

March 2017

# Television

**Liberty's big bet on F1**

# Apply now for the 2017 Shiers Trust Award

## Do you need £2,000 for a history of television project?

The Trust can make a grant of up to £2,000 towards publishing work on any aspect of the history of television

### Objectives

The promotion of public education through the study and research of the history of television in all its aspects and without regard to country of origin, including the development and encouragement of publications and associated projects such as bibliographies and monographs on particular aspects, provided that the results of such study and research shall be published and that the contribution made by the Trust shall be suitably acknowledged in any publication.

### Criteria

Grants will be given to assist in the completion of new or unfinished projects, work or literature specific to the objectives of the Trust. 'Literature' is defined as including audio-visual media such as DVDs and websites.

The Trustees must be satisfied that the work they are supporting either could not be finished or published without the grant and that, with it, the work will be completed, or, the grant will provide the initial phase of a project that will be continued and completed with other identified funding.

Applications will be considered broadly in support of research, development, writing, editing or publication.

Grants for research will require that the results of the work will be made known and accessible through appropriate means. In the case of literature, projects must have a real prospect of publication. Applicants must demonstrate that their work will have a clear expectation of making a significant contribution to the objectives of the Trust.

Applicants will be required to satisfy the Trustees of the soundness of their projects, and identify any grants from other sources. The Trustees will not make commitments to support recurring funding, nor make grants to cover fees or maintenance of students undertaking courses.

### George Shiers

George Shiers, a distinguished US television historian, was a long-standing member of the RTS. Before his death in 1983, he and his wife, May, provided for a bequest in their wills. The Shiers Trust grant, now in its 17th year, is normally worth £2,000. Grants will be considered and approved by the Trustees who may, at their discretion, consult appropriate experts to assist their decisions. In assessing priorities, the Trustees will take into account the sums of money available.

### Application procedure

Applications are now invited and should be submitted to the Trustees by Friday **31 March 2017** on an official application form (available from the RTS, address below). Applications should set out the nature of the project in not more than 500 words. Supporting documentation may also be included. Details of your experience or qualifications should be provided. Applicants should ensure that their project conforms to all the criteria. Applications should be accompanied by a budget that clearly identifies the sum being requested for a grant and the purposes for which it will be used. **Application forms are available from the RTS and should be returned to the same address:**

Clare Colvin, Archivist  
Royal Television Society  
3 Dorset Rise  
London EC4Y 8EN  
clare@rts.org.uk

### Previous recipients

- 2016:** The Scottish Broadcasting Heritage Group recorded interviews with people who worked at and watched STV from 1957 to 2017.
- 2015:** Oral history project by former Granada staffers Stephen Kelly and Judith Jones, with interviews published at: [www.granadaland.org](http://www.granadaland.org)
- 2014:** Shared between Dr Sheldon Hall, whose *Armchair Cinema* is a study of feature films on British television, and Marc Scott, whose research focuses on the unofficial development of TV in Australia
- 2013:** Barry Fox has built a website ([www.tekkiepix.com](http://www.tekkiepix.com)) to present his collection of historical consumer electronics imagery and documents. The picture shows a publicity still for Philips's optical videodisc
- 2012:** Paul Marshall researched a biography of Alan Archibald Campbell Swinton, the early visionary of all-electronic television
- 2012:** Simon Vaughan digitised the 300-page 'Black Book', the first manual of the Marconi-EMI electronic television system, installed in 1936
- 2011:** David Rose presented an illustrated retrospective of his exceptional career as a groundbreaking television and film producer to a large number of live audiences
- 2008/2010:** Steve Arnold digitised back issues of *Radio Times* to make a searchable online archive of articles and schedules
- 2001:** Simon Vaughan, archivist of the Alexandra Palace Television Society, printed a collection of 1,200 photos by the father of television lighting, Desmond Robert Campbell
- 2004:** Don McLean compiled an authentically accurate audio two-CD presentation of the beginnings of television in Britain
- 2005:** John Grist wrote a biography of Grace Wyndham Goldie, the first Head of BBC Television News and Current Affairs
- 2009:** Ronald Sandell, a key planner of the analogue terrestrial transmitter network, conducted research for a book, *Seventy Years Before the Masts*
- 2010:** John Wyver conducted interviews on the presentation of theatre plays on British television



1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13



## From the CEO



Our awards season is in full swing and I am thrilled to report that the recent RTS Television Journalism Awards delivered a fantastic night.

A big thank you to the evening's host, Barbara Serra, one of Al Jazeera English's news anchors.

Congratulations to all the winners and a huge thank you to all the judges, who worked so tirelessly. The RTS Television Journalism Awards are always an emotional event, but this year's ceremony was especially moving. The Judges' Award was given to the late Steve Hewlett, and the Society announced the creation of a scholarship in Steve's name. We are running

the scheme in tandem with the Media Society.

The Steve Hewlett Scholarship will be presented each year to one recipient from a lower-income family studying an undergraduate broadcast journalism course in the UK. It will be funded on a long-term basis as part of the RTS's Undergraduate Bursary scheme, which guarantees students a scholarship of £1,000 each year.

I was delighted to attend the RTS North East and the Border Awards, which celebrated its 30th anniversary this year. There were some great winners – from the well-loved and powerful female trio of Brenda Blethyn, Fiona Armstrong and Pam Royle to some very talented students producing innovative animation. Jayne

Secker of Sky News was a gracious host.

Back in London, the RTS returned to The Hospital Club for a stimulating debate sparked by the storm over fake news, "False news, unverified claims, alternative facts: What is the future for honest journalism?". A full report is contained in this issue of *Television*.

Heartfelt thanks to the wonderful panel, to Sue Robertson and Martin Stott for producing the event, and to the energetic Stewart Purvis, who chaired the session.

Theresa Wise

# Contents

**7 Fatima Salaria's TV Diary**  
Fatima Salaria gets close to the royals and attends a Channel 4 diversity debate

**8 Restart the race**  
Can Liberty Media modernise Formula One for an audience addicted to social media? Owen Gibson is our man in the pits

**10 Keeping up with the Joneses**  
Steve Clarke talks to A+E's Heather Jones about the lure of a career in pay-TV

**12 Is politics beyond satire?**  
Stuart Kemp inquires whether today's disruptive politics will foster a new golden age of British TV satire

**14 The fight against fake news**  
Matthew Bell hears how social media is subverting objective, factual reporting by disseminating lies – and how to tackle this

**18 The political axis shifts to the weekend**  
Sunday morning political TV shows are booming. Raymond Snoddy reports

**20 A tough job for Ofcom**  
Martin Stott lays out the challenges facing the regulator as it takes over responsibility for the BBC

**22 Atlantic crossing**  
Can BritBox, the subscription streaming service backed by the BBC and ITV, succeed in the world's most competitive TV market, asks Lisa Campbell

**24 Doctors in distress**  
BBC Two's acclaimed documentary *Hospital* has been reordered. Tara Conlan talks to the show's creators

**26 A passion for truth in a post-truth world**  
*Channel 4 News* editor Ben de Pear tells Sanya Burgess why his reporters need to get out more

**29 Our Friend in Northern Ireland**  
Steve Carson warns that Belfast cannot rest on its laurels as a production powerhouse

**32 RTS Television Journalism Awards 2017**  
Hosted by Barbara Serra, the awards were presented on 1 March at the London Hilton Park Lane. The winners and nominees over six pages

Cover: Shutterstock

**Editor**  
Steve Clarke  
smclarke\_333@hotmail.com  
**Writer**  
Matthew Bell  
bell127@btinternet.com

**Production, design, advertising**  
Gordon Jamieson  
gordon.jamieson.01@gmail.com  
**Sub-editor**  
Sarah Bancroft  
smbancroft@me.com

**Royal Television Society**  
3 Dorset Rise  
London EC4Y 8EN  
T: 020 7822 2810  
E: info@rts.org.uk  
W: www.rts.org.uk

**Subscription rates**  
UK £115  
Overseas (surface) £146.11  
Overseas (airmail) £172.22  
Enquiries: publication@rts.org.uk

**Printing**  
ISSN 0308-454X  
Printer: FE Burman  
20 Crimscott Street  
London SE1 5TP

**Legal notice**  
© Royal Television Society 2017.  
The views expressed in *Television* are not necessarily those of the RTS.  
Registered Charity 313 728



# DAVINCI RESOLVE 12.5

The world's fastest video editing and color correction software!

Now with over 1,000 enhancements and 250 new features, DaVinci Resolve 12.5 gives editors and colorists a faster, more refined editing and grading experience than ever! You get professional editing with advanced color correction, plus incredible new effects so you can edit, color correct, add effects and deliver projects from start to finish, all in one single software tool!

### Faster Editing

DaVinci Resolve 12.5 features dozens of new editing and trimming tools, along with faster timeline performance! You get new ripple overwrite, paste insert, revolutionary new audio waveform overlays that help you edit, and much more. DaVinci Resolve 12.5 now features virtually every editing and trimming tool imaginable!

### Better Color

Now you can use the same tools Hollywood colorists use every day on blockbuster films and television shows! DaVinci Resolve 12.5 Studio gives you new HDR grading, faster node editing, new Resolve FX and more! You get color that goes far beyond any other editing system and you can switch between editing and grading with a single click!

### New Effects

DaVinci Resolve 12.5 introduces ResolveFX, an amazing collection of high performance plug-ins such as blurs, light rays, mosaics, and more! You also get more transitions, enhanced titles, keyframe animation and speed ramp effects, along with Fusion Connect, which lets you send shots to Fusion for visual effects!

### DaVinci Resolve 12.5 Studio

When you need to work at resolutions higher than Ultra HD, like DCI 4K or even on stereoscopic 3D projects, then upgrade to DaVinci Resolve 12.5 Studio. You get multi-user editing and color correction, network rendering, 3D, advanced temporal and spatial noise reduction, optical quality blur effects, additional ResolveFX and much more!

DaVinci Resolve 12.5

**Free Download**

DaVinci Resolve 12.5 Studio

**£785\***

DaVinci Resolve Advanced Panel

**£24,095\***



Watch Video!

## National events

**Tuesday 21 March**

### RTS Programme Awards 2017

In partnership with Audio Network  
Venue: Grosvenor House Hotel,  
Park Lane, London W1K 7TN

- Alice Turner 020 7822 2822
- ATurner@rts.org.uk

### RTS EARLY EVENING EVENT

**Monday 10 April**

#### Where have all the disabled people gone?

Panelists: Louise Dyson, founder, VisABLE; Adam Hills; Rosie Jones. Additional speakers TBC. Chair: Ade Adepitan MBE. 6:30pm for 6:45pm start

Venue: Channel 4, 124 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2TX

- Book online at [www.rts.org.uk](http://www.rts.org.uk)

### RTS EARLY EVENING EVENT

**Wednesday 26 April**

#### Breaking barriers: How can the TV industry encourage more women into technology jobs?

Panelists: Sinead Greenaway, chief technology and operations officer, UKTV; Kate Kinninmont MBE, Chief Executive, Women in Film and TV (UK); Anna Patching, sound engineer, OB STV; Additional speakers TBC. Chair: Maggie Philbin, CEO, TeenTech.

6:30pm for 6:45pm start  
Venue: The Hospital Club, 24 Endell Street, London WC2H 9HQ

- Book online at [www.rts.org.uk](http://www.rts.org.uk)

### RTS AWARDS

**Friday 16 June**

#### RTS Student Television Awards 2017

Venue: BFI Southbank, London SE1 8XT

- Booking opens soon

### RTS CONFERENCE

**13-15 September**

#### RTS Cambridge Convention 2017

Venue: West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge CB3 9DP and King's College, Cambridge CB2 1ST

- Booking opens soon

## Local events

### BRISTOL

- Belinda Biggam
- belindabiggam@hotmail.com

### DEVON & CORNWALL

- Kingsley Marshall
- Kingsley.Marshall@falmouth.ac.uk

### EAST

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

### LONDON

**Saturday 22 April**  
**Update TV**

Free, all-day training event, in partnership with BBC Academy and Richmond, The American International University in London. Tickets are free but numbers are limited, so the selection process involves an application form. Provisional topics include: multi-platform commissioning; mobile journalism; production for portable devices; using social media; the journey from HD to Ultra HD; VR programming; digital media workflow; CV workshop. Registration from 9:00am; event starts at 9:45am.

Venue: Asa Briggs Hall,  
7-17 Ansdell Street, London W8 5BN

- Daniel Cherowbrier
- daniel@cherowbrier.co.uk

### MIDLANDS

**Thursday 23 March**

#### Networking seminar

Find out what's happening in your region from guest speakers, and network with other professionals. To book a place, email [RTSMidlands@rts.org.uk](mailto:RTSMidlands@rts.org.uk). 11:45am-2:30pm

Venue: University of Worcester, Henwick Grove, Worcester WR2 6AJ

**Wednesday 29 March**

#### Baird Lecture: Planet Earth II – the making of a natural history blockbuster

The Baird Lecture 2017 is given by Mike Gunton, creative director of factual and the Natural History Unit for BBC Worldwide and BBC. Free, but attendees must register in advance via: [thebramall.co.uk/bookings/?eid=1759](http://thebramall.co.uk/bookings/?eid=1759). 7:00pm.

Venue: Elgar Concert Hall, The Bramall, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT

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

### NORTH EAST & THE BORDER

**Wednesday 17 May**

#### Young People's Media Festival 2017

Further information at: [www.sunderland.ac.uk/rtsypmf](http://www.sunderland.ac.uk/rtsypmf). 6:00pm

Venue: Media Campus, University of Sunderland SR6 0DD

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

### NORTH WEST

**Thursday 23 March**

#### An evening with Kay Burley

To reserve your place please email: [rachelpinkney@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:rachelpinkney@yahoo.co.uk). 6:30pm

Venue: Compass Room, The Lowry, Salford Quays, Salford M50 3AZ

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

### NORTHERN IRELAND

**Tuesday 28 March**

#### RTS NI Student Awards 2017

Ceremony followed by reception. Light refreshments. Sponsored by Crawford McCann, Stellify, Lark Insurance and Westway Film Productions and supported by the Department for Communities as part of Creativity Month '17. Enquiries to Sara at [rtsni@rts.org.uk](mailto:rtsni@rts.org.uk). 7:00pm-9:30pm

Venue: Black Box, 18-22 Hill Street, Belfast BT1 2LA

- John Mitchell

- [mitch.mvbroadcast@btinternet.com](mailto:mitch.mvbroadcast@btinternet.com)

### REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

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

### SCOTLAND

**Wednesday 26 April**

#### The next generation of TV journalism

Venue: City of Glasgow College, City Campus, 190 Cathedral Street, Glasgow G40RF

**Wednesday 17 May**

#### RTS Scotland 2017 Awards

6:00pm for 6:30pm

Venue: Oran Mor, Byres Rd, Glasgow G12 8QX

- James Wilson 07899 761167
- [james.wilson@cityofglasgow-college.ac.uk](mailto:james.wilson@cityofglasgow-college.ac.uk)

### SOUTHERN

**Wednesday 22 March**

#### Meet the professionals

An opportunity for students from production-based courses across the South to meet informally a wide range of media production professionals. 2:00pm-5:30pm

Venue: Bournemouth University, Talbot Campus BH12 5BB

- Gordon Cooper
- [gordonjcooper@gmail.com](mailto:gordonjcooper@gmail.com)

### THAMES VALLEY

**Wednesday 17 May**

#### NAB review 2017

7:00pm-9:00pm

Venue: Pincents Manor Hotel, Calcot, Reading RG31 4UQ

Venue: Pincents Manor Hotel, Calcot, Reading RG31 4UQ

- Penny Westlake
- [info@rtstvc.org.uk](mailto:info@rtstvc.org.uk)

### WALES

- Hywel William 07980 007841
- [hywel@aim.uk.com](mailto:hywel@aim.uk.com)

### YORKSHIRE

- Lisa Holdsworth 07790 145280
- [lisa@allonewordproductions.co.uk](mailto:lisa@allonewordproductions.co.uk)



# CrewStart™

## Struggling with start paperwork?

Hiring artists and crew? CrewStart™ manages the onboarding process for you, from the initial invitation, to ensuring that paperwork is completed correctly, signed and approved online. CrewStart™ is designed to help your team automate the processing of contracts, start forms, daily rate vouchers and timesheets.

### CrewStart™ benefits:

- Reduce administration
- Sign contracts securely
- Submit start paperwork
- Calculate timesheets
- Approve documents
- Ensure accuracy
- Auditable reports

To find out how you can save time and go paperless on your next production, visit the Digital Production Office® website

[www.digitalproductionoffice.com](http://www.digitalproductionoffice.com)

Contact our team for more information:

T: +44 (0)1753 630300

E: [info@sargent-disc.com](mailto:info@sargent-disc.com)



[www.digitalproductionoffice.com](http://www.digitalproductionoffice.com)

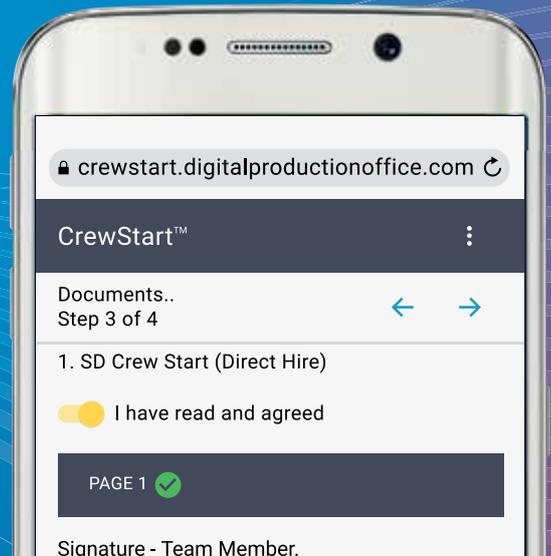
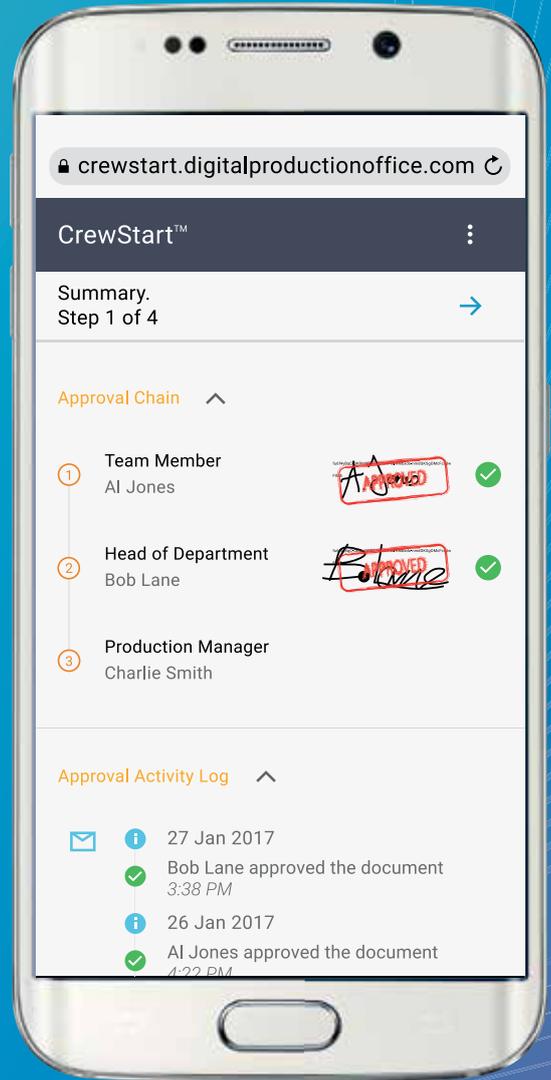
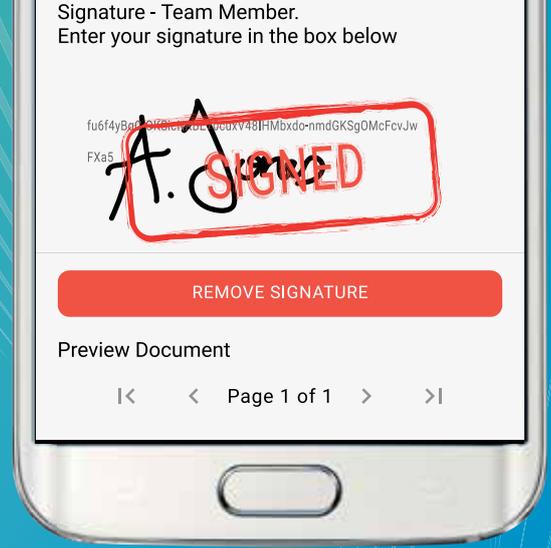
[@DigiProdOffice](https://twitter.com/DigiProdOffice)

[/digitalproductionoffice](https://facebook.com/digitalproductionoffice)

[www.sargent-disc.com](http://www.sargent-disc.com)

[@SargentDisc](https://twitter.com/SargentDisc)

[/SargentDisc](https://facebook.com/SargentDisc)



# TV diary

## Fatima Salaria gets close to the royals and attends a Channel 4 diversity debate



**S**tart the week in a panic about what to wear to the screening of *George III – The Genius of the Mad King* at Buckingham Palace. I know, I know, I shouldn't really be worried about this; typical female angst. Protocol dictates a trouser suit or a skirt. For someone who lives in her trainers and jeans, this is a sartorial challenge.

