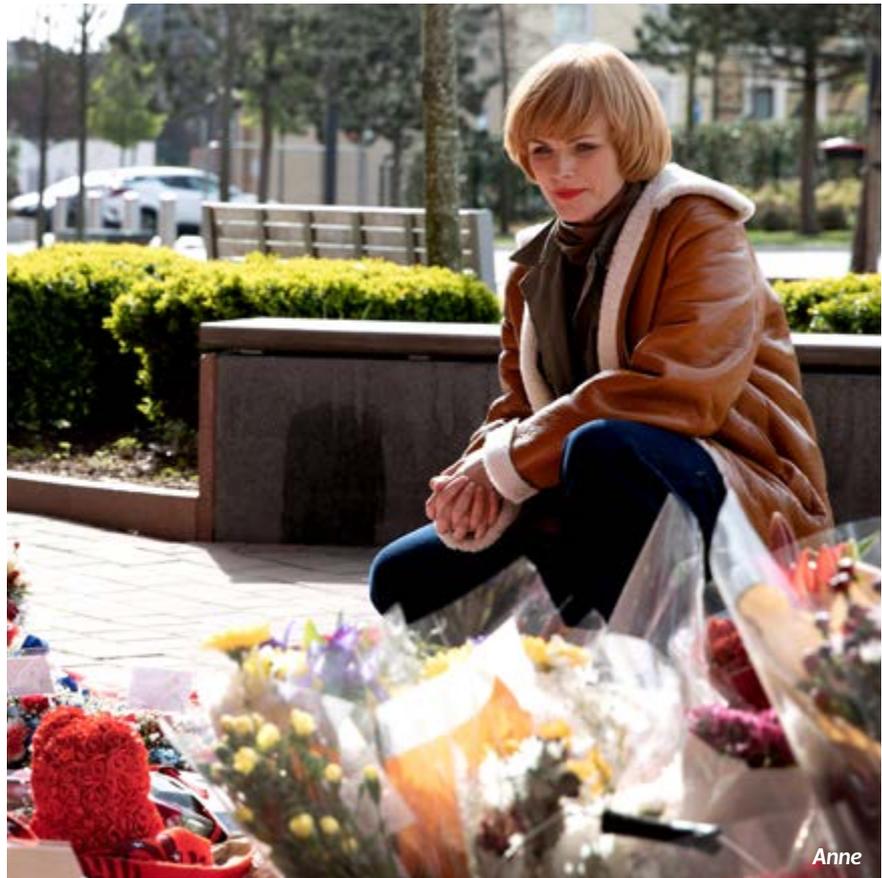
What's your biggest current challenge?

Productions want to shoot in a sound-proof studio but there aren't enough studios available, so they use sheds and warehouses, which are not sound stages. They tend to have hard surfaces, which produce a lot of reverb. That's terrible for sound.

solution was to rig a mic into actor Vicky McClure's helmet, and we also built a second mic into a loop outside the stab vest, which gave clean sound.

Is it a good time to work in sound?

The US model has always had higher production values than the British system – its drama is more polished. Traditionally, our dramas have been more documentary in style, with lots of



Is there a problem, as many claim, with actors mumbling?

Sometimes, actors choose a style of performance that can mean they mumble and you have to respect that, but it's my job to record tracks that are understandable. If there is a problem, I have a conversation with the producer and director – it's their decision to talk to an actor.

Are there any tricks of the trade you can share?

Costumes can be a problem. Silk generates an electric charge so, if you put a mic between two silk items, you get static on the mic. Cotton is much better for sound.

On *Trigger Point*, the thick material of the police stab vests and lots of Velcro meant that every time an officer moved, there was a lot of rustling. The

hand-held footage, and more realistic.

Now, we've moving closer to the American model and sound is becoming more important. On bigger-budget dramas, you get more coverage – generally, wide, mid and close shots of a scene, all with dialogue recorded – and more takes. So, you have a lot more material to get the best sound.

Is there a genre you'd love to work in?

I just want to see a good script, with a good cast attached, and then see the director's vision, costumes, art direction and production design coming to life – that's a magical feeling. It's filmmaking in its true essence – people coming together with one goal. ■

Kieron Wolfson was interviewed by Matthew Bell

COMFORT CLASSIC



BBC

Men Behaving Badly

All sitcoms have something to say about the eras they are made in, but few sum up an era so definitively as *Men Behaving Badly*, the no-holds-barred slice of 1990s lad culture created and written by Simon Nye.

Today, looking at this raucous tale of two best mates making complete, often drunken, idiots of themselves, it is tempting to dismiss Gary and Tony, played by Martin Clunes and Neil Morrissey, respectively, as disgustingly sexist bores short on social graces and big on schoolboy humour.

That would be to miss the point. Whatever you may think of their attitudes, especially their attitude to

Despite the sexual stereotypes, **Steve Clarke** still finds this exuberant series impossible to resist

women, *Men Behaving Badly* remains a very funny show. The four main characters are well drawn and there's wit aplenty. Subtle or sophisticated it isn't, but there is an innocence about the show that reflects the pre-internet age and what were, in sexual and cultural politics, perhaps more simplistic times. And Clunes and Morrissey's physical comedy remains a joy to watch.

From *The Odd Couple* to *The Young Ones*, house-share settings have always been part of film and television's armoury of ideas. What stands out in *Men Behaving Badly*, apart from their immaturity, is how much Gary and Tony enjoy each other's company. Why else would they spend so much time together, not only at home but also down the pub, where they can often be found propping up, or being propped up by, the bar.

The programme was made originally for the ITV station Thames TV, and the first series starred Harry Enfield as Gary's flatmate, Dermot. Reportedly, Enfield felt he was the weak link in the show, so Dermot was written out and he left the UK to seek his fortune overseas.

Given the chemistry between Clunes

– then largely unknown – and Morrissey this was, to say the least, a stroke of good luck. Unfortunately for producer Beryl Vertue (see her obituary on page 50), whose Hartswood Films made the show, Thames axed *Men Behaving Badly* after the second series.

She takes up the story: “We did two series for Thames TV, then ITV took over and said that if any episode got 10 million viewers, the show would stay on air. We got 7 million, which people would kill for today – and ITV pulled the plug. I felt so cross I went to the BBC, which took it, and it became a huge hit and definitely got more than 10 million viewers.”

Hapless Tony’s infatuation with Deborah (who lives in the flat above and is played by Leslie Ash) provides a lot of the storylines, as does Gary’s relationship with Dorothy (Caroline Quentin), a nurse who is much cleverer than Gary, though, frankly, that is not saying a lot.

The best approach to *Men Behaving Badly* is not to take it seriously and revel in the comedy. Re-watching some episodes, I laughed out loud when Tony’s inept attempt to light a barbecue – and, of course, impress his female guests – ends in disaster by burning down the garden fence. Perhaps it is the pair’s complete lack of machismo that makes them so endearing.

Clunes once said: “Beryl Vertue was an empowering producer: she let us have real input, let the monkeys run the zoo. And Simon Nye, the writer, was up for anything. We just showed off for each other.

“It was the best job – not a threatening or edgy show, but still cheeky and on the edge. I have a great memory of sitting in a birthing pool with Neil, farting. I don’t care if our characters were heroes or fools. People were fond of them. They still are.”

He added: “The men always lost, too – Dorothy and Deborah had the upper hand. We did *The Late Late Show* once and they tried to drag us into a war of the sexes. We just said: ‘Look at the programme – it’s not about anything!’”

That is, other than having a laugh. Or, as Nye said recently: “It was an exuberant half hour of stupidity, really, so to have to think too hard about the sexual politics of it might take away some of the joy.” Precisely. ■

Men Behaving Badly is available on Amazon Prime Video, BritBox, Virgin TV Go and Now TV.

Ear candy



Female Pilot Club

In 2018, a report by the Writers’ Guild of Great Britain revealed that women wrote just 28% of TV episodes shown between 2001 and 2016. The findings suggest the bias against

female TV writers is caused by a straightforward lack of representation. But perhaps, as Georgia Pritchett suggests in the first episode of *Female Pilot Club*, there is a concern that if there is more than one woman in the same writers’ room, “Their ovaries will start synchronising, clubbing together and forming a suicide pact.”

Comedy writers Abigail Burdess and Kay Stonham and actor Emily Chase founded the *Female Pilot Club* live shows to challenge the male dominance of TV comedy. They selected uncommitted pilot scripts written by women to be performed at a club by the cream of the comedy crop. Participants so far, have included Sarah Hadland, Jordan Stephens and Robert Webb.

For the podcast, the club founders

interview the writers of the pilots showcased. These are interspersed with clips of their biggest zingers, which are always funny and help to illustrate the points made as they discuss the craft of comedy.

Pritchett was a big get for the first episode. She is one of the UK’s most successful screenwriters. Her credits include *Veep*, *The Thick of It* and *Succession*. Her insights are brilliant, especially on the cultural differences between the UK and the US, and how they have influenced her work.

For a long time in the UK, she says, we’ve laughed at our characters and not with them. For her, it is more interesting if you endow them with wit, or at least show them compassion.

According to Pritchett, it is not just the comedy culture that differs: writers rooms in the US are noticeably more diverse than those in the UK. Hopefully, with the help of clubs such as these, the UK will follow suit. ■

Harry Bennett



This Is Going To Hurt

BBC

Doctor in distress

I squirmed in my seat when former doctor Adam Kay verbally eviscerated a heckler. He was as sharp as a surgeon's scalpel and as mean as a betrayed woman in a blues song. It hurt. Anyone attending his live shows: be warned.

His new medical drama, BBC One's *This Is Going To Hurt*, should come with a health warning. This is not because of the gore (of which there is plenty), but because one aspect of junior doctors' lives has improved since his and my time – though this, sadly, could soon regress with Brexit.

Love or hate the EU, the European Working Time Directive made our lives easier and patients safer, while formal training plans got rid of a lot of nepotism. But, like the bad guy in a horror movie, the smarmy old school tie is creeping back. Junior doctors work far fewer hours than in my and Kay's day. Today, however, they are stressed by having to do loads more in those hours, and the higher-ups need to do more on site.

British medical dramas have inevitably reflected the severe underfunding

Charlie Easmon casts a medic's eye over the acclaimed *This Is Going To Hurt* and compares it with other TV hospital dramas

and under-resourcing of the NHS. *This Is Going To Hurt* captures this perfectly. A favourite line of mine from the series is, "You losing your shit at me isn't going to suddenly magic up any more doctors." The problems are made worse by the waste, over-management and inefficiency that get brushed under the linoleum for ministerial or Royal visits. We always used to say that the Queen must think that every hospital smells of fresh paint.

This Is Going To Hurt is as different from previous medical dramas as John Osborne and the angry young men's plays were from traditional British theatre in the 1950s. Like them, Kay has irreverently shown the bare-faced truth, in this case of disillusioned doctors in

under-resourced settings. The show is far from the heroism of US medical dramas such as *ER* or *Grey's Anatomy*.

There is no George Clooney here or gorgeous, sexy female junior Dr Grey chased by an equally hot colleague more than keen to explore her anatomy.

Previous UK medical dramas, such as *Cardiac Arrest*, *Bodies*, *Casualty* or *Holby City*, show the frustrations of the medical team, but they don't expose the dirty laundry as explicitly as this show does. In the 1950s, audiences were shocked out of complacency by "kitchen sink" drama. We now, at last, have a realistic "hospital gore and guts" drama featuring worn-out anti-hero, Adam, expertly played by Ben Whishaw. If there is an RTS award or Bafta for casting directors, the person or team who chose this fine actor to humanise an otherwise unsympathetic role deserves it.

In my junior doctor years, thanks to tiredness and frustration, I became as unpleasant to some more naive juniors as Kay did. After I left traditional hospital medicine, I told colleagues, "Find me the happiest man or woman in Britain and put them in the role of junior

doctor for one month and I assure you that at the end of that period you will have a snarling beastie.” Sad but true.

The consultants are shown to be superior, condescending or so hardened that they could, without a blink, order cannon fodder out of their trenches. This dramatic tension is evident in all medical dramas and reflects reality. Once you get to the top of the tree, you have little desire to reach down to those scrambling at the bottom. Fortunately, there are delightful exceptions. One of these modelled himself on Sir Lancelot Spratt from the 1954 hit comedy *Doctor in the House* – no joke, his nickname was Bodger.

A consultant, Miss Houghton (played to perfection by Ashley McGuire) in *This Is Going To Hurt*, reminds me of the 1000cc motorbike-riding, beer-swilling, crew-cut orthopaedic surgeon of my day who could and would drink any foolish male under the table and then might join him for a bit of what Dr Grey started with. I am sure she would have uttered my other favourite line from *This Is Going To Hurt* and keep a “stiff upper labia”.

Adam’s homosexual relationship is handled sensitively and without cliché. Interestingly, some viewers were shocked by this and thought it was the BBC trying to be woke. Kay tweeted to one man that, since he did not believe the facts of his autobiography, he would happily break the news to his husband.

Many doctors have been advisers on medical dramas, but not many have been the main script writer. Among this elite few, Jed Mercurio shines bright. Twice I have had the pleasure of hearing him talk. When his *Cardiac Arrest* was first screened, I was excited to see a drama that realistically showed the adrenaline rush as you ran, jolted from sleep, to try to save a life with a team equally exhausted.

In *Bodies*, he showed the reality that technical competence has nothing to do with likeability. The braggart surgeon to whom you would give a wide space in the bar is exactly the person you need while asleep under anaesthetic to expertly fix your organs or remove them. The affable but incompetent decent chap or chapess may leave swabs inside your cavities or the wrong connections to your plumbing.

We see the true urgency of medical emergencies in *This Is Going To Hurt*, and the randomness of junior doctors performing procedures of which they have little experience – those old

chestnuts, “See one, teach one, do one”, and “How else are they going to learn?” As the EU told us: training, that is how.

Class features prominently in the drama. Kay rebels despite his own posh background. He is appalled at the luxurious but dangerously inefficient private sector. This, though, is the reality of the situation: the best place for a medical emergency is the NHS. When serious things go wrong in its palatial clinics, the private sector is entirely reliant on the NHS.



Race and overt racism feature a lot in *This Is Going To Hurt*. Medical dramas tend to be good for actors of colour because they can play any part of the medical or administrative system. They appear to have got the balance right in this series.

Bus drivers do not generally go on bus or coach holidays. Practising doctors like me often avoid medical dramas. To write this, I watched and enjoyed all of *This Is Going To Hurt* and revisited other medical dramas.

To emphasise, *This Is Going To Hurt* gets many things right about life in the NHS before the improvement in junior doctors’ hours. I am sure many aspects are still problematic because of under-resourcing, which will not have been helped by the pandemic.

