

Television

May 2017

TV's invisible people





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From the CEO



The past month has been action-packed at the RTS. I am hugely grateful to Channel 4 for providing the venue and facilities for what was, for us, a ground-breaking event, "Where have all the disabled people gone?"

Ade Adepitan was a brilliant and good-humoured host at this packed evening. The four panellists were highly engaging as we heard how, in this area of diversity, British television has yet to fulfil the promise of Channel 4's coverage of the Paralympics.

Staying with diversity, our other big London event of the past four weeks was "Breaking barriers: how can the TV industry encourage more women into technology jobs?"

Thanks to all of you who attended and to those who took part in what was a fascinating and timely

discussion. You will find reports of both events in this month's issue.

Planning for Cambridge is gearing up. We have announced one of our keynote speakers, James Murdoch, CEO of 21st Century Fox. I am so excited that James has agreed to join us.

Also confirmed at the convention are: Andy Harries, CEO of Left Bank Pictures; *The Grand Tour* executive producer Andy Wilman; Michelle Guthrie, Managing Director of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation; and Sharon White, CEO of Ofcom.

I hope to be announcing more details soon of our line-up for Cambridge, which runs 13-15 September.

Our next early-evening event examines the increasingly relevant subject of targeted advertising and takes place at The Hospital Club in London on 24 May.

For younger readers, there is still time to apply for our student bursaries.

These include the Steve Hewlett Scholarship to a young talent studying journalism.

Finally, I'd like to draw your attention to some must-reads in this month's *Television*. In what, I think, is a first for the magazine, we have a perspective from China, where Marcus Ryder recently starting working for CCTV. Marcus offers some important advice for anyone considering a career in international television.

Back in the UK, Tim Dams provides a comprehensive account of how Britain's studio sector is booming. And, if you are looking for some light relief, don't miss Vinay Patel's witty diary.

Theresa

Theresa Wise

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National events

RTS FUTURES

Tuesday 23 May

VFX and animation: Meet the experts

Panellists include: Alex Donne-Johnson, creative director, Dazzle Ship; and Pete Allinson, head of design, UKTV. More expert panellists TBC. 6:45pm for 7:00pm
Venue: Curzon Soho, 99 Shaftesbury Avenue, London W1D 5DY

RTS EARLY EVENING EVENT

Wednesday 24 May

Is targeted advertising the future of TV?

Panellists: Simon Cook, product and business development director, YouView; Jonathan Lewis, head of digital and partnership innovation, Channel 4; Jakob Nielsen, international head of addressable TV, GroupM; Jamie West, group head of advanced advertising, Sky; and additional speaker TBC. Chair: Anna Dobbie, reporter, M&M Global. 6:30pm for 6:45pm start
Venue: The Hospital Club, 24 Endell Street, London WC2H 9HQ
■ Book online at www.rts.org.uk

RTS AGM

Tuesday 30 May

6:00pm-7:30pm. Note that the AGM will be held at Virgin Media.
Venue: Virgin Media, Griffin House, 161 Hammersmith Road, London W6 8BS

RTS AWARDS

Friday 16 June

RTS Student Television Awards 2017

Venue: BFI Southbank, London SE1 8XT
■ Book online at www.rts.org.uk

RTS CONFERENCE

13-15 September

RTS Cambridge Convention 2017: 'A world of opportunity'

Confirmed speakers include: Sir David Clementi, Chair, BBC; Michelle Guthrie, MD, Australian

Broadcasting Corporation; Tony Hall, Director-General, BBC; Andy Harries, CEO, Left Bank Pictures; James Murdoch, CEO, 21st Century Fox; Sharon White, CEO, Ofcom; and Andy Wilman, Executive Producer, The Grand Tour.

Early-bird rate of £1,200 plus VAT for the first 75 bookings. The principal sponsor is Sky and the convention is co-chaired by Andrew Griffith, Group Chief Operating Officer, Sky, and Gary Davey, Managing Director, Content at Sky.

Venue: West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge CB3 9DP and King's College, Cambridge CB2 1ST
■ Book online at www.rts.org.uk

RTS MASTERCLASSES

Tuesday 14 November

RTS Student Programme Masterclasses

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

Wednesday 15 November

RTS Student Craft Skills Masterclasses

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

Local events

BRISTOL

■ Belinda Biggam
■ belindabiggam@hotmail.com

DEVON & CORNWALL

■ Jane Hudson
■ RTSDevonandCornwall@rts.org.uk

EAST

Thursday 25 May

RTS East Awards 2017

Drinks reception 7:30pm, dinner 8:00pm, awards presentation 9:00pm. Tickets £40 each.
Venue: Norwich University of the Arts, 3-7 Redwell Street, Norwich NR2 4SN

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

LONDON

Wednesday 24 May

RTS London AGM followed by Big summer quiz

AGM 6:00pm; quiz 6:30pm for 7:00pm, hosted by Greg Scott
Venue: ITV London Studios, Upper Ground, London SE1 9LT
■ Daniel Cherowbrier
■ daniel@cherowbrier.co.uk

MIDLANDS

■ Jayne Greene 07792 776585
■ jayne@ijmmmedia.co.uk

NORTH EAST & THE BORDER

Wednesday 17 May

Young People's Media Festival 2017

Further information at: www.sunderland.ac.uk/rtsypmf.
6:00pm
Venue: Media Campus, University of Sunderland SR6 0DD
■ Jill Graham
■ jill.graham@blueyonder.co.uk

NORTH WEST

Wednesday 17 May

Broken – screening

Q&A with writer Jimmy

McGovern and cast and crew after the screening. 6:30pm

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

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

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ John Mitchell
■ mitch.mvbroadcast@btinternet.com

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

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

SCOTLAND

Wednesday 17 May

RTS Scotland 2017 Awards

6:00pm for 6:30pm
Venue: Òran Mór, Byres Rd, Glasgow G12 8QX
■ Jane Muirhead 07718 087 108
■ scotlandchair@rts.org.uk

SOUTHERN

■ Stephanie Farmer
■ SFarmer@bournemouth.ac.uk

THAMES VALLEY

Wednesday 17 May

NAB review 2017

7:00pm-9:00pm
Venue: Pincents Manor Hotel, Calcot, Reading RG31 4UQ
Wednesday 14 June
Summer barbecue and mobile broadcasting
6:30pm for 7:00pm
Venue: Pincents Manor Hotel, Calcot, Reading RG31 4UQ
■ Tony Orme
■ RTSThamesValley@rts.org.uk

WALES

■ Hywel Wiliam 07980 007841
■ hywel@aim.uk.com

YORKSHIRE

Friday 7 July

Programme Awards 2017

7:00pm for 7:30pm
Venue: New Dock Hall, Royal Armouries, Leeds LS10 1LT
■ Lisa Holdsworth 07790 145280
■ lisa@allonewordproductions.co.uk

RTS AGM

Tuesday 30 May

6:00pm-7:30pm

The AGM will be held at Virgin Media, Griffin House, 161 Hammersmith Road, London W6 8BS

TV diary

Vinay Patel detests meetings and is happier attending rehearsals, but nothing compares to the thrill of seeing his work performed live



It's the meetings that kill you. No one warns you about the bloody meetings. Not because they're bad – more often than not they aren't, but they trick your brain into thinking you're doing work when you're not, not really.

And it can be fun. Sometimes, it takes all I can muster to prevent myself leaning across the table, grabbing my meetee by the hands and whispering, "Thank you for saving me from a life of isolation and giving me an excuse to put on my trousers."

Instead, today, I treat them to a coffee-fuelled treatise about Why Television Drama Matters, which sounds noble but is basically an attempt to justify my existence to people who already want to give me a job. There's plenty of twitching on both sides. It is all a bit much for a Monday morning.

■ **Rehearsals for the first performance of a play I've written. It's been a while since I've had a play on, and I have to remind myself that those initial theatre rehearsals are the opposite of TV meetings, in that the most useful thing you can do is to shut up.**

You've got to let the director establish authority and the actors figure out solutions themselves – rehearsals are

all about getting it wrong until it's right. That doesn't stop me squirming, though. Need to learn to squirm less.

■ Twitching and squirming aside, my one nod to physical activity is to turn up to Wednesday-night football for the team I helped found but hardly ever play for any more. Without me, they've won the league. Twice. Thus, my "activity" is constrained to giving the sidelines a good seeing to with my elaborate warm-up routine.