As the daughter of Pakistani immigrants, who grew up in Stoke-on-Trent, the closest I ever imagined I'd get to the royals was my copycat Lady Di hairstyle. So, just walking through the gates gives me a kick and the nerve to hold my own with the double-barrelled history bigwigs inside.

■ **Ditch the heels for my trusty trainers, a rush through St James's Park to catch a bus to Holborn for a first viewing of an upcoming *Who Do You Think You Are?***

The show really moved me and made me think about my strained relationship with my Dad, who arrived in Britain in the early 1950s as a labourer from Sialkot.

He never really talked about his early life and how the Partition of India in 1947 affected him and my grandparents.

I was ignorant of the struggle my parents went through back then,

**which is why I was so passionate about commissioning a series on the Partition for the 70th anniversary, this August.**

■ Checking emails on the train back, I find that I've been invited to a meeting with Harun Khan, the President of the Muslim Council of Britain. Harun was one of our consultants on *Muslims Like Us*, which I commissioned last year. He told me he faced criticism from some of his members for helping us but felt that the programme was spot on and worth defending.

One of the things I have agreed to help him with is training young Muslim women to become film-makers. But what really impressed me was how he was trying to develop Muslim women to be spokespeople for the community. Couldn't come sooner.

■ **On Wednesday, I'm part of a Channel 4 Diverse Festival panel. I have five minutes to reveal what we have learned in the past year and our ambitions for the future.**

As Zai Bennett, Ralph Lee and others cover targets, social inclusion and audience need, I just stand up and give them my story: how a young kid who loved watching *Crossroads*, *It's a Knockout* and *Charlie's Angels*, and enjoyed writing and finding out about people's lives, found her way into the BBC.

I had many happy years working as a director and series producer, but must admit that I was beginning to feel overlooked. Then the BBC Assistant Commissioner Scheme gave me my breakthrough. Now, I am able to commission shows that I hope will inspire my children's generation, such as *Black and British: a Forgotten History*.

And I am delighted that the scheme is continuing for at least the next two years.

■ In the evening, there's a leaving party for Maxine Watson, a friend and colleague from the days of BBC Two's *Black Britain*, a late-1990s programme that nurtured a lot of black talent, including Gillian Joseph, Eddie Botsio, Kurt Barling and the brilliant Simone Pennant, a really clever development producer who also runs the TV Collective, which promotes diversity in television, so skilfully.

■ Finally, I was grateful to the Church of England for welcoming my appointment, despite some in the media implying that I am sympathetic to extremism just because I am a Muslim. I worry for the hacks now viewing every old edition of *An Island Parish*, trying to find jihadis on Shetland or Anguilla.

*Fatima Salaria is commissioning editor for religion and ethics at the BBC.*

# Restart the race

## TV sport

Can Liberty Media modernise Formula One for an audience addicted to social media?

**Owen Gibson** is our man in the pits

**W**hen Bernie Ecclestone's reign as Formula One's ringmaster finally came to an end earlier this year, it

was accompanied by a frisson of disbelief. Until that moment, it had felt as though the former used-car salesman who had built Formula One from a disparate cottage industry into an \$8bn business was indivisible from the sport he bestrode.

But, in taking the decision to oust the 86-year-old from a meaningful management role, the sport's new owner – Liberty Media – was underlining its intention to modernise a product whose appeal appeared to be flatlining.

For a sport that has always built its allure on an intoxicating mix of romance and technology, there were signs that its star was on the wane.

Shortly before agreeing the deal that saw Liberty Media acquire the sport under moustachioed supremo Chase Carey, Ecclestone admitted that it had lost a third of its viewership since 2011.

In simple terms, 200 million people worldwide had turned their backs on Formula One. This could partly be accounted for by Ecclestone's strategy of moving the sport from free-to-air to pay-TV; sponsors preferred the former because it gave them more exposure.

But many of those within, or around, the sport's hermetically sealed bubble believed that there was also something more fundamental at play.

Ecclestone had successfully built Formula One on a combination of horse trading and ruthless control. But was that approach still suited to the new



Ferrari pit stop

world of abundant access across multiple digital channels and online platforms via a dizzying array of devices?

While always keen to experiment with new models if he saw a financial upside – recall the abortive attempt to establish an interactive F1 subscription channel before the technology was ready – Ecclestone could appear all at sea in the digital world.

Two years previously, he had waved away suggestions that his sport needed to boost its youth appeal.

“I’m not interested in tweeting, Facebook and whatever this nonsense is,” said Ecclestone in 2014. “I tried to find out but, in any case, I’m too old-fashioned. I couldn’t see any value in it. And, I don’t know what the so-called ‘young generation’ of today really wants. What is it?”

Ecclestone’s view was that the sponsors that bankrolled his sport were looking to target older fans who would buy their luxury brands. But that ignored two things.

First, that social media and digital channels are now increasingly ubiquitous for all ages; and, second, that a sport built on perpetual motion has to be seen to be moving forward. Instead, it risks coasting to a standstill.

“I don’t know why people want to get to the so-called ‘young generation’. Why do they want to do that? Is it to sell them something? Most of these kids haven’t got any money,” said Ecclestone then. “I’d rather get to the 70-year-old guy who’s got plenty of cash.

“So, there’s no point trying to reach these kids because they won’t buy any of the products here and, if marketers are aiming at this audience, then maybe they should advertise with Disney.”

By the standard of some of his other pronouncements – Ecclestone had previously sung the praises of Vladimir Putin and said that Adolf Hitler was someone who “got things done” – it was hardly controversial.

In the UK, Formula One had gone from a sport on which the BBC was prepared to lavish £40m a year in 2009 – and thereby resist the relentless trend for sport’s glitziest properties to head towards pay-TV – to one that the corporation was happy to pass on, in order to save cash. The BBC launched its coverage at the height of Lewis Hamilton’s first flush of fame following

his inaugural title win. The broadcaster presented it as a means of targeting hard-to-reach demographics, including younger men.

But it rapidly became clear that, in line with Ecclestone’s later comments, Formula One’s audience was an ageing one – albeit a committed and moneyed fan base. All of which, in fact, made it an attractive target for pay-TV.

First, the BBC decided to relinquish half of the races, ending its deal with Ecclestone early, to share rights with Sky. The corporation subsequently relinquished the rest of its rights,

## DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT, ON ITS OWN, WILL NOT REVERSE DECLINING VIEWING TRENDS

which were picked up by Channel 4. To complete the switch to pay-TV, Sky then scooped the rights exclusively from 2018.

But Liberty’s avowed intention is to reverse the flow, democratise the sport, take it to new fans and subtly effect a shift from a product that is wringing ever more money out of a contracting audience to one striking out for new audiences.

All of which is, of course, easier said than done in an ever-more crowded media and sporting landscape.

Having appointed former ESPN executive Sean Bratches to oversee the sport’s commercial growth, much of Liberty’s early rhetoric has been concerned with the sport’s digital reach. It may be significant that Norman Howell, the man Bratches appointed head of global communications, was formerly head of Formula One’s digital channels.

“We want fans to get closer to the action on and off the track, with new levels of entertainment and engagement. If we can do this, Formula One will continue to be one of the biggest sporting brands in the world,” says Howell.

In an early hint of what may follow, one of Liberty Media’s first steps was to relax the social-media restrictions

around the sport. Indeed, it seems an obvious move to make if the company wants to build deeper bonds between the drivers and fans, and promote the personalities behind the helmets.

Hamilton, for one, complained last season that the endless rounds of top-table appearances were “boring”. He preferred to communicate directly with fans via Instagram and Snapchat. One divisive episode summed up the sport’s cultural collision: half of the fanbase praised Hamilton, as he fiddled with his phone like a bored teen during a press conference while the other half castigated him.

But, crucially, it got people talking. Part of Liberty’s plan is to reconnect casual audiences and general sports fans with the glamour, drama and personality of the sport.

Previously, contractual restrictions prevented drivers and teams from posting video content from the paddock. Predictably, Hamilton was among the first to take advantage of the new rules, with the Mercedes driver posting content from the testing track in Barcelona.

Digital engagement alone won’t reverse declining viewing trends but Liberty – which did, after all, shell out \$8bn on the show that Bernie built – is convinced that, if it can add a modern twist to the deep bonds that petrol-heads have with their sport, it will be on to a winner.

Under Carey, the highly respected Ross Brawn, recently appointed as Formula One’s Managing Director of Motorsport, has been charged with innovating the sport. Meanwhile, Bratches takes care of spearheading the commercial and media side.

Structurally, everything from shorter races to new city-centre-based locations have been mooted. In his first round of interviews, Carey stated simply: “We’re not marketing the sport.”

Expect that to change. But, in a global media and sporting landscape that often feels like it is spinning faster than a Pirelli Slick, innovating while maintaining its allure to the broadcasters – who have traditionally brought in its biggest audiences and revenues – will be no mean feat.

Like the sport itself, it promises to be a thrilling ride for Liberty, but one fraught with jeopardy.

## Multichannel TV

### Steve Clarke talks to A+E's Heather Jones about the lure of a career in pay-TV

**H**eather Jones is living proof that a working-class, non-metropolitan woman can make it to the top in TV. But, after listening to her recount her life story, you can't help thinking that she was always bound to succeed.

She runs US cable station A+E's London-based businesses, overseeing such channels as History, Lifetime and Crime+Investigation, and is responsible for slightly more than 200 staff.

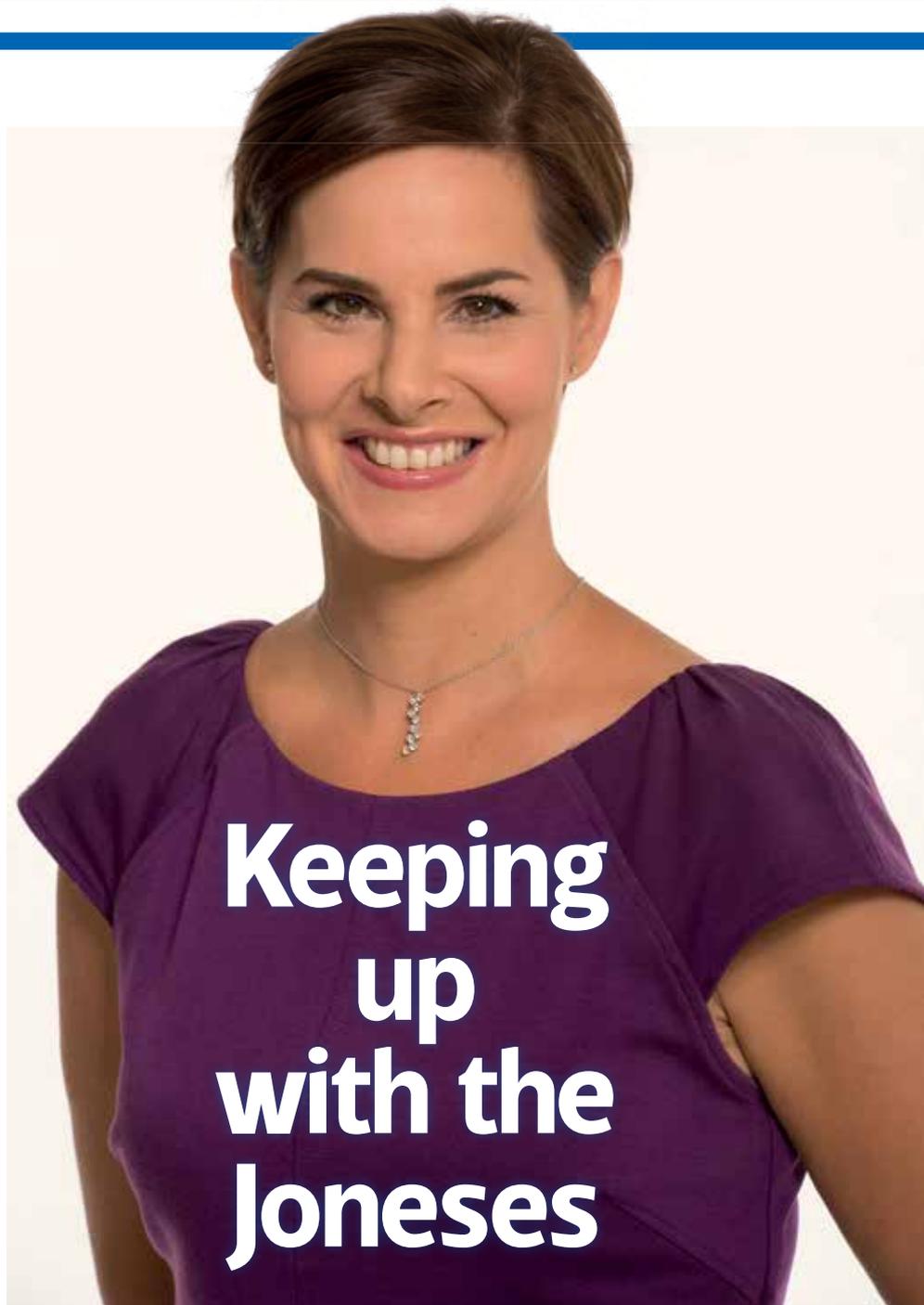
Jones, 46 and the mother of three children (Alice, 15, Joe, 13, and Franklyn, 6), has worked in the British pay-TV business for 20 years (A+E's UK-based activities are a joint venture with Sky) and makes no secret of her commercially driven dedication to popular television.

Her commissions are honed to try and grab attention in the clutter of the post-multichannel world – *Britain's Next Top Model*, *Dance Mums with Jennifer Ellison*, *Pawn Stars UK*, *Sean Bean on Waterloo*, *Measuring Evil: Britain's Worst Killers*, *Britain's Darkest Taboos*, *Crimes That Shook Britain* and, recently, *Ronnie O'Sullivan's American Hustle*.

"When you are not top of the EPG, having a brilliant piece of TV isn't enough. You also have to make sure you've got the necessary ingredients to make the noise that's going to get people to watch it," she says.

Jones is someone who has always known her own mind. As a teenager, she rejected an offer from Oxford to read English, much to the annoyance of her father, a carpenter.

Instead, she did a drama degree at Aberystwyth University, graduating with a 2:1. "All I ever wanted to do was work in TV. I loved TV. As a young girl, I didn't watch much TV but, by the time I was a teenager, I was hooked.



## Keeping up with the Joneses

I was obsessed by *Coronation Street* and even *Crossroads*."

Jones was brought up in rural Somerset, where she attended the local comprehensive, Holyrood Community School. Her housewife mother encouraged her daughter to dance, sing and play the piano. "I was on stage in the local panto when I was five," she recalls. "At 10, I was offered a place to be a professional dancer but the funding dried up."

Tall and striking, Jones looks as if she is heading for a red-carpet awards bash, rather than running a company located in a busy mall in west London's Hammersmith. Her tailored dress is a dazzling pink that matches

her nails and lipstick. It is Monday afternoon and Jones is back in the office after a week's skiing with her family: "I don't have much technique but I am fearless." No surprise there. Her husband, who stays at home to care for the kids, is documentary-maker Matt Webster.

Despite her can-do attitude, getting started in TV proved difficult. Jones applied for graduate schemes at both the BBC and Channel 4 but failed to land an interview. Undaunted, she competed for and won a one-year scholarship at the University of California.

It was 1991 when the course ended. The UK was deep in recession, so, fluent in French, she decided "to run

away to Paris". She got a job at Euro Disney, eventually using a contact she made there to find work as a researcher at the Disney-owned Buena Vista Productions in London.

Her obvious focus and appetite for hard work meant that it was not long before her career began an upward curve. At Flextech, she ran youth channel Trouble, before joining Viacom as Managing Director of Paramount Comedy Channels and subsequently becoming director of television for MTV Europe.

Having joined A+E in the summer of 2013 as VP of programming, she was

channels: a local version of the female-skewed Lifetime and a new station, Blaze, aimed at "slightly older, more downmarket men".

History (formerly The History Channel) is the company's flagship offering. Commentators have long dubbed it "The Hitler Channel". Jones denies that History is still synonymous with the German dictator: "If you haven't watched History for 10 years, you still think it's the Hitler channel... We felt cleansed of that and we're now ready to do Hitler again."

Hence, *Hunting Hitler*, which recently completed its second season and was

channels and the increase in home-grown shows, plus the ability to acquire bigger shows from the US.

An example of the latter is the remake of *Roots*, initially broadcast by BBC Four in the UK, but due to be shown by History later in the year.

"We don't have the money to go and buy *Grey's Anatomy* or *CSI*," Jones admits. "We can't compete financially with the likes of Living or Channel 4 for those massive procedurals."

As much of her US content supply pipeline is high-volume, her domestic commissions are usually short series, allowing "proper money" to be spent on these shows.

At the moment, Jones is commissioning around 200 hours a year of original programmes. "I want local content to be the driver of all our networks. Across the networks, our biggest shows are the local commissions," she says.

Her most expensive show to date is *Ronnie O'Sullivan's American Hustle*, which she claims had "a terrestrial-sized budget". Ultimately, she would like a third of her schedules to be made up of original content.