One of the sadder things about

watching the show is that the recent report on obstetric and gynaecology services at the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust confirmed that underfunding and poor staffing levels contributed to increased baby deaths.

Our free health service has its flaws, from overbooked outpatients to lack of adequate support for junior doctors and nurses.

British medical dramas can juxtapose the jeopardy caused by worn-out staff and poor resourcing with the human stories that provide endless

fuel for a public for whom health is a number one topic of conversation. Listen in at any bus stop.

US medical dramas, based on a well-funded private service, can go big on technology and resources, so tension has to come from the relationships between characters. However, I am not aware of a US drama that shows the reality of the awful fact that the main cause of personal bankruptcy in the USA is medical bills.

My only criticism of *This Is Going To Hurt* is that I don’t remember any of us taking personal calls while we were working, but goodness knows what is happening with smartphones on the not-so-smart wards today. ■

Dr Charlie Easmon is medical director of Your Excellent Health Service.

The 10 percenters cross the channel



From left: Prasanna Puwanarajah, Maggie Steed, Jack Davenport and Lydia Leonard in *Ten Percent*

Amazon Prime Video

It's easy to just take the piss out of showbusiness. In many ways, it's laughable: we're not saving lives, it's a distraction, we're like shadow puppets on a cave wall," says Jack Davenport (*This Life, Coupling*), star of *Ten Percent*. "But John Morton's evocation of the world of showbusiness in the UK in the year 2022 shows tenderness. These are real people with real vulnerabilities."

That's encouraging; as a comedy-drama series that probes the dynamics of the entertainment industry as seen through the prism of a talent agency, we're certain to have a vested interest in how the players are portrayed in *Ten Percent*.

Airing on Amazon Prime Video, the production is the UK version of *Call My Agent!*, the Emmy-winning French series that became a global success on Netflix during lockdown. It follows four top agents as they imperfectly tussle with the business, talent and personal aspects of their lives.

How do you transfer the very French global hit *Call My Agent!* from Paris to London? Shilpa Ganatra explains

Alongside are a supporting cast of assistants who drop any semblance of work-life balance in favour of the bright lights of showbusiness – plus a revolving cast of famous faces, around whom the weekly story revolves.

Reworking a known and successful premise is a strategy that has delivered mixed results. At its best, it can match or emulate the original, as with *The Office* and *What We Do in the Shadows*. But it often loses the magic of the original. Are we able to refer to the US version of *Kath & Kim* as a car crash yet?

Call My Agent! is transferable enough that the format has already been

adapted in territories as far-ranging as Turkey, India and Malaysia, allowing each to inject their own cultural specificities and cameos.

In 2019, Headline Pictures and Bron Studios brought in John Morton as the showrunner of the UK version. He is an expert in teasing out the idiosyncrasies of British culture, as shown in *People Like Us*, *Twenty Twelve* and *W1A*.

"Looking at it objectively, I think that's what I was hired to do," he says. "One of the things that's so beguiling about the French show is that it's so French, and if you're not French, that's so attractive. Paris looks fantastic, the French look fantastic. But London and the UK are different. London's much more chaotic and diverse in every way, architecturally and ethnically."

Once Morton was on board, Amazon Studios soon joined – even though, with *Call My Agent!* being a Netflix series, one might have expected Netflix to snap it up. Thomas Drachkovitch, Amazon Studios' development

executive for UK originals, says: “I can’t speak to people’s expectations, but I know that [with] the package of John, the producers and the talent in front of and behind the screen, it was more of an issue of how could you

Having already seen *Call My Agent!*, Morton watched it again with a professional eye. “And then I put it away,” he says. “I’ve not been measuring our stories against the French. We had a writing room and we cherry-picked

character, Stella – a veteran at the agency – is about who is best placed to run the show.

Joining Davenport on screen is a multitude of talent, established (the aforementioned Steed and Rebecca Humphries) and emerging, such as Hiftu Quasem, who plays an assistant and Jonathan’s secret daughter.

“The rough palette of the French show is visible. Roughly where people are in their lives and the look of the main characters are similar,” says Morton. “Like the character who was played by Camille Cottin in *Call My Agent!* is also someone who is gay in our show. We’ve done that because that’s a really interesting component to have. But what we do with her story on our show is very different to how it plays out in the French series.”

Then, there is the revolving door of guest stars. *Ten Percent* boasts the likes of Dominic West, Helena Bonham Carter and David Oyelowo, which is where it all went a bit meta.

“Most of our guests, weirdly, I’ve either worked with before or have known quite well through the years,” says Davenport.

“I’ve done most things in rooms full of cameras at this point, but I’ve never had the experience of having scene partners who are playing themselves and I’m not, but I know them personally. It was quite vertiginous in a way. For a second, it was like seeing things through the wrong end of a telescope.”

The series was filmed under Covid-19 protocols, which added to the complexity of matching the schedules of in-demand guest actors and *Ten Percent*’s own schedule, but Davenport says the cast was united around Morton’s vision. “I’m glad it’s turned out as good as it felt when we were doing it. I’ve learned over the years to be quite suspicious of that feeling because this business will only ever break your heart, but it felt really good in the room,” he says.

As *Call My Agent!* reaches its fifth and final season, the way is paved for *Ten Percent* to continue into a second season. Will that happen?

“I won’t get into the process,” says Drachkovitch. “But I will say, watch this space.” ■



Call My Agent!

Netflix

say no to it. We absolutely wanted it.

“Our commissioning goal is to be hyper-local, to commission content that our customers in the UK are going to love. So, with *Ten Percent*, we have a great show with a proven track record, but set in London, with John’s unique British writing and humour, and the biggest actors in the market here. It was an absolute perfect fit for what we’re after. I had the best and probably easiest job ever working with John, Bron, Headline and the entire cast.”

When it came to reworking the original, you can clock how Morton balances that line between respect for the French show and works to find a different voice for the British one. In addition to the haggles and deals of the screen industry, he zeroes in on the importance of the West End and the UK’s relationship with the US entertainment industry. This is crucial because *Ten Percent* acts as the mainstream adaptation for the US, as well as other English-speaking territories.

our way through things that might map on to our world. The first episode is the one that follows the French show most closely but after that, you will find further and further divergence.”

An example is Davenport’s character, Jonathan, a main agent at fictional

‘CALL MY AGENT! HAS ALREADY BEEN ADAPTED IN TURKEY, INDIA AND MALAYSIA’

agency Nightingale Hart. In the UK version, he is also the son of the agency’s recently deceased owner, adding another layer to the interplay. It means that, from the end of the first episode, the subtext of conversations between Jonathan, and Maggie Steed’s

From left:
Sophia Di Martino,
Tom Hiddleston
and Michael Waldron

Paul Hampartsoumian

A starry RTS event heard how the Marvel film character was adapted for a high-end TV series on Disney+

How Disney gave new lives to Loki

Tom Hiddleston joined co-star Sophia Di Martino, series writer and executive producer Michael Waldron and director Kate Herron at a sold-out RTS event to share insights into their big-ticket Disney+ show *Loki*.

They discussed, among other things, the pressures of conjuring high-end TV for a streaming behemoth, pushing the envelope on content based on a character drawn from a blockbuster film franchise – and keeping legions of loyal fans happy.

Hiddleston, who has been playing Loki for more than a decade in the Marvel Cinematic Universe feature films, revealed how he was presented with the idea for a TV series spin-off four years ago, after *Avengers: Endgame*. “Michael [Waldron] and I were having breakfast a couple of years ago [after

he’d] written the first pilot. We found ourselves talking about psychoanalytic theory and repetition compulsion and [the question of] whether you can ever change,” recalled Hiddleston, also an executive producer on *Loki*. “Is it possible for people to change? Even if you do, will people accept that you’ve changed? Is it possible to know yourself entirely?”

Loki features a variant of Hiddleston’s mischief-making Norse god in a series that is set after the events of the *Avengers: Endgame* movie.

Over six episodes of between 40 and 50 minutes, the show follows Loki as he is arrested by the Time Variance Authority (TVA) for creating a “branched timeline”, his subsequent investigation and his fights for variants, fates and futures.

Owen Wilson plays TVA agent Mobius. “Owen came on board and we realised we were in a police detective

thriller,” said Hiddleston. “When I was cast as Loki, however many years ago, I never thought of this character as a detective. But he is here.”

With its elements of Franz Kafka’s *The Trial*, George Orwell’s *1984* and the otherworldliness of sci-fi, time travel and apocalypse survival tales, *Loki* draws on literary and movie traditions, and on mythology. It even dares to pull off Hiddleston’s horns and armour, putting him in plain jumpsuits and, later, a collar and skinny tie.

To prepare, Hiddleston, who has a double first in classics, re-read *The Trial* and *1984* and watched Michael Radford’s feature adaptation of Orwell’s novel starring Richard Burton and John Hurt. He also reminded himself of the advice of Kenneth Branagh (with whom he made *Thor* in 2011) to base Loki on a cocktail of Shakespearean characters.

“It was like making three Marvel

movies because we were filming so many hours of content at the same time,” said Herron, whose previous credits include *Sex Education* for Netflix. “I just didn’t think about it in terms of the massive scale, and just tried to tackle it day by day because it was such a mammoth task to get it done.”

Waldron said his work on cult adult animation *Rick and Morty* was helpful when it came to *Loki*, because he gained experience of “introducing big sci-fi concepts and explaining them to the audience.... We got to take a villain

could do walking, talking heads up and down the corridors.” A whole town set was built in a circular plan from what looked like a “load of white polystyrene” during the day but, because it was daubed with UV and glow-in-the-dark paint, “came alive as soon as a night shoot started,” said Di Martino. Small details had a big impact.

UK-based Di Martino gave birth weeks before she embarked on the shoot, which required her to relocate (with her family, including a nursing baby) across the Atlantic. She worried

co-executive producer Kevin R Wright and Marvel Studios chief Kevin Feige to keep it all on track.

The series was scheduled to film for 18 weeks in Atlanta, Georgia, from January 2020. Six weeks in, production was shut down because of Covid and resumed in September 2020, finishing in December that year. During the shutdown, Waldron and his writing team “had time to refine” the two final episodes. This period also gave Herron time in edit to note what was clicking and working on screen.



Sophia Di Martino and Tom Hiddleston in *Loki*

Disney+

from an action movie franchise and have these dialogue-heavy scenes that feel like prestige television.” But Waldron, who has also penned the upcoming feature *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* for Marvel, noted, “The harder, more human stuff is what you’ve got to work at, and that’s what makes it great.”

No expense was spared for *Loki*, reportedly bankrolled to feature-film levels. Production designer Kasra Farahani built oppressive, brutalist architecturally inspired sets with roofs to make the rooms smaller, and created corridors to film in.

“We were the envy of lots of the other Marvel projects because we had ceilings. These very oppressive ceilings are very unusual, because, normally, that’s where the lights are, and you can frame the ceiling,” noted Herron. “I love a long take and was thrilled we

about a potentially tricky conversation with costume designer Christine Wada when she arrived. Wada, however, allayed her fears and designed a costume with a lot of Velcro and zips so it was practical and comfortable for a new mother and a character who is “a brawler and a survivor who has been through hell and back and survived apocalypses,” said Di Martino. “I could pump and breast feed, we just made the costume super practical, and I didn’t have to take it all off to go to the loo.”

Herron said she noticed on set that Hiddleston danced around a lot – “he’s very musical” – and used Natalie Holt’s score to help choreograph some of the longer scenes.

Whenever there was any doubt about whether details of the storyline were consistent with events elsewhere in the Marvel multiverse, Waldron, Hiddleston and Herron relied on

The quarantine-bubbled cast and director held “watch parties”, which included James Cameron’s *Titanic*, which added to the camaraderie. They also helped to alleviate the pressures of being quarantined and working on such a high-profile standalone show.

“For those of us in the engine room, when it comes to those pressures, you just keep going at a pace that feels manageable, so that things are made and considered and created with integrity,” said Hiddleston. “That’s the way Kevin [Feige] runs Marvel Studios. He is very, very careful about the detail, like any creative, and doesn’t rush it.” ■

Report by Stuart Kemp. The RTS members event ‘Loki: Behind the scenes’ was held on 2 March at Kings Place, London, and was hosted by film critic and broadcaster Rhianna Dhillon.

A dark take on motherhood

A new Scandi noir usurps the convention that mums should be portrayed as loving and nurturing

Walter Presents' latest Scandi noir puts women, specifically mothers, at the centre of its dark and disturbing drama. In *Snow Angels* (*Snöänglar*), the lives of three women – a mother, policewoman and a paediatric nurse – become intertwined following the disappearance of a five-week-old boy, Lucas, shortly before Christmas in a snow-covered suburb of Stockholm.

Series creator Mette Heeno explained that she had wanted to write a show about “motherhood with a lot of female leads”. The question she asked herself as a writer was: “[As a mother,] ‘What is the worst thing that could happen to you?’ That would be to wake up one morning and realise your child has gone. And then, afterwards, falling under suspicion that maybe you are involved with the disappearance of your own child.”

Heeno, speaking via a video link from Copenhagen, was in conversation with Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen, professor of Scandinavian and comparative literature at University College London, following the screening of episode 1 of *Snow Angels* in the Regent Street Cinema. Joining them at the RTS London event were the director, Anna Zackrisson, in person on the cinema stage, and the lead actor, Josefin Asplund, from Stockholm.

The series, funded by multiple producers from across Scandinavia, has already aired to critical acclaim in the region, and is on Walter Presents via All 4 from 11 March. The first episode also airs on Channel 4 on 13 March.

As you would expect from a Scandi drama, the characters are complex and flawed; the story more dark than light.

As sole writer, it took Heeno two to three years to pen the scripts. When Zackrisson came on board, Heeno had



Channel 4

Snow Angels

written three episodes and the final three were at the synopsis stage.

The director said: “When I read the first episode, my instant thought was, ‘Who the fuck are these people? They are so weird.’ That was such an amazing feeling because very often [in drama] you are supposed to immediately understand everything.”

While preparing for the series, Zackrisson recalled reading a book, *Regretting Motherhood*, while in a café: “I could feel people watching and judging me... it’s such an amazingly strong taboo being a mum and not being super-nurturing or great at it.”

Heeno agreed: “It’s one of the last taboos, regretting your child or not being the mother you want to be... you don’t normally see [this theme] in crime stories; normally, they’re in quirky comedies, where mothers are trying to do their best and failing.

“We tried to do it differently, going really dark with the theme and making all the characters surrounding the [main] story also about motherhood – the grandmother who was not the best mother, the child nurse who doesn’t have children, the policewoman who cannot have children – and then putting them into a crime story.”

Zackrisson said that, by adopting the crime genre, “You put the characters very close to danger... and that makes it more interesting – you can push the characters... Who are they? What are they capable of?”