Our shirt names were all chosen by committee. I've got "Plath" on the back of mine, a nod to Sylvia, though people often assume I've misspelled "Platt" (as in David, the early-1990s England captain). Not sure which is the more hipster choice.

■ **Revisions for a film I'm writing and my head is struggling with switching between three different media in three consecutive days. I can't remember who said it, but the phrase "learning to write is learning to work" has never left me.**

Though the past year or so has been brilliant, the jump in pace and the sheer number of words to be written has been a steep learning curve.

Ironically, part of becoming a full-time writer is training yourself to be less indulgent with your work. You

can't toss away entire weekends and evenings to it any more, you have to learn to be better, quicker and to force yourself to make time for the people who care about you.

The emotional demands of a script can be intense and, if you don't keep yourself balanced, you'll burn out again and again. Figuring out how to do that is my task for the year.

■ Performance of the play's first scene as part of the reopening of the Bush Theatre. It's also my birthday and, after the hamster-wheel of a week I've had with writing, there's no better way to spend today than with an audience, watching the end product of all those all-nighters and reminding myself why I love what I do and that I'm lucky to do it.

On Saturday, I'll celebrate my birthday properly, which means I'll sit in the pub from open till close, watch England lose to Ireland in the Six Nations, spill beer on myself during said game and attempt to style it out.

But the biggest lesson of the week is that there's no styling out a half pint of thick stout on a crisp, white shirt.

*Vinay Patel is the writer of **Murdered by My Father**, winner in the **Single Drama** category at the **RTS Programme Awards 2017**.*

Inhospitable to the invisible



Shutterstock

Disability

An RTS panel explored why a fifth of the population still get a rough deal from TV. **Steve Clarke** took notes

Channel 4's coverage of the 2012 London Paralympics was a big moment in British TV. For the first time, audiences saw disabled athletes as glamorous role models participating in a high-profile showcase. At a stroke, Channel 4 put the Paralympics on the map, after more than half a century of obscurity.

But, in the past four and a half years, have our broadcasters begun to fulfil the promise of the Paralympics in the

representation of disabled people on TV – or are those with disabilities still being marginalised and stereotyped?

The title of this RTS event, "Where have all the disabled people gone?" suggested that we all know the answer and it is not one that disability campaigners are happy with.

This is despite Channel 4 investing a lot of resources in last year's Rio Paralympics and screening several high-profile programmes that put disabled people to the fore. The network's satirical panel show *The Last*

Leg, spun off from the 2012 Paralympics, and dating show *The Undateables*, also launched in 2012, both come to mind.

As the RTS audience heard, progress is being made, but a great deal more needs to be done. There are still few opportunities for non-able-bodied people seeking employment in TV.

And producers and commissioners are still struggling to think beyond the familiar stereotypes when disabled people are cast in shows.

In July 2014, the BBC announced a target to quadruple the number of disabled people on screen by the end of this year. The aim is to hire more disabled performers and presenters, as well as back-room staff.

The recent appointment of Parliamentarian Tanni Grey-Thompson to the new BBC Board is clearly a step in the right direction. Her elevation won't have gone unnoticed by Ade Adepitan, the wheelchair basketball star who steered this discussion with wry good humour and a quiet passion.

He was a medal winner at the 2004 Paralympics and has hosted shows for CBBC and appeared in *EastEnders*. Channel 4 picked him as one of its main presenters of the 2012 London and 2016 Rio Paralympics.

Laughter was much in evidence throughout the evening as the audience heard from a panel of people who, against the odds, are working successfully in TV.

There was anger and frustration, too, that, in an allegedly liberal sector such as TV, the disabled are too often feared and regarded as being akin to outcasts.

Adepitan said that around 20% of the UK population is estimated to be disabled or to suffer from a long-term health condition.

Disabled people find it hard to get a job *per se*, let alone work in TV. Two million of the disabled in Britain are unemployed.

"Potentially, that's a lot of untapped talent," said Adepitan, who also noted that UK soaps *Coronation Street*, *EastEnders*, *Emmerdale* and *Hollyoaks* had all recently featured disabled actors.

One of the themes to emerge from the evening was not only the lack of disabled people working in TV, especially in drama and comedy, but

rampant stereotyping of those who do pass their auditions.

The importance of having televisual role models was stressed. Adepitan and the panellists agreed that seeing "someone like me" on TV could have "a profound effect" on a person's self-esteem.

Rosie Jones, a researcher and comedian who has cerebral palsy, made the point with humour. She recalled that the first disabled character she saw on TV was a schoolgirl in BBC TV's pioneering drama *Grange Hill*, launched in 1978. Rachel, played by Francesca Martinez, also had cerebral palsy.

While Jones was thrilled to see someone similar to her appearing in a TV show, she hated the fact that one of the storylines involved Rachel being bullied. "I had a great time at school and I bullied other people," she said, to ripples of laughter from the audience.

Jones added: "I have never felt disabled. So it was interesting to see someone on TV [but] it made me quite angry. Why was she the only person I had to be compared to? It just made me feel like I wanted more people [like me] out there. Why wasn't there an ultra-cool, ultra-funny person exactly like me?"

"Why are disabled people on TV always portrayed as being nice all the time?" asked Adam Hills, presenter of *The Last Leg*.

"Why aren't there any [disabled] bastards on TV?" interjected Jones.

As the laughter from the audience subsided, Hills said that one of his early role models was athlete Oscar Pistorius. It should be stressed that, when he first saw Pistorius, the runner was not a convicted murderer.

Another early role model was Paralympian Jonnie Peacock. Like Hills, he had a single-leg, below-the-knee amputation. Until then, the only people Hills had seen with the condition were "old blokes". "I was proud to see a positive representation of it... to see someone sprinting as fast as Jonnie," recalled Hills.

By contrast, fellow panellist Deborah Williams, CEO of the Creative Diversity Network, said that she had no TV role models to inspire her. "I've never seen a black, disabled woman, slightly overweight, with no left hand, on television," she told the RTS. "It makes me feel sick to the pit of my stomach." ▶



Paul Hampartsoumian

Quotas: for and against

The case for

Adam Hills: 'If we didn't have a quota, how many disabled people would have worked behind the scenes at the Games in Rio?

'Quotas are a pain in the arse but, if your disability is going to hold you back when you go into an interview, we may need them.'

The case against

Deborah Williams: 'I am against quotas because implementing them is difficult. Each of the five broadcasters in the UK has a different approach.... Some people do have quotas. For them, it works.

'But most quotas are set at entry level. What do you do when you get to senior management? What do you do when you get to executive producers? What do you do in production companies?

'I prefer the long-term goal of changing the way that the industry works, including a change in working practices.'

The experience

Rosie Jones: 'I'm very pro schemes. I started in TV in 2011 because of a scheme and that meant that I could leapfrog over being a runner, which was great because I'm crap at running. But you do not want me to make you a cup of tea.'

➤ In the mid-1980s, the only people she could begin to identify with on TV were *French and Saunders*. They looked completely different to anyone else on the box at that time.

“Because I don’t see myself on TV, I am not comfortable with myself, I am not happy with myself. Had I been able to see people like me on TV, it would have boosted my confidence,” said Williams, who performs as a comedian.

She stressed that one purpose of TV was to “remind us that we exist in many shapes”: “A lot of people perceive disability as a sickness and an illness they can catch.... They don’t think of disabled people as fully rounded individuals who have everything to offer.”

Financial considerations are often cited for failing to employ disabled people in TV. “With 30 years of doing this, people still say, ‘It will cost me money.’ I’m like, ‘Please, you spend more on your bar tab in a week than it costs to build a ramp or provide an interpreter,’” said Williams.

Shannon Murray, actress, writer and broadcaster, emphasised that disabled people need to be regarded as part of everyday society by their able-bodied peers. “We can like clothes and fashion and take pride in our appearance,” she said. “I wanted to snog boys [as a teenager] and go to clubs. [But] If you were in a wheelchair or were physically disabled [people thought] you shouldn’t be bothering with that: ‘No one’s going to be looking at you. You should be at home, knitting and wearing comfy shoes.’”

Paralysed from the waist down since the age of 14 following an accident, Murray has forged a career as a model, an actor and a lawyer. This has been in spite of obstacles such as no disabled access to some casting-audition venues.