So, where does her business acumen come from? "I've only ever worked in pay-TV," she says. "Therefore, any model that I look at is, by definition, a commercial model."

"I've always been a deal-maker, ever since I was little."

"When I first moved from production into channel management, when I became channel manager of Trouble, the first thing I had to do was renegotiate *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air* deal with Warner Bros."

"I was petrified. I'd never done an acquisitions deal before, but the euphoria I felt when I closed that deal was amazing."

Clearly, she feels at home being employed by US-owned firms. "I love working for American businesses where, if you've got a great idea, they're willing to back you.... A+E is an extraordinary company. Being a joint venture, it's effectively a private company. They look at things in the long term – what do these brands want to be in five years' time?"

"There's no distraction of quarterly Wall Street calls that affect your budgets. It's all about long-term sustainability. It's a company that's entirely run by producers, which speaks to me enormously."



**Britain's Next Top Model presenter Abbey Clancy**

twice promoted to reach her present job, general manager UK and SVP content and creative.

Jones says: "As a woman, the media is a great place to work. But I do feel that we are under-represented in the boardroom." She adds: "The challenge is how we get more senior women working in the business side of television."

What do women need in order to make it to the boardroom? Jones pauses before answering: "Confidence is a big part of it. The skills and the talents are there. Women sometimes have a tendency to self-check and to self-doubt, more than men do. That limits their ability to progress."

At A+E, she has launched two

accused by *Variety* of trivialising its subject matter.

She agrees that History needs to do, well, more history and trim the factual entertainment: "One of our priorities is that there is going to be a lot more history on History going forward."

"People say: 'Where's the history in *Pawn Stars*?' *Pawn Stars* is absolutely designed to be a mass-market show about history. You've got these wonderful characters, who are family, who run a real business," she says. "History is for the man who likes a pub quiz and who likes the little nuggets that cab drivers have."

Asked about her biggest achievements so far at A+E, she highlights the new



## Content

**Stuart Kemp** inquires whether today's disruptive politics will foster a new golden age of British TV satire

# Is politics beyond satire?

The disruptive, combative political landscape created by Brexit and the election of Donald Trump is, on the face of it, a gift for UK television satirists and their venerable tradition of biting and often brutal parody.

While Theresa May's blandness may do little to whet a satirist's appetite, Boris Johnson and Nigel Farage bring larger-than-life personas to Brexit. And Trump is, well, Trump.

For Jimmy Mulville, Managing Director at Hat Trick Productions, maker of *Have I Got News for You* and *Revolt* for the BBC and *The Fake News Show* and *Power Monkeys* for Channel 4, it's all about concentrating on the personalities. "Brexit is a sort of ongoing sitcom," he says. "Trump often defies satire because he's almost a parody of himself."

Satire is, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the use of humour, irony, exaggeration or ridicule to expose and criticise people's stupidity or vices, particularly in the context of contemporary politics and other topical issues.

One of British TV's finest hours was the era of *Spitting Image*, when the political landscape was dominated by big characters such as Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. The unrelenting latex puppet lampoonery achieved plaudits and initially healthy ratings for its satirical efforts. But, in 1996, ITV cancelled the show created by Peter Fluck, Roger Law and Martin Lambie-Nairn. Several of its top writers and impressionists (such as Rory Bremner and John Sessions) had left and Thatcher, too, had exited the main political stage.

A big challenge for the 21st Century television heirs of *Spitting Image*, including ITV's *Newzoids*, is that Brexit and Trump have taken up permanent residence on the news agenda.

"The problem with these two big, lumpy stories sitting there, dominating the news agenda, is how to make your show interesting week in and week out," says Mulville. Commissioners and creators "have to be quick, nimble and to adjust" as Brexit and Trump continue to evolve, he adds.

Dominating the news agenda isn't necessarily all bad. "Our tradition of news and impartiality in this country means that we have an incredibly informed audience, which is very alive to, and has an appetite for, satire," says Ed Havarad, head of entertainment, TV

events and sport at Channel 4, who recently shepherded Fake News Week to the broadcaster. He was previously editor of the BBC's *Question Time*.

"We have very, very good news, so satire just has to be more informed and targeted," is how Ian Hislop, the *HIGNFY* captain and long-standing editor of *Private Eye*, sees it.

"If you want to change things [through satire], you have to go out and campaign, and write and argue," says Armando Iannucci, the writer, producer and director, who skewers politics and puffery with shows such as *The Thick of It* and *Veep*.

"Let's examine what people have said and where they may have mis-spoken or said strange things or where the logic has broken down," he continues. "Or where someone has said one thing and then ended up saying a completely different thing a year later."

Shane Allen, comedy commissioning controller at the BBC, says: "We'll always need a satirical eye to filter things and help us process whatever madness is going on in the world."

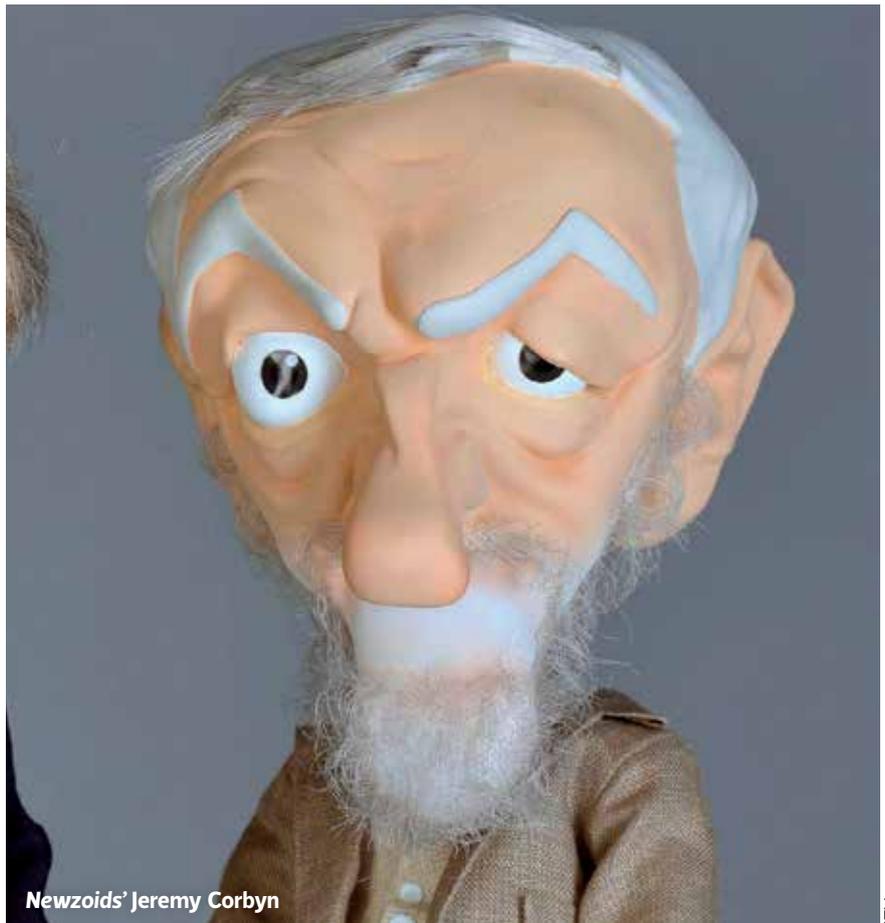
The BBC is working on some quick-turnaround shows, including Frankie Boyle's *American Autopsy* and Jack Dee's *HelpDesk*. There will be another edition of *Charlie Brooker's Screenwipe* at the end of the year. The emphasis is on quality, not quantity.

"People such as Charlie Brooker and Frankie Boyle have got very authored, strong world views and they can sometimes really help us [the audience] badge our opinions and what we think about an issue," suggests Allen. He is talking to Boyle and other undisclosed talent for satirical show ideas. "We have an onus to focus on our own domestic issues, such as Brexit, as well as Trump. From Brexit to lettuce shortages, it's ripe times for satire," Allen believes.

"We have a multi-genre approach to satire," says Channel 4's Havard. "It's not just studio-based entertainment, it's many genres piling in to try and find effective ways of delivering satire on Trump."

Havard argues that there are not enough female voices on television, let alone in satirical comedy. He doesn't rule out the possibility of a female-driven show airing sometime in the future: "Katherine Ryan on *The Fake News Show* was brilliant and absolutely note perfect on Trump. We are always looking for great female voices that can turn their attention to satire."

Sara Pasco (*Frankie Boyle's American*



Newzoids' Jeremy Corbyn

ITV

*Autopsy*), Aisling Bea (*8 Out of 10 Cats*) and Roisin Conaty (*Russell Howard's Good News*) are among those female voices that have done so previously via turns on topical shows.

Mulville believes that he is not doing his job correctly if his programmes fail to get under people's skin. One of his proudest professional moments came when Cherie Blair told him that she hated what he did.

"She thought *HIGNFY* damaged the good name of politics," Mulville recalls. "I thought her husband, Tony, and his cabinet were doing a pretty good job of that on their own."

The Trump administration is the elephant in the satirists' writers room. Is the thrice-married billionaire businessman and long-running reality TV star beyond satire? He appears to revel in his own ridiculousness.

"It is sort of funny and sort of horrific," says Iannucci of Trump's presidency so far. "The only things we know are that he is tremendously thin-skinned and that it would be good for [the careers of] John Oliver or Charlie Brooker to do or say something that results in Trump tweeting about them for 24 hours."

Expectations are high on both sides of the Atlantic that the UK will come up with a fittingly robust satirical response. In February, Michael Steele, a former Chair of the Republican National Committee, extolled the virtues of satire when he told the *Observer* that he "learned more about British government through *Monty Python* than anything else".

"Trump is a comedy gift," says Kate Phillips, entertainment commissioning controller at the BBC. "With what he says in his own tweets, he writes his own comedy scripts. [So] we have to raise our game a bit when we're looking at how we do satire."

In addition to commissioning series that include *HIGNFY* and *Mock the Week*, Phillips has ordered three pilots to road test how best to handle Trump. She's keeping the details under wraps while they are fine-tuned but says that they will air within the next two months.

Iannucci emphasises that Trump is "not a monster of our making, rather a monster of America's making". Trump-focused satire is thriving on US television. *Saturday Night Live* (SNL) is leading the offensive, along with *Last Week Tonight*, hosted by UK-born comedian ▶

► John Oliver, *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*, *Real Time with Bill Maher* and *The Daily Show*, presented by Trevor Noah.

Last month, Alec Baldwin's scathing portrayals of the commander-in-chief have helped propel *SNL*'s ratings to a 22-year high. An *SNL* segment featuring Melissa McCarthy's cutting impersonation of Trump's White House press secretary, Sean Spicer, has been viewed 24 million times on YouTube.

McCarthy's portrayal is held up as one of the fresh and inventive ways to tackle Trump and his presidency.

"The Melissa McCarthy/Sean Spicer *SNL* sketch cut through so much because it was new and really unusual

WITH WHAT HE SAYS IN HIS OWN TWEETS, [TRUMP] WRITES HIS OWN COMEDY SCRIPTS. [SO] WE HAVE TO RAISE OUR GAME A BIT WHEN WE'RE LOOKING AT HOW WE DO SATIRE

to get a woman to satirise quite an aggressive male performance," says Havard. "It was a very clever way of trying to find something new to say about something that was already quite familiar."

In the UK, sales of *Private Eye* are up 9% year on year. Its Christmas issue was the biggest seller in the title's 55-year history, shifting 287,334 copies, according to ABC figures.

Hislop foresees a different problem for UK programme-makers, and urges them to get their pitches in and the programmes made.

It may be that Trump doesn't last too long in the job. "We know what television lead times are like; they might find he's not there [in a few months]," he explains, with an optimistic smile. "I would say: 'Be quick, get in and enjoy the joke'.

"Bringing down governments is what you are meant to do with elections, not panel shows," adds Hislop. "But there is always a point to satire, even if it just to make you feel better."

## TV news

Matthew Bell hears how social media is subverting objective, factual reporting by disseminating lies – and how it should be tackled

# The fight against fake news

‘Any politician who uses the words ‘fake news’ to describe something they don’t like from their opponent should be assaulted verbally by people in their own party and fellow parliamentarians – we have to fight for language,” Nick Robinson told an RTS early-evening event discussing false news and alternative facts.

At the event in late February, chaired by former ITN chief executive Stewart Purvis, Robinson argued for the continuation of “impartiality as a legal requirement for television news”.

Without it, as in the US where “right-wingers watch Fox News and liberals watch MSNBC”, he continued, “there are no shared facts. Good public policy decision-making requires shared facts.”

Robinson, a former political editor at both ITV News and the BBC, and now a presenter on BBC Radio 4’s *Today* programme, added: “What Facebook does, and what separate news channels for different opinions do, is give people the possibility to have their own facts.”

“I don’t see anything wrong with partiality. The *Daily Mail* presents a particular type of view – you buy it knowing what that point of view’s going to be,” said fellow panellist and Conservative MP John Whittingdale, the former Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.

“I would have no objection to someone starting a left- or right-wing TV channel if they brand it as that.

“What I do want is to have somewhere for people to go where they can be pretty confident that it will not have a political perspective and will be impartial,” he continued.

Whittingdale added that he believed in “plurality”. His impartial news sources would include “the BBC, ITV and, I hope, still the major broadsheets”.

Outside the licence-fee-funded BBC, he said, the rest of the media was struggling. “So, the old assurances that, when you read a story, it has been double-sourced, fact-checked, ‘legalled’, sub-edited and then, if it passed all those hurdles, it appeared, [have gone].”

Since the election of Donald Trump to the US presidency last November, social media platforms, and, in particular, Facebook, have been accused

of doing too little to stem the flow of fake news. Journalist Anne McElvoy, a senior editor at the *Economist* and a newspaper columnist for London’s *Evening Standard* and the *Guardian*, argued that the problem was that Facebook “are editors, but you just don’t want to admit it”.

Facebook’s initiative to “flag” fake news (see box on page 17) with the help of news organisations and users, “was not a bad idea”, she said, “but the one thing I would predict is an awful lot of flags. Almost everything I’ve written would be flagged. [People] will just decide that they don’t like something [and flag it].”

Addressing fellow panellist and Facebook director of media partnerships EMEA Patrick Walker, McElvoy called on the social media giant to “invest a bit more in journalism. Get off the fence and think about whether you should be supporting public interest journalism.”

“We’re fundamentally dependent on good journalism, [but] we don’t think the solution is to write cheques to journalists,” responded Walker.

He argued that the company’s Facebook Journalism Project, which attempts to build stronger links between Facebook and news organisations, train journalists to use Facebook tools, and improve digital literacy was an appropriate response.

“You’re clearly spending money on lots of related projects, but is the reason you don’t want to spend the money on journalism because people will say, ‘They are publishers?’” asked Robinson.

Likening the quantity of fake news to an “extraordinarily large pipe of sewage”, Channel 4 marketing and communications chief Dan Brooke, who was in the audience at the sell-out RTS event, said he could not “understand why the social media platforms, and Facebook in particular, are being so complacent” about fake news.

“I publicly said before Christmas that I thought you were fiddling while democracy burns,” he added.

“It’s quite easy to blame the big platform when there are all sorts of fundamental challenges occurring across society,” replied Walker.

“We’re deeply committed to creating technological tools and working with third parties to try and find solutions.”

Whittingdale rejected the idea of state intervention in this area: “The >

## Five forces reshaping journalism



Paul Hampartsoumian

The BBC’s Nick Robinson argued that there had been a ‘democratisation of media’ via social media, so that ‘the barriers to entry are now practically zero’.

Second, he continued, ‘the destruction of the economic model of news publishing’ had meant the ‘platforms have taken over from the publishers. And that means that the publishers can’t get advertising revenue and, therefore, all traditional media beyond those that are subsidised – as [the BBC is] by a levy from licence-fee payers – are struggling economically.’

Third, Robinson highlighted that, as well as mistrusting the political establishment, the public increasingly doubted elites in the UK’s print media and, since Jimmy Savile the BBC.

Fourth, he stressed ‘the investment of non-democratic states in propaganda. It seems to be only 10 years ago that, essentially, the attitude of the Chinese and Russians was to try to censor. Whereas the attitude now is, “if you can’t beat them, join them”, so as to flood the market with false news.’

The fifth trend identified by Robinson was the ‘rise of populists who take advantage of all the other four’ forces. ‘Donald Trump uses social media; uses the fact that the traditional mainstream media are in trouble, so he’s constantly banging on about them failing; uses the mistrust in the political establishment; and uses – and, indeed, cooperates with, we think at times – the fact that non-democratic states are putting out things that help [him].’



## EU referendum: a triumph for fake news?

**Q Stewart Purvis, panel chair:** Do you think the BBC and other broadcasters were clear enough in their challenge to the Vote Leave slogan “We send the EU £350m a week – let’s fund our NHS instead”? Was that an alternative fact?

**A Nick Robinson, BBC:** I did *The Big EU Reality Check* [for BBC One] ... The combination of the number with certain words was critical. You could always defend

the number – £350m was merely taking the gross EU contribution of £19bn and dividing it by 52 to get a weekly sum.

The thing that was, in my view, untrue... was the suggestion that the £350m a week was “sent” to Brussels. No, we don’t. We don’t send £350m a week to Brussels...

In the documentary, I held up the poster and put a large cross through it...

Anybody looking at BBC News could find many examples of where

we questioned and queried the £350m figure... I suppose I wish we had been a bit ballsier about it.

**A John Whittingdale MP:** It was a political debating point... [In] every election I’ve been involved in, one side has made a claim and the other has said that’s rubbish... That is traditional political debate and it doesn’t seem to me that it falls within the definition of fake news, which is an entirely different and more recent development.

## IT IS CLEAR THAT PEOPLE DO NOT ALWAYS FIND IT VERY EASY TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN FAKE NEWS AND REAL NEWS



From left: Anne McElvoy, Patrick Walker, Nick Robinson and John Whittingdale MP

All pictures: Paul Hampartsoumian

› idea that government is somehow going to get involved in adjudicating about what is news and what is not is both impossible and, even if it were not, extremely undesirable.”

From the audience, Damian Collins MP, chair of the Culture, Media and Sport Committee, said: “We have to look at online content because it’s clear that people don’t always find it very easy to distinguish between fake news and real news.

“One of the things I’m particularly [concerned] about what Donald Trump is doing at the moment is using the label ‘fake news’ to [dismiss] any news that he doesn’t like.”

Peter Barron, Google’s head of communications and public affairs EMEA,

was sitting next to Collins in the audience. Purvis asked him about Google’s search engine which, when one types in “The Holocaust is ...” the first item on Google’s search page suggests it is “a successful historical fiction”.

Barron accepted that “clearly there is an issue”. He was further pushed by Purvis, who suggested that “some people have worked out how [to promote Holocaust denial] and you can’t seem to stop them”.

The Google executive replied that, while “it would be tempting to fix problems piecemeal, it is not a sustainable way of doing it. It’s much better to try to fix these things on a global scale.”

Barron discussed the thinking behind Google’s Digital News Initiative, which is investing €150m euros into digital innovation projects, but he added: “What it isn’t [doing], is funding journalism as such.”