Asplund plays Lucas’s struggling mother, Jenni, who, having taken sleeping pills on the night of her son’s disappearance, doesn’t remember anything about it.

Discussing her preparation for the role, Asplund said: “I don’t have kids myself so that was the biggest challenge – to imagine what it would feel like to lose a baby. I did a lot of research and listened to a lot of podcasts.

“I grew up in a quite [poor] area in Stockholm... Both [Lucas’s father] Salle and Jenni appeared in my mind from my childhood – my friends’ parents who struggled with drugs and alcohol... working really hard to keep it together.

“I really wanted to do this because of the complexity of the characters – it’s so much more challenging and fun as an actor to do these kinds of characters and tell these stories.”

Heeno had pitched the idea to a room of female executives, which she felt was critical in getting the project commissioned and remaining true to

her vision. “When I said I wanted to do a story about motherhood with three female leads who are very complex, and that it was very dark and doesn’t give you that much hope, these women were cheering,” she recalled.

“I’m not sure how it would [have gone] if there had been four men in that room. Maybe it would have been the same show, but I’m not sure.”

Asplund added: “For this TV show, I can’t even imagine having a guy as a director; there was a lot about my body, my boobs, not being able to breastfeed correctly. I had so many questions to

Heeno was sent the dailies and had to do any rewrites at a distance. “It was really depressing,” she said. “Normally, I’m on set a lot more and in the edit and involved in the process.

“But this is a mini-series; it doesn’t go on for ever and we’re not planning a second season. And, since Anna [directed] all the episodes, I feel like we created this together and that I didn’t have to be showrunning like I would normally do on a show. But I would, of course, have loved to be there a lot more than I was.”

What should viewers expect from



Josefin Asplund in *Snow Angels*

Channel 4

Anna, like, ‘How does it feel to be pregnant?’ ‘How does it feel having sex while pregnant?’ I don’t know if I could have been completely comfortable with a man, or at least not as open.”

Snow Angels was filmed in Sweden and Denmark during the pandemic. “We just kept on shooting... there’s always a hassle filming and for me as a director there were days when we just had to do less, but that can be a positive thing,” recalled Zackrisson.

“There was an adrenaline push as well because you knew that maybe tomorrow [the authorities] were going to say, ‘You can’t shoot any more.’”

the six-part series? Heeno offered a taster: “The next episodes take you back to before Lucas was born and you peel all the [layers] off the characters and you get to know them really well. Hopefully, during these episodes, you will shift your perspective on the characters.” ■

Report by Matthew Bell. The RTS London event was held on 22 February at the Regent Street Cinema in collaboration with UCL’s Department of Scandinavian Studies and the Embassy of Sweden. Damien Ashton-Wellman and Philip Barnes were the producers.



Graham Norton's crime novel, *Holding*, is about to air on ITV. Caroline Frost talks to him and other members of the creative team

‘It’s acerbic, followed by a hug’

“It was very clear I didn’t want to do the adaptation. I’d had my time with these characters, and it was time to hand them over.” Graham Norton is quick to explain why he was thrilled to let someone else bring to screen his 2016 bestselling crime novel, *Holding*. It is the story of a murder in a rural Irish community where everyone, it seems, has secrets that they have been holding on to. “I thought I’d feel weird, but I’ve loved watching the direction the characters have gone in, and the way the world has opened up and got larger. I’ve really enjoyed it.”

The screenwriting fell instead to his

friend Dominic Treadwell-Collins, a former *EastEnders* executive producer who runs Happy Prince (part of ITV Studios), which is making the show. With *Holding*, Treadwell-Collins is flexing other muscles, too: it’s his own screenwriting debut.

“I’ve always loved a whodunnit, and this book was so brilliant and set in an area I knew. I drove out to Ireland and kind of auditioned for Graham,” he says. That was a few years ago. “Then,” he says, “I tried different people adapting it and my uncle said: ‘You should do this yourself.’”

He set to work alongside co-producer and writer Karen Cogan (both are

executive producers here, along with Norton), and it was she who persuaded him to put more of his own history into the script, to make it more personal.

“My dad was from West Cork, and he died very suddenly in an accident when I was 15,” says Treadwell-Collins. “It affected my family massively in good ways and bad ways, and I felt that now was the time to put that in the show, to talk about grief, about how holding on to grief can be so detrimental for you.”

“The flip side is, I was living on the farm my dad grew up on, and on the first day of filming, I walked up to my dad’s best friend’s farm where we were shooting. It felt a bit cathartic for me,

quite raw and painful, but I think the best things are.”

Given permission by Norton to do whatever he liked with the story, Treadwell-Collins has kept the book’s central narrative, but has expanded other characters, including the Ross sisters, living together uncomfortably on the farm where a body is soon discovered – a shift that delights the author. “Mine were more constrained and they’ve been fully developed. Each one of them could have their own show,” Norton says. “One of the things I’ve really enjoyed is, my book is a genre book, it’s cosy crime, and what Karen and Dominic have done is make a TV show unlike other shows. The feel is entirely its own and that’s hard to do.”

For Cogan, such characterisation was a crucial aspect of the piece. “Telly eats story, you need plot, plot, plot, but the joy of this book was the people, so it was important to us that we spent time with them in their smaller moments, in kitchens, in bedrooms, in private moments that you don’t always get the luxury of in telly. They were really important to us.”

Key to all this was the team’s choice of director. Enter Kathy Burke, who, Treadwell-Collins explains, “understands grief and loss”, but also the value of community, on and off screen. He says admiringly: “She took it to a whole new level with her vision, her punkiness that she brings, and her gathering together of the cast and crew.

“On the second week, a crew member came up to me and said, ‘I’ve never been on a set where the director has known everyone’s name.’ And I think that all comes out on screen.”

Burke, by her own admission, feels more at home directing in the theatre, but during lockdown had enjoyed listening to the audiobook of Norton reading *Holding* . “Then, my manager got in touch and told me Dominic wanted me to have a look at a TV project, and it turned out to be the same book.”

Burke was equally lured by the prospect of expanding the roles of the Ross sisters and other women. “He’s made them three-dimensional, which is so rare,” she says. The pedigree of the cast didn’t hurt, either, as it includes some of Ireland’s most beloved actors, including Siobhán McSweeney (Sister Michael in *Derry Girls*), Conleth Hill (*Game of Thrones*), Brenda Fricker (who won an Oscar for her role in *My Left Foot*) and Pauline McLynn (*Father Ted* ’s scene-stealing Mrs Doyle).

“People such as Siobhán McSweeney and Conleth Hill, they’re usually the supporting actors people love, but they’re never the leads – but, with *Holding* , it’s happened,” says Burke happily. “I was so chuffed that these were the people Karen and Dominic wanted from the off.”

For Hill, the role of PJ, a weary local policeman propelled unwillingly into action, is, by his own admission, the best he has ever read. “He’s holding things, too, he doesn’t feel like he really belongs, never felt part of the community,” says Hill. “He’s real and flawed and human.”

Alongside him for much of the show is Linus, a younger but more senior officer, played by Clinton Liberty. As the real outsider to the village, Linus is

it never happened,” says Treadwell-Collins. For the Tobermory-esque rich colour palette of the high street – PJ’s first call-out in the show is when one resident has the temerity to paint his shopfront brown – Cogan explains that, while no buildings were constructed, “We worked very hard with our art department.”

The colours are key to the look of the piece, but Burke admits she struggled initially to find them and translate them to screen. “I was looking at paintings from Ireland, and they were all green with a red pillar box,” she says. “Then, I came across paintings by the artist Katherine Boucher Beug, sent them to Karen and Dominic and said, ‘This is the colour palette. I’ve found it!’”

The tone of the show is rich, too, and



the viewer’s way into this tightknit community. His evolving partnership with PJ is also a joy to behold.

“They both have such different ways of operating,” laughs Liberty. “Linus is headstrong, PJ is coasting and enjoying trying not to do too much. That said, throughout the show, I really feel that Linus learns to take a step back and not always go by the book. And PJ learns to have more confidence in himself and take the initiative.”

Arguably, the biggest character on-screen is Norton’s fictional village of Duneen, filmed largely in two locations in West Cork.

“We looked at a few different towns, and the one we ended up using was, in real life, really busy. We kept being told the traffic would be diverted, but

shifts unexpectedly from sinister and brooding to whimsical and comedic. Cogan references the Coen Brothers’ work and other small-town dramas, such as the multiple Emmy award-winner *Olive Kitteridge* , but also credits Norton’s original work. “A huge amount of that is Graham, his warmth but not being afraid of the darkness. It’s acerbic, followed by a hug.”

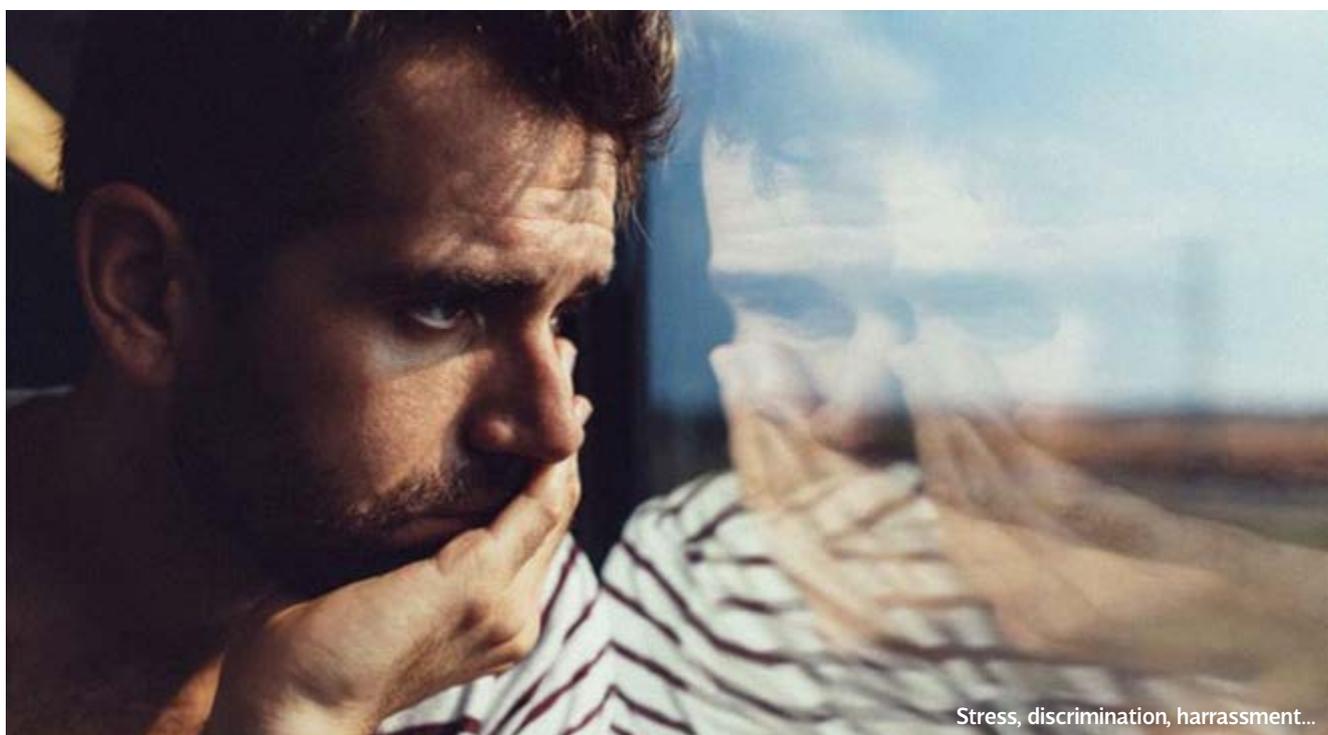
Of course, *Holding* , like Norton himself, is essentially Irish. Indeed, he says the only note he ever gave was when he felt things had become “too Irish”. Norton explains: “I was saying, ‘You have Irish actors, you’re filming in West Cork, it’s Irish enough. We get it.’” ■

Holding will air in four parts on ITV from 14 March.

MENTAL HEALTH IN THE TV INDUSTRY:

New commitment to tackling the crisis...

...But there are still profound problems, according to a new report discussed by the RTS



Stress, discrimination, harassment...

The Film and TV charity has just published *Looking Glass '21*, a follow-up to its 2019 research that exposed a mental health crisis in the film, TV and cinema industry. The RTS invited the charity's CEO, Alex Pumfrey, to discuss the latest findings with other industry professionals, including Philippa Childs, head of Bectu, Lucinda Hicks, CEO of independent production company Banijay, which includes more than 24 labels, and Alicia Dalrymple, junior production manager at Dragonfly and a Channel 4 Production Scheme alumna. The event was moderated by Conor Dignam, CEO of Media Business Insight.

Looking Glass '21 surveyed 2,000 people

working across the whole field of production. Pumfrey revealed some headline findings. First, she said there were grounds for optimism, if only because mental health scores had not changed greatly since 2019 – an achievement in itself, given the challenges of the pandemic. “There is a real sense that mental health is now firmly on the industry’s agenda, and an emerging belief that things can and will change,” she said.

However, she also noted widespread concern that the industry needed not just to talk, but to put in place real structures of support.

Then, the bad news: only 32% of the respondents said they felt they had good or very good mental health, and more than half reported experiences

of bullying, harassment and discrimination within the industry.

Four out of 10 of those in black, Asian or ethnic minority groups said they had suffered from one of these – all experiences, Pumfrey pointed out, that have a strong correlation with poor mental health and wellbeing.

Just 10% felt that reporting issues had become easier or more effective; 10% felt that the industry overall was a healthy place to work; 78% said work intensity was having a negative impact on their mental health; and 65% said they had considered leaving the industry over the past year due to these concerns (including an even more alarming 74% of disabled respondents).

Of course, the past two years of

Covid chaos have not been easy on anyone. Alicia Dalrymple said, "Covid added an additional work layer: we have to abide by government protocols, services protocols, and that additional layer translates into an extra five hours of work a week. It's understandable that it has added more pressure on crew, but it's also made production a bit more isolating. Morale can go down with wellbeing. You have to stay in your cohort, and you're not mixing with anyone."

Banijay's Lucinda Hicks agreed that it had been tough, adding, "Production can feel more restrictive than wider society, with a sense of unjustified bureaucracy and dictatorial standards. We all know why they're there, but it's really hard when you have other people outside going about their business, and you're stuck in a production bubble."

One problem that hasn't gone away is the powerlessness felt by freelancers in what is such a contract-led industry. Bectu's Philippa Childs called it "a structural problem". She explained: "Having power around your working environment is hugely important for mental health. The project nature of the industry does lend itself to long hours, people feeling they have no control on a day-to-day basis, and people feeling vulnerable about reporting in a freelance environment."