She recalled how casting directors typecast her: “I would love to play an evil old bitch. Every character [I have played] was nice and needy, and every character had to cry except for one.

“I have never played a character with a job. Because I’m a disabled woman, therefore I must be dependent on either a husband or the state.”

Picking up the point about how TV tends to stereotype non-able-bodied people, Jones said that she had always



WHY AREN'T THERE ANY [DISABLED] BASTARDS ON TV?

been judged on how she talked; one of the symptoms of cerebral palsy is slurred speech.

“My first job when meeting anyone is breaking that barrier of ‘Don’t worry, I’ve got a dodgy voice but I’m all right at my job,’” she explained. “That’s difficult and it has been crap at times. I have applied for jobs where they will ring me up, hear my voice and hang up because they can’t be bothered.

“It’s hard to break that stereotype. But I hope that five or 10 minutes in my company will break down that stereotype.”

Murray sounded pessimistic about the opportunities for disabled actors in TV drama and comedy. In other

non-scripted areas, she said that British TV was doing more to embrace disabled representation.

But she was concerned about some of the freak shows featuring disabled people that populate schedules. Sensationally titled factual entertainment shows seemed popular with able-bodied people “who sit in amazement and go, ‘Wow, look at that person with two heads,’” argued Murray. “It is a cheap way in and a way of a ticking a box.... The contributors are not being paid. They are only getting travel expenses.

“These shows are a cheap way for networks to say, ‘We got viewers and we have done our bit.’”

All the panellists agreed that real and lasting change would come only when some of TV’s decision-makers were hired from the ranks of the disabled.

Adeitan thought it would take another five years before this happened. By then, people like Jones, working in mid-ranking jobs, would be promoted to executive roles.

Ultimately, broadcasters and film studios were losing out financially by



Panellists (from left):
Deborah Williams,
Adam Hills, Rosie Jones,
Shannon Murray and
chair Ade Adepitan

On its own, one leg isn't funny

Adam Hills, presenter of Channel 4's *The Last Leg*, recalled how, working as a newbie stand-up comedian in his native Australia, he was told by a veteran performer to hide his disability.

'I had just started doing paid gigs and I remember doing a joke about my foot,' he said. 'One of the older comics took me aside and said, "You're not good enough to talk about your foot yet. If you talk about your foot now, you are going to be the guy with one leg, that's all people are going to want you to talk about."'

Hills then spent 13 years on the comedy circuit avoiding jokes relating to his foot. It was not until 2001 that he felt his comedy chops were good enough to mine material from the disability.

Two things happened: Hills was nominated for the Perrier Awards in Edinburgh and an incident at airport security, in the wake of 9/11, persuaded him that having a prosthetic lower leg was good for his act.

Hills said: 'I was going through Heathrow three days after 11 September and people were freaked out about my foot, because it would set off metal detectors.'

'A security guard came over and I explained it was a prosthetic leg. He shat himself and said: "It's all right, mate, go straight through."'

'It was the look on his face: "I don't care if a plane comes down, I don't want to offend a spastic."'

'That punchline is the reason that I started talking about my prosthetic on stage.'

'The only hurdle I found was that there were some audience members who'd been following me for years and they were angry that I had never talked about it before...

'In a way, for me, it's become my little secret weapon I can whip out when I need to.'

Paul Hampartsoumian

continuing to marginalise the disabled, argued Hills. Once they woke up to the impact that improved depictions of the disabled could have on the company's bottom line, a tipping point would be reached.

"TV and the media forget that there's a disabled audience that is willing to spend money. They want to watch these shows," agreed Adepitan. "If you advertise and you market towards them, you're going to get their money. I just don't understand why they neglect that audience."

Williams said that it was financial considerations that made Sky sit up and take notice of its black subscribers: "They went, 'Look, 21% of our audience is not white, and they pay for telly. We are not feeding them. Let's go out and buy some content and feed them.' It drove up the numbers."

Asked about the various schemes and initiatives apparently championed by broadcasters over the years, Murray was scathing: "I think they are as useful as a condom in a convent."

She added: "I have been doing this for 20 years, I have seen you at many

DON'T WORRY, I'VE GOT A DODGY VOICE BUT I'M ALL RIGHT AT MY JOB

panels, I have been in the audience, on the stage, and I can't believe we are still doing it.

"It is the same questions and it goes back to the same answer: fear. It is like: just do it, just book disabled people, just use us, whether it is behind the screen or on the screen."

"We are all mature enough and have our shit together enough to do a job. We wouldn't ask to work in an industry that we couldn't cope in." ■

'Where have all the disabled people gone?' was an RTS early-evening event held at Channel 4 in central London on 10 April. The producers were Dan Brooke and Jonathan Simon.

Content

From *Fleabag* to *Thirteen*, BBC Three's online-only service is defying the sceptics, says **Sanya Burgess**

Not everyone was happy with the Royal Television Society crowning BBC Three Channel of the Year. As one young viewer tweeted: “@bbcthree how can you win channel of the year, if you don't actually exist on a channel?”

The success of online-only, schedule-free BBC Three shows that our idea of what constitutes a channel is evolving.

Forced off the air in early 2016 as a cost-cutting measure, sceptics thought that BBC Three faced an early and regrettable death. Yet, the service has gone on to confound the pundits. It picked up six awards at the recent RTS Programme Awards, from Single Drama to Channel of the Year, and it has also been nominated for eight Baftas.

So, how did BBC Three become the Cinderella of television?

In March 2014, BBC Director-General Tony Hall announced that the youth channel would stop broadcasting and move online, with its budget slashed from £85m to £30m. Speaking at the time, BBC Trustee Suzanna Taverne said: “The decision to close a TV channel is a difficult one, and one we have not taken lightly.” A petition against the closure gathered more than 300,000 signatures. Stars, including Daniel Radcliffe and Olivia Colman, voiced their resistance to the move.

After its last show was broadcast on 16 February 2016, BBC Three lost no time in posting a video online called *Welcome to BBC Three on YouTube*. Earliest comments, such as “RIP BBC3 2003–16”, were posted underneath. To this day, the video has been viewed only 45,000 times.

At the time of its closure, BBC Three had an average daily audience of 925,000 under the age of 25. Experts predicted that only 20% of them would

remain loyal to the channel online.

Fast forward 15 months. The station is still hitting some duff notes. Some videos on its YouTube channel have extremely low viewing figures – some struggling to reach 230 views.

However, other videos have secured in excess of 1 million views on the YouTube channel, which has more than 243,000 subscribers – double that of E4's rival YouTube channel.

Over the past year, BBC Three's YouTube service has accumulated more than 40 million views; the monthly average is 4 million views.

BBC Three has also found solid support on Facebook. Episodes of its weekly, short-form series *Amazing Humans* have notched up a total in excess of 90 million views.

Another of BBC Three's short-form videos, *Things People with Down's Syndrome Are Tired of Hearing*, has been viewed more than 14 million times and received over 130,000 likes and

220,000 shares. Since the start of 2017, the station's total Facebook worldwide reach has averaged 53 million people a week – with a peak of 88 million one week in February.

It's not all just about social. The channel's strongest content is prominent on iPlayer. For example, in 2016, the first episode of drama *Thirteen* attracted more than 3.2 million iPlayer views and was only knocked off the top of the iPlayer ratings that year by *Planet Earth II*.

BBC Three controller Damian Kavanagh says that the vision for BBC Three online has been, from the very beginning, to push boundaries: “We wanted to commission programmes that felt very distinctive and we also wanted to work with a wide range of talent – both established and brand new.”

He believes that BBC Three has lived up to this and, while continuing to be a badge of quality, it has become a hub for innovation and demonstrated its





Fleabag

BBC

willingness to take a punt on first-time talent.

Kavanagh argues that, freed from the burden of a schedule, his team can also focus on the best way to tell each story without having to worry about cutting content down to fit into its slot.

He gives the example of last year's documentary *Unsolved*, an investigation into the historical disappearance of a teenage boy on the Isle of Wight: "I commissioned it and said just go and shoot. We sent two journalists there and told them to get to the bottom of the story. They came back and then discovered what format it would take. It ended up as eight 10-minute films."

Additional content was published alongside the films, which audiences were encouraged to explore at their own pace.