Addressing both the representatives from Google and Facebook, McElvoy said: “In the end, what you’re doing is building a corporate wall around yourselves. It gives you something to say when you’re under challenge.

“But if the news disruption is as big as we’ve reflected tonight, then I think that, ultimately, if you [want to fight for the] public good then you might have to think about yourselves as investors in news as truth. That might take you a bit out of the comfort zone I think you’re in now.”

Robinson challenged the online companies to help their users “find the facts”, rather than “just following people you already blooming well agree with”.

He continued: “When people have a massive decision to make, like whether we should stay in or leave the EU, there [should be] somewhere on these sites where they can get facts.”

***The RTS early-evening event ‘False news, unverified claims, alternative facts: What is the future for honest journalism?’ was held at The Hospital Club in central London on 23 February. The event was produced by Sue Robertson and Martin Stott.***

## Fake news: Facebook’s response



Patrick Walker

“The mission of Facebook is to allow people to share, to make the world more open and connected... we thought, by doing that, we were making the world a better place. What we’ve come to realise is that is not necessarily the case,” said Facebook’s Patrick Walker.

“With fake news... we’ve set out to suppress a number of the most egregious types of misinformation. The first would be what we call financially motivated spam, which is really the worst of the worst... If something starts to spread, we look at that [site]... and we have ways in which we can remove it...”

“With regard to hyper-partisan news or sensationalism, that’s not something that we can identify with technology. Nor is it something that, if it’s flagged or reported by somebody, we are in a position to determine whether it’s true or not.

“This is where... we are working with third parties... Once something is reported – and we’ve made it easier for someone to report something that they see as potentially untrue – it then gets looked at by a third party. If they find something that is in dispute, it gets a flag as [being] disputed... [although] it’s not removed from the site.”



# The new political axis spins on the weekend

**W**ith the arrival last May of *Peston on Sunday* on ITV to add to *The Andrew Marr Show* and

Andrew Neil's *The Sunday Politics* on the BBC, the Sunday morning TV political audience seemed to be very well catered for.

Yet, Sky's head of news, John Ryley, thought there might be room for another competitor and a different approach. With this in mind, he talked it over with his young political correspondent, Sophie Ridge.

"I thought there was an opportunity to take a different line with a much younger individual – she is 32. She thinks that political discourse is too

## Current affairs

### Sunday morning political TV shows are booming Raymond Snoddy reports

pugnacious and that there should be more rational debate at a critical time in the UK's history," says Ryley.

The new programme would also try to get out around the country with filmed reports to talk to the electorate and avoid the "claustrophobia" of College Green in Westminster.

When she took her place in the schedule with the three established male broadcasting heavyweights in January, Ridge bagged an interview with Prime Minister Theresa May for her launch programme.

Ridge was generally seen to be polite but firm and certainly no pushover. She challenged the Prime Minister repeatedly on whether she was preparing to sacrifice access to the single market to have greater control of migration.

Though May prevaricated, this was a further indication that a form of hard Brexit was on the way.

Over the years, Sunday morning political programmes have come and gone. Before Ridge, on Sky there was Adam Boulton and Dermot Murnaghan.

ITV's dalliance with Sunday politics goes all the way back to Peter Jay and Brian Walden's *Weekend World* and on through Jonathan Dimbleby.

There was a hiatus before the arrival of Peston, when ITV's missing political slot was occupied by second showings of *The X Factor*.

For ITV, the return to the Sunday morning fray sprang from a desire to create a new political vehicle as part of the bait to lure Robert Peston away from the BBC to become the network's political editor. The decision also played to ITV's ambition to add programmes attractive to more upmarket viewers.

At the BBC, David Frost begat Andrew Marr. Andrew Neil, by common consent the most hard-nosed of the Sunday political interviewers, has been running his *Sunday Politics*, with regional breakouts, for the past five years.

Richard Tait, media academic and former editor-in-chief of ITN, likes what he now sees on a Sunday morning. He believes that, historically, it is "a good period" for the genre.

The presenters are accomplished broadcasters who have a bit of humanity but are not in the least frightened by the people they are interviewing.

"They [the Sunday programmes] clearly take politics seriously. They feed off each other and it becomes quite a coherent piece of public service broadcasting and there is room for everybody," Tait argues.

The choice, the competition and the different approaches have combined with the magnitude of running stories such as Brexit and Trump to produce record viewing figures.

*Marr* is up year-on-year by 200,000 viewers to an average of nearly 1.7 million, the highest for five years, although the post-referendum show attracted 2.7 million, its largest ever audience.

*The Sunday Politics* averages 900,000 – 1.8 million on 26 June – but, of the political four, Neil gets the highest audience-appreciation figures.

Peston wins an average of 850,000 viewers; the bigger slice comes from the re-broadcast following the late-evening ITV news.

Ridge has around 200,000, although there is a boost from a repeat of the

highlights; the May interview was watched by 356,000. Sky says Ridge has reached a total of 1.4 million since launch and almost certainly wins the social-media battle, with 750,000 video views on Facebook. It all adds up to a total broadcast audience, including repeats, of what must be a historic high of more than 3.6 million.

But could there be one unexpected downside – that the more discursive Sunday shows may suit the interests

## [THE SUNDAY PROGRAMMES] FEED OFF EACH OTHER AND IT BECOMES QUITE A COHERENT PIECE OF PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING

of the politicians a little too well? Is it leading, particularly in the case of the controlling style of the May Government, to fewer TV appearances by ministers during the week?

"There is something about the rise of the Sunday programmes and the lack of willingness to put forward Government people in the week that is connected," suggests one senior news and current affairs executive who asked not to be named.

The source, who is involved in the highly competitive battle of attracting top political players into the studio, believes that fewer ministers are appearing on the *Today* programme than with previous governments. Is it, perhaps, easier for this Government to get its messages out on a Sunday than face a weekday grilling on *Newsnight*?

The executive concedes, however, that "it may also be partly about everything being dominated by Brexit and they don't want to be asked about Brexit all the time".

Former *Today* editor Phil Harding believes that there is something to the theory. He believes that more pundits than ministers are appearing on the Radio 4 flagship programme, which is attracting record audiences of more than 7.5 million.

Harding accepts that the Sunday TV shows have always been a good way to set the political agenda for the coming week. Sunday news bulletins and Monday's newspapers are always grateful for the resulting stories.

"To be fair to the politicians, the Sunday programmes do give them longer to make their point," adds Harding. "But it does mean that they don't have to go 12 rounds with John Humphrys or 10 rounds with Evan Davis."

Steve Anderson, ITV's former head of news, who also used to work on *Newsnight*, is not so sure anything very new is going on. "When I was on *Newsnight*, people began to suspect that the politicians liked to get the Sunday business out of the way very early and be away from west London in the morning, heading off to the Home Counties," says Anderson.

Anderson now works for independent Shearwater Media and makes programmes for Discovery and the BBC. He believes that this is a very good time for television and politics to complement each other on Sunday mornings, even though people don't really want highly competitive, hand-to-hand combat at such a time.

If there is, indeed, a problem, then programmes such as *Today* and *Newsnight* will have to adapt again – as they have done in the past.

Tait, a former *Newsnight* editor, believes that it is important not to have a rose-tinted view of the programme, remembering only the great set-piece Jeremy Paxman interviews.

He believes *Newsnight*'s problem is that it tends to dip in and out of big British political stories in favour of a broader mix, including international stories: "I think that, post-Paxman, there isn't the expectation that they are going to hit those stories consistently. In the end, if you don't, you will find it harder to persuade people to come on." He believes that *Today* is still attracting good interviewees.

For David Mannion, former editor-in-chief of ITN, there is no obvious problem. The Sunday programmes are all in good hands. He welcomes the lively competition. For him, it is a case of the more the merrier.

"Look," says Mannion, "there are times that I want to throw a brick at the TV and shout, why don't you ask this, that or the other – but, overall, we are well served by some very good questioning and good journalists doing the questioning" – whatever the day of the week.

# A tough job for Ofcom



**A**s Sir David Clementi begins his work as the first Chair of the “unitary board” that he recommended to run the BBC, is he having second thoughts about his other big piece of advice – that Ofcom should regulate the BBC?

It was Clementi’s report, published one year ago and largely adopted by the Government, that suggested scrapping the BBC Trust. The idea was to replace it with a single board. Meanwhile, for the first time in the BBC’s history, an external body would regulate the corporation.

## BBC regulation

**Martin Stott** lays out the challenges facing the regulator as it takes over responsibility for the BBC

Sir David opposed the idea of a discrete, BBC-only regulator. He said that Ofcom had scale and credibility and “would be a strong regulator to match a strong BBC”.

Twelve months on, Ofcom is preparing in typically comprehensive manner for BBC Day – 3 April. That is when it formally takes over responsibility for overseeing the BBC.

Over recent months, Ofcom has not only recruited dozens of new staff, it has issued eight separate consultations on how the new regime will work in practice. These include Ofcom’s enhanced role in content regulation and its oversight of the BBC’s



iStockPhoto

that the BBC receives a couple of hundred thousand complaints each year, they will not go to Ofcom in the first instance (as complaints about all other broadcasters can).

One surprising aspect of the new set-up is that certain areas of BBC activity will be exempt from Ofcom's oversight. These include the World Service and non-video online content (though Ofcom will have an advisory role in the latter case). It is something of a paradox that the BBC Trust regulated the BBC in its entirety, while the avowedly more robust Ofcom regime will leave some activities to the unitary board.

Ofcom's trickiest responsibility could turn out to be the BBC's operating licence, which is why the regulator is taking time to consult the corporation and others over the course of this year. The licence will set out how the BBC's core services should fulfil its mission and public purposes – and the criteria that Ofcom should use to assess the BBC's performance.

Crucially, Ofcom will assess whether the BBC's output has been sufficiently distinctive. This may prove challenging for a regulator that likes to rely on objective, measurable criteria. For many people, distinctiveness only truly exists in the eye of the beholder.

Overall, Ofcom is talking a tough game. It says that the aim of the new regime it is putting in place is to hold the BBC to account more robustly than in the past. And, to ensure that happens, the regulator will have tough enforcement powers.

The really important question, however, is not about the flavour of Ofcom's rhetoric, nor what it has written down in its detailed procedures, but how it will act when a controversial issue arises on which it needs to adjudicate.

Ofcom says it recognises that "the BBC has a special status but we won't give it special treatment".

Such statements try to navigate between the higher expectations of Ofcom that many external stakeholders have (including some commercial broadcasters) and the BBC's status as a publicly funded body that commands considerable public support.

Ofcom may say it wants to regulate the BBC like any other broadcaster, but the BBC is unique. And not only in relation to its funding model: people

have higher expectations of its services and we know that it attracts many more complaints than other broadcasters.

At the same time, the regulations and obligations placed upon it are more extensive and, in many ways, tougher than for its competitors.

The risk for Ofcom (and for the BBC) is that when some knotty problem arises, the regulator either does not prove as tough as some arch BBC critics might hope for, or it overreacts in order to demonstrate its toughness.

Ofcom is going to be under much greater scrutiny in regulating the BBC than in its dealings with any other broadcaster. That creates a potentially greater reputational risk for itself. No wonder that it was unenthusiastic in volunteering for the role.

The regulator also has to worry about how close an interest it is seen to be taking. For some people, the BBC Trust was always too close to the corporation – though, in practice, it did reject some of the BBC Executive's wilder ambitions. So, will Ofcom be an arm's-length regulator and allow the new BBC Board to get on with running the corporation – or an interventionist one? The conundrum is that, if the BBC makes decisions that Ofcom agrees are within its remit but which then prove controversial, Ofcom may face criticism for being too hands off.

It will probably take years for the true nature of the BBC/Ofcom relationship to become clear.

Perhaps the weightiest medium-term problem is that the BBC is a big, complex and very high-profile organisation – and Ofcom has many other issues to worry about: the telecoms market, spectrum policy and competition cases, not forgetting the rest of UK broadcasting.

Ofcom will be under intense scrutiny over how it deals with the corporation over the next year or two. But just how much will Ofcom be able to maintain a focus on the BBC once this initial phase is over?

Perhaps a tough regulator concentrating on ensuring that the BBC complied with the new Charter might have been a better fit. But that was the option Sir David Clementi rejected a year ago.

**Martin Stott was, until recently, head of corporate and regulatory affairs at Channel 5.**

commercial activities. The most substantial document, the new operating licence that will cover the whole BBC service, has yet to be published.

Of those that have been published, most are highly detailed transpositions of the new BBC Charter and Agreement: they lay out the procedures that Ofcom will follow in the big new areas that it is responsible for.

There is already a new Ofcom acronym: a BCR – BBC competition review – will be instituted if there is evidence that a BBC service is, or might be, having an undue impact on the market.

And there will be a new complaints procedure, called "BBC First". Given

## On-demand video

If BritBox, BBC Worldwide's international subscription video-on-demand (SVoD) service, is to stand any chance of converting US consumers, it will need a major marketing push.

Despite a plan to launch by the end of March, the joint venture between the BBC, ITV and AMC Networks that promises to deliver "best of British" content, it appears that even key industry players are unaware of its existence.

The popularity of Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime is self-evident, so a major challenge will be conveying exactly what it is that sets BritBox apart from these well-established competitors. And this is in a country where the take-up of online services is much more advanced than in the UK.

"BritBox will be the best and most comprehensive British streaming service in the US," said Simon Pitts, Managing Director of online, pay-TV and interactive at ITV, when the service was announced in December. He revealed that it would offer "a rich catalogue of classic, new and exclusive shows, easily accessible to US viewers in one place".

At this stage, there are no plans for any original commissions, although sources suggest that these are on the long-term roadmap, and that BritBox plans to invest in co-productions.

For now, the catalogue includes newer UK dramas *New Blood*, *In the Dark*, *Tutankhamun* and *The Moonstone*, plus season premieres of *Cold Feet* and *Silent Witness*.

Soaps, including *EastEnders* and *Emmerdale*, will be available as soon as 24 hours after their airing in Britain and there will be a collection of classics from the ITV and BBC archives: *Pride and Prejudice*, *Inspector Morse*, *Keeping Up Appearances* and *Fawlty Towers* are among them.

Whether this really constitutes the "best of British" is a serious question, given that big BBC hits such as *Sherlock* and *Call the Midwife* are on Netflix in the US, while *Poldark* and *Downton Abbey* are on Amazon Prime.

However, some of the older content, particularly period dramas such as *Brideshead Revisited* and *Upstairs Downstairs*, could prove popular in the trail of *Downton* and *The Crown*. But new series, such as daytime drama *The Moonstone*, look unlikely to have the

Can BritBox, the subscription streaming service backed by the BBC and ITV, succeed in the world's most competitive TV market, asks **Lisa Campbell**



same instant mass appeal. This means that pricing – likely to be around \$10 a month – will be key during this launch phase. As Tom Harrington of Enders Analysis suggests, "At \$10 per month, which is around the cost of the HD Netflix subscription, it is not a particularly compelling proposition, even in the wake of the US excitement over *Downton* and their continued curiosity around cord-cutting."

The price is also higher than for other US streaming services. AT&T and the Chernin Group's Fullscreen is \$5.99 per month; Hulu Plus is \$7.99 and YouTube Red – which is popular largely thanks to its Google Play Music offering – is \$10 per month. Walter Presents – a showcase of foreign drama – launches in the US in March at \$6.99 per month.

Lori Robinson-Hogan, executive

vice-president of New York-based media agency The Specialist Works, believes that consumers will be willing to pay for a specialised service offering high-quality British content. She notes that the Brits are all over US TV right now, whether it's *The Crown* on Netflix, AMC's *The Night Manager*, Amazon's *Catastrophe* and *Fleabag*, Ron Howard's Beatles doc, *Eight Days a Week*, on Hulu or *Victoria* on PBS.

Robinson-Hogan adds that cord-cutters and cord-nevers (typically younger viewers) are happy to pay for multiple streaming services as this is still cheaper than a cable subscription.

The content currently available on BritBox suggests that the backers' target is a more mature audience. Even so, she says, "As long as there's a unique selling point and people become very engaged in certain shows, they will pay



# Atlantic crossing

ITV's *Cold Feet* will be available on BritBox

that the service could not be rolled out in the US because pay-TV operators were threatening to drop the BBC America channel. They feared that, if the app were launched locally, it would cost them viewers.

This new push into the US, and the confidence that comes with it, might partly be explained by the success of another subscription streaming service, Acorn TV. Described by the *New York Times* as “a perfect streaming service for the Anglophile in your life”, Acorn TV was spun out of a DVD business and began stocking exclusive content. The first such show was the US premiere of *Doc Martin*, series 6, in 2013.

As of the end of 2016, it had 430,000 subscribers, each paying \$4.99 per month. Going forward, however, it could find that Soumya Sriraman, president of BBC Worldwide North America, and her counterparts at ITV, are less willing to strike such deals as they expand on their own offerings.

Rod Henwood, former CEO of Banijay UK, who was involved in the BBC's Project Kangaroo (the online service scuppered by regulators) and launched 4oD (now All 4), believes that, while BritBox is not without its risks, it has a good chance of succeeding.

“My view is that SVoD is going to become a space for the super-niche, with content propositions that are clearly defined and targeted at an upmarket audience. It is comparable to multichannel, where you focus on the passionate interests of a defined group,” he argues. “BritBox has access to content assets and, with AMC able to provide cross-commercial leverage in the US, it's got a chance of success.”

Long-term success in the US, and globally, will, as always, be all about the content. Harrington says: “If anything, the pop-cultural impact that *Downton* had in the States would have been a driving factor behind the realisation that there could be something to this idea. The fact that it's not on the service, and nor are any of its comparable contemporaries, will, initially, be a stumbling block.

“That being said, I doubt that the initial library is reflective of how the BBC and ITV foresee the future of the service. The SVoD market is worth around \$8bn in the US, Britbox gives them an [eventually worldwide] platform for their content. This should, at the very least, increase their leverage when it comes to content licensing negotiations.”

and will think that it's the best of British, whether it is or not.

“But marketing will be the number-one challenge – getting it out there successfully and efficiently, given that rival services, such as Netflix and Amazon, have put a lot of money into advertising.”

In an interview at BBC Showcase last month, BBC World director of scripted content Liam Keelan stressed that BritBox is, indeed, a different proposition to Netflix. At the same time, he outlined his aim of continuing to work with the market leader. “There's a definite appetite for this kind of service – for shows that aren't on those other platforms. But I would not compare it to Netflix – it's different to that,” he said.

Meanwhile, some observers contacted by *Television*, including Brits living in the US, question whether the soaps

will be of interest to anyone beyond the ex-pat community – and whether that's a big enough niche to support the service.

Robinson Hogan offers a supportive view. She believes that American viewers are increasingly interested in the grittier or more realistic British drama series. *Happy Valley* on Netflix is a notable example, she says: “Many dramas here, particularly the soaps, are full of perfect-looking people with lots of money. The British soaps are much more relatable.”

What makes the corporation so certain that this service will succeed, when, in June 2015, it scrapped the global version of its iPlayer service? One executive close to the business suggests that its failure was largely down to a lack of investment.