On the plus side, she mentioned the "good collaboration across the industry to put mechanisms in place and sign-post people to services". She laughed and added: "I would say, join the union, obviously. Good work is going on with wellbeing facilitators, and all the resources of the Film and TV Charity, including its helpline, but there is clearly still an awful lot of work to do."

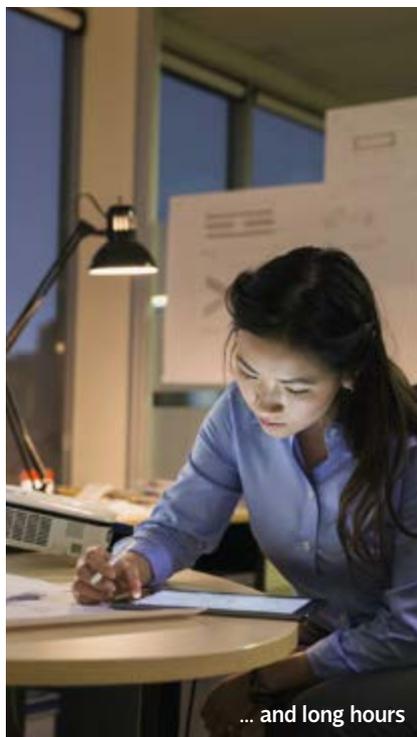
Hicks pointed out that, for some people, freelancing brought a lot of benefits, which they really liked. "It's horses for courses," she said. "We can offer long-term contracts because the scale of our group means we can move people around, but it doesn't appeal to everyone."

Addressing the wider topic of reporting issues, Hicks highlighted the importance of giving clear outlines at the start of any project. "What we can provide is kick-off meetings, where we emphasise expectations, the importance of right behaviour, explain routes for raising issues, access to HR or a third party. But I realise they are still strangers to freelancers starting on a project. It's good to encourage things to be tackled

at a lower level. The escalation process, though necessary, can be intimidating."

On the issue of diversity and inclusion, Dalrymple felt that some people in ethnic minority groups "feel like they're there to tick boxes". Feelings of being discriminated against, harassed, bullied and stressed were heightened for those in minority groups.

She spoke highly of the Channel 4 Production Scheme but recalled how, after moving to a new company, "I wasn't that open about my mental health, so that limited me." She praised the growing number of accessibility co-ordinators employed on projects. "It's a brand-new role, but it helps ease people in, makes the environment



Getty Images

more comfortable and open."

Hicks added her voice to those insisting that solutions have to be found: "Broadcasters are making it a commercial priority to have diverse cast and crew. You can't ignore it."

Another challenge highlighted by the survey is that of the long weeks worked by production staff at all levels. While lockdown proved that flexible hours and remote working need not hinder production, production industry employees still work an average of 10 hours a day, compared with the national average of 7.2 hours. Childs said: "Two groups we're losing talent from are women and people who become a parent."

Hicks agreed, adding, "Everyone

expects it to work now. It's going to be down to individual teams to work out how it works best for them. Flexibility is key, and it's needed on both sides."

Despite all the bad headlines and the procedures already put in place, the figures for bullying and harassment remain worryingly high (see page 26). Pumfrey believed the problem to be "cultural and operational". She said: "There isn't one single thing that's going to solve it. We see in the media the most egregious cases, but it can exist on an everyday basis, grind people down and make them miserable."

For Dalrymple, it was about holding people accountable, and making workers feel comfortable about coming forward: "People need to know they can go to their line manager. We have to trust in the process, which is easier said than done."

With so many freelancers, especially, fearing for their job and other consequences if they report any bad behaviour, Childs agreed that this was "a real challenge for the industry. We have to put in place policies and processes so that people feel supported. At the moment, they don't and it's a huge contributor to poor mental health."

The panellists agreed that all these factors come into play when looking at those high figures of people leaving the industry. The charity's previous report highlighted the same problem – what Pumfrey called "the revolving door". She said: "The industry is spending a lot of money on talent attraction, but if you don't support those people, you risk that investment and those people disappearing. We need to discover who is it who's leaving, and for what reasons."

Childs summed up the discussion well: "Tensions will always exist between budgets, schedules and what happens in production. People want to work for companies that treat them well, give them flexibility and support them in their mental health. It's got to be in the industry's interest to turn this situation around." ■

■ Read the report at: bit.ly/charity-report

■ Find freelancer wellbeing support at: bit.ly/charity-freelance

Report by Caroline Frost. 'Mental health in the film and TV industry after Covid' was an RTS event held on 3 March. The producers were Tessa Matchett, Sarah Booth and Mike Hird from the Film and TV Charity.



How to call out the bullies

Harassment, bullying and discrimination would appear as endemic to TV production as flair, creativity and honest toil. It is a freelance industry that, to its shame, all too often takes advantage of its workers during long, stressful days on set. If a manager oversteps the mark and starts to harass and bully, what can a freelancer do? It often feels as if the choice is between grinning and bearing it or quitting.

Speaking at an RTS Midlands event, “Toxic TV: How to call out bullying”, director Delyth Thomas put the problem succinctly: “It is very problematic if you are a freelancer, because you’re financially vulnerable [which means] you live or die by your reputation. It’s difficult to whistleblow and maintain a career.”

TV’s vast freelance army, though, does have rights, explained Birmingham-based employment lawyer Eileen

An RTS Midlands event provided advice to workers who have experienced bullying on set or in the studio

Schofield. “There is a misconception that they are not protected,” she said, but the protection freelancers receive under the Equality Act 2010 is the same as for employees. “They have every right to pursue any formal grievance against [someone] they feel has bullied, harassed or victimised them in any way.”

Thomas, whose directing credits include *Vera*, *Silent Witness* and *The Story of Tracy Beaker*, is a passionate advocate for a fair and inclusive industry, and is one of the founders, with Jules Hussey and Kate Wilson, of the new Call it! app (www.callitapp.org).

The idea came out of a conversation Thomas had with a young actor who had experienced bullying but felt powerless to do anything about it. She said: “I wanted to do something to [allow people] to speak out but without fear of reprisal.”

When a production company signs up to Call it!, its workers can record their daily treatment, anonymously, via a traffic-light system, and make a note of any incidents of workplace bullying or harassment. The app is in its pilot phase but is expected to launch at the end of this month.

Thomas said: “It gives every single person on a show a voice and the chance to be heard, without being named.”

Bafta’s director of learning and new talent, Tim Hunter, has overseen new Bafta and BFI measures to tackle bullying, harassment and racism. These include an “action list”, setting out employers’ responsibilities.

But do employees also have a moral responsibility to speak out against any harassment or bullying they witness in the workplace? "It's easier said than done to call out other people's behaviour," admitted Hunter. He recommended taking a measured approach, using a form of words such as, "You didn't have to speak in that way." He added: "Try and do it in a sympathetic way: 'Are you stressed? Is something going on?' [This] will set the tone that a different culture is expected on set."

Hunter revealed that the BFI is piloting safeguarding officers on some productions and "creating a job description, which will be shared with the industry.... We want broadcasters and funders to agree to include that cost [in the budget]."

"But productions that are smaller... need a solution that works for them, so it could be an HR organisation on a retainer, or a relationship with another production company of a similar size."

It should be in the interest of a production company to take this seriously, both from a moral and a financial standpoint. If an indie fails to deal with harassment or bullying, it – and, potentially, the person doing the bullying – could be hit with significant penalties by an employment tribunal.

"Awards can be pretty high... sometimes from £10,000 to £50,000 for an injury to feelings... so prevention is better than cure," argued Schofield. "Let's get people trained up, let's get people understanding what the boundaries are so there is an opportunity to raise [bullying] at an early stage. Nip it in the bud... so it doesn't escalate and become a big issue."

She continued: "If you have employees, then you have to have HR expertise because you have huge statutory obligations when you're employing people, not least to get the right contracts in place to start with... and then [to offer] the day-to-day support for employees."

However, Thomas pointed out the scale of the challenge: "I've had two HR meetings in my whole career. There is a huge amount of work to be done by the industry for us, as freelancers, to perceive HR as being anything other than the people who protect the company and not us." ■

Report by Matthew Bell. The RTS Midlands event, 'Toxic TV: How to call out bullying', was held on 18 February and chaired by TV producer Perjeet Aujla.



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Bullying and harassment – the law

Is there a difference between bullying and harassment?

The Anti-Bullying Alliance defines bullying as 'repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It can happen face to face or online.'

Harassment, however, explained employment lawyer Eileen Schofield, 'is aligned to a protected characteristic under the Equality Act... gender, race, disability, sexual orientation and religion...'

'Bullying and harassment are almost interchangeable, but the legal impact is different... It is a very subjective test: while one person may feel a comment or action is acceptable... it might not be to another person... It's a very complicated subject [with] lots of case law.'

'One person's banter is another person's harassment,' added director Delyth Thomas. 'It is a tricky area: there are some things that are clear cut and some things that are not.'

How widespread is the problem?

According to the report *Looking Glass 2021: Mental health in the film and TV industry after Covid*, published last month by The Film and TV Charity, '57% of respondents had experienced bullying, sexual harassment, racial harassment or discrimination, or other forms of harassment or discrimination in the past year'. In total, 39% of black, Asian and minority ethnic respondents had 'experienced racial harassment or discrimination... which had caused 43% of them to consider leaving the industry. Only 10% of respondents agreed that the industry is a mentally healthy place to work.'

How do you prove bullying and/or harassment?

'Make a record of those incidents... a date and a time is really helpful... [as] is any documentary evidence, such as emails that are inappropriate... Identify the people around you when the [bullying] happened... if you want to take formal action such as a grievance,' said Schofield.

Where to go for help

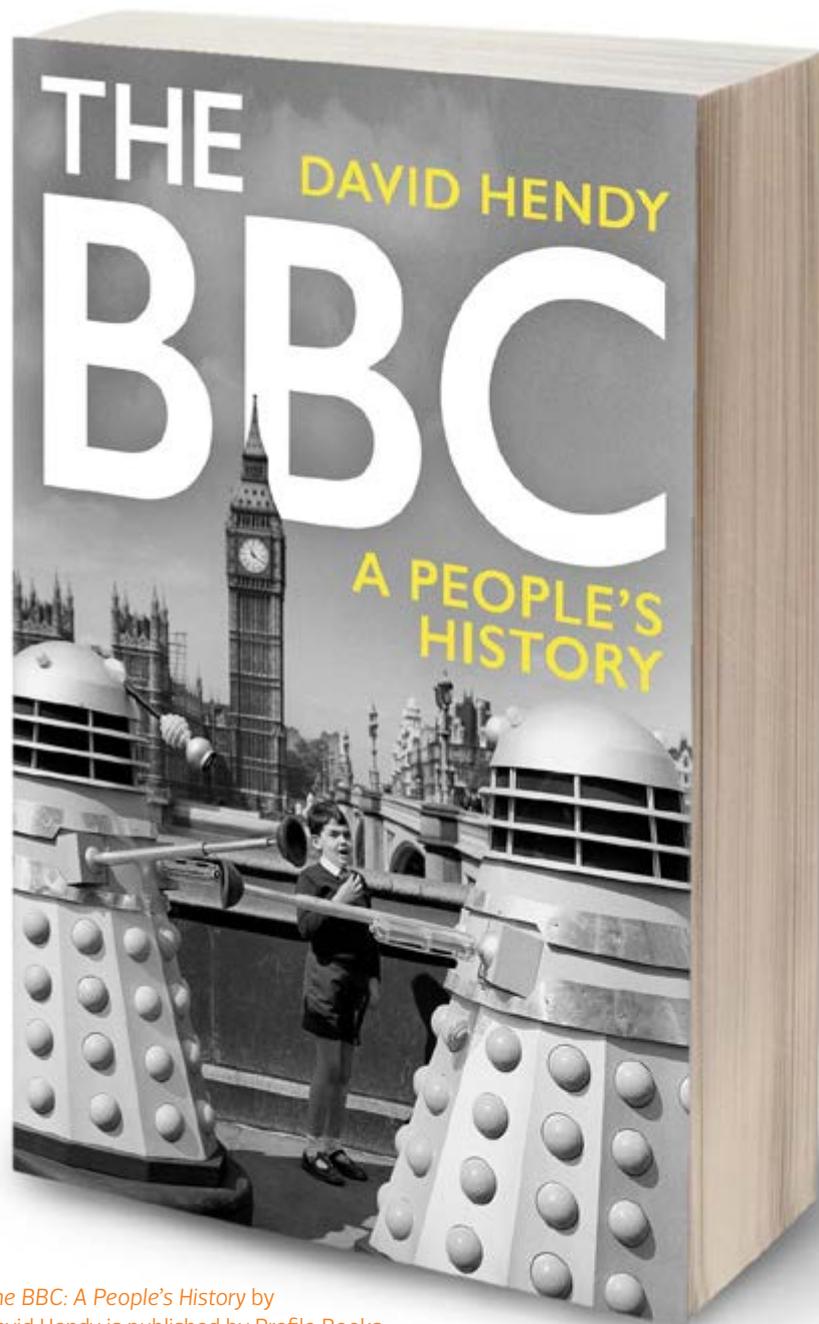
The Film and TV Charity has guidance on how to record bullying (at app.talkspot.com/flows) and a 24/7 support line (0800 054 0000).

The BFI has produced comprehensive guidance on tackling and preventing bullying, harassment and racism in the screen industries – see: bit.ly/bfi-bully.

ScreenSkills has developed an

e-learning module, building on the principles developed by the BFI and Bafta to help people recognise and address harassment and bullying behaviours in themselves and others – see: bit.ly/screen-bully.

Bectu's help pages are at: bit.ly/Bectu-bully and Equity's are at: bit.ly/Equity-bully.



The BBC: A People's History by David Hendy is published by Profile Books, priced £17.00. ISBN: 978-1781255254

1,001 stories but no theme

Narinder Minhas enjoys the colour, but thinks more intellectual muscle would have been appropriate in the Beeb's centenary year

Everyone has a story about when they first became aware of the BBC. For me, it was when I was roused from sleep by the sound of a TV programme my mum was watching. Picture this: a little boy trudging downstairs in his PJs to see what was so thrilling that it warranted his dear mum waking herself (and him!) so early on a Sunday morning, only to find that it was a show about British electrical plugs. And, no, I'm not joking.

The show was *Nai Zindagi Naya Jeevan*, or, in English, *New Way, New Life*. Catchy title? I think not. It was aimed at Asian immigrants like me and my family and, although it was full of useful info on how to adapt to your new surroundings, to say it was seriously lacking in entertainment value would be an understatement. But achieving two out of three of the Reithian trinity of information, education and entertainment wasn't a bad strike rate.