The nature of online also means that content can be turned around with the speed of news programming. Incredibly, some of the *Stacey Dooley Investigates*

documentaries are available to watch within a week of being commissioned.

Kavanagh does not believe that scheduled television is dying – perhaps because his channel's long-form content has continued to be broadcast on BBC One and Two. But he is convinced that the way young people consume video is changing and that BBC Three is tapping into that change.

As a result, he also does not believe that BBC Three is stealing viewers from rival channels, such as Channel 4 and E4, because nowadays so much is watched on catch-up.

E4 has remained the most popular digital channel for viewers aged 16–34. Its two top-rating shows last year were *The Big Bang Theory* and *Tattoo Fixers*, pulling in average audiences of 2.6 million and 1.2 million, respectively.

By comparison, BBC Three drama *Murdered by My Father* had 1.8 million iPlayer requests last year, while the first episode of the third season of

Cuckoo had 1.5 million requests. One of BBC Three's biggest hits last year was *Fleabag*, a dark comedy following one woman's struggle to cope with a personal tragedy and the demands of life in the capital. The show keeps winning prizes for its star and creator, Phoebe Waller-Bridge.

Lydia Hampson, who produced *Fleabag*, says: "Phoebe was super new talent and BBC Three was a great home because its whole remit is to take chances on new talent and that's absolutely what Phoebe was. It was far more open to taking risks with the show."

Hampson believes that BBC Three gave Waller-Bridge the creative freedom she needed to make the show in a way that remained true to her original play. Recall, for instance, that the very first episode contained the C-word. And even if one episode ran to 22 minutes and another ran to 31 minutes, it was no big deal as there was no schedule to squeeze it into.

Despite the strong content emerging from BBC Three, some critics are frustrated that it is being compared like-for-like with terrestrial TV channels. Indeed, some senior industry figures insist that a core part of being defined as a channel is having to fill a traditional schedule with variety and skill.

One such practitioner remarked – on condition of anonymity – that, while he was impressed with the quality of programming considering its limited budget, he doubted whether BBC Three could deliver the same quality consistently over a 24/7 schedule.

Kavanagh bats away these criticisms: "I think that that's a really strange delineation. I don't know what they mean by a 'real channel'. What is a TV channel? It's a collection of content.

"If you go down that line, you could argue that some of the channels that are repeats-heavy and don't have a certain quantity of origination on them aren't real channels.

"It sounds to me a bit like sour grapes because we won Channel of the Year."

He adds: "We were judged on exactly the same as everyone else.... I believe the content we've made over the past year has been outstanding and it's outstanding because of the brilliant people who wanted to work with us."

Reflecting on the anger around the initial move to online-only, Kavanagh quips: "People don't like change, do they?"

It is a sentiment that will likely dog BBC Three for some time to come. ■

Can Sands deliver Today?



To outsiders, the *Today* programme is the flagship of BBC News. It is the place where decision-makers are held to account, and it provides radio's gathering point for the chattering classes, their essential briefing for the day ahead.

To insiders, it's a rather different experience: dreadful working hours, fuelled by grim Broadcasting House coffee – and, perhaps most surprisingly, a struggle for the resources commensurate with the programme's reputation. Welcome to both of these worlds, Sarah Sands.

I did the same job myself more than 20 years ago, and it was that old cliché about the best and the worst of times.

BBC News

Roger Mosey, a former editor of *Today*, outlines the challenges facing **Sarah Sands** as she takes on the hottest news seat in the BBC

There is the exhilaration of setting the national agenda and being in charge of journalism that can shake ministerial careers or provide the day's humorous talking point.

Yet, it was also all-consuming and destructive of normal life: the phone calls at any hour, the need to follow every twist and turn of a story – and the kickings you received if politicians didn't like the treatment they received.

Like most of my predecessors and successors, I had been blooded by a number of years on Radio 4 news programmes before I was promoted to editing *Today*. But, these days, the BBC routinely recruits newspaper executives such as Sands.

The director of BBC News, James

Harding, came from the *Times*; Ian Katz of the *Guardian* took over *Newsnight* in 2013; Amol Rajan from the *Independent* is the corporation's media editor. Probably only the *Daily Mail's* Paul Dacre can be ruled out as a future corporation staffer.

BBC folk tell me that there is grumbling about the failure to promote insiders who know how to make television and radio programmes.

For someone with no background in broadcasting, and who is branching out in a new direction at 55, Sands has the toughest possible challenge. She has to be the hands-on editor of the BBC's most important daily programme.

The job involves taking decisions in the lonely hours of the night. In the most extreme case, a wrong move can bring the corporate structure tumbling down on top of her. Remember what happened in 2003-04 to the Director-General Greg Dyke and Chair Gavyn Davies after Andrew Gilligan's contribution to *Today* regarding weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

But this is not a programme that benefits from corporate caution: at its best, *Today* has a swagger and sense of its own mission that defies attempts to control it by BBC apparatchiks.

People who've talked to Sands say that she enters the job in high spirits. Her role as editor of the *London Evening Standard* is, she has claimed, about getting the news out first in print and shaping the agenda as the day's events unfold. She believes that those skills will transfer to Radio 4. Her contacts are impeccable, as evidenced by a deluge of letters from the great and good congratulating her on getting the job, and her friendship with Boris Johnson.

She is a dedicated listener to *Today* – “she seems to remember each programme in some detail,” says a current employee, approvingly. And she rightly considers the programme to be in decent shape, though her instincts are to cheer it up a little.

Her background as deputy editor on the *Daily Telegraph* and consultant editor on the *Daily Mail* means that she will have a shared background with one of the great *Today* editors, Julian Holland. He had previously been a feature and leader writer for the *Mail*.

A BBC insider notes that she understands “what interests the ageing middle class”, which is a necessary skill on Radio 4.

Her CV points to another of Sands's

challenges, though. The modern BBC has executives whose views we know: James Purnell, the director of radio, is a former Labour cabinet minister who voted for the Iraq war and against an inquiry into it.

Sands edited a newspaper that campaigned for Zac Goldsmith to be mayor of London. We know what she thinks about Brexit because she's told us in her *Standard* column: she's a Remain voter who's now giving Brexit a chance.

This is surmountable, and at least she's not another BBC soft leftie, but

SO FAR, SHE HAS SHOWN A ROBUSTNESS THAT SOME IN BROADCASTING HOUSE WILL FIND ALARMING

the risk is that her views become a story in the inevitable battles that *Today* will have with political parties.

There is, of course, a degree of management protection for the editor of *Today*. Sands will report to a controller of daily news programmes, who, in turn, sits within Harding's management structure.

I suspect that she will find this somewhat restrictive after the freedom of being a newspaper editor but, so far, she has shown a robustness that some in Broadcasting House will find alarming.

Her post-appointment interview on Radio 4's *The Media Show* gave every sign of not having been prepped by the BBC press office in the usual way. There cannot have been corporate approval for her musing about humanists being invited on to the *Thought for the Day* strand.

This is good. Having a *Today* editor who behaves like a proper editor is better than producing ranks of compliant bureaucrats.

Sharp elbows will be needed to ensure that *Today* has the staffing it needs and enough money to spend on its journalism, at a time when the BBC as a whole is cutting back. *Today's* night shifts are more thinly staffed than when I was in charge. The emptiness of the

building in the early hours is in contrast to the teeming offices during the day.

Sands can certainly expect some “assistance” from above in a decision that will come sooner or later: how to refresh the line-up of presenters on the programme. This isn't an urgent task, because the veteran John Humphrys is still on excellent form and the newer presenters – such as the ambitious Nick Robinson and Mishal Husain – sit well alongside him.

There is, however, a bit of a random feel about the presentation rota. Donkey's years ago, *Today* was defined by the double act of John Timpson and Brian Redhead, who had a chemistry and shared on-air wit that added considerably to the programme's appeal.

Nowadays, five main presenters are featured on the programme's website, and you never know who it'll be each morning – which is perfectly viable, as *Today's* audience figures prove, but it may not survive the departure of Humphrys.

If there is to be a new top dog, he or she may want to establish more ownership of the airtime.

And, finally, there is the biggest editorial test for Sands: how she keeps the *Today* programme relevant to the whole of the UK and in touch with the wider world.