Reports at the time also suggested

**D**escribing it as having, “nail-biting twists and powerful emotional pull”, the *Daily Telegraph* said BBC Two’s recent timely medical documentary series *Hospital* “could pass as a top-drawer medical drama”.

The fledgling production company Label1 that made the stylish, six-part series has its own twist. Unusually, the firm was set up in 2015 as a “quasi-indie” within ITV Studios. The two people behind the venture were experienced programme-makers Simon Dickson and Lorraine Charker-Phillips.

From this month, Label1 is going completely independent – just as the headline-hitting and timely *Hospital* wins a two-series recommission from the BBC.

Called “extraordinary” by the *Times* and “brilliant and brave” by the *New Statesman*, *Hospital*’s insight into London’s Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust averaged around 2.5 million viewers a week. But what made this series so different from the glut of hospital documentaries?

For a start, it was edited and broadcast just a few weeks after filming was completed. Dickson claims that it is “Britain’s first fast-turnaround, blue-chip documentary series”.

Arguably, it challenged the traditional arena occupied by news and current affairs and their regular investigations into the state of the NHS.

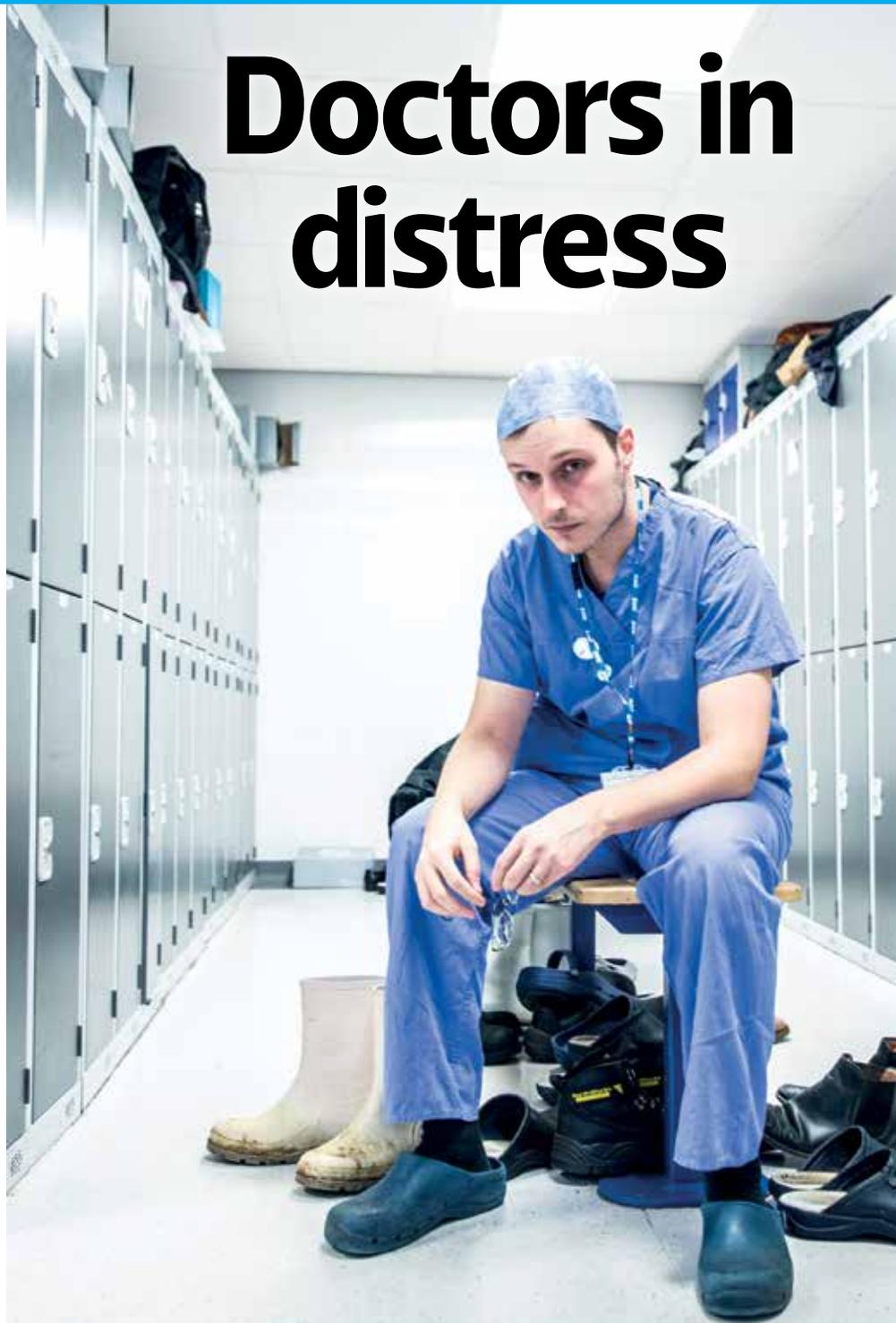
The medics portrayed in *Hospital* were all too human, often exasperated and at breaking point. There were moving surgical scenes but also valuable glimpses into such hot issues as health tourism and bed shortages as the health service struggled to meet patient demand.

And, given the winter crisis in NHS hospitals, the series was remarkably prescient.

The BBC Two show emerged after a meeting in the summer of 2016 between new channel editor Patrick Holland and documentaries commissioning editor Danny Horan.

“The relationship is where the genesis lies,” explains Dickson. “When Lorraine and I were pitching a more conventional medical surgery idea to Danny and Patrick, we did that thing that is crucial to good ideas being born. We just sat down and talked to see if we could find a way of making it bigger and more substantial... something that was like a modern take on the

# Doctors in distress



classic, system-focused documentary series of the past.” He cites BBC Two’s *The House*, an insightful look at the Royal Opera House, as an example.

“Patrick reminded me of a series that I had commissioned at Channel 4 called *Seven Days*, made with Studio Lambert. It was the first fast-turnaround docu-soap of its type.

“Patrick asked, wouldn’t it be great if you could do that in a hospital? Fun- nily enough, Lorraine and I had had the same idea, but wondered whether it might be in any way achievable.”

## Factual

BBC Two’s acclaimed documentary *Hospital* has been reordered for another two series. **Tara Conlan** talks to the people behind the show



**[WE  
WANTED]  
A MODERN  
TAKE  
ON THE  
CLASSIC,  
SYSTEM-  
FOCUSED  
DOCS OF  
THE PAST**

BBC Two's *Hospital*

BBC

Holland explains: "Simon and Lorraine's documentary skills had found exceptional contributors, whose daily dramas all connected.

"The world they found was one where the decision to operate on one patient meant another patient had to be bumped off the list. These dramas played out on a daily basis."

Such things are not cheap and the BBC funded extended development. The team concluded fairly quickly that weekly filming in a hospital while the patients were potentially in mortal

peril posed problems. So, they decided to turn the films around as quickly as possible for broadcast in early January, having finished filming in December. Editing, which went on until close to broadcast, was another hill to climb.

"I've got lots of experience of doing really fast-turnaround films... but to juggle six films simultaneously, trying to achieve a hitherto unseen connectedness between the different parts of the NHS and the people who work within it was an almighty challenge," says Dickson.

He pays tribute to the "great team, who all have different strengths, which helped make this show a success".

Holland says of Dickson and Charker-Phillips that they "have an exceptional ability to think the most ambitious thoughts, get excited about them, and then realise them.

"Many doc-makers may have been sniffy about rushing to transmission, but Labell persuaded the team that this was in the best interests of the audience and of the contributors."

Dickson and Charker-Phillips met when she was running the second series of Channel 4's *One Born Every Minute* and he was a commissioning editor at the broadcaster. He had begun his TV career as a BBC trainee, risen to become Channel 4 deputy head of documentaries but then left when he was appointed creative director of Dragonfly, maker of *One Born Every Minute*.

After producing the hit show *The Plane Crash*, in which a Boeing 727 was remotely crash-landed in the Mexican desert, he was promoted to Managing Director at Dragonfly.

He returned to programme-making 18 months later and went freelance. Among other things, he relaunched *First Dates* for Channel 4, turning it into a ratings winner.

Dickson injected the show with more warmth. He says that those taking part "had the right to be paired up with someone we thought stood a chance of liking them". He also introduced a European maître d', Fred Sirieix.

Meanwhile, Charker-Phillips moved to become a commissioning editor at Sky, where she was responsible for shows such as the Greater Manchester Police series, *The Force*.

Then, Dickson had a phone call from his old friend and Channel 4 colleague Julian Bellamy, now running production at ITV Studios.

Bellamy thought the pair would

prove invaluable for his in-house factual arm Shiver, which also made *The Job Interview* for Channel 4.

Although, in effect, Dickson became the creative director of ITV in-house factual or documentaries, "the way in which we decided to present to the wider world was unique: I wasn't going to be called creative director of Shiver docs, I was going to be given a framework, at least in terms of how we presented to the outside world, that would suggest that Lorraine and I were working, to an extent, independently of the mothership.

"That was a conscious decision by Julian, which seemed like a good idea because we knew that the more we presented as nimble and self-propelled, the more likely we would be to win business. And so it proved."

Like *Hospital*, *The Job Interview* has been recommissioned. Both shows will be made by Labell, but distributed by rights owner ITV.

Labell is wholly owned by Dickson and Charker-Phillips and has a licence to make both shows in perpetuity.

"It is, on the face of it, a tiny bit complicated, but Julian should get the credit for giving us the platform to build on," explains Dickson.

Charker-Phillips says that what makes the new venture exciting is that it is "rare to find people you can work alongside while pushing each other creatively, through good times and bad, keeping each other in check and challenging each other. We want to make mainstream, popular shows that people talk about but which are not complacent."

Dickson adds: "*Hospital's* been a great calling card... and the BBC is asking us to contemplate whether or not we can take that same unique approach... into other spheres."

*Hospital* will return this year, looking at maternity and mental health-care provision, among other things.

Dickson lives in Hertfordshire with his wife, while Charker-Phillips lives in west London and the pair's new office is in Soho.

Holland, who worked with Charker-Phillips on BBC Two's *Modern Times* series, says that they "are an impressive pair, who marry the ability to think big, with a real understanding of the nuances of documentary storytelling".

He adds: "They have married the innovative and risky with exceptional film-making. You can't ask for much more than that."



# A passion for truth in a post-truth world

## TV news

Channel 4 News editor  
**Ben de Pear** tells  
**Sanya Burgess** why  
his reporters need to  
get out more

**M**ornings in the De Pear household are like many across the country. The family chomp down breakfast, dash around to get the three children ready for school on time and Ben and wife Leila listen with one ear to Radio 4's *Today* programme on in the background.

But, during the US election, Ben de Pear, who is editor of *Channel 4 News*, started to turn down the radio when Donald Trump was discussed. He now wonders whether to turn on the show in the first place: "I used to listen to *Today* obsessively around the house but I do find myself listening through headphones because, actually, I don't

want [my children] to hear some of the stuff that is going on...

"We're in a weird period [when] we are censoring the news for our children."

De Pear does not look the stereotype of the modern editor. His shirt is rumpled, partially untucked, with a rip on his left elbow.

It is under his editorship that the show has grown to become one of the most-watched news outlets in Europe. This is thanks to the skilful translation of the hour-long bulletin into video clips broadcast on Facebook.

Their presence on the social-media platform has grown from a healthy 80 million video views in 2014 to the enviable figure of 2 billion last year.

The show's traditional broadcast figures are still dwarfed by the millions



Channel 4

who tune into BBC and ITV news programmes. But Barb confirms that *Channel 4 News's* audience can number as much as 1 million and is frequently around 750,000 to 850,000.

Considering the show's smaller resources and awkward time slot of 7pm – when a lot of *Channel 4 News's* key demographic of upmarket males are commuting – the size of its TV audience should not be scoffed at.

Recognition from within the industry remains robust. Last year, *Channel 4 News* won 26 awards, including a Bafta, and secured six wins and 12 nominations for this year's RTS Television Journalism Awards, including Young Talent of the Year and Daily News Programme of the Year.

De Pear believes the secret of this

success comes from Channel 4's remit, which he describes as "brilliant and imaginative". His comments come as culture secretary Karen Bradley continues to chew over the future of Channel 4. Any changes could have implications for the ITN-produced *Channel 4 News*.

"Why is there still a debate going on about the future of Channel 4? It's mad," says De Pear. He finds the debate destabilising and, from his tone of voice, exasperating. To threaten *Channel 4 News* would be, he says, "an act of madness" and "sheer lunacy".

He warns: "I feel very honoured to be the editor of this programme... which I think is among the best in the world and certainly one of the best in the English language.

"And to mess with that, you'd better know what you're doing. Especially in this atmosphere, at this moment, when a 16-year-old kid in Macedonia can invent stories that are shared by hundreds of thousands of people and can earn hundreds of thousands of pounds for doing so.

"To destabilise or mess with the foundations of this programme and everything else that Channel 4 does, you do so at your own peril."

De Pear finds it amusing that *Channel 4 News* is now referred to as the "so-called mainstream media". He believes the label should be a badge of pride: "Fake news, as a phrase, is annoying everyone, but... I think it's probably the most dangerous thing of our time, without doubt. Global terrorism is a terrible thing but this is certainly more insidious," he says.

To De Pear, to be "mainstream media" is to have layers of vetting and fact-checking. He says that a vital part of this system is Ofcom: "I think that, as much as it's a pain in the arse, it's a wonderful system."

*Channel 4 News* voluntarily holds its social-media videos to Ofcom regulations and applies the broadcaster's remit to all content published online.

"We are quite serious, we are

**FAKE NEWS  
IS PROBABLY  
THE MOST  
DANGEROUS  
THING OF OUR  
TIME**

questioning, we are inquisitive and I think that it makes us quite shareable [online]," he explains, adding: "I think that people feel quite clever when they share our material, or it makes them feel moved or they think it makes them look good when they share our material. I think it's been a very good strategy and it's worked very well."

However, one instance where the show's pioneering online strategy backfired was its ill-advised Facebook Live footage of the battle for Mosul in October 2016.

"It was a really stupid thing for us to do," admits De Pear. "We thought you can probably go live from almost anywhere... But, of course, we forgot about the bloody emojis, which were hearts and happy faces and smiley faces coming out when you've had Isis going on. It was not good."

Across the industry, *Channel 4 News's* coverage of Aleppo has been applauded. De Pear, a former head of foreign news at the programme, lays most of the credit at the feet of a young, local filmmaker, Waad al-Kateab – the first woman to win RTS Camera Operator of the Year at the RTS Television Journalism Awards. She recently turned 26.

After she submitted a video to the programme, she was taken out of Aleppo by the foreign editorial team, who met her in Turkey, gave her a camera and training. She then returned to her city with a determination to see the crisis out until the bitter end, working exclusively for *Channel 4 News*.

"Waad was not objective or impartial in the way that Lindsey Hilsum or Jonathan Rugman would be as an outsider, or someone who was coming to report objectively. But what she did was she filmed observational stuff and captured the raw horror of what was going on without editorialising," reflects De Pear.

He continues: "The end of Aleppo was a bloody and horrible incident in history and it was disgusting to behold. [But the remit and funding model create] a delicate ecosystem, which was devised in order to support *Channel 4 News* and to make it unlike any other broadcaster.

"That helps us to tell the story of Aleppo better than anyone else. I wouldn't say that about every story, but I would say that about Aleppo."

The other major news story of 2016 was, and for the foreseeable future is, President Trump.

"I think there was an unpleasant->



Ben de Pear (centre) holding the RTS award for Daily News Programme of the Year

Richard Kendall

ness and aggression and nastiness injected by Donald Trump into the election, which made his election seem unlikely,” says De Pear. “He broke the mould. He smashed the mould and threw it in people’s faces.” The *Channel 4 News* editor takes umbrage at some news outlets for referring to Trump as “colourful” and insists that his campaign was “unorthodox”.

“I was very clear with [the team] that ‘unorthodox’ is not to replace racist, sexist, bigoted, rude, abusive,” he explains. The challenge now, De Pear says, is holding Trump to account while not picking up on every single thing – coverage has to reflect how relevant the US President is to a British audience.

Media coverage of the US election was often led by what turned out to be inaccurate polling data, a trend mirrored in the UK’s 2015 general election and the EU referendum.

Of the latter, De Pear concludes: “We make a big effort to report from all over Britain, but I think we believed the polls when we should have believed our gut.

WAAD WAS NOT OBJECTIVE OR IMPARTIAL IN THE WAY THAT LINDSEY HILSUM... WOULD BE

“There were reporters in this newsroom who said: ‘We’re going to vote out and we [the UK] are going to leave’, [but] we felt that we couldn’t go against the polling.”

As a result, *Channel 4 News* is pursuing plans to make its newsroom less London-centric.

De Pear says: “News covers places where big things happen and I think that, with Brexit and Trump, we were not covering places where things weren’t happening. Things in economically deprived places were where things weren’t happening and weren’t ‘newsworthy’”

De Pear has no desire to leave his position any time soon. But, even if he can survive a news agenda tainted by fake news, Brexit and Trump, he does not intend to stay as long as his predecessor, Jim Gray. His editorship lasted 14 years.

And what about that national treasure, *Channel 4*’s main presenter, Jon Snow? “No idea. [His retirement] is so far away that, I think, by the time it happens, we may all be living in colonies on Mars or on different planets. It is beyond the horizon.”

# OUR FRIEND IN NORTHERN IRELAND

**Steve Carson**  
warns that Belfast  
cannot rest on  
its laurels as  
a production  
powerhouse

In the picturesque village of Greyabbey, on the shores of Strangford Lough, cast and crew assemble for the latest network drama to be shot in Northern Ireland. *The Woman in White* is a five-part adaptation of Wilkie Collins's psychological thriller for BBC One. The period drama joins a BBC slate that in the past year has included *The Fall*, *Line of Duty* and *My Mother and Other Strangers*.

Further north, the finishing touches are being put to two 2,970m<sup>2</sup> sound stages in Belfast Harbour. When they open later this year, the stages will add to the existing capacity in the Titanic Quarter, built on the site of the former Harland and Wolff yard.

Where once we built ships – most of which didn't sink – now we make content. The creative sector in Northern Ireland is in the midst of a once-unthinkable boom. Local companies and international producers are carving out a track record in drama, children's, animation, factual and games.

In a small place, the impact has been considerable. Innovative local agency Northern Ireland Screen reckons that it will leverage more than £250m out of an investment of £42m under its current plan.

The BBC's network TV budget has more than tripled so far this decade to reach last year's £25m.

There are hopeful signs that Northern Ireland could possess a "Goldilocks" effect – large enough to have

the facilities and talent to operate globally, but small enough to host informal networks that can pull together to make things happen.

In 2015, Tony Hall signed a unique partnership between the BBC and Northern Ireland Screen, a sign of how close ties are being built to drive creative investment for audiences across the UK and beyond.

The current media landscape is all the more startling for those of us who left Northern Ireland during the Troubles. In the 1970s and 1980s, armed with maintenance grants and free tuition, many took the ferry for college in Scotland, Wales and England. Many are still there.

But those who have returned in recent years have found a place transformed. Physically, Belfast itself is a different city. The big new buildings with shiny glass facades speak of a confidence that the days of car bombs and control zones are over.