My point is that the BBC's influence on each of our lives can't – and shouldn't – be understated. And this remarkable influence is what David Hendy sets out to understand in his new book, *The BBC: A People's History*. Hendy illustrates the BBC's impact perfectly: "If nuclear war begins, the last voice of authority we will hear before Armageddon arrives will be a Radio 4 announcer." He's so right, although I really don't need him to be proved right anytime soon (are you listening, Mr Putin?).

To call the story of the BBC sprawling would be selling it short. As Hendy tells us, it has broadcast between 10 and 20 million programmes. The corporation has become so multifaceted that, in truth, there is not just one history to this organisation, but thousands.

That's where Hendy's book falters slightly: he tries to cover too much ground. As we know, Asa Briggs struggled to encapsulate the BBC's history in five thick volumes, over 35 years of his life. Even then, he confessed it was "a history and not *the* history".

So, is it possible to write the whole story of the BBC in one book? Well... no. And Hendy seems to agree. He knew this was going to be a struggle from the outset. Look no further than the very first sentence of the book: "Is a history of the BBC even possible?"

Where the book shines, however, is in its description of key moments and characters. I love the introduction of

founder Cecil Lewis: “Well over six feet tall, exuberant and quick-witted, married to the glamorous young daughter of an exiled White Russian general”. In those days, wasn’t everybody married to a Russian general’s daughter? The best historians are often some of the best storytellers, capable of capturing the mood and spirit of the time. Hendy is no exception.

The early years of the BBC read like a 1920s mystery novel. We’re in the Savoy district, “a slightly seedy rectangle of narrow, sloping streets where a series of undistinguished offices are clustered. Here, three men stand huddled together, deep in thought.” These three shady characters would shortly become the founders of the BBC: Lewis, Arthur Burrows and, the most famous of all, John Reith.

The section on the Second World War is where Hendy really succeeds. Take the vignette about the radio presenter who is at Broadcasting House reading the news when a bomb falls on the building. After a brief pause and a reshuffling of his papers, he carries on reading. Could anything encapsulate British wartime stoicism more? Talk about “Keep calm and carry on.”

I also love the three simple rules BBC journalists had to follow so their words wouldn’t provide clues to the enemy. Don’t mention any numbers, don’t give away locations of bomb drops – and the third order, one that goes against the very essence of Britishness: don’t talk about the weather.

But how did the BBC deal with impartiality during these years? Can you be non-partisan when it comes to the Nazis? The stance, unsurprisingly, was that “deliberate perversion of the truth” should be avoided, but the corporation couldn’t help “being sucked into the propaganda war”. The government knew that propaganda would be more likely to get through if it was spread by the trusted BBC. This brought into focus a “close but fretful” relationship between the government and the broadcaster, a tension between state interference and editorial independence.

It is impossible to look at the issue of the BBC’s independence without considering Margaret Thatcher’s impact. During the Falklands war, the feathers of BBC sceptics were ruffled when *Newsnight*’s Peter Snow faced the camera and unwittingly expressed the BBC’s “moral equivalence” over the conflict. His use of the words “British troops” rather than “our troops” led the

Thatcher-loving *Sun* to brand the BBC “a traitor in our midst”.

According to Hendy, the Thatcher years altered the internal environment of the BBC. It became “a potent brew of political, commercial and personal hostility”, and the Prime Minister set her sights on a “radical overhaul of



Roy Letkey/Reuters

‘THE PRIME MINISTER SET HER SIGHTS ON A RADICAL OVERHAUL OF BROADCASTING ITSELF’

broadcasting itself” and that sometimes scary word, “reform”. What follows is a tale of high politics, betrayal, Tory scepticism and a relentless PR war.

The BBC had its problems under New Labour, too. Look no further than 29 May 2003. A journalist on the *Today* programme, Andrew Gilligan, goes off-piste, and accuses Downing Street of sending British troops into Iraq based on a lie: “Here was a BBC correspondent alleging [that] the Prime Minister had deliberately and consciously misled the nation”. Gilligan’s claims were later found to be false by a government inquiry led by Lord Hutton (though the succeeding Chilcot Inquiry came to different conclusions). “Well, boys,” said Director-General Greg Dyke, “We’ve been fucked.” Journalism

within the BBC was never the same again. In classic BBC fashion, there was a massive overreaction, and the institution beat itself up. Strict new rules and regulations led many to ask if the freedoms of journalists had been stifled.

The issue of impartiality has not gone away. Last year, Ofcom found that audiences “consistently rate the BBC less favourably” for impartiality. How do we fix this? Can the BBC ever be considered truly independent when government chooses its senior figures and sets the licence fee? How do you create and maintain a publicly funded institution? Can it continue its current public service content with shrinking funding? Is it too obsessed with ratings and competing with commercial channels? Can it redefine how success is measured? How do we save the BBC?

It would have been good if Hendy had addressed these issues, particularly through some of the debates and internal disputes that we’ve seen over the past 10 years. For instance, how has the Boris Johnson era influenced such debates? And what are the solutions? The answer, some think, is to introduce a democratic process for selecting senior figures, which would reduce governmental control. Some believe an entire structural overhaul is necessary. What most can agree on is that some kind of change is needed.

If this book were a TV show, it would be on at 7:00pm. You’ve just got home from work and have put dinner on and are looking for something that’s “a bit of a warm bath”, as commissioning editors would say. You find a show that has some great characters and you feel a bit smug after you’ve watched it. But, in the end, you think it maybe went on a bit too long.

While the book is packed with great stories and interesting characters, there is something missing: a thesis. It does not feel as if there’s a real argument pulling us through the anecdotes.

As the BBC approaches its centenary, it’s an important moment to write its history. As the historian EH Carr said, “We can fully understand the present only in light of the past.” The landscape of TV is changing and, with the licence fee under threat, the future feels less certain than ever. If ever there was a time to look back at where we came from, it is now. ■

Narinder Minhas is Co-Managing Director of Cardiff Productions.



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OUR FRIEND IN THE WEST

It's all about the "cultural dividend" in the West of England this year. It's about identifying the sweet spots between public and private sector agendas and using creativity and culture to drive economic growth and opportunity in the region. We are off to a flying start with a newly published West of England Cultural Strategy and some welcome news about the strength and depth of our creative community (see bit.ly/Bristol22).

The region's film and television industries (excluding BBC Studios) generated £197.5m in turnover in 2020-21. This was up £57.2m from the £140.3m generated by the 131 independent companies in 2017 (a growth rate of 40.8%) according to *Go West**, to be published in late March.

It's estimated that BBC Studios contributes almost one third of the region's turnover, which brings the combined turnover for Bristol's independent sector to £288m – representing a growth rate of 105% in that period.

We now have 188 independent production companies. In addition, BBC Studios Natural History Unit (NHU) and part of its Factual Entertainment Productions are based in Bristol. These embrace a wide range of micro, small and mid-sized enterprises, and six established sub-sectors – animation, branded content, facilities (including studios), factual, natural history and post-production – plus an emerging sector of indigenous drama companies.

The long-established specialisms in natural history and animation remain our region's principal strengths

**Go West* by Andrew Spicer, Steve Presence and Agata Frymus, UWE, Bristol, is due to be published later this month.

Lynn Barlow
hails Bristol as a
production hub that
goes way beyond
its reputation as the
Green Hollywood



Jon Craig

– Aardman is up for another Oscar (that would be its fifth) with its Netflix short *Robin Robin*, while *The Green Planet* is doing great business for the BBC's NHU. After all, we are the "Green Hollywood".

In less than a decade, Bristol-based Plimsoll Productions, with offices in Cardiff and Los Angeles, has grown to more than 300 staff. Its customers include Apple TV+, Netflix, the BBC and ITV. The company was valued at over £80m in 2019 when the UK private equity firm LDC acquired a minority stake.

Check out the standout scripted shows made at our Bottle Yard Studios – three new stages will open this summer, after a £12m investment from the regional authority – *Chloe* (BBC One/Amazon Prime Video); *The Girl Before* (BBC One/HBO Max);

Showtrial (BBC One); *The Outlaws* (BBC One/Amazon Prime Video); and *The Beaker Girls* (CBBC). Waiting in the wings are: *Am I Being Unreasonable?* and season 2 of *The Outlaws* (BBC One); *McDonald & Dodds* (ITV); *The Last Bus* (Netflix) and *Becoming Elizabeth* (Starz).

The pleasure and the pain of the region's creative sector has always been about the way it has developed into a global leader. It was born out of individuals falling in love with the area, setting down roots and producing some amazing work. But that individuality always meant there was a tension between being "bigger than the sum of our parts" and not being able to attract anchor institutions and different forms of investment. This is no longer true. We now have a Channel 4 Hub plus investment in our indies from some of the industry's biggest players: Sky, All3Media and Netflix.

At the launch of the cultural strategy, West of England Metro Mayor Dan Norris said that more than 500 businesses have been directly boosted by Netflix's investment alone, creating 1,000 jobs. He reckons that, globally, about 800 million people watch digital content produced in the region each month.

The cultural dividend is not just about economic strength, but also about how the power of culture makes our neighbourhoods better places to live and our communities more cohesive, as well as doing wonders for our personal wellbeing.

"Vibrant communities, culture and easy access to the coast and countryside, that's why we all want to live in Bristol," said the *Daily Mail*. So it must be true. ■

Lynn Barlow is Chair of RTS West of England.



Daniel Mays in *Magpie Murders*

BritBox

The RTS learns how the complex BritBox whodunnit **Magpie Murders** was made – and why one of the characters was influenced by Emily Maitlis

A story within a story

Eagle-eyed viewers – and, for detective dramas, we should assume that’s the majority – may have noticed a small detail in an early episode of the long-running ITV series *Midsomer Murders*. “You’ll see one of the characters reading a book called *Magpie Murders*. At that point, I hadn’t written it, but I got the book made up into a prop anyway,” Anthony Horowitz, writer of both, told the RTS.

Magpie Murders is a murder mystery story set within a murder mystery story. The idea came to him 15 years before he put pen to paper; the tricky task of weaving the conjoined stories together in a clear, linear fashion explains the unusually long development period. The book was finally unveiled in

2016, and arrived on BritBox last month.

The protagonist in this modern twist on the classic murder mystery tale (you’ll spot on-screen references to Agatha Christie, Sherlock Holmes and Dorothy L Sayers) is Susan Ryeland. Played by Lesley Manville (soon to take the role of Princess Margaret in *The Crown*), Ryeland is an editor to Alan Conway (Conleth Hill), a celebrated author who delivers the manuscript for his latest masterpiece, *Magpie Murders*, but with the final chapter missing.

When Ryeland travels to Suffolk to retrieve it, she discovers that Conway has been murdered – and that the mystery of his death may be uncovered by the missing chapter. Thus follows a clever take on the classic whodunnit, with a stellar supporting cast of Tim McMullan (*Foyle’s War*) as

Atticus Pünd, the fictitious detective in Conway’s book and Daniel Mays (*Line of Duty*), who takes a double role as two policemen – one in the story, and one in the story within the story.

“We’ve made a lot of crime, but I think this is the most distinctive piece we’ve ever made,” said Jill Green, producer of the series and CEO of Eleventh Hour Films. “The biggest challenge was that, in the book, there’s a huge amount set in 1955, and a very small amount in the contemporary world. We decided to flip the two over and make the contemporary story almost 70% of the drama and make Susan our reliable narrator. I felt that she needed to carry the audience through all the complexities that the script is presenting.”

The team brought Manville in early on, when Horowitz had written only the

pilot episode and outlined the others. As such, Manville helped flesh out Ryeland into a woman who eschews settling down in favour of an independent lifestyle and has intelligence and style. The latter aspect was influenced by the broadcaster Emily Maitlis,

1940s, and tried to pick up his voice. But I didn't want Pünd to be too guttural. German can be quite harsh and I wanted to find a non-harsh version."

Mays had arguably the meatiest challenge as an actor, playing two different characters. "In terms of an

we flip over to the other world, were so cleverly written in the first episode. There was potential to keep playing with that all the way through."

While the story is set in London and Suffolk, where a little filming took place, much of the production occurred in Ireland – an added complexity while shooting under Covid conditions, said Green: "You're flying whole crews between Dublin and the UK, but everyone also had to quarantine, so it was a very big commitment, and very expensive.

"I had three five-day chunks where I had to quarantine. I think it was the best thing that happened with the show. Boy, did I do some intricate shot lists, storyboards and prep – and I think it helped. Often, you're rushing around in prep, but, actually, I had time to think about those things, so it was quite good for me. As Danny said, if any actor on this show doesn't know their lines, they deserve to never work again, because they had five days to learn."

While the series was primarily developed with PBS and GBH in the US – no doubt with an eye on the growing appetite for UK crime dramas there – the British partners changed mid-process.

ITV got the ball rolling before BritBox took over. "It was at a moment when ITV felt it had a lot of other crime returning and the schedule was busy," explained Green. "But it was also at a moment when BritBox was starting to make original drama – it had literally made only three and we're the fourth, I think."

With *Moonflower Murders*, Horowitz's sequel to *Magpie Murders*, published in 2020, the team is hopeful that Ryeland can return to the screen again. It already foresees 2023 as a potential release date, provided the financiers agree. "Both PBS and BritBox are very excited, so we are really hoping. But also we have to wait for Lesley to become free," said Green.

"The book has already been brilliantly narrated on audio by one Lesley Manville, as it happens," said Horowitz. "I'm very, very hopeful. *Moonflower Murders* here we come." ■

Report by Shilpa Ganatra. 'Magpie Murders preview Q&A' was an RTS event held on 3 February. It was chaired and produced by journalist Caroline Frost.



Lesley Manville in *Magpie Murders*

after Manville spotted her while waiting in a BBC foyer.

"I watched her run across the reception and she looked fantastic. It was 10:00am and she had an amazing outfit, high heels, the lot. I thought, 'Yeah, I'll pinch that little bit of her and put that into Susan,'" said Manville. "I was hugely helped through that journey by the costume designer, Annie Hardinge. She came in with this array of clothes, which was another little lightbulb moment. All those things helped me to get Susan on the go."

For McMullan, a large part of embodying his character was nailing the accent. "I played a German character before – Dr Miller in *The Deep Blue Sea* – so I drew on that," he explained. "I also watched Anton Walbrook, a wonderful Austrian actor from the 1930s and

'YEAH, I'LL PINCH THAT LITTLE BIT OF HER AND PUT THAT INTO SUSAN RYELAND'

acting exercise, it was brilliant because of how different they are to one another and [yet] how similar they are. [The dual role] gives a great theatricality to it all," he said.