At a time when metropolitan elites are being challenged, she is unashamedly from the metropolitan elite and her terms of reference will be familiar to the top BBC leadership: London arts events, and who said what at the ambassador's dinner party.

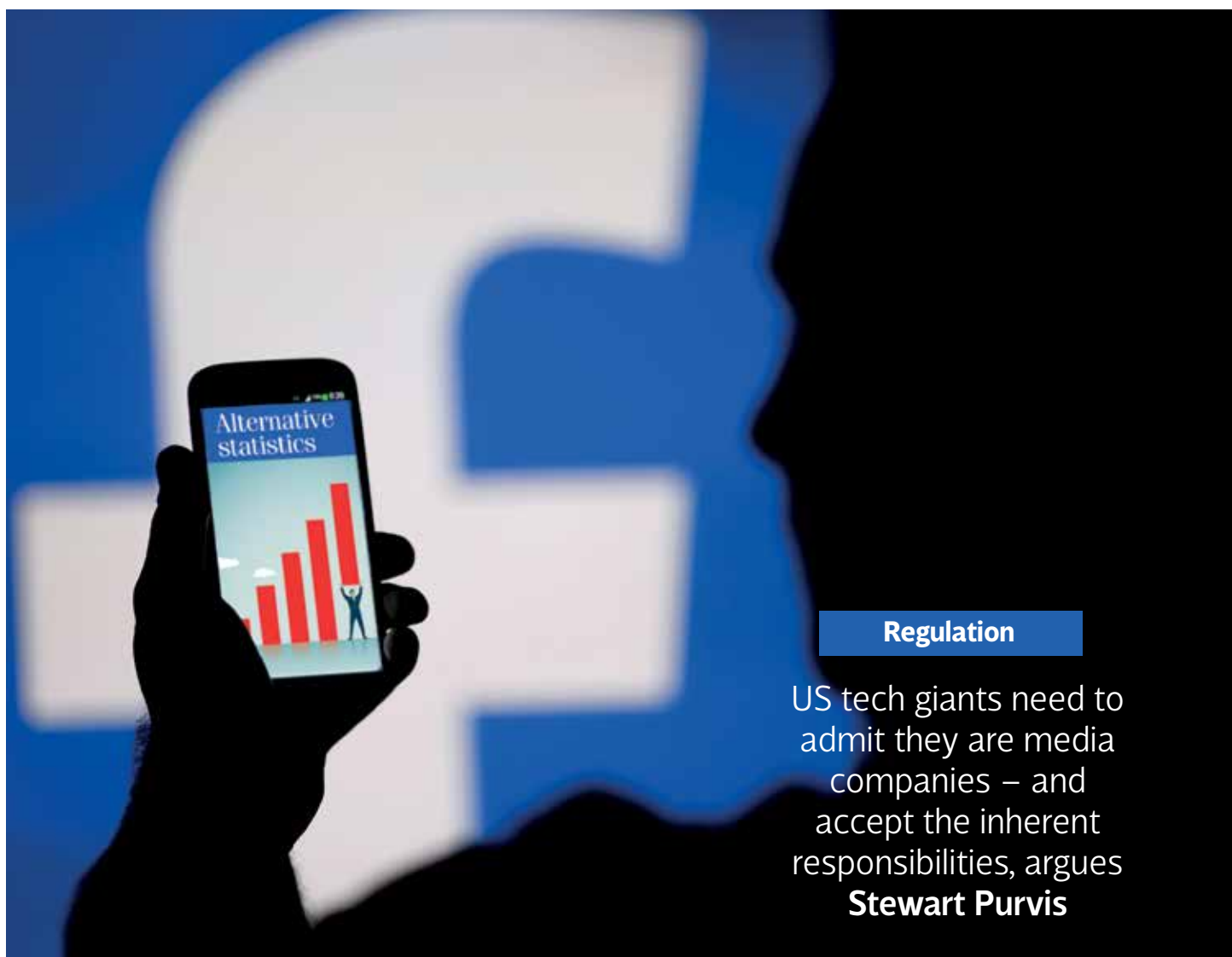
Sands herself is sure she can transcend this. She has ideas about taking the programme on the road more around the UK, and about speaking to Brexit Britain – including its rural heartlands.

Today is at its best when it establishes a connection between the decision-makers and the public, turning tedious Westminster preoccupations into issues that matter to the people of these islands.

Sands has been able to do this in market-driven newspapers, so there's a decent chance that she can translate it to the radio. In these troubled times, we need a strong *Today* programme – and the audience will certainly be rooting for her to deliver it. ■

Roger Mosey is now the Master of Selwyn College, Cambridge.

Showdown looms for the net giants



Regulation

US tech giants need to admit they are media companies – and accept the inherent responsibilities, argues **Stewart Purvis**

Imagine that a broadcaster reaching over 1 billion people a day is making billions of pounds of profits every year, partly by distributing news coverage that includes numerous mistakes.

Imagine, too, that, when the broadcaster is called to account, its first proposed solution to the problem is to send out a message to viewers entitled “tips for spotting false news”. The first of the 10 tips is: “Be sceptical of headlines”.

The chances are that the broadcaster would be told that its so-called “new educational tool against misinformation” was hardly a satisfactory remedy.

All of the above accurately describes Facebook’s current status and policies – apart, of course, from the fact that it isn’t a broadcaster by any traditional definition, even though it is a platform for multiple video streams.

Imagine, too, a broadcaster having to admit to advertisers that it didn’t know during which programmes their ads

were transmitted. That’s the equivalent of Google’s position over its video platform, YouTube.

Brands as varied as L’Oréal and the UK Government stopped advertising on Google after realising that their ads had appeared next to extremist content.

This row prompted Sir Martin Sorrell, whose WPP advertising agencies spent about \$5bn on Google advertisements last year, to announce: “We have always said Google, Facebook and others are media companies and have the same

responsibilities as any other media company. They cannot masquerade as technology companies, particularly when they place advertisements.”

Ever since the 15th-century printing press of Johannes Gutenberg, media companies have been shaped by the technologies of their times. So how did the 21st-century Gutenbergs manage to distance themselves from the responsibilities that traditionally come with terms such as “publishers”, “editors” or “broadcasters”?

I got an early insight into this at the turn of the millennium, when I visited AOL’s headquarters outside Washington. AOL was the big, new kid on the digital block and had, in effect, taken over the “old-media” company Time Warner.

I was directed to the AOL “newsroom” and arrived to find nobody there, just computers. We’d heard about paperless newsrooms but here was a human-less newsroom and, perish the thought, potentially a world without editors.

AOL and their counterparts emphasised that they were, in the jargon of the time, “mere conduits for others’ communications”. In other words, no more than a modern version of the stagecoach, where the mail was carried under the driver’s seat and the driver never opened the letters and read them.

Thus, the early “tech” companies avoided being seen as editors or publishers. Much of what they carried had already been edited or published by people like us broadcasters, so what was the problem?

But the second wave of tech companies provided carriage to very different kinds of content – “social media”, “user-generated content”, “citizen journalism”.

The new business model created an engagement currency of clicks, likes and shares that fed off emotional responses that put a premium on strong views and strong reactions.

Getting noticed was a way of getting paid, for the content creator and the carrier. And that’s when the “mere conduit” argument started to become unconvincing.

For years, the companies avoided many of the debates about content oversight and regulation.

As the Ofcom member of the first UK Council for Child Internet Safety, I saw how the US-based businesses initially frustrated action at a UK national level by saying that they only worked with Brussels on EU-wide initiatives. Specifically, they pushed

WE DON'T SEE OURSELVES AS EDITORS

back against a proposal on child protection from CEOP, the police-led, child-protection body later absorbed into the National Crime Agency.

But as the lobby for child protection became bigger in the UK, things started to change. Even more effective was the lobby against digital piracy by creative rights-holders, especially the Hollywood studios, which brought about the 2010 Digital Economy Act. There has also been action over “hate crimes” in social media.

In the courts, Twitter is now regarded as mainstream media. See Mr Justice Warby’s recent judgment in the Jack Monroe vs Katie Hopkins libel action, where he dismissed the attempt by Hopkins’s counsel to portray Twitter as “the ‘Wild West’ of social media, and not as authoritative as (for instance) the *Sun* or the *Daily Mail*”.