Creatively, opportunities grow for the high-quality students pouring out of local universities and colleges.

The evidence shows that they are ready to take advantage of those opportunities. This month, the RTS

Northern Ireland Centre is hosting its Student Television Awards in the Cathedral Quarter (Belfast now has at least five quarters).

The entries are testament to the creative energy pulsing through a generation of young people who were, for so long, bred for export.

These students now expect to build rewarding careers on this side of the water. It's up to us to make sure they can, because future success is not guaranteed.

Agencies such as Northern Ireland Screen are financed through a local executive that is now in turmoil.

ITV's purchase of UTV may impact on its local content budget, although the early signs are that its commitment to news and current affairs will continue.

Third-level institutions across the UK are under financial pressure. The BBC will have to work hard to deliver its commitments to Northern Ireland in the new Charter.

That is, potentially, where organisations such as the RTS can come in. The Society covers the whole creative sector; indies and broadcasters, new entrants and old hands. If Northern Ireland's current growth was built on creative collaboration, then we have a part to play in keeping those personal and professional connections intact.

**Steve Carson is head of BBC Northern Ireland Productions and Chair of the RTS Northern Ireland Centre.**



# Fast track to the right training

**M**ore than 800 people attended RTS Futures' most successful careers fair yet. Eight sessions during the day featured some of television's biggest names as well as its rising talent. More than 30 broadcasters, indies and industry bodies took stands in the exhibition hall, offering the inside track to the telly hopefuls.

TV magician Dynamo and *ITV News* presenter Charlene White also made guest appearances.

Some 900 tickets were sold for the event, which was held in Islington, London, on 1 February – with another 400 on the waiting list.

During the first session, a panel of RTS Awards winners revealed the secrets of their success. "I always try to work on programmes that I would want to watch," said Shine creative director Tim Whitwell, who developed Channel 4's *The Island with Bear Grylls*.

He added that, regardless of genre, successful shows "were all about telling stories with strong characters".

Offering advice to the young talent in the room, Whitwell said: "Anyone can be a film-maker now [with a smart

## RTS Futures

### Matthew Bell reports from RTS Futures' most successful careers fair to date

phone] – you've got to get on with it."

Rob Hifle, whose company BDH won an RTS Craft Award last year for the digital effects on BBC Two science series *Countdown to Life*, said: "I put our success down to staying small and keeping the [ability] to work on what you want.

"I'm always trying to do something different, and you want to be commissioned to do something new and

**MAKE CONTACTS AND NURTURE THEM, BUT DON'T PESTER OR BECOME A STALKER**

fresh," he continued, before warning that "the TV industry is all about bums on seats, so, if [something works], it wants to repeat it".

"Get ready for your TV job" was aimed at the television novice. In this session, the MD of TV jobs website The Unit List, Jude Winstanley, nailed some of the common myths about breaking into telly. "It's all about who you know if you want to get into TV' – that's a big fat lie," she said.

Winstanley stressed the need for professionalism, especially in CVs and on social media. "Let's make sure we're presenting the best of ourselves," she said. "If there are [embarrassing] things [on the internet] about you, you might want to do a bit of housekeeping."

RTS Futures Chair Donna Taberer hosted a session on interview tips that included two mock interviews, one good, one bad, with actor Elliot Blagden playing the interviewee.

Breaking into TV remains tough but at least aspirants are now competing on a level playing field. "It's a much more democratic industry now," argued Taberer. "Ten years ago, television was more nepotistic."

Beejal-Maya Patel, a series producer who has worked on the Channel 4

show *Educating Essex*, said that she looks to hire “people who are enthusiastic and passionate about television”.

BBC head of talent Donald-Iain Brown advised interviewees: “Be honest about yourself, your passions and experience. Don’t be a bullshitter – we will find you out.”

Warning against coming across as “arrogant” in interviews, he added: “This industry is built on relationships – you don’t need a particular qualification to get into it, but the ability to work with people and build relationships [is key].”

“You also need to stand out from the crowd. We’re looking more and more for people who can self-shoot.”

Experience, though, can be gained outside the industry, added Taberer. “In TV, we like people with a strong work ethic, but it doesn’t have to be television related,” she said.

A session hosted by the Indie Training Fund offered insights into the work of the TV researcher. “The keys are to show that you’re keen and learn to do all the basics,” advised Betty TV researcher Chitsi Kurangwa.

The final session of the day assembled a panel of producers to discuss spotting talent and how newcomers can bring themselves to the attention of TV execs.

Channel 5 executive producer Sarah Wood advised: “Make contacts and nurture them, but don’t pester or become a stalker.”

Nevertheless, some flattery can help. “It’s an industry full of big egos – everyone thinks they’re great,” said former RTS Futures Chair Camilla Lewis.

Securing work experience can add to a sketchy CV but, advised Fremantle-Media UK head of talent Emily Gale, it should last for only two weeks without pay (but with expenses). “It’s wrong if people are working long term for free,” she said.

If you secure an interview for a paid position, continued Gale, prepare thoroughly. “I look for people who can tell me stuff,” she said. Too often, she added, there is an “awful tumbleweed moment” when interviewees are unable to discuss what was on TV the previous day.

Earlier in the day, Taberer had noted that, at interviews, “people fall into the trap of talking about shows they liked a long, long time ago, or *Game of Thrones*”. Interviewers want to discuss neither.

Knockbacks are frequent in TV. Blast!



Paul Hampartsoumian

Ideas are the lifeblood of television – and for TV newcomers a potential route into the industry. ‘The biggest short cut to get people to take notice of you is to have ideas,’ said Curve Media CEO Camilla Lewis.

Generating ideas is considerably less of a problem than getting them commissioned. ‘A TV creative has 10 great ideas a week,’ said David Flynn, the co-founder of Youngest Media who created Channel 4 game show *The Million Pound Drop* and co-created BBC One quiz *Pointless*.

‘I read a lot, watch a lot of television and talk to a lot of people,’ revealed BBC assistant commissioning editor for entertainment Sohail Shah, who added that there was no shame in borrowing from other TV shows.

‘You don’t know when an idea is going to hit you,’ said Flynn. ‘I’m OCD about having a notebook with me at all times.’ He added that the trick was ‘to find a way of distinguishing your idea from everybody else’s’.

Shah agreed, revealing that he

received ‘a lot of similar ideas at the same time’. ‘It’s because we all have the same influences,’ said Flynn.

Caroline Sciamia, development assistant producer at The Garden, recommended ‘asking people who don’t work in the industry – they watch TV, too’.

Before pitching to a broadcaster, ideas need a development stage. ‘You only have one chance to [pitch] a show,’ warned Flynn.

The original idea for *Pointless* was little more than a quiz in which the least-obvious answer won.

After six weeks’ development, it had become a format and, only at the last minute, gained a title.

The panel suggested that a pitch generally needed a good title; a short, clear description; and a beginning and an end. They might also include an online element, such as an extension to Facebook Live, although Sciamia warned: ‘Do this sparingly and only when it adds to a programme.’

‘Certain shows need a lot of fleshing out; others just a top line,’ said Shah.

Films talent manager Edd Buckley recalled one disastrous interview, where he was told: “I don’t think you’re ready for this role.” “It was awful, but I wasn’t ready,” admitted Buckley.

But when an opportunity finally comes knocking, added Wood: “Show some enthusiasm – I don’t want to work with someone who’s moody or can’t be arsed.”

*The RTS Futures event ‘The Ultimate TV Careers Fair: Getting your first job in TV’ was held at the Business Design Centre in London on 1 February. It was supported by Creative Skillset and the Edinburgh International Television Festival.*

Hosted by **Barbara Serra**, of Al Jazeera English, the awards were presented on 1 March at the London Hilton Park Lane

# RTS Television Journalism Awards 2017

## **News Coverage – Home Prisons – BBC Six O’Clock and 10 O’Clock News**

BBC News for BBC One

‘A series of revelatory films that pre-figured one of the big domestic crises of the year. They were the result of remarkable access gained through dogged negotiation over a long period of time. The coverage across a number of exclusive reports identified a shocking picture that led to a major public debate and changes in policy.’

**Nominees:**

### **Election Expenses Exposed –**

**Channel 4 News**, ITN for Channel 4  
**Hillsborough – BBC Network News**, BBC News for BBC One

## **News Coverage – International Inside Aleppo – Channel 4 News**

ITN for Channel 4

‘In a year of extraordinary coverage of appalling wars, this insight into Aleppo was something very special – the yardstick by which other coverage should be judged. Matt Frei’s scripting was word perfect. With a digital project alongside, the coverage was imaginative and innovative.’

**Nominees:**

**Battle for Mosul**, CNN International  
**Terror in Europe**, Sky News

News Coverage  
– Home: Prisons

## Breaking News

### *Brussels Terror Attack*

Sky News

‘The winning team had the good fortune to find themselves in the midst of an unfolding drama, and built on that by using every ounce of journalistic enterprise and technical skill – as well as considerable courage – to deliver a textbook example of how to cover a breaking story.’

**Nominees:**

*Battle for Mosul – 48 Hours*, CNN International

*Murder of Jo Cox – ITV News*, ITN for ITV

## Camera Operator of the Year

### *Waad al-Kateab – Channel 4 News*

ITN for Channel 4

‘With many strong contenders, our winner’s portfolio was head and shoulders above the rest. Her powerful images didn’t flinch from showing the full horror of life and death in Aleppo.’

**Nominees:**

*Dai Baker – Channel 4 News*, ITN for Channel 4

*Mstyslav Chernov*, The Associated Press

## Current Affairs – Home

### *Interview with a Murderer*

ITN Productions/Monster Films for Channel 4

‘A brilliant and gripping film, which was also beautifully made. It was a compelling watch, right from the first frame and the final interview was a genuine scoop.’

**Nominees:**

*Exposure – Abused and Betrayed: A Life Sentence*, Hardcash Productions for ITV

*Panorama – Teenage Prison Abuse Exposed*, BBC Current Affairs for BBC One

# Judges’ Award

## Steve Hewlett

‘I don’t think there has ever been anybody in broadcasting quite like Steve Hewlett. And probably never will be again.’

‘Over four decades he variously, and often simultaneously, produced programmes; edited them; commissioned them; wrote and broadcast about them; presented them and exec produced them as an independent. He worked for the BBC, Channel 4, ITV and his own indie Genie Pictures. He started on TV and learned to love radio. He was the star turn for many years at RTS Cambridge, the Edinburgh and Sheffield festivals and many other media events.’

‘He truly was a man for all seasons, one of them being the rugby season. I remember turning up with my son at a youth rugby tournament in Hertfordshire to find Steve all toggled up, ready to referee one of the matches.’

‘He was fiercely competitive in everything he did but also generous with praise for his competitors. He always threw himself into his journalism. He spent eight weeks filming inside the Maze Prison with Peter Taylor, and made a remarkable film there. He enjoyed his triumphs – the 23 million audience for the *Panorama* Diana interview will take some beating as a record for factual television – and he carried on regardless after disappointments.’

‘One of the hallmarks of Steve’s journalism was his natural curiosity – which contact or interviewee could resist an opening line like, “Help me with this if you can”? Another was his attention to detail: as a pundit, he read the documents others didn’t, which is how he knew so much and questioned so

much, especially his own employers at the BBC.’

‘And there was his humanity and there was his humour. All these same qualities, this same journalism, came to the fore last year on Radio 4’s *PM*. Presenter Eddie Mair told listeners that, this time, Steve was on the air not to talk about the media, but about his health.’

‘Eddie asked Steve, “What’s

happening?”, to which Steve replied, “Well, I’ve got cancer. I’ve got cancer of the oesophagus.” This matter-of-fact conversation set the style for many that were to follow on Radio 4 and be replicated in different forms in print and on TV.’

‘It was public-interest journalism of the kind Steve practiced on *Panorama*. He knew all the

details, as if he was talking on *The Media Show* about the latest draft of the BBC Charter. The public response was enormous. Many of the people who wrote to Steve said he had inspired them to find out more about their own condition, their own treatment.’

‘On 6 February Steve told Eddie Mair on BBC Radio 4 that he’d been given only “weeks, possibly months” to live. He and his partner, Rachel Crellin, decided to get married in a ceremony organised within the hour at the Royal Marsden Hospital.’

‘The plan was for him to be sitting at a table with Rachel, his former partner Karole Lang and his and Karole’s three sons, Fred, Billy and Bertie. Steve knew he wouldn’t be well enough to come up to the podium but wanted his sons to speak for him. Always the realist, Steve knew he might not make it here tonight.’

**Stewart Purvis**



Paul Hampartsoumian

BBC



News Coverage –  
International: *Inside  
Aleppo* – Channel 4 News

Channel 4

### Current Affairs – International *Exposure – Saudi Arabia Uncovered*

Hardcash Productions for ITV

‘An extremely brave film. Venturing into Saudi Arabia undercover was a remarkable feat. This is an important country, which we hardly ever see, beyond the official veneer. The film brought to life the extent of the power and the fear which lie under the surface. The viewer really experienced the journey. An important piece of journalism and a great watch, beautifully shot and full of fine production values.’

#### **Nominees:**

*Dispatches – Children on the Frontline: The Escape*, ITN Productions for Channel 4  
*This World – Unarmed Black Male*, BBC Current Affairs for BBC Two

### Daily News Programme of the Year

**Channel 4 News**  
ITN for Channel 4

‘A masterful breadth and depth of content throughout the year, from world-class frontline coverage to its trademark political analysis and powerful interviews. It backed that up with tenacious and exclusive investigations and high-quality location presentation.’

#### **Nominees:**

*BBC News at Ten*, BBC One  
*The Victoria Derbyshire Programme*, BBC Two

### Interview of the Year

*Faisal Islam Interviews David Cameron*  
Sky News

‘The hallmark of all three interviewees was that they seemed better prepared than their interviewees. Particularly so in the case of the winner who... brought new insights and energy to the national debate.’

#### **Nominees:**

*Christiane Amanpour Interviews Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov*, CNN International  
*Gary Gibbon Interviews Andrea Leadsom* – Channel 4 News, ITN for Channel 4

### Nations and Regions Current Affairs

*Spotlight – The NAMA Tapes: Corruption and Cover-Up*  
BBC Northern Ireland

‘Financial corruption stories are never easy to do. The Northern Ireland team worked unbelievably hard and bravely over 18 months to expose corruption over the sale of a £1.3bn property portfolio. This was an extraordinary and incredibly important story, as well as a gripping watch.’

#### **Nominees:**

*Broken Trust*, BBC South for BBC One  
*Week In Week Out: Learning How To Fake It*, BBC Wales for BBC

### Nations and Regions News

*BBC South East Today*

BBC News English Regions for BBC One  
‘A brilliant selection of the very best of regional journalism, from illegal immigrants working in Kent and Sussex to tracking down a gunman who’d been on the run for a decade. The abuse story at a Kent care home was astonishing and led to a parliamentary investigation. The Calais ambush by people smugglers was riveting television. Amazing journalism from a small region that exhibited real ambition.’

#### **Nominees:**

*BBC North West Tonight – The Hillsborough Inquests*, BBC North West for BBC One  
*Lookaround – 8 December 2015*, ITV Border for ITV

### Network Presenter of the Year

**Tom Bradby** – *ITV News at Ten*  
ITN for ITV News

‘Presenting done in a new style: intimate, engaging, authoritative, trustworthy. The winner got to the heart of the matter sometimes very directly with the newsmakers themselves.’

#### **Nominees:**

*Emily Maitlis* – *Newsnight*, BBC Two and BBC News Channel  
*Victoria Derbyshire* – BBC News, BBC Two and BBC One



**1** News Coverage – Home:  
*Prisons – BBC Six and 10 O'clock News*

**2** Current Affairs – Home:  
*Interview with a Murderer*

**3** Interview of the Year: *Faisal Islam Interviews David Cameron*

**4** News Coverage – International:  
*Inside Aleppo – Channel 4 News*

**5** Current Affairs – International:  
*Exposure – Saudi Arabia Uncovered*

**6** Nations and Regions Current Affairs:  
*Spotlight: The NAMA Tapes*

**7** Breaking News: *Brussels Terror Attack – Sky News*

**8** Daily News Programme of the Year:  
*Channel 4 News*

**9** Nations and Regions News:  
*BBC South East Today*

All pictures: Richard Kendal



Channel 4

## News Channel of the Year

### **BBC News Channel**

‘Combined outstanding live and continuous coverage of big events with strong worldwide reporting and a great touch with human interest stories. It was quick on breaking news and showcased an impressive range of exclusives, too.’

#### **Nominees:**

**CNN International**  
**Sky News**

## News Technology

### **Sky Data**

Sky News  
‘A brilliant example of technical innovation. It has transformed the way television measures public opinion, leaving the old vox pop obsolete.’

#### **Nominees:**

**360 Special – BBC Click**, BBC News for BBC News Channel/BBC World News/BBC One BBC News Online/YouTube 360/Oculus Store/Facebook (Immersive 360 Experience)

**Facebook LiveStudio**, Sky News live on Facebook

## Regional Presenter of the Year

### **Harry Gratton – BBC Look North (Yorkshire)**

BBC News English Regions for BBC Yorkshire

‘Outstanding, a class act... when the winner is on the screen, you simply want to watch. He is deeply rooted in his region and exhibits a genuine affinity with his audience and demonstrates both depth and range.’

#### **Nominees:**

**Duncan Wood – Calendar**, ITV Yorkshire for ITV

**Stewart White – BBC Look East**, BBC One

## Scoop of the Year

### **IS Files**

Sky News

‘A team effort that brilliantly exploited a leak of data, transforming it into compelling television using the entire toolbox of TV news. This dwarfed in scale, skill and significance other attempts at the story.’

#### **Nominees:**

**Election Expenses Exposed – Channel 4 News**, ITN for Channel 4

**Southern Health**, BBC News

## Specialist Journalist of the Year

### **Lisa Holland**

Sky News

‘The winner has carved out a unique role in a new but crucial specialist position. It has taken them around the world to report on one of the year’s most controversial and pressing issues. They showed a great range of skills pursuing the story, from investigation to analysis to empathy.’

#### **Nominees:**

**Gary Gibbon – Channel 4 News**, ITN for Channel 4

**Michael Buchanan**, BBC News

## Television Journalist of the Year

### **Matt Frei – Channel 4 News**

ITN for Channel 4

‘One of the best writers in the business. His use of language brings great depth

to his reports and regularly shines through. His interviewing has also produced insights that others have missed. He is one of the most experienced, and skilled TV journalists working today.’

#### **Nominees:**

**Jeremy Bowen**, BBC News

**Krishnan Guru-Murthy – Channel 4 News**, ITN for Channel 4

## The Independent Award

### **The Last Flower Seller of Aleppo – Channel 4 News**

Hoodwink Productions for Channel 4

‘A fabulously powerful piece of television... We applaud not only the enterprise and courage of the freelance camera operator who first suggested the story and then filmed it, but also the production company back in London who, in the edit, crafted a narrative that made this stand out as strong storytelling.’