The dual set-up is also what attracted director Peter Cattaneo: "For a director, it's an absolute gift. You've got a chance to make two movies or two TV shows at a time. The transitions, where we're in one world and

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Storming of the Capitol, Breaking News; News Coverage – International and Scoop of the Year

ITV

RTS Television Journalism Awards 2022

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The awards were presented on 23 February at the JW Marriott Grosvenor House London, and hosted by Cathy Newman

Breaking News

**Storming of the Capitol –
ITV News at Ten**

ITN/ITV News for ITV
‘This was exclusive, brave reporting that stood out for its high-quality journalism under pressure and its sheer daring. A brilliant operation by news gatherers and newsroom alike to report a jaw-dropping event – and thrashing the local media on its own turf.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **The Killing of Sir David Amess**, Sky News
- ▶ **The Assassination of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse – CNN International**, CNN

Camera Operator of the Year

Dean Massey

Sky News

‘There are a few elite camera operators who regularly feature in the final voting for this category. But this year a new name emerged whose skill in composition, colour and innovative sequence production won the day.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Mstyslav Chernov**, The Associated Press
- ▶ **Mark Davey – ITV News at Ten**, ITN/ITV News for ITV

Current Affairs – Home

The Men Who Sell Football

Al Jazeera Investigations for Al Jazeera English Channel

‘The entry tackled a global subject with a reputation for corrupt behaviour. In forensic detail, with great use of graphics and remarkable undercover photography, this investigation threw fresh new light on the stories behind some of our most famous football clubs.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Surviving Squalor: Britain’s Housing Shame**, ITN/ITV News for ITV
- ▶ **Rape: Who’s on Trial?**, Hardcash Productions for Channel 4 ▶

Current Affairs – International

The Missing Children – Exposure

True Vision/Nevision for ITV

‘This was a beautifully made film – a truly chilling story that was sensitively handled and unremittingly held power to account. It demonstrated excellent production values and had wide-ranging impact.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Collapse: Retreat from Afghanistan**, Sky News
- ▶ **Return from Isis – A Family’s Story**, BBC Panorama in conjunction with Frontline PBS and Mongoose Pictures for BBC One

Digital Award

All Hail the Lockdown

Al Jazeera English

‘Very engaging, with great camerawork and innovative use of graphics. Impressively high-quality work by the multi-media journalist who put the whole thing together: she presented, produced, filmed and edited the packages.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Uncovered – The Down’s Syndrome Fightback**, Channel 4 News/Online and Social Media
- ▶ **Sky News Investigates**, Sky News

Nations and Regions

Current Affairs

Disclosure – Desperately Seeking Asylum

BBC Scotland for BBC One Scotland

‘A masterclass in reporting, journalistic rigour, and a fine example of how persistence does pay off in investigations. It was a brave story to undertake and... stood out for the remarkable stories and powerful personal testimony of vulnerable people’s lives.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Up Close – Minority Report**, UTV
- ▶ **Spotlight – Undercover: Pups for Sale**, BBC NI for BBC One Northern Ireland

Nations and Regions News

Children in Crisis: Are We Failing Young Minds?

ITV News Central for ITV

‘Brave, gripping, responsible and important, an exposé that proves both the importance of a journalist’s contacts and a programme’s relationship with its audience.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **ITV West Country – Plymouth Shootings – ITV News West Country**, ITV News for ITV
- ▶ **Ballymurphy Special – UTV Live**, UTV

Nations and Regions

Presenter of the Year

Kathryn Samson – Scotland Tonight and STV News at Six

STV News for STV

‘Our winner is fearless in holding power to account, exhibits sharp journalistic skill, but also clearly knows how to build a relationship with the viewers. She demonstrates real depth, empathy when needed, passion and humour.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Mark Carruthers – The View and Sunday Politics**, BBC NI for BBC One Northern Ireland
- ▶ **Charlene White – ITV London**, ITN/ITV News for ITV

Network Daily News

Programme of the Year

ITV News at Ten

ITN/ITV News for ITV

‘In a head-to-head battle [at 10:00pm] the winner was in a class of its own, with a raft of compelling stories at home and abroad in addition to one stonking exclusive.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **BBC News at Ten**, BBC News for BBC One
- ▶ **News at Ten**, Sky News ▶



Dean Massey,
Camera Operator
of the Year.
(He is the first RTS
Bursary Scholar
to win a national
RTS award.)



Disclosure – *Desperately Seeking Asylum*,
Nations and Regions Current Affairs

BBC



ITV News at Ten, *Network Daily News*
Programme of the Year

ITV



Children in Crisis: *Are We Failing Young Minds?*,
Nations and Regions News

ITV



The Missing Children – *Exposure*,
Current Affairs – International

ITV



Dominic Cummings – *The Interview*,
Network Interview of the Year

BBC



Cathy Newman, Host

Richard Kendal



Richard Kendal

Outstanding Contribution Award

Samir Shah CBE

‘This year’s winner has probably done more for the cause of diversity in television journalism than any other individual.

‘But that is not the only reason we are honouring him tonight. His glittering 40-year career took him from ITV to the BBC – heading up many of the most successful current affairs programmes on both networks – before launching his own production company.

‘One of the many TV luminaries who supported his nomination wrote: “He has led the way in shaking up conventional thinking, and in challenging established views with programmes remarkable for their toughness of argument.”

‘Our winner has also made a huge voluntary contribution to our industry across a wide range of activities – including, indeed, for the RTS.’

Network Interview of the Year

Dominic Cummings – *The Interview*

BBC News for BBC Two

‘This was a fantastic piece of theatre. Forensically conducted and a genuinely revelatory interview generating acres of news coverage and containing some great lines. A spellbinding example of revenge served up cold.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **The Taliban Live – BBC News Channel**, BBC News for BBC News Channel
- ▶ **Nevres Kemal by Jason Farrell**, Sky News

Network Presenter of the Year

Krishnan Guru-Murthy – Channel 4 News

ITN for Channel 4

‘The winner has become one of the outstanding presenters of his generation. He harnesses his assured broadcasting presence and writing skills to doggedly pursue a story with nerve and directness. He is bold and brave and gutsy: he doesn’t flinch from asking the direct and tough question.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Kate Garraway – Good Morning Britain**, ITV Studios Daytime for ITV
- ▶ **Kirsty Wark – BBC**, Newsnight for BBC Two

Network Television Journalist of the Year

Robert Moore – ITV News

ITN/ITV News for ITV

‘Simply brilliant! Star-quality journalism with amazing craft skills, reporting live from the chaos of the attack on the US Capitol while keeping his audience front of mind and capturing history in the making.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Stuart Ramsay**, Sky News
- ▶ **Yogita Limaye**, BBC News for BBC One

News Channel of the Year

Sky News

‘When it comes to rolling news, plurality is alive and well. Although some themes were shared – all offered different takes on the year’s events. The winning channel – while doing its normal good job of reporting breaking news – had been especially innovative in other ways. It’s focus on data journalism and its dedicated climate change coverage stood out.’

Nominees:

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



1 *The Men Who Sell Football*, Current Affairs – Home

2 *Storming of the Capitol*, Breaking News

3 *All Hail the Lockdown*, Digital Award

4 *Kathryn Samson*, Nations and Regions Presenter of the Year

5 *Krishnan Guru-Murthy*, Network Presenter of the Year

6 *Robert Moore*, Network Television Journalist of the Year

7 *Dominic Cummings – The Interview*, Network Interview of the Year

8 *Sky News*, News Channel of the Year

9 *Noel Phillips*, Young Talent of the Year

All pictures: Richard Kendal



All Hail the Lockdown, Digital Award

Al Jazeera



Kathryn Samson, Nations and Regions Presenter of the Year

BBC



Storming of the Capitol, Breaking News; News Coverage – International and Scoop of the Year

ITV

News Coverage – Home

The Cost of Covid

BBC News for BBC One

‘This category threw a spotlight on those left behind in modern Britain, struggling to survive or facing injustice. It was a very strong set of submissions from all the participating news companies. The judges applauded the emotional impact of a programme compiled with restraint and skill and the bravery to run the pieces at length even in a crowded news bulletin.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Britain’s Housing Scandal** – ITV News, ITN/ITV News for ITV
- ▶ **Women, Violence and Criminal Justice** – Channel 4 News, ITN for Channel 4

News Coverage – International

Storming of the Capitol – ITV News

ITN/ITV News for ITV

‘It was difficult to compare a large and varied field of quality entries, particularly in a year when western forces ended their 20-year mission in Afghanistan in chaos and confusion. Coverage from less-well-reported conflicts was also impressive but it was ITV News’s dramatic reporting from Capitol Hill that proved the power of a news team on the ground following a breaking story with bravery and skill.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Yemen**, BBC News for BBC One
- ▶ **Afghanistan Under the Taliban**, The Associated Press

News Technology

Climate Live

Sky News

‘Innovation is alive and well in the television journalism business. This entry used technology in an ambitious and original way. In particular, it allowed the production team at base to control the output created 600km away.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Our Climate Futures**, Channel 4 News/ Online and Social Media
- ▶ **What Will Climate Change Look Like In Your Area?**, BBC News/BBC Panorama for BBC One ▶



Krishnan Guru-Murthy,
Network Presenter of the Year

Channel 4



sky news

Sky News,
News Channel of the Year

BSkyB



The Cost of Covid, News
Coverage – Home

BBC



Daniel Hewitt, Specialist
Journalist of the Year

ITV



Noel Phillips,
Young Talent
of the Year

BREAKING NEWS LIVE
NOEL PHILLIPS
North America Correspondent

ITV



The Men Who Sell Football,
Current Affairs – Home

Al Jazeera



Climate Live,
News Technology

BSkyB



Tom Koene/Alamy

RTS Special Award

Afghan journalists

‘One of the biggest international stories of the year was the retaking of Afghanistan by the Taliban. All the major global news organisations who have reported the Afghan story on and off for four decades depend on the sup-

port of local journalists. Now, under the Taliban, many have been forced to flee the country, many more have lost their jobs. Some were among those we remembered earlier who were killed in the line of duty.’

Scoop of the Year

Storming of the Capitol – ITV News
ITN/ITV News for ITV

‘A reporter and camera operator with an exclusive eyewitness account of a genuinely historic event is something we rarely see. Our winners not only did that – but they did it brilliantly. They captured dramatic pictures and telling interviews, alongside a cool and analytical commentary – all under extreme pressure and in the face of great personal risk.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Amazon’s Waste Secrets Uncovered – ITV News**, ITN/ITV News for ITV
- ▶ **Ethiopia: Exposing All the Hallmarks of a Genocide – CNN International**, CNN

Specialist Journalist of the Year

Daniel Hewitt – ITV News
ITN/ITV News for ITV

‘The winner’s relentless focus on the state of Britain’s housing and the dire problems faced by tenants was exceptional. This is a story that has been hidden from public gaze but Hewitt’s uncompromising campaign through the year had real public and policy impact.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Victoria Macdonald – Channel 4 News**, ITN for Channel 4
- ▶ **Nick Martin**, Sky News

Young Talent of the Year

Noel Phillips – Good Morning Britain
ITV Studios Daytime for ITV

‘It is always good to see the quality of young talent emerging in our industry and being nominated in this category. The winner worked more or less single-handedly in the midst of a major news story – coolly delivering a succession of rolling lives and interviews. Our winner began his broadcasting career on radio at the age of 15, and worked for the BBC and Sky News before, aged 28, starting his current role.’

Nominees:

- ▶ **Marianna Spring**, BBC News for BBC One
- ▶ **Mickey Carroll**, Sky News ■



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George Shiers, a distinguished US television historian, was a

long-standing member of the RTS. The Shiers Trust grant is in its 21st year.

Application procedure

Applications are now invited and should be submitted to the Trustees by 31 March 2022 on the official application form.

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

Apply now for the 2022 Shiers Trust Award

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

How a design archive won the 2021 award



The 2021 Shiers Trust Award went to Mark Craig. The award of £4,000 will allow Craig to continue filming interviews with notable designers for an archive of BBC motion graphic design.

It marks the first time a project has received a Shiers Trust Award twice. In 2019, Craig shared the prize, winning £2,000, with the Made in Yorkshire

documentary film project. Craig is a former BBC and Channel 4 motion graphic designer turned documentary-maker who made the well-received feature film *The Last Man on the Moon*.

Expanding the archive, which contains hundreds of examples of title sequences and idents from the early 1960s onwards, is an ongoing process. Craig said: 'It's a real shot in the arm for the project and we'll be able to get a lot of work done with the award. It's much appreciated.'

'A key part of the archive is to capture interviews with the veterans of graphic design. Their spoken testimonies offer not only insight into their creative process and techniques, but also social and cultural context.'

The interviews with BBC TV graphic designers are edited together with examples of their work and included in an open-access archive hosted

by Ravensbourne University London*.

The archive was started by former BBC graphic designer Michael Graham-Smith, who works closely with another award-winning designer, Liz Friedman, and senior projects and partnerships manager, BBC Archive Content & Partnerships.

Past Shiers Trust Award winners include an oral history of BBC Pebble Mill and a biography of Grace Wyndham Goldie, the first head of BBC TV News and Current Affairs.



Mark Craig

School leavers aged 18-plus and graduates are being urged to apply for a new West Midlands apprenticeship scheme, the BBC Apprentice Hub, which is offering up to 50 places to people who want to work in TV and the creative sector.

“We don’t know what we’re looking for until we see your application form,” stressed Affie Jeerh, skills specialist for the scheme. She encouraged applicants to reveal as much as possible about their personalities in their applications.

Former BBC production apprentice David Winfield said: “When I applied for a BBC apprenticeship, I didn’t think I’d get picked for it, but I did. So always have a go and throw yourself into every assessment.”

The hub aims to help creative employers in the West Midlands address their creative needs and fill skills gaps. Louise Brown, business advisor for the hub, explained that the region had been chosen to launch the scheme because of its young, diverse population.

“The apprenticeships supply people with vocational training and they will gain a formal qualification at the end,” she explained. “It is a flexible approach to learning and is all about getting vital work experience. The difference between this and the internal schemes the BBC offers is that, although the contract of employment sits with the BBC and the learning is done via the BBC, the work experience will be gained at businesses outside the BBC.”

This could be in traditional TV, virtual reality, special effects, mobile technology or digital marketing. Potential employers include not only the BBC, but also local virtual



West Midlands boost

RTS Midlands The BBC Apprentice Hub aims to plug the skills gaps in the region’s creative industries. **Steve Clarke** reports

reality specialist RiVR and 3D animation company Bigtooth Studios.

As well as on-the-job experience, apprentices will receive a minimum of 20 weeks’ learning with an external training provider and a salary of about £15,000. Tuition fees are paid.

Birmingham-born Jeerh said she knew that the West Midlands was a hotbed of talent and she urged local people to start applying.