So now, with these precedents set, comes a natural corollary. As Damian Collins MP, outgoing Chair of the Culture, Media and Sport Committee, says: “Facebook and Google already accept that they have a social obligation to address pirated content online and illicit material. I think they also have a social obligation, as well, to act against the sources of fake news.

“Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook, who initially dismissed the impact of fake news on the US presidential election, has had to announce forthcoming projects on the detection of fake news of which the ‘10 tips’ is among the first.”

At an RTS event earlier this year, Patrick Walker of Facebook in Europe said: “We don’t see ourselves as editors.”

GOOGLE, FACEBOOK AND OTHERS ARE MEDIA COMPANIES... THEY CANNOT MASQUERADE AS TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES

I would suggest that the more credible position now is: “We at Facebook originally didn’t see ourselves as editors but that’s where we are ending up.”

Or would admitting that leave Facebook open to the same exposure for libel that mainstream editors and publishers have always faced?

Perhaps such an admission would also worry the regulatory institutions, which prefer to keep a safe distance from the “Wild West”. Witness Ofcom’s resistance to regulating something as comparatively wholesome as the BBC website. The regulator convinced the Government that it would set an awkward precedent because it might be asked to regulate other websites.

As a result, Ofcom will have the final say on whether, for example, the BBC is impartial in its TV and radio coverage of the forthcoming Brexit negotiations, but not on whether the BBC’s coverage online has been. That will be a matter for the BBC Board.

Looking across the wider spectrum of issues, the regulatory institutions and the tech companies share a common fear that this beast has simply got too big to control. Sorting it out would require resources that the regulators aren’t able to deploy. Meanwhile, despite their enormous wealth, the companies themselves often aren’t willing to.

When the heat gets really bad, they have shown that they can solve some problems. Last year, Google said it was “thinking deeply” about the way that users searching the word “holocaust” were often taken first to Holocaust-denial sites.

That seems to have been solved. But so many other problems remain.

In an article headlined “Why does Facebook still seem so helpless against ‘fake news’?”, Jacob Brogan of the online site *Slate* said: “Facebook still gives the impression of a hiker flapping his arms before a bear, struggling to scare off a monster many times its size.”

He argued that Facebook’s latest strategies, including attempts to disrupt the monetisation of fake news, were little more than a stopgap.

Furthermore, its top 10 tips page “isn’t so much a tool as it is a cry for help, a desperate attempt to leverage the source of its power in pursuit of a war that it’s currently losing”. ■

Stewart Purvis is a former Chief Executive of ITN and Ofcom regulator. He is a non-executive director of Channel 4 and writes here in a personal capacity.



All change on the studio floor

Change is sweeping through the UK studios business. The transformation of this formerly predictable but competitive sector – dominated, traditionally, by a handful of studios such as Elstree and Pinewood – could have far-reaching effects.

One of the key drivers is the boom in television production, fuelled by tax credits for high-end drama and growing demand from broadcasters and streaming services for long-running series.

Huge new studios are being planned around the country. Scotland is set to get its first purpose-built studio complex, after proposals for six sound stages on the outskirts of Edinburgh were approved in April.

A major new studio is being readied in east London, on a 69,000m² site in

Production

Demand for high-end, English-language drama is transforming the UK's studio business.

Tim Dams investigates

Dagenham, backed by the Mayor of London and Film London. And, later this year in Belfast, the £20m Belfast Harbour Studios will be completed. They will offer over 11,100m² of studios, workshops and offices.

Existing studios are also enjoying significant expansion. Pinewood, which hosted Amazon's *The Collection*, is in the process of doubling in size: it

opened five new sound stages last July and applied for planning permission this April to build a further three.

Elstree, the base for mega-hits *Strictly Come Dancing* and *The Crown*, plans to build two more stages.

Leavesden intends to extend facilities at its 80,000m² site by a quarter. The Space Project in Manchester, which hosted *Cold Feet*, is adding a huge, 2,800m² studio to its three 930m² stages. And Belfast's Titanic Quarter, home to *Game of Thrones*, has invested £14m in developing two more studios.

As if all this was not enough, several old factories are being developed into studios. In Wales, an 18,600m² studio complex is being developed on the site of a former television factory in Cardiff Bay. The initiative is a partnership between the Welsh Government and drama indie Bad Wolf, which intends



The Buckingham Palace sets for ITV's *Victoria* were constructed at Church Fenton Studios in Yorkshire

to shoot its adaptation of Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* there.

Screen Yorkshire recently converted a former RAF base into the Church Fenton studio facility, where the interiors of Buckingham Palace were recreated for ITV's *Victoria*.

Even Hartlepool is getting in on the act, with the local council hoping to convert an industrial depot in the city into TV and film studios.

Much of this development is driven by the boom in television drama production. Thirty-six high-end drama series (defined as costing more than £1m per episode) saw their producers spend a total of £478m in the UK in 2016, according to the BFI.

This roster included the second series of *The Crown*, the seventh series of *Game of Thrones*, *Fortitude*, *The White Princess* and the third series of *Outlander*.

"Across our three studios in the UK, we are seeing sustained growth in film and high-end TV and, indeed, demand for light entertainment and shiny-floor shows as well," says Andrew Smith, director of strategy and communications at Pinewood Group. "Demand for new content continues to grow."

His company runs Pinewood, Shepperton and Pinewood Studio Wales, but Smith is concerned that the demand is stretching UK crews and talent. He fears that producers might look to shoot in other countries: "Our biggest threat is the skills shortage. We need to make sure that we are planning to fill those gaps rapidly."

"But not with some sort of grandiose strategy. This needs to be addressed immediately. If we haven't got them in the UK, we need to train them up. If we haven't got them in Europe, we need to bring them in from outside."

Smith cites jobs such as set decorators, while Creative Skillset has identified shortages of production accountants, line producers and location managers.

He plays down any suggestion that the studio sector is experiencing a bubble that may one day burst – particularly if the drama boom abates. Production levels in 2017 and into the future look encouraging, he says. "There are high levels of demand for facilities, particularly bespoke sound stages – as opposed to what I call pop-up studios, such as converted warehouses."

His view is echoed by Roger Morris, Managing Director of Elstree Studios, who also sees growing demand for English-language content.

Like many studio chiefs, Morris is cautious about investing large sums in big construction projects: "It is a very expensive thing to go and build stages from scratch." One of the keys to running a successful studio business, he says, is "not putting all your eggs in one basket". He adds: "We try not to have a business model that is too dependent on any one genre."

As a full-service studio complex, with technical facilities provided in partnership with BBC Studioworks, Elstree can host shiny-floor shows alongside dramas and film. It is also home to the *Big Brother* house at one end of the lot, which is left *in situ* all year round.

"I like having long-term clients," says Morris. As well as providing long-term revenues, such relationships mean that "you can gear up your facility to everything such clients

need, as opposed to inflicting your facility on them."

In addition, Elstree has 43 on-site tenants – ranging from set builders and editing facilities to production accountants – which contribute to a local production ecosystem.

The high demand for fully equipped studios is particularly strong in the London area, which has seen capacity squeezed in the recent past.

BBC Television Centre's studios have been closed for refurbishment for several years, and will reopen in September with three studios. Others have closed altogether, notably Teddington and Fountain Studios (home to *The X Factor*). Both were sold to property developers. ITV will close its London Studios to indie shows in spring 2018, and then redevelop its South Bank site.

However, Morris insists that Elstree experienced high levels of demand long before these studios started closing. "We've been busy for the past five years," he says.

Manchester is another hot spot, says Adrian Bleasdale, CEO of Space Studios Manchester, which has provided facilities for *Cold Feet*, *The A Word* and *Dragons' Den*. Space Studios is investing £14m in a new 2,800m² stage plus 3,700m² of units for "supply-chain businesses", such as lighting and camera hire companies.

All the units, he says, have already been booked, off plan: "We are creating our own kind of ecosystem for film and television." Numerous commercials have been shot at Space Studios Manchester, and it has hosted virtual-reality and motion-capture shoots, too.

Salford's Dock10 is near by, but that is a very different studio operation, geared more towards shiny-floor entertainment shows. Bleasdale says that Space Studios' primary competition comes from warehouses on industrial estates. His sound stages, however, "are air-conditioned, and acoustically treated for reverberation and noise ingress. They are part of a purpose-built facility that has dressing rooms, make-up and costume areas and production office space."