#### **Nominees:**

**Desert Fire**, *The Guardian* and Matter Out Of Place Ltd

**Gun Nation**, *The Guardian* and Wagon Trail Productions

## Young Talent of the Year

### **Waad al-Kateab – Channel 4 News**

ITN for Channel 4

‘Heart-stopping, calm in horrific conditions, sensitive, empathetic, extraordinary – the compliments kept on coming.’

#### **Nominees:**

**Adam Cole**, Sky News

**James Longman**, **Victoria Derbyshire Programme**, BBC News



**1** Network Presenter of the Year:  
Tom Bradby

**2** Regional Presenter of the Year:  
Harry Gration – *BBC Look North*

**3** Television Journalist of the Year:  
Matt Frei

**4** News Channel of the Year:  
BBC News Channel

**5** Scoop of the Year: *IS Files* – Sky News

**6** The Independent Award:  
*The Last Flower Seller of Aleppo*

**7** News Technology: Sky Data

**8** Specialist Journalist of the Year:  
Lisa Holland

**9** Judges' Award: Steve Hewlett

All pictures: Richard Kendal

## Myrie denounces fake news

**B**BC News presenter Clive Myrie discussed race, fake news and the boxer Tyson Fury in conversation with RTS Wales Chair Tim Hartley at the University of South Wales in February.

Myrie's childhood inspiration was ITN journalist and newsreader Trevor McDonald. "I was fascinated by the fact that I saw a black person on television," he recalled.

The former foreign correspondent explained that, in his youth, he received a free newspaper after finishing his paper round. He would go home and pretend to be McDonald reading the paper.

Myrie was adamant that his colour hadn't hindered him; if anything, it had helped. "If the BBC doesn't represent its audience, it will lose its licence fee – I'm exactly the kind of person the BBC needs," he said.



Tim Hartley (left) and Clive Myrie

Hywel William

Nevertheless, added Myrie: "There are still problems – there aren't many black people in this profession."

Discussing the problem of fake news, Myrie said: "You have to call out what might be a lie."

Addressing BuzzFeed's decision to post an unsubstantiated intelligence report about Donald Trump's behaviour in Russia, Myrie said: "It was a huge mistake for BuzzFeed to publish the dossier, because a lot of it

wasn't true – it gave ammunition to colour the whole of the media. It was a disservice to all of us in the industry."

Myrie has generated a little controversy himself. At the end of 2015, while hosting BBC News Channel's late-night newspaper review programme, he described Tyson Fury as a "dickhead".

The boxer, who had been airing homophobic views in the press, had recently made the list of nominees for BBC Sports Personality of the Year.

Myrie defended his choice to swear on live TV, saying it was after the watershed and his choice of words didn't count as slander.

Offering advice to the student journalists in the audience, Myrie said: "See everything and say nothing, stay longer than anyone else, go that extra mile, be keen, enthusiastic and have ideas."

**Lottie Morley**

## Wales visits Gorilla

■ As operations director at post-production company Gorilla, Paul Owen's main task is ensuring an efficient workflow of media and data through the building. But, he said, "with tightening budgets, there is always pressure to streamline our processes".

Talking to RTS Wales members who were visiting the facilities at GloWorks, Cardiff, in January, Owen said: "We're able to handle big, data-intensive projects on behalf of our clients."

He described how the Channel 4 series *One Born Every Minute* generated more

than 4,000 hours of HD video, stored in a 500TB server on location in a Liverpool hospital.

Owen added: "We had 56 remote cameras, operated by just one person, with only four staff working eight-hour shifts – it wouldn't have been cost-effective otherwise."

The company also recently handled post-production for Channel 4 thriller *Born to Kill*, Sky 1 comedy series *Stella* and BBC Two's Evelyn Waugh adaptation *Decline and Fall*.

Now an editor with more than 20 years' experience, Owen joined Boomerang in



Gorilla's facilities

Hywel William

2004, when the company had just three edit suites.

Following a merger with Cardiff-based facility Mwnci, the TV post-production arm was rebranded as Gorilla and now has around 50 editing

and post-production suites. The combined group, which also includes Boom Cymru and Plymouth-based indie Twofour, is owned by ITV Studios.

**Hywel William**

**M**ore than 400 guests attended the 30th anniversary of the RTS North East and the Border (NETB) Awards in February. At a ceremony held at the Hilton Newcastle Gateshead Hotel and hosted by Sky News presenter Jayne Secker, the RTS audience recognised the rising stars of the TV industry in the North East.

There were breakthrough awards for: BBC reporter Philippa Goymer, who won the Rising Star category; animator James Taylor, from Arcus Animation Studios (Professional Excellence: Animation, Graphics and Titling); and broadcast news graduate Alice Winney (Student News).

Young people from the Northern Stars Academy at Newcastle's Tyneside Cinema won the Best Commercial category for *Sportivate*, a film about boxing on Teesside.

Local TV channel, Made in Tyne and Wear, picked up the Centre Award for supporting new programme-makers and production innovations such as the *Made with Pride* strand.

Among the student winners were Teesside University (Drama and Animation), University of Sunderland (News and Entertainment), University of Cumbria (Factual) and Carlisle College of the Arts (Short Feature).

"The ceremony showcases the next generation of TV and digital talent. We are delighted to be able to recognise these new players, who are the future leaders of the sector," said Graeme Thompson, Centre Chair and University of Sunderland pro vice-chancellor.

Established talent also enjoyed success. ITV police

From left: Pam Royle, Fiona Armstrong and Brenda Blethyn



## North East lauds its stars

drama *Vera* won the Best Drama category, while the show's star, Brenda Blethyn, picked up the Best Performance award.

ITV News Tyne Tees won the Best News Programme award, while the show's Pam Royle was Best Presenter. The BBC's Dan Farthing was

Best Journalist, and the Best Factual award went to the BBC for *The Gift of Hearing*.

Current ITV *Border Life* and former *News at Ten* presenter Fiona Armstrong won the Outstanding Contribution award. There was also a special award for veteran BBC outside broadcast director

Alan Farrington, who has directed all 30 of the NETB Awards since the first one at the Tyneside Cinema in 1987.

Among the guests at the Gateshead ceremony were Steve Cram from BBC Sport and Oscar-winning producer David Parfitt.

**Matthew Bell**

## Secret histories of Geordie classics

■ The BBC executive who initially turned down the drama *Our Friends in the North* because he didn't want "losers on TV"; the football caper *Purely Belter*, which sank because it was released at the same time as mega-hit *Billy Elliot*; and why the director of *Les Misérables* doesn't include Yorkshire Tyne Tees' soap *Quayside* on his CV.

These were just some of the stories told by TV producer and media historian Chris

Phipps at an RTS event in January at Newcastle Library highlighting the film and TV productions shot in the region. The capacity crowd of 200 discovered the histories of classics such as *Get Carter*, *Stormy Monday* and *Whatever Happened to the Likely Lads?*

Phipps – who has produced a location guide, *Forget Carter* – welcomed the decision to film shows such as *Vera* in the region. But, he lamented, there

were commissioners who thought that 'production in Salford ticks the boxes of representation across the North of England'. He added: 'The writers, landscapes, actors and stories from this part of Britain deserve more airtime on British TV.'

The earliest film shot in Newcastle? The thriller *On the Night of the Fire* in 1939. The most recent? The latest instalment of *Transformers*.  
**Graeme Thompson**

# First place for Safest Place

Students from Middlesex University took two of the top prizes on offer at the RTS London Student Television Awards in early February.

Simon James and Daniel Tempel-Merzougui scooped the Comedy and Entertainment award with the “well-executed, highly entertaining” *Pyre for Hire*.

Fellow Middlesex students Jack Dingley and Hafiza Musammad won the Factual award for *Safest Place in the World*, which the jury said offered “an intimate insight” into the terrorist shootings on the island of Utøya in Norway in 2011.

Kingston University student Jennifer Zheng was awarded the Animation prize for *Tough*, which gave “a unique insight into her ethnic heritage and British upbringing”.

Zak Boxall and Chris Turner from the University of Hertfordshire took home the Short Film award for the “hugely ambitious” *Bertie the Elephant*.

The Drama award went to



Hafiza Musammad

Paul Hampaertsumian

Rob Woods, Nathan Wilson and Taylor-Anne Wheeldon from the University of Greenwich for *Remembrance Day*, which was praised by the jury for its strong writing. Woods also won the Craft Excellence Writing award.

The other Craft Excellence awards were won by Arran Green, Ravensbourne (Camera); Tom Beale (Sound Design) and Sophie Moore (Production Design), both from the University of Westminster; and Jeanette Lee, Goldsmiths (Editing).

“The range and quality of many of the entries were equal, if not better, than a lot of what gets broadcast on our televisions every night,” said BBC producer Andrea Gauld, the Chair of the RTS London Student Awards 2017.

The awards were held at ITV Studios in central London and hosted by television presenter Ria Hebden.

Michael Price, whose composing credits include BBC One’s *Sherlock* and ITV crime drama *Unforgotten*, gave a speech at the ceremony.

**Matthew Bell**

Students from the University of the West of England (UWE) took all three top prizes at the RTS West of England Student Awards, which were held in early February at the Everyman Cinema in Bristol.

*The Wall* won in the Factual category, with the judges praising its “sparse, simple style and strong contributors”. It was made by Christy Tattershall, Matt Pidala, Alex Handschuh, Edd Roberts and James Royall.

The “ambitious and mature” *One Sleepless Night*, made by Johnny Lennox, Harvey Quirke, Owen

## UWE dominates Bristol awards

Hemming-Brown and Jack Hayter, won the Drama award.

In the Animation category, Edward Leicester’s *Heist* was the judges’ pick for its “beautiful animation and great storytelling”.

There was a commendation for *Marooned*, by Matt Carroll from the University of Gloucestershire, in the

Comedy and Entertainment category. The awards, judged by a panel of industry experts, recognise the best in student television across the region – with nominees representing UWE, the University of Gloucestershire, and Gloucestershire College.

As well as prizes for the best overall film in three categories, Craft awards were

given for the first time. *The Wall* picked up the Editing and Sound awards.

Camera awards were made to three films: *Beauty of a Stateless Mind*, *One Sleepless Night* and *Brothers* (Gloucestershire College). *Heist* took one Sound and Music award and *The Fall*, from UWE, another for Sound.

At the ceremony, before an audience of more than 100 guests, Bristol-born TV presenter Naomi Wilkinson discussed her experiences of starting out in TV and offered advice on how to break into the industry.

**James Mead**



Michael Price

Michael Price

# Mood music for teacs

**M**ichael Price offered a fascinating insight into composing for television at an RTS London event in late February. Backed by a

keyboard and video clips, Price deconstructed the scores for BBC One show *Sherlock* and ITV's *Unforgotten*. "They are both detective shows, but they could not be

more different. For *Sherlock*, we chose a character- and theme-driven way of scoring," said Price, who was in conversation with live music producer and former BBC

presenter Tommy Pearson. Price demonstrated how he and his co-composer, David Arnold – neither will reveal who writes which parts of a score – composed *Sherlock*'s "hero theme", the music that accompanies Benedict Cumberbatch's sleuth as he springs into action.

Price's music for *Unforgotten* is intentionally set at a lower key. Although it is a police series, the programme forgoes the action scenes typical of the genre.

"I wanted to create a stillness for something naturalistic to develop – it's a long way from the hyper-realism of *Sherlock*," he said. "I was trying to find a [musical] language that attaches itself to emotions, not characters."

The piano, supplemented by strings, is the main instrument featured on Price's soundtrack. "There's tons of space inside sparse piano music," he explained. "It leaves room for emotion to develop. Plus, most composers are pianists."

The composing process, said Price, involves "hours with your arse in the chair – there's no magic button that writes all the music".

Criticism and knock-backs are part of the job, continued Price. "As I become more comfortable and confident with my own musical voice, I have got less defensive and more resilient," he said.

What remains, he added, "is the absolute terror of the blank piece of paper, but, with experience, although the terror is just as bad, I have developed techniques to get [a score] started."

**Matthew Bell**

The producer was Terry Marsh.

## Michael Price: a musical life

Michael Price served his apprenticeship as assistant to the late composer Michael Kamen, after his synthesizer expertise landed him work on the 1997 sci-fi film, *Event Horizon*, which Kamen scored with electronic dance duo Orbital.

Price worked with Kamen for five years on productions, including HBO series *Band of Brothers*.

"There's a long tradition of composers who've been assistants to other composers," Price told *Television* before the RTS London event. "It gives you a real grounding in the history and practice of [composing]."

He was one of the music editing team on *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, working with

Howard Shore's Oscar-winning score. Price also worked as a music editor on Richard Curtis's *Love Actually*. "We spent nine months in the cutting room, working with such a wide variety of songs," he recalled. "It was a [great way to learn] the technical and emotional aspects of how music works with pictures."

Price first worked with *James Bond* composer David Arnold on the 2002 Jennifer Lopez thriller, *Enough*, and, a few years later, wrote additional music for Arnold's score for Edgar Wright's comedy *Hot Fuzz*. "It's proved to be a joyful relationship," he said. "It feels very natural."

In partnership with Arnold, Price has composed the

music for all four series of *Sherlock*, winning an RTS Craft & Design award in 2010. "There's been a great deal of satisfaction for both of us, having what are, effectively, 13 feature films to construct a musical world for – those opportunities don't come along very often."

Working solo, Price writes for film and TV, including ITV's *Unforgotten*, starring Nicola Walker and Sanjeev Bhaskar.

Price also has a burgeoning career as a recording artist, releasing his debut album, *Entanglement*, in 2015. Tongue in cheek, Price describes his style as 'hipster classical', a crossover of electronic and classical music.

**Matthew Bell**

## Midlands goes back to university

■ In February, RTS Midlands held the first two of the three networking seminars planned for the early part of the year, as well as a joint event with the BBC Academy.

At the University of Stafford on 2 February, the RTS Committee was joined by industry professionals from Film Birmingham, the Writers' Guild and local TV channel Made in Birmingham.

A week later, the roadshow went to Wolverhampton University, with a team from ITV Central adding to the expertise on offer. The final seminar is at the University of Worcester on 23 March.

In mid-February, RTS Midlands and the BBC Academy hosted the "Bounce into broadcasting boot camp" for 80 media and journalism students from the University of Wolverhampton, as part of the university's career enhancement week.

BBC Academy mobile-phone guru Marc Settle and trainer Deirdre Mulcahy took the students through the skills required to make short films with phone cameras.

The student radio journalists made a programme with the help of the university's radio studio and presenter Jo Hayward from BBC Radio Leicester.

The TV production group heard from *Doctor Who* writer Phil Ford and producer Carol Harding (*Holby City* and *Doctors*), who advised on how to develop and pitch a drama to commissioners.

Michelle Young from the BBC Academy's Production Apprentice Scheme talked about opportunities with the corporation.

**Dorothy Hobson**

## Wales screens music doc

February saw RTS Wales screen the much-anticipated, two-part documentary #swn10 at the University of South Wales in Cardiff.

This S4C commission, produced by Green Bay Media and On Par Productions, celebrates the much-loved, multi-venue Cardiff music festival Sŵn, the creation of BBC Radio 1 DJ Huw Stephens and promoter John Rostron.

The cinema screening, and Q&A that followed with the organisers and the production team in front of a packed audience of music lovers and documentary enthusiasts, was held in conjunction with festivities across Wales for Welsh Language Music Day.

Artists ranging from Adele to the Vaccines and Super Furry Animals' Gruff Rhys have played Sŵn, which also promotes new talent.

It is a place where the language of the song is not



John Rostron (left) and Huw Stephens

On Par Productions

the focus; as Stephens said: "Good music is just good music no matter what language it's in."

Toby Cameron, producer/director of #swn10, said: "It was amazing to bring everyone that's been involved in the project together to say

thank you and a great way to celebrate bilingual Wales and Sŵn, such an epic festival over the past decade."

The documentary first screened on S4C in December 2016 and is available on BBC iPlayer.

**Llinos Griffin-Williams**

## ONLINE at the RTS

■ The digital team turned their hands to print in February, publishing a 32-page TV jobs guide for the RTS Futures Careers Fair. With tips on everything from working in journalism to production design, the magazine offers a no-nonsense overview of the many roles the industry can offer. Presenter Laura Jackson, *EastEnders* writer Rob Gittins and *The Crown* editor Úna Ní Dhonghaile are among the experts offering insights into their careers. You can read an online version at [www.rts.org.uk/TVJobsGuide17](http://www.rts.org.uk/TVJobsGuide17).

■ Magic supremo Dynamo was among the guests at the careers fair. His TV career began



Paul Hampartsoumian

performing on the street, and how the magic of putting a show together happens in the editing suite ([www.rts.org.uk/Dynamo](http://www.rts.org.uk/Dynamo)).

■ In TV journalism, the focus is usually on the subject of a story, not the journalists, and rightly so. The RTS Television Journalism Awards are an opportunity to celebrate the work of the people who bring the important stories into our homes. Ahead of this year's ceremony, Ed Gove caught up with the nominees for Regional Presenter of the Year ([www.rts.org.uk/StewartWhite](http://www.rts.org.uk/StewartWhite); [www.rts.org.uk/DuncanWood](http://www.rts.org.uk/DuncanWood); [www.rts.org.uk/HarryGration](http://www.rts.org.uk/HarryGration)).

**Pippa Shawley**

after his popular, self-produced YouTube videos gained the attention of producers. We caught up with him to hear why he prefers

# Yorkshire students show craft skills

Universities and colleges from across the region shared the honours at the RTS Yorkshire Student Television Awards.

Edd Benson from Sheffield Hallam University scooped the Animation award with *Out on a Limb*, which the jury praised as a “timely and thought-provoking piece”.

Fellow Hallam students – Amy Parker, Kirean Boughan, Lauren Griggs, Beth Elston and Chris Kelly – picked up the award in the Comedy and Entertainment category for *Tug of War*, which the jury commended for its “clear set-up, middle and pay-off – all in the right order”.

Purple Thunder Productions, from York St John University, won the Drama award with *Eden*, “an ambitious film with a real human story”.

Adam Marseille, Fraser Heanue and team from the Northern Film School at Leeds Beckett University

took home the Factual award for *Juiced*.

The jury said that this film got “right to the heart of the subject and was something they could easily see on television”.

The University of Sheffield’s Catarina Beija took the News prize for *Portuguese Bullfighting: A Dying Tradition?*. The jury said it included “a confident piece to camera, had good access and showed really strong craft skills”.

The last of the six main awards went to Callum Isaac, Jack Routledge and Dominique Scoles, from the University of Leeds, in the Short Feature category for *Jamie*, “an emotional piece, made with a lot of love”.

Eight Craft Awards were also made at the ceremony, which was held at Sheffield United FC in late February and hosted by *BBC Look North* presenter Amy Garcia.

“We are delighted with this year’s entries, both for their



Purple Thunder Productions won the Drama prize

Paul Harness

number and their quality. There were a number of entries that the judges felt would sit very well on the TV right away,” said Yorkshire

Chair Dr Fiona Thompson.

The University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam University sponsored the awards. **Matthew Bell**

# Irish colleges divide the spoils

Students from three colleges took home the prizes at the RTS Republic of Ireland Student Television Awards in mid-February.

Sean Cunningham, Paul Kavanagh, Padraic Byrne, Nicole Storck and team from the Irish School of Animation, Ballyfermot College of Further Education, took the Animation award, with an irreverent film about religion, *Define Intervention*.