Naomi Webb, production manager at Midlands-based North One, which produces programmes including *The Gadget Show* and *Paul Hollywood Eats*, told the RTS that North One was always looking for local talent.

“We’ve been forced to go to London, but we want local people who know the area and are willing to learn,” she said. “We’re looking for

people with enthusiasm and passion. TV can be brutal, sometimes, so we need people who are prepared to put in the hours.

“But you get great rewards from seeing a programme being made. You don’t necessarily need to know a lot about TV. We need people who have good personal skills and can get on with other people... We need to see a potential apprentice’s personality shine through in their application.”

Winfield, who took up his BBC apprenticeship in 2017 instead of going to university to study film and TV, is now a production co-ordinator on *The Archers*. As an apprentice, he worked in the BBC’s radio drama department in London.

“A lot of skills that I use on *The Archers* I learnt during my apprenticeship. My job is to

make sure everyone is in the right place at the right time, and has what they need for the show to be made and to run smoothly.

“That can sound quite boring but it’s not, because *The Archers* is a very busy and intense environment. Every month, we’re in the studio recording 20 scripts... I also get to go to story conferences, where we can pitch ideas and discuss where we want the show to go next. It’s a very varied job.”

To apply, go to bbc.co.uk/apprenticehub. Depending on the scheme, applications can be made for the next month or so. The apprenticeships start in July, with a second wave in September. ■

‘BBC Apprentice Hub’, chaired by radio presenter Nikki Tapper, was an RTS Midlands event held on 14 February.

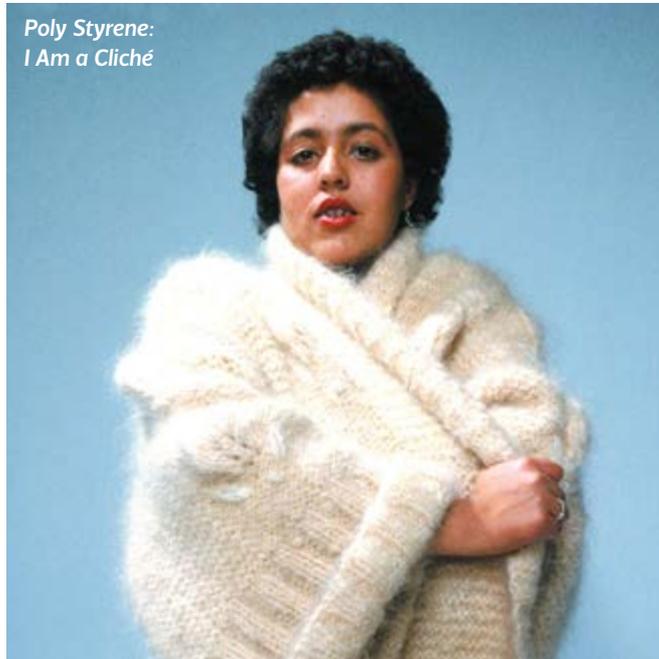
Tyke films life of a punk icon

RTS Yorkshire The Centre made a welcome return to in-person events in early February at the Archive in Leeds, with a screening of *Poly Styrene: I Am a Cliché*, made by Sheffield-based Tyke Films.

The award-winning film explores the life of legendary punk icon and X-Ray Spex frontwoman, Poly Styrene, who died in 2011.

The film was introduced by Candour Productions director Anna Hall, who interviewed the film's producer and Tyke Films founder, Rebecca Mark-Lawson.

The duo explored the responsibilities of making a film about a woman who was a feminist role model to many, while also acknowledging the difficulties she faced. Poly Styrene was subjected to racism and had severe mental health



Poly Styrene: I Am a Cliché

Modern Films

problems later in life. Mark-Lawson also discussed working with Poly Styrene's daughter, Celeste Bell, who

co-wrote and co-directed the film, and had initially crowdfunded it so she could tell her mother's story.

A Q&A following the film highlighted its inventive use of archive footage, despite its limited budget. There was also a discussion about how acclaimed Irish actor Ruth Negga had provided Poly Styrene's voice for the extracts from her diaries and interviews that are used throughout.

The film won the Documentary category and the Raindance Discovery Award at the British Independent Film Awards last year.

Earlier that day, RTS Yorkshire held its AGM and welcomed a new Chair, Lisa Holdsworth, and Vice Chair, Beth Johnson. Warm thanks were extended to the outgoing members of the committee and especially to former Chair Fiona Thompson, who saw the Centre through the pandemic.

Diving into TV archives

RTS Midlands TV archive is an often overlooked area in programme-making, and it is suffering from a shortage of talent.

It 'plays an integral role in many parts of production', said archive researcher Jemma Wood, giving an RTS Midlands presentation in late February.

Wood, who works for ITV Studios subsidiary Potato, focused on the archive-heavy *Autopsy: The Last Hours of...*, a series that Potato made for US network Reelz. In particular, she discussed an episode about Steve Irwin, the so-called 'crocodile hunter' who was killed by a stingray.

Archive provided establishing shots of the Great Barrier

Reef – filming in Australia itself would have been impossible on the available budget. The programme also recreated Irwin's death on the reef, using archive footage of stingrays.

Does the audience realise they are not watching actual footage of Irwin's death? 'We believe they're savvy enough to know they're not watching his [death],' said Wood.

Working in archive, she said, gives you 'experience across the whole production process – in research, editorial, legal, post-production and delivery... There is such a demand at the moment for people working in this area of television.'

The attributes needed for the job, she said, included



Autopsy: The Last Hours of... Steve Irwin

Channel 5

having a 'good editorial understanding... creativity and perseverance.... You need to be up for a challenge and enjoy detective work.'

Lastly, she said, 'Being able to negotiate is really important, to

get the best price for [archive] material... because we are working to budgets.'

Paul Davies, Managing Director of Vyka, chaired the RTS Midlands event.

Matthew Bell

Linear television – and the critical role schedulers play in deciding when shows air – are here to stay, according to an expert panel assembled by RTS Thames Valley last month.

“We’ve always worked hand in glove with [schedulers],” said Satmohan Panesar – ITV factual entertainment commissioner. “We try and bring an idea that [is] great, and they have insight on... where it may play best and why.”

Simon Tomkins, who schedules shows on ITV2, ITVBe and CITV, agreed: “It’s always going to be a close relationship... Linear exposure is still very important – a clever bit of scheduling for one of your key shows can really make an impact.”

He added that traditional scheduling techniques, such as “taking advantage of big events to springboard new shows”, can be key.

Genres particularly suited to live TV include news, sport, family co-viewing, gameshows and entertainment/reality formats, even for younger viewers who increasingly watch shows on-demand. *Love Island*, said Tomkins, “demonstrates that you can attract a big 16- to 34-year-old audience to linear, night in, night out”.

Increasingly, he continued, dramas receive a linear launch, with the remainder of the series immediately made available on the ITV Hub. But old-school scheduling survives.

Referencing Sky Atlantic’s HBO drama *Mare of Easttown*, Panesar said: “I’ve enjoyed the anticipation of watching things weekly because that feels like a novelty. The fact that you have to exercise some bit of self-control and wait a whole week for an episode feels positively avant-garde now.”

At the BBC, said Jo Smith, portfolio editor for BBC Two



Mare of Easttown: a weekly must-watch

Alive and kicking

Reports of the death of the TV schedules are greatly exaggerated, hears **Matthew Bell**

and BBC Four, there are different strategies for drama: “With... *Vigil* and *Line of Duty*, there was a linear delivery, but with *The Tourist*... we dropped the lot.”

Binge-watching TV dramas increased during the Covid-19 pandemic, but it is not a recent phenomenon, argued Kim Akass, professor of radio, television and film at Rowan University, New Jersey. She dated it to the turn of the millennium, with the release of *Sex and the City* and *The Sopranos*: “We started bingeing before streaming came along, [with] DVDs... which you could buy and have like books on your shelves.”

During the pandemic, said Akass, viewers have “realised that TV isn’t just entertainment for the masses – it is increasingly an art form that people can watch and not feel so slummy about”.

Nevertheless, TV is not all about bingeing. “Sometimes, all you want to do is come home from work, put the TV on and veg out, and watch something that’s chosen for you... Linear-TV is here to stay – there’ll always be a need for it,” said Akass.

Comparing on-demand TV with Spotify, where the choice of what to listen to is vast, she added: “Sometimes, you just want the DJ or the scheduler to say, ‘This is what you want to watch now.’”

“The tyranny of choice is upon us,” agreed Panesar, who argued that trusted brands such as ITV and the BBC can help viewers negotiate this choice safely. “We, as a brand, as ITV, are premium content providers to everyone, wherever you want to [watch] your content.”

Smith admitted the landscape was “challenging” for

terrestrial channels: “The competition is far bigger than it ever was... there are new on-demand platforms all the time.”

For the BBC, she said: “We still have got a place in that crowded space to offer something that is really distinct for British audiences... We can do that in a way that Disney+ and Netflix can’t – we can reflect the lives of modern Britain.

“We need to work really hard to grab [younger viewers’] attention in this noisy space... we’ll have to be really creative... but linear telly will be about for a long while yet.” ■

The RTS Thames Valley event, ‘The evolution of scheduling and commissioning in a VoD world’, was held on 9 February and chaired by Twofour development executive Chloe Seddon.

RTS Scotland Firecrest Films scooped a hat-trick of prizes with *Murder Trial: The Disappearance of Margaret Fleming* at the RTS Scotland Television Awards last month.

The two-part documentary took BBC Scotland and BBC Two viewers inside the story of a vulnerable young woman from a Scottish village whose disappearance went unnoticed, and was therefore not investigated, for almost 20 years before her killers – the two people who were meant to be looking after her – were jailed.

It won the Documentary and Specialist Factual award, the Director prize for Matt Pinder and the Professional Excellence: Post Production Editing award for Audrey McColligan.

CBeebies' *Hushbye Lullabye* – made by Scottish-based production houses Wild Child Animation and Maramedia – also nabbed two awards, in the Animation and VFX, and Children's categories.

Susan Calman was named On-screen Personality for her light-hearted travel show, *Secret Scotland*, which is made by IWC Media for Channel 5.

An Outstanding Contribution Award was given to Phil



BBC *Murder Trial: The Disappearance of Margaret Fleming*

Accolades for legal doc

Differ and Jonathan Watson for *Only an Excuse*, which BBC Scotland showed on Hogmanay from 1993 to 2020. Created and produced by Differ, the sketch show starred Watson and featured impressions of Scottish football greats.

The RTS Scotland Award went to the production management community, recognising its resilience and commitment to ensuring TV continued to be made during the Covid-19 pandemic.

A posthumous Special Contribution Award was

made to Donald John Macdonald, the editor of Aberdeen-based STV North from 2007 until his death in December 2020. An enthusiastic supporter of future talent, he was generous with his time in inspiring new entrants to the industry. His passion for journalism had a huge impact on so many individuals and broadcast news in Scotland.

Scottish stand-up and presenter Des Clarke hosted the online ceremony in early February.

Stephen O'Donnell, the Chair of RTS Scotland, said: "There's an incredible wealth of talent working in the TV industry in Scotland and we're delighted to recognise these people and productions through our awards. "We're particularly pleased to recognise the production management community in 2020 at what was an incredibly challenging time for the business."

Matthew Bell

RTS Scotland Television Awards winners

RTS Scotland Award - Production management community

Outstanding Contribution Award - Phill Differ and Jonathan Watson, *Only an Excuse*

Special Contribution Award - Donald John Macdonald, former editor of news at STV

Drama - Control - BBC Scotland Productions for BBC Social (bbc.co.uk, Facebook and iPlayer)

Comedy - Frankie Boyle's *Tour of Scotland* - Two Rivers Media and Cheeky Grin for BBC Two

On-screen Personality - Susan Calman, *Secret Scotland* - IWC Media for Channel 5

Director - Matt Pinder, *Murder Trial: The Disappearance of Margaret Fleming* - Firecrest Films for BBC Scotland

Documentary and Specialist Factual - *Murder Trial: The Disappearance of Margaret Fleming* - Firecrest Films for BBC Scotland

Documentary and Specialist Factual: Arts - Boswell & Johnson's *Scottish Road Trip with Frank Skinner and Denise Mina* - IWC Media for Sky Arts

Documentary and Specialist Factual: History - Harry Birrell: *Films of Love and War* - Hopscotch Films for BBC Scotland

Documentary and Specialist Factual: Science and Natural History - *Cheetah Family & Me* - Hello Halo Productions and Oak Island Films for BBC Two

Factual Entertainment and Features - *A Country Life for Half the Price* - Raise the Roof Productions and Motion Content Group for Channel 5

Current Affairs - *Disclosure: Scotland's Lockdown* - BBC Scotland

News - *Eorpa, Episode 1, Slavery* - BBC Scotland Productions for BBC Alba

Young Journalist - Hope Webb - BBC Scotland

Sport: *Live Event - Serbia vs Scotland* - Sky Sports

Sport: *Programme - The Women Who Built Glasgow City* - Purple TV for BBC Alba

Children's - *Hushbye Lullabye* -

Wild Child Animation and Maramedia for CBeebies

Animation and VFX - *Hushbye Lullabye* - Wild Child Animation and Maramedia for CBeebies

Short Form - *BURDS: The Colour Wheel* - BBC Studios for BBC Scotland - BBC Short Stuff

Professional Excellence: *Camera - Fergus Gill, Neil Anderson, Asgeir Helgestad and Pete Barden, Stormborn* - Maramedia for the BBC

Professional Excellence: *Post-production Editing - Audrey McColligan, Murder Trial: The Disappearance of Margaret Fleming* - Firecrest Films for BBC Scotland

Professional Excellence: *Post-production Graphics and Titles - Space Resources: Driving the Future of Space Exploration* - Revenant for Luxembourg Space Agency

Professional Excellence: *Sound - Kahl Henderson, The Nest - Studio Lambert* for BBC One

ITV Sunday-night detective drama *Vera* enjoyed a successful night at the RTS North East and the Border Television Awards late last month.

Silverprint Pictures, a subsidiary of ITV Studios, won the Drama over £100K award, while the show's star, Brenda Blethyn, took the Drama Performance prize. *Vera*'s production team also received a special award, Pandemic Innovation: Drama.

The long-running show was honoured at an awards ceremony held at the Hilton hotel on Gateshead's quayside and hosted by Tyneside comedian and writer Jason Cook, the creator of BBC Two comedy *Hebburn*.

The Pandemic Innovation: Factual award went to *Look North*'s Jen Bartram, Dan Farthing and Luke Walton, one of four prizes picked up by the BBC regional news programme. The Presenter award went to Dawn Thewlis and that of Sports Presenter to Jeff Brown. *BBC Look North* secured the News Programme prize.