As with many studio bosses, further expansion is clearly on Bleasdale's mind. The 2,800m² sound stage currently under construction is the second phase of building at the studio, which opened in 2014.

In a comment that underlines the growth mindset of the UK studio sector, he says: "We've already got thoughts about phases three, four and five." ■

The transgender gap

Two of the UK's best known and most successful transgender figures say that criticism of their status by Jenni Murray and Germaine Greer proves that the media is not as tolerant as it thinks. And they say the sector remains a very challenging option for transgender professionals.

Speaking at an RTS event in the North East, broadcasters India Willoughby and Stephanie Hirst agreed that building their TV and radio careers had not been easy.

"There's a perception that transgender is accepted, but you'd struggle to name four transgender role models," said Willoughby, the first transgender host of ITV's *Loose Women*. "Why aren't the broadcasters looking at it seriously? We need more of us on screen, in front of microphones and behind the scenes."

"Not just in the media, but in business and politics, too. The fact that we're both on radio and television is great, but it's a crack in the wall – the wall is not yet down."

Hirst, who presents for BBC Radio Manchester, ITV's *Lorraine* and Channel 4, revealed that, when she was looking to transition, there was no one she felt she could identify with.

"It was for this reason that I wanted to come out about my transition very publicly – through BBC Five Live. I wanted to use it as a springboard," said Hirst. "Someone told me that I could save a life by doing this – and make a difference. I feel we are still taking baby steps. It's about being more visible without it defining you."

A turning point for Hirst in her decision to transition came when she heard the lyrics of Supertramp's *Take the Long Way Home*, which say: "When you look through the years and see what you could have been, what might have been if you'd had more time." She said that the song "hit me like a bolt".

Both presenters had high-profile media jobs as men before they

Diversity

Graeme Thompson hears why TV needs more transgender role models from two presenters who have changed their sex

within me. But the strain of it became too much. I left my job in TV and moved to Newcastle to work as India, the press officer, during the week. Then, at weekends, I would resurrect Jonathan and go back to my son and family in Carlisle."

The double life was exhausting, so Willoughby broke the news to her teenage son that she planned to live as a woman. He supported her decision and, two years ago, Willoughby underwent surgery. "Honestly, by then it was such a relief – it was like having my

tonsils out!" she said.

Soon after, she was offered on-screen presenting work back at ITV Border. "I had thought my career in journalism was over," said Willoughby. "But here I am. I do tend to get the softer stuff to do – not the serious

stories now. I don't really know why."

Her first appearance as a presenter on *Loose Women* has been nominated for Top Media Moment in May's 2017 British LGBT Awards.

Her encounter with Jenni Murray on BBC Radio 4's *Woman's Hour* put her in the headlines again. "She was questioning my authenticity as a woman so I told her on air that I thought she was being a little transphobic. She said that I couldn't be real because I'd grown up with male privilege."

"That assumes that I enjoyed the experience of growing up male. You don't benefit from being trapped in the wrong body – it becomes an acting job."

"I'd be happy to debate this with Jenni again. Somebody should send us both on a spa holiday and film it."

Hirst agreed: "I'm not a drum banger – but I'd love to share a panel with Jenni or Germaine. The more visible we are, the more likely that people will understand."

"You've got to look at it as pure biology. By transitioning, you're correcting a birth defect."

Germaine Greer's BBC interview – in which she refused to acknowledge



underwent gender transition – which involves hormone treatment and surgery. Hirst hosted national chart and breakfast shows on Capital for 11 years, while Willoughby started her career as reporter Jonathan Willoughby on ITV Border and spent five years living a "bizarre double life".

"I knew from the age of five that I was a girl," she said. "But you have to conform, so I buried the secret deep

that post-operative transgender men were now women – brought more criticism from Willoughby.

“It’s plain wrong that Germaine gets invited to speak on this subject as some kind of expert,” she said. “You see lots of TV panels discussing gender realignment with four people around the table and not one of them is transgender.”

Willoughby and Hirst were joined at the Digital Cities North East day session by the writer of BBC Two’s first transgender sitcom, *Boy Meets Girl*. Elliott Kerrigan said that the casting of trans actor Rebecca Root had been a breakthrough moment in the development of the show, which ran for two seasons.

“She brought a lot of herself into the role,” he said. “Leo [her boyfriend in

THERE’S A PERCEPTION THAT TRANSGENDER IS ACCEPTED, BUT YOU’D STRUGGLE TO NAME FOUR TRANSGENDER ROLE MODELS

Willoughby disapproved of ITV’s decision to cast a woman in the role of Hayley Cropper in *Coronation Street*. But Hirst felt that it was still a groundbreaking moment for the soap – after all, Hayley was its first trans character.

The transgender Kyle Slater in *EastEnders* and the introduction of non-binary characters in US shows

of its students openly identify as transgender. This population is not being reflected in the media,” she said. “I think there should be more discussion in schools to open up the dialogue.”

Hirst insisted that the BBC gave her a job solely because of her talent: “I know that it wasn’t the result of box ticking. I don’t mention on my show that I’m trans. I’m accepted as ‘that lady on the radio’. The BBC and Channel 4 have been wonderful.

“I made some noises about a possible return to commercial radio, where I spent 11 years, but – nothing. They won’t touch me.”

And there was advice for people working alongside transgender colleagues. “Language is a bit of a trip wire and some people get rather sensitive,” observed Willoughby. “The eti-



BBC Two transgender sitcom *Boy Meets Girl*

the series] asks her at one point what it is like being born in the wrong body.

“In the close-up, she had tears in her eyes. This was from the heart – it wasn’t scripted. I’m convinced that it was that scene, and that performance from the pilot show, that won us the series commission.”

There were mixed reactions from the panel to other TV attempts to portray transgender characters.

Billions and *Couple-ish* were welcomed as positive moves.

Hirst singled out Channel 4’s *Queer as Folk* as a breakthrough for people struggling with their sexuality.

But, according to Willoughby, there remained an element of “box-ticking” from broadcasters, who failed to reflect the lives of the one in 100 people who are transgender. “I did a talk at Tees-side University and discovered that 20

quette is that you don’t ‘dead name’. You refer to the individual in the now – not as was.” ■

‘Transgender and the media’ was an RTS North East and the Border event and part of the Digital Cities North East day at Baltic, Gateshead, on 4 April. It was chaired by Ruth Pitt and produced by Chris Jackson. The panellists were Stephanie Hirst, Elliott Kerrigan and India Willoughby.

Online TV

Torin Douglas discovers how Amazon and Netflix are changing factual television

In February of this year, Netflix won its first Oscar and its first Bafta. Surprisingly, the awards were not for any of its high-profile drama series, but for two documentaries. The Academy Award went to *The White Helmets*, a film about a group of Syria Civil Defence volunteer rescue workers. The Bafta winner was *13th*, Ava DuVernay's film about race in the US criminal justice system.

The two prizes have highlighted the growing part that documentaries are playing in the Netflix portfolio and the impact that is having on the world of factual television. "UK producers are queuing up to have a conversation with them," says Greg Sanderson, Managing Director of Brook Lapping.

Listing "the 28 best documentaries on Netflix", *Time Out* wrote recently: "Netflix has revitalised the documentary industry. *Making a Murderer* became a global talking point overnight, followed by exclusives such as *13th*, *Amanda Knox* and *The Ivory Game*, while the streaming site's archive of great documentaries has proven enormously popular."

Meanwhile, Amazon Prime used last autumn's launch of *The Grand Tour*, with Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond and James May, as a huge marketing campaign to woo new subscribers. It is following up with a new portfolio of unscripted series, including two that venture behind the scenes in motor sports.

So how significant is the streaming behemoths' growing focus on factual television, and what does it mean for UK producers and broadcasters?



Reframing the

Steve Anderson, former head of news and current affairs at ITV, knows the US market well. He set up the international division of NBC's Peacock Productions. He says cautiously: "There's been some investment in factual so far, but not a lot – certainly, in comparison with drama. I don't think they have fully worked out their strategy. But the signs are that it will get stronger, and that is good news for UK producers."

John Battsek of Passion Pictures produced the latest Netflix documentary series, *Five Came Back*, which examines Hollywood and the Second World War through the eyes of five legendary directors who went to film

in combat zones – including John Ford and William Wyler.

Battsek is a double Oscar winner, who has worked with HBO, the BBC, NBCUniversal and A+E Networks. He is full of praise for Netflix.

"Its documentary team is superb and has the ability to access good-sized budgets to enable us to make big, cinematic, broad-reaching films," he says. "It also has the muscle to promote them powerfully and enable them to reach really big audiences."

Five Came Back exemplifies Netflix's ambitious approach. Narrated by Meryl Streep, the five-part series features interviews with Steven Spielberg, Francis Ford Coppola, Paul Greengrass



THIRTY
THOUSAND
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DRESS? I KNOW
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FOR LESS
THAN THAT
ON BBC FOUR

Originals, acknowledges. "We have a saying at Amazon, it is 'Day One' – our main building in Seattle is even called Day One," he told an audience at the recent MIP Formats market. "We're just starting – but we believe that we have an opportunity to bring great factual content to our customers."

Riggs says the show that he is most proud of is *All or Nothing*, a series about American football, and Amazon's first sports Emmy nomination. The cameras followed the Arizona Cardinals throughout the 2015 NFL season.

ShortList, the UK men's magazine, wrote: "An absolute game-changer of a series. It's reality TV for sports fans and is a fascinating insight into the major personalities and their experiences."

Riggs has just announced the show's second season, focusing on another NFL team, *All or Nothing: A Season with the Los Angeles Rams*.

On similar lines, he has green-lit a series following McLaren Racing as it competes in the 2017 Formula One World Championship, and another about the Le Mans endurance race – *Le Mans: Racing is Everything*, produced by the UK company New Black Films.

"These are all opportunities to get inside worlds that people don't know the details about," says Riggs. "Viewers get really deep, intimate access and exciting storytelling, and an honest look at extraordinary people doing extraordinary things."

Amazon has also commissioned *Lore*, a series about supernatural and real-life horror stories, based on a popular podcast.

Riggs says that he will take ideas from anywhere, and any part of the ➤

Netflix

documentary

and other directors, talking about how earlier film-makers helped show America the realities of war.

Netflix has also added 13 film documentaries discussed in the series to its archive catalogue, including Ford's *The Battle of Midway* and Wyler's *The Memphis Belle: A Story of a Flying Fortress*.

This is Battsek's second production for Netflix, following *Winter on Fire: Ukraine's Fight for Freedom*.

Passion Pictures is also about to make its first two documentaries for Amazon. "It's really exciting to have two such big, aggressive players as part of the documentary community," he says. "From a producer's perspective, the more people with the muscle to

finance the big docs we make, and the know-how to exploit and release them, the better."

Established documentary broadcasters are feeling the heat, believes Sanderson, who worked with many partners worldwide as executive editor of the BBC's *Storyville* strand. He says: "I was in the US the other week and saw HBO and PBS and a few others and they are suddenly feeling that they're not the biggest boys in town. They used to be able to go to Sundance and other festivals and buy the docs they wanted and that's not now the case – they can be blown out of the water."

But it is still early days, as Conrad Riggs, head of unscripted for Amazon

All or Nothing:
A Season with
the Arizona
Cardinals



**AN
ABSOLUTE
GAME-
CHANGER
OF A
SERIES. IT'S
REALITY
TV FOR
SPORTS
FANS**

Amazon Prime

world: "I like to be open to anything. You never know where the next great idea is going to come from. We're trying to make a statement and do things differently and take risks."

An obvious attraction for programme-makers is that Amazon and Netflix pay big money. But Anderson points out that they also demand to see that on the screen, as with *The Grand Tour* and *The Crown*. For the latter, "Netflix paid a well-publicised £100m for 20 shows but you see that £100m on the screen. Thirty thousand pounds for Claire Foy's dress? I know people making documentaries for less than that on BBC Four."

The streaming and subscription model has another benefit, he says: "You escape the tyranny of the slot and the fixed time-length. They don't have the mainstream broadcasters' problems of trying to attract audiences to attract advertising money."

"Having got their subscribers in,

they want to give them a wide range of programmes to enjoy."

Sanderson agrees: "When you talk to Netflix, it is not prescriptive about length or slots or any of the traditional boundaries that we've had."

"*Making a Murderer* was in 10 parts. I don't think that it would have worked if you'd tried to condense it into three or four, because it's the detail that drags people in."

"It is amazingly liberating, but, for people who've grown up in the industry here, it takes a bit of getting your head around."

The huge success of *Making a Murderer* also led Netflix to say it needed more crime, says Anderson. "After I left Peacock, they got a call from Netflix asking if they had any good crime series for it – and it just so happened that they did."

"The other day, I found out that it has bought a series I made six years ago, for Mentorn, called *The Murder*

Files – the producer suddenly started getting emails from people in the US about it."

But it is the big original series that define Netflix and Amazon, and they don't come bigger than *Our Planet*. The eight-part Netflix series is being filmed over four years using 4K Ultra-HD technology by the team behind *Planet Earth*, Alastair Fothergill's Silverback Films.

It is scheduled for screening in 2019. In the past, such blockbuster series would have been international co-productions – usually involving the BBC – but this one, like *The Crown*, has been funded by Netflix alone.

Sanderson says the streaming giants are rewriting the co-production rules. "They want global rights, they don't want any partners. They don't want any geo-blocking. In the long term, I don't think that's great for broadcasters such as the BBC or Channel 4." ■

OUR FRIEND IN BEIJING

If you are serious about television as a business you need to think internationally.” Those were the words of an executive producer speaking to me when I started work at the BBC in 1992.

It was five years before BBC Online officially launched and changed the meaning of “national broadcaster” for good. It was seven years before Endemol produced the first edition of *Big Brother* in the Netherlands, and we realised how real money could be made selling formats internationally.

And it was almost 25 years before “Netflix and chill” became a phrase heard around the world, challenging the very meaning of a “broadcaster” as streaming services crossed continents and time zones without a second thought.

But, back in 1992, when I was a trainee researcher, I ignored my executive producer. I continued to see TV in terms of a single country.

I think of that conversation quite often now. As a media executive myself, if I was talking to someone starting out, my advice would be: “If you are serious about television as a business, learn Chinese.”

China’s impact on the media landscape is significant, as Hollywood knows. The country has the second-largest box office in the world. It is expected to overtake the US in the next year. China can turn flops into hits. As I write, *The Fate of the Furious* (aka *Fast and Furious 8*), which pretty much bombed in the US, had just passed \$300m at the Chinese box office.

Second, China wants to increase its media presence overseas. When it negotiates trade deals, TV is part of the mix. In a recent deal with Morocco, China made sure that a Chinese series dubbed in Arabic would be broadcast on the leading Moroccan TV channel, 2M.

Closer to home, during trade nego-

Marcus Ryder
offers advice to
those starting out
on their TV careers
as he battles with
Chinese censorship



Paul Hampartsoumian

tiations with the UK in 2015, China agreed that it would set up regional headquarters for CCTV News in London. I am told that this could happen as early as this year.

Chinese cable television provider StarTimes is seeing exceptional growth throughout Africa and is beaming original Chinese content into people’s homes. According to *Digital TV Research*, the broadcaster had 4.2 million subscribers at the end of 2016, and this could grow to 10.6 million by 2022.

And third, China wants to improve its journalism to become a global voice in the world of news.

What’s the evidence for this? I took up the position of chief international editor of CCTV News Digital in September 2016. CCTV News was the English-language version of China’s state broadcaster, China Central Television, which is, arguably, the world’s

largest broadcaster. It wanted me to help relaunch its foreign news channel, starting with a name change, a change in editorial direction and a move away from focusing on television to a “mobile/digital-first” strategy. On 1 January this year we launched CGTN (China Global Television Network).

China may be “the future” but that doesn’t mean that working here is easy. A large part of my job is “capacity building” – training young (and not so young) journalists from around the world to cover stories in an objective and balanced manner. And instilling news values into journalists from countries where some of these elements have been, at best, dormant and, at worst, suppressed.

I attempt to do that while, at the same time, trying to avoid imposing so-called Western values. We use internationally recognised newswires as our primary sources, including the likes of Reuters, AFP and AP. We also rely on a network of journalists throughout China and the rest of the world.

I have good days, where I ensure that we report on LGBT issues, democracy protesters in Hong Kong and