“The original scripting and placing of witty set pieces

conveyed a well-crafted animation with great attention to detail and unique comedy,” said the jury.

Noel Aungier, also a student at Ballyfermot College of Further Education, was awarded the Comedy and Entertainment prize for *Trixie*, “a lively, narrative piece with music, movement and charm”.

Jordan Murshed and Eoin Duggan, students from the National Film School, IADT, took the Short Feature category with *Vitruvius*, which

featured “strong graphics, an effective score and sound effects”.

The award in the Factual category also went to National Film School students – Laura Gaynor and Luke Brabazon – for *When the Butcher Stopped Ordering Meat*.

The jury admired “the warm, congenial atmosphere maintained throughout”.

Ciarán McNamara, Ashley Turbett, Phil Davin, Pierce McDonagh and team from the School of Media, Dublin

Institute of Technology, scooped the Drama award for *Adolf and Eva*, “a comedy-drama, with clever scripting and good acting”.

RTÉ Director-General Dee Forbes presented the awards at RTÉ Studio One in Dublin.

“The jury was delighted to have such a high number of entries again this year in the five categories, and it was very impressed with the standard of the work of the students,” said Republic of Ireland Centre Chair Charles Byrne.

**Matthew Bell**

# Central Lancashire nabs three prizes

■ The University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) took home three of the top prizes from the RTS North West Student Awards in February.

The university's Jake Blakeston won the Animation award for *Matchstick Zombies*, which the jury praised for its direction and humour. UCLan students also won the Comedy and Entertainment and Short Feature Awards.

Yousef Thami, Liberty Shaw, Jake River Parker and Heather Davenport were awarded the Comedy and Entertainment prize for *Headless: The Ed Shales Story*, "an original and clever idea with a great punchline". Ashley Collier took the Short Feature award for *Felix*, a story "with heart and soul".

Robbie Nash from the University of Bolton triumphed in the Factual category with *See What I See, Hear What I Hear*, which featured a "strong bond and warmth between the film-maker and contributors".

James Oliver and team from The Manchester College took home the Drama award for *Stars on Mars*, which boasted an "outstanding set, with some superb graphics work



Jack P Shepherd (left) and Kieron Richardson

Claire Harrison

and brilliant post-production".

The News award was given to Jennifer Henry from Salford University for *Life as a Refugee*, which the jury praised for its journalism, production and "compelling interviews".

The ceremony was held at the Lowry Theatre, Salford, and hosted by *BBC North West Tonight* presenter Roger Johnson. It included a question and answer session with Jack P Shepherd from *Coronation Street* and *Hollyoaks* actor Kieron Richardson.

Earlier in the day, the

North West Centre held its annual Student Media Conference, also at the Lowry Theatre. It was hosted by *ITV News* senior programme editor Richard Frediani.

The sell-out conference, held in partnership with Salford University, featured high-profile industry speakers.

The *Hollyoaks* digital team from Lime Pictures – creative director Alan Toner, campaign manager Carly Stratton and head of video Graham Gallery – discussed the impact of social media on TV alongside

cast member Richard Linnell.

The audience heard how a tailored digital media strategy, with bespoke content for each digital platform, had enabled Channel 4's longest-running drama to not only connect with audiences in new ways but also to see increased engagement and interaction by viewers.

An informative and entertaining careers session, featuring *ITV Granada Reports* journalist Rachel Braund and Laura Gibson from *ITV Creative*, discussed the dos and don'ts of breaking into TV.

Sarah Jones, deputy head of media at Coventry University, led a session on virtual and augmented reality.

The "Soap in a week" session featured: *Corrie* actor Connor McIntyre; UCLan journalism head Andrew Ireland; *ITV* execs John Whiston and Mark Bickerton; and two students, Ariana Scott and Sam Greene.

This innovative project – in which students and TV practitioners created an episode of a soap in a week – was designed to inspire students and find new talent. **Matthew Bell and Abigail Hill**

## Al Lennon 1932-2017

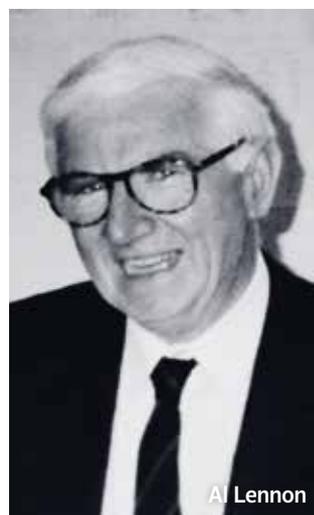
**A**lphonsus (Al) Lennon, who died after a long illness on 19 February, aged 84, founded the RTS Republic of Ireland Centre in 1996.

Al remained as Chair until 2000, when Charles Byrne assumed the role.

"We are all very sad at the passing of our dear friend and colleague Al Lennon and

owe him a great deal for his vision in founding the RoI Centre. I also had the honour of working with him at RTÉ, when he was part of the outside broadcast department," said Byrne, who remains Chair of the Centre.

In 2006, Al received the RTS's Pilgrim Award, which recognises outstanding service. "Al was, of course, the rock on which the RTS in Ireland was founded and a prime mover in Irish television. He will be sadly missed," said RTS Honorary Secretary David Lowen.



Al Lennon

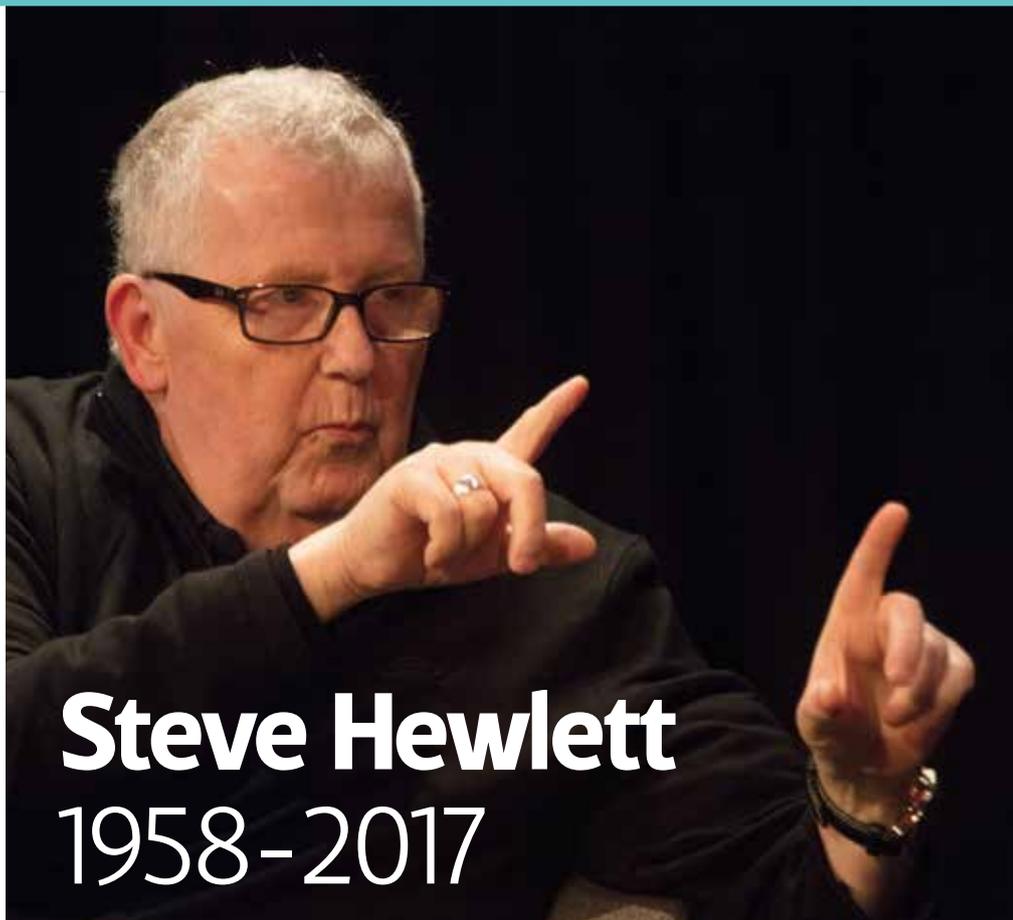
RTÉ

Over a long career at RTÉ outside broadcasts, Al covered many events, including the *Eurovision Song Contest* in Dublin in 1971, 1994 and 1995. He was also technical co-ordinator for the interval performance of *Riverdance* during the 1994 contest.

He contributed to RTÉ installations and technical planning at many of Ireland's sporting venues, including Croke Park and the Curragh.

Al is survived by his wife, Mary, and his three daughters, Ann, Kathryn and Sinéad.

**Matthew Bell**



Paul Hampartsoumian

# Steve Hewlett

## 1958-2017

**S**teve Hewlett, who has died, aged 58, was, in many ways, the journalists' journalist. Large and crumpled in appearance, looking askance at the world through badly treated glasses, Steve resembled a character from the pages of Michael Frayn. It was no surprise to learn that he was a rugby player.

His distinctive Midlands' tones were invariably part of the background noise to any media event worth attending.

At Cambridge or Edinburgh, Steve's presence was de rigueur – whether talking, beer in hand, until past midnight in the bar or up on stage interviewing, say, Elisabeth Murdoch or David Abraham.

The public knew him as the presenter of BBC Radio 4's *The Media Show* and latterly for describing in moving detail the progress of the cancer that finally killed him on 20 February.

On some days when a big media story was breaking, it seemed as if there were three, four or even seven Steve

Hewletts. He'd be on *Today* at breakfast time and there again as a pundit on the lunchtime news. As the day's news cycle drew to a close, Steve would still be explaining the importance of the latest twist in the phone-hacking saga, or a row over BBC executive pay, on *Newsnight*.

### STEVE'S INTERVIEWING GIFTS WERE SUBLIME

Somehow, the hugely energetic and intellectually forensic Steve would find the time to return calls from various media correspondents. He would not short-change these reporters by giving brief, run-of-the-mill answers to their queries.

Steve's weekly columns for the *Guardian* were a must-read and he was a valued contributor to *Television*. It is hard to imagine the UK's

media world without Steve's inquiring mind to make sense of it. He would look deep under the surface of things and never use the hack's lazy trick of falling back on platitudes.

At RTS events, Steve was a hugely welcome presence. His interviewing gifts were sublime, although his questions could be longer than the eventual answers.

Steve was brought up by adopted parents, Lawrence and Vera Hewlett, and attended grammar school in Solihull in the West Midlands. He went to Manchester University, where, as a student activist, he helped to organise a rent strike.

As an aspiring journalist, he sold stories to the BBC, but when *Nationwide's* editor, Roger Bolton, offered him a job, Steve caught the eye of the corporation's infamous Brigadier Ronnie Stonham, the Beeb's in-house spook. Bolton somehow overrode the MI5 man's objections and Steve's career was up and running.

Steve was part of the team

that made the radical Channel 4 current affairs shows *The Friday Alternative* and *Diverse Reports*, both of which were accused of left-wing bias.

In 1987, he returned to the BBC, making hard-hitting investigative programmes for *Brass Tacks* and, famously, *Panorama*, where he edited the sensational interview with Diana, Princess of Wales.

The show was watched by an astonishing 23 million people and precipitated a clash between the then-BBC Chairman, Marmaduke Hussey, and Director-General John Birt. Hussey's wife, Susan, was a lady-in-waiting to the Queen, but Birt kept the Chairman in the dark about the programme until it became public knowledge. Steve loved upsetting apple carts.

He was in line to become controller of BBC One in 1997 but was beaten to the job by Peter Salmon.

Instead, Steve was recruited as a commissioning editor at Channel 4, before joining Carlton TV as managing director of productions. He was hired to bring some editorial clout to the company following controversy over a faked documentary.

The corporate Carlton life was not totally to Steve's taste. Following Granada's takeover of the company, in 2004, he was made redundant.

He then proceeded to re-invent himself as Steve Hewlett, portfolio worker. As well as his BBC duties, he made programmes for two companies he had helped set up, Big Pictures and Genie Pictures. His 2013 BBC Two documentary *Rupert Murdoch: Battle with Britain* typically avoided being binary.

Steve is survived by his wife, Rachel Crellin, whom he married weeks before his death, and three sons, Freddie, Billy and Bertie, by his former partner Karole Lange.

**Steve Clarke**

# OFF MESSAGE

**W**e all know that the RTS Television Journalism Awards are one of the high spots in the TV calendar, but this year's ceremony was memorable on so many different fronts.

Throughout the proceedings, the emotional temperature was, to put it mildly, volatile – and nowhere more so than at the *Channel 4 News* table. They had many reasons to celebrate, winning a total of six awards.

Star reporter and anchor Matt Frei's tired and emotional acceptance speech – he beat the BBC's Jeremy Bowen and colleague Krishnan Guru-Murthy to nab Television Journalist of the Year – was worthy of Hollywood. Imagine a deranged Jack Nicholson at the peak of his powers and you'll have some idea of Frei's unbuttoned performance.

No prizes for guessing who the former Washington correspondent thanked for “making news great again”.

■ **Staying with the Journalism Awards, no one could fail to be touched by seeing Syrian film-maker Waad al-Kateab take the stage to receive the trophy for Camera Operator of the Year.**

In December, there were fears for al-Kateab's life when she was trapped amid the horror of a besieged Aleppo.

But, having managed to secure a visa in the nick of time, Waad was able to be there on the night. Justifiably, she was greeted by a standing ovation. She was the first woman to be voted Camera Operator of the Year. Off Message sincerely hopes she won't be the last.

As several commentators have pointed out, the fact that a woman filmed the destruction of Aleppo marks a significant moment in television news narration.

Or, as *Channel 4 News* editor Ben de Pear summed it up so eloquently in the *Guardian*, when he wrote in December: “She humanised the victims, showed us whole families in their worst moments, chronicled their pain and showed the world the horror, without intruding, and with a skill it takes most decades to learn.”

■ No apologies for one more item on the awards. As we all know by now, the Judges' Award was given to the late Steve Hewlett.

His three sons, Fred, Billy and Bertie collected the award. It was a highly charged moment. Stewart Purvis's moving tribute to Steve was a fitting coda to a remarkable evening.

And all executed without a single envelope malfunction.

■ **Meanwhile, did anyone mention ITV and the *News at Ten* at the ceremony? Well, the brilliant Tom**

Bradby won the night's first award, for Network Presenter of the Year.

The timing of this was exquisite. Two nights earlier, ITV had unveiled the first edition of its new, late-night entertainment vehicle, *The Nightly Show*. The *News at Ten* was bumped to 10:30pm to make room for the upstart chat show.

The next few weeks are certain to be an anxious time for everyone's favourite maverick, ITV's head of television, Kevin Lygo, architect of the new schedule. He now knows what it feels like to be at the sharp end of playing fast and loose with a national TV institution.

But are all the criticisms thrown at Lygo merely the anachronistic whinges of those who've forgotten that, in today's world, most of us get our news online and on the move?

One other point: before *The Nightly Show* is written off as Lygo's *Eldorado*, just remember how long it took for another type of TV show pioneered and perfected across the Atlantic to bed down in the UK. Bringing breakfast TV to Britain was hardly an overnight success.

TV-am, recall, was beset by teething troubles that make *The Nightly Show*'s present woes look like just another embarrassing day for Paul Nuttall. As far as Off Message knows, no irate *News at Ten* presenter has yet hurled a glass of wine in Lygo's direction.



# RTS PATRONS

<b>RTS Principal Patrons</b>	BBC	Channel 4	ITV	Sky
------------------------------	-----	-----------	-----	-----

<b>RTS International Patrons</b>	A+E Networks International Discovery Networks Liberty Global NBCUniversal International	The Walt Disney Company Turner Broadcasting System Inc Viacom International Media Networks YouTube
----------------------------------	--	---

<b>RTS Major Patrons</b>	Accenture Amazon Video Audio Network Boston Consulting Group BT Channel 5 Deloitte	EndemolShine Enders Analysis FremantleMedia FTI Consulting Fujitsu Huawei IBM IMG Studios	ITN KPMG McKinsey and Co OC&C Pinewood Studios S4C Sargent-Disc Sony	STV Group UKTV Virgin Media YouView
--------------------------	--	--	---	--

<b>RTS Patrons</b>	Alvarez & Marsal LLP Autocue Blackmagic Design	Digital Television Group Kantar Media Lumina Search	PricewaterhouseCoopers Quantel Raidió Teilifís Éireann	UTV Television Vinten Broadcast
--------------------	--	---	--	------------------------------------

<b>Who's who at the RTS</b>	<p><b>Patron</b> HRH The Prince of Wales</p> <p><b>Vice-Presidents</b> David Abraham Dawn Airey Sir David Attenborough OM CH CVO CBE FRS Baroness Floella Benjamin OBE Dame Colette Bowe OBE Lord Bragg of Wigton John Cresswell Adam Crozier Mike Darcey Greg Dyke Lord Hall of Birkenhead Lorraine Heggessey Ashley Highfield Armando Iannucci OBE Ian Jones Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon OBE Rt Hon Baroness Jowell of Brixton DBE PC David Lynn Sir Trevor McDonald OBE Ken MacQuarrie Gavin Patterson Trevor Phillips OBE Stewart Purvis CBE Sir Howard Stringer</p>	<p><b>Chair of RTS Trustees</b> Tom Mockridge</p> <p><b>Honorary Secretary</b> David Lowen</p> <p><b>Honorary Treasurer</b> Mike Green</p> <p><b>BOARD OF TRUSTEES</b> Lynn Barlow Tim Davie Mike Green David Lowen Graham McWilliam Tom Mockridge Simon Pitts Jane Turton Rob Woodward</p> <p><b>EXECUTIVE Chief Executive</b> Theresa Wise</p>	<p><b>CENTRES COUNCIL</b> Lynn Barlow Charles Byrne Steve Carson Dan Cherowbrier Isabel Clarke Alex Connock Gordon Cooper Tim Hartley Kingsley Marshall Nikki O'Donnell Fiona Thompson Graeme Thompson Penny Westlake James Wilson</p> <p><b>SPECIALIST GROUP CHAIRS</b> <b>Archives</b> Dale Grayson</p> <p><b>Diversity</b> Marcus Ryder</p> <p><b>Early Evening Events</b> Dan Brooke</p> <p><b>Education</b> Graeme Thompson</p> <p><b>RTS Futures</b> Donna Taberer</p>	<p><b>History</b> Don McLean</p> <p><b>IBC Conference Liaison</b> Terry Marsh</p> <p><b>RTS Technology Bursaries</b> Simon Pitts</p> <p><b>AWARDS COMMITTEE CHAIRS</b> <b>Awards &amp; Fellowship Policy</b> David Lowen</p> <p><b>Television Journalism Awards</b> Stewart Purvis CBE</p> <p><b>Programme Awards</b> Alex Mahon</p> <p><b>Student Television Awards</b> Phil Edgar-Jones</p>
-----------------------------	---	--	--	---

BRITAIN'S NEXT  
**top model**  
#BNTM



**Lifetime**

THURSDAYS 9PM

**A+E NETWORKS** | UK