ITV was also well rewarded in the news categories, with Tyne Tees News's Rachel Bullock winning the Outstanding Journalism award and her colleague, Paul Kingston, named Rising Star.

Kingston, a camera operator, also won the Professional

Vera
ITV

Vera scores a hat-trick

Excellence: Photography prize.

The Drama under £100K award went to the short film *She Lives Alone*, written and directed by Lucy Rose and inspired by her experiences growing up in Cumbria.

Terry Abraham won the Broadcast Factual Production award for the BBC Four film *Life of a Mountain: A Year on*

Helvellyn, which captured the beauty of the Lakeland fells and wildlife through the seasons and the insights of those that live by, care for, and visit the mountain.

RTS North East and the Border awarded two special prizes on the night: its Centre Award went to Middlesbrough indie Ithica Films and

its Outstanding Contribution honour to Alison Gwynn, the Chief Executive of Northern Film and Media.

At the awards ceremony, RTS North East & Border Centre Chair Will Nicholson referred to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on local production: "The past two years have been incredibly challenging for all of us. I am extremely proud of the creative and emotional tenacity shown by the region's creative industries. There are some incredible opportunities on the horizon."

In the student categories, the spoils were split between Newcastle University, Tees-side University and the University of Sunderland. The latter picked up two awards: the Comedy and Entertainment prize for *The Importance of Acquiescence* and Drama for *Before It All Happened*.

Matthew Bell

RTS North East and the Border Television Awards winners

Centre Award - Ithica Films

Outstanding Contribution - Alison Gwynn, Northern Film and Media

Drama over £100K - *Vera*, Silverprint Pictures for ITV

Drama under £100K - *She Lives Alone*, Candle & Bell

Drama Performance - Brenda Blethyn, *Vera*, Silverprint Pictures for ITV

Pandemic Innovation: Drama - *Vera* production team, Silverprint Pictures for ITV

Pandemic Innovation: Factual - Jen Bartram, Dan Farthing and Luke Walton, BBC Look North, BBC

Broadcast Factual Production -

Terry Abraham, *Life of a Mountain: A Year on Helvellyn* - BBC Four

Non-broadcast Factual Production - *We Are the Geordies* - FNA Digital

Comedy and Entertainment - *Things You Wish You'd Said in an Argument* - Motif Pictures for Channel 4

News Programme - BBC Look North - BBC

Outstanding Journalism - Rachel Bullock, Tyne Tees News - ITV

Presenter - Dawn Thewlis, BBC Look North - BBC

Sport Presenter - Jeff Brown, BBC Look North - BBC

Rising Star - Paul Kingston, Tyne Tees News - ITV

Children's - *My Life My New Heart* - MCC Media for CBBC

Short Form - Sean McKenna, *Dead Whistle Stop*

Commercial - Topher McGrillis, *Shakespeare Coming Home*

Professional Excellence: Animation, Graphics and Titling - Simon Terry - SJW Films

Professional Excellence: Editing - David Fisher, *His Dark Materials* - Bad Wolf for BBC One

Professional Excellence: Photography - Paul Kingston, Tyne Tees News - ITV

Student Awards: Animation - *Sleep Paralysis* - Teesside University

Student Awards: Comedy and Entertainment - *The Importance of Acquiescence* - University of Sunderland

Student Awards: Drama - *Before It All Happened* - University of Sunderland

Student Awards: Factual - *Ordinary Life* - Newcastle University

Beryl Vertue

1931–2022

Beryl Vertue, who died last month at the age of 90, was one of that handful of people who deserve to be described as an industry legend.

Interviewing or bumping into Beryl was a privilege, not least because the experience put you in touch with television's first golden age.

Her south London accent and non-nonsense style – and, yes, she didn't suffer fools – stood out in a business where sycophancy and insincerity are so often the order of the day.

She was famous for producing the hit comedies *Men Behaving Badly* and *Coupling*, and for being responsible for the first format sale of a British sitcom (*Steptoe and Son*) to a US network. But that was only part of an incredible life that reads like the stuff of fiction.

Beryl, who received an RTS Lifetime Achievement Award in 2012, was a pioneering figure in British independent production: she set up Hartswood Films in 1979, an extraordinarily far-sighted move; helped to write the first Pact agreement when she was Chair of the producers' body; executive produced films such as *The Plank*; made documentaries on a wide range of subjects, including one on the early life of the Queen Mother and one about a florist preparing for the Chelsea Flower Show. And, of course, she was the

executive producer of *Sherlock*, one of the defining TV dramas of the 21st century.

She began her career in TV more by chance than planning. The daughter of a south London garage owner, she started her working life as a typist. In the early 1950s, she contracted tuberculosis and, while in hospital, a school-friend, comedy writer Alan Simpson, asked her to join Associated London Scripts (ALS) as a secretary.

There, she worked with numerous funny men, including Tony Hancock, Frankie Howerd and Spike Milligan, and eventually became their agent after persuading the BBC to pay an extra five guineas an episode for *Hancock's Half Hour*.

At ALS, she started producing, a career that would last for more than six decades, and selling format rights to *Steptoe and Son*, *Till Death Us Do Part*, *It's a Knockout* and *Upstairs Downstairs*.

In 1967, Robert Stigwood, the manager of rock bands Cream and the Bee Gees, took a controlling stake in ALS and Beryl became deputy chair of the Stigwood Organisation. In 1975, she was a co-executive producer of the cinema version of The Who's rock opera, *Tommy*, directed by Ken Russell and starring Roger Daltrey, Elton John and Tina Turner. It was one of her proudest achievements.

At Hartswood, her first hit



Hartswood Films

was *Men Behaving Badly*, which initially aired in 1992 on ITV, before switching to the BBC for series 3. Beryl spotted the potential in Simon Nye's novel of the same name, putting the lad-humour comedy on to the small screen with a cast including Harry Enfield (for series 1), Neil Morrissey, Caroline Quentin, Leslie Ash and Martin Clunes.

Another Hartswood hit, *Coupling*, launched in 2000. The show, about a group of young singles, was based on a script by Steven Moffat and was inspired by his relationship with his wife, Sue Vertue, Beryl's daughter, who produced the series.

There were also three series of the comedy, *Is It Legal?* for ITV and then Channel 4 – another example of her extraordinary selling skills and tenacity as she moved the show from one channel to another, repeating the trick she'd so successfully accomplished

with *Men Behaving Badly*.

Moffat and Sue Vertue's professional partnership continued with *Sherlock*, with Moffat co-creating the series with Mark Gatiss, and Sue Vertue producing.

Announcing Beryl's death, her daughters, Debbie and Sue, said: "It's with the heaviest of hearts that we have to share the sad news that mum/Beryl passed away peacefully last night [Saturday 12 February]."

"It wasn't Covid, it was just her nearly 91-year-old body saying enough is enough. We were there, so the passing was as good as one could hope for. Nothing wrong with her brain – earlier this week she was grilling us both about work.

"It's really impossible to believe that she has gone, though, because we know we're not alone in thinking that somehow she'd go on for ever. She meant so much to so many." ■

Steve Clarke

**'SHE
MEANT
SO MUCH
TO SO
MANY'**

Roger Graef, who has died aged 85, was one of the most important campaigning and radical documentary-makers of the past 50 years, a director, producer and driving force behind Films of Record, the production company he formed in 1979. His energy and passion for his chosen profession were apparent to anyone who met him.

But that was only part of Roger's professional life, which involved so many chairmanships, memberships and trusteeships that his *Who's Who* entry ran to 14 lines. These ranged from London Transport to the LSE, where he was a visiting criminology fellow, via the Metropolitan Police to the Brandt Commission.

His 1982 BBC 12-part observational series *Police*, about Thames Valley Police, made headlines and was discussed in Parliament. The film changed the way rape victims were treated and was typical of how he was able to get under the skin of institutions.

ITV's *Decision*, winner of an RTS award, was a fly-on-the-wall account of how organisations, including British Steel and the Communist Party, reach decisions. *The Siege of Scotland Yard* featured Metropolitan Police Commissioner Paul Condon at the time the Stephen Lawrence report was published, in 1999. He made more than 30 documentaries on the police and judicial system in the UK.

Roger was an influential figure in helping to create Channel 4 and became a founding board member in 1980. He played a key role in selecting the broadcaster's first Chief Executive, Jeremy Isaacs, and had a radical vision for the channel.

He suggested that Channel 4 should be housed in a warehouse in King's Cross, at



Films of Record

Roger Graef

1936–2022

the time a rundown area of London. The idea was that it would make a direct connection with its audience as well as help to regenerate the neighbourhood.

He was determined that Channel 4 should be different from the existing broadcasters. In 1987, when Michael Grade succeeded Isaacs, becoming Channel 4's second CEO, Roger made it to the final shortlist of candidates for the job, although, frankly, it would be difficult to imag-

ine him happily adapting to a corporate role.

Born in New York, Roger was the son of a distinguished doctor. His mother was a United Nations volunteer. At Harvard, where he majored in English, he spent most of his time directing plays and opera. In 1962, he came to Britain to direct Tennessee Williams's *Period of Adjustment* at the Royal Court.

His first film was *One of Them Is Brett* for the Society for the Aid of Thalidomide

Children. It demonstrated to primary school headteachers that the physical disabilities of children did not prevent them from being active mentally. It won the Silver Dragon Prize in Krakow, Poland, and was broadcast by the BBC, CBC and ABC Scope in the US, as well as being added to medical school curricula.

Roger said in a BBC interview in 2014, "Nobody had ever seen them as people, they had only seen them as cases, and it entered medical school curricula immediately because doctors had never seen them at home."

He made a series of arts documentaries culminating in *Why Save Florence?* and, in 1970, made an observational film shot in Morocco which showed how ordinary Muslims live.

Roger directed several TV specials, including: the first three Amnesty International comedy galas between 1976 and 1979, and the first *Secret Policeman's Ball*, a benefit show for Amnesty; and co-produced the first *Comic Relief* with Richard Curtis in 1985.

Mark Browning, CEO of Zinc Media Group, which acquired Films of Record in 2008, said: "He was a trailblazer in programme-making and used documentary to open people's eyes to issues in society and the changing world around them.

"His pioneering work helped establish documentaries as an authoritative force for positive change in our world, and this became part of the DNA of Films of Record.

"The contribution that Roger made to the genre cannot be underestimated. His contribution to the industry will be sorely missed, but he leaves behind an industry that is all the better for him having been part of it." ■

Steve Clarke

ROGER 'USED DOCUMENTARY TO OPEN PEOPLE'S EYES TO ISSUES IN SOCIETY'

RTS Yorkshire

Students from Leeds Arts University took home three prizes from the Yorkshire Student Television Awards, which drew an audience of 120 to the Leeds Conservatoire.

Devon Short's film *Impresario* won the Animation prize, Haraldur Pétursson triumphed in Production Design with *Heart of Stone* and Kate Varley took the Set Design prize for *Monkey Business*.

The Northern Film School at Leeds Beckett notched up two prizes: in Drama for *My House of Things* and for Cinematography with *Abhangigkeit*.

The Comedy and Entertainment award went to the University of York for *Morning Daily: Episode 2 "Valentine's Day"* and the Factual prize to Sheffield Hallam University's Phoebe Rowan and Amy Cottrell for *Under Lock and Key*.

The other Craft Awards went to York St John University's Jack Thompson (Cinematography) and Summer Lytton Cobbold, University of Leeds (Camerawork).

BBC Look North (Yorkshire) presenter Amy Garcia



Leeds Arts University

Leeds Art films triumph

hosted the awards ceremony.

"It was a pleasure to hold the Student awards as an in-person event again," said incoming RTS Yorkshire Chair Lisa Holdsworth. "It's such a great opportunity for our members to welcome recent graduates to the industry. It was wonderful to see connections being made all around the room."

Matthew Bell

RTS Yorkshire Student Television Awards winners

Animation - *Impresario* - Devon Short, Leeds Arts University

Comedy and Entertainment - *Morning Daily: Episode 2 "Valentine's Day"* - Sam Bentham, Lauren Voth, Christianna Kouloumpi, Elysia Hickery, Darcie Ingle, Reef Rounding and Isaac Sunderland, University of York

Drama - *My House of Things* - Ingo Lyle-Goodwin, Nikki Merrit, Ben Collins, Kinga Kovacs and Dylan Saville, Leeds Beckett University, Northern Film School

Factual - *Under Lock and Key* -

Phoebe Rowan and Amy Cottrell, Sheffield Hallam University

Craft Skills: Camerawork - *Lullaby for George* - Summer Lytton Cobbold, University of Leeds

Craft Skills: Cinematography - *Abhangigkeit* - Jack Howard, Kate Longton and Katie Cowgill, Leeds Beckett University, Northern Film School
Heartdone - Jack Thompson, York St John University

Craft Skills: Production Design - *Heart of Stone* - Haraldur Pétursson, Leeds Arts University

Craft Skills: Set Design - *Monkey Business* - Kate Varley, Leeds Arts University

The UPSIDE

Carousing on the edge of the volcano

Perhaps the darkest period in recent European history began early on 24 February, when Russian troops began their invasion of Ukraine.

Hours earlier, the mood had been concerned but also celebratory at the RTS Television Journalism Awards, where more than 400 TV people had gathered to hail some of our very best news broadcasters and gatherers.

It was the first time the

event had been held in person since Julie Etchingham signed off the 2020 awards as we all prepared for lockdown.

The joy of mingling was palpable and frequently remarked upon, not least by the evening's elegant and charismatic host, *Channel 4 News*'s Cathy Newman.

Achievements to be proud of

In case you missed it, Sky News was voted News Channel of the Year for the fifth year running. *ITV News* had a brilliant night, winning a total of nine awards.

Especially good to see *Good Morning Britain*'s Noel Phillips scoop the Young Talent of the

Year prize. To say the 28-year-old appreciated the verdict of his peers is an understatement. He was – how to put this? – very keen to share the stage with his colleague, Kate Garraway.

A hostile article that won over its subject

Samir Shah, recipient of the Outstanding Contribution Award, revealed to the audience how he met his wife, Belkis, when she was working as a journalist on *Broadcast*.

After she'd written a less than laudatory article – Shah described it as "coruscating" – he thought it would be a good idea to meet Belkis again to try to persuade her

to see him in a different light.

It obviously worked: for decades, they have not only shared the same house but he and Belkis jointly own Juniper TV.

Heggessey waxes lyrical about theatre

Congratulations to Lorraine Heggessey, who last month was appointed Chair of the Lyric Theatre in Hammersmith. "I know how much the community appreciates having such an excellent theatre on its doorstep, which also gives opportunities to many young people in the creative arts," she said.

The UpSide wishes her great success in her latest role.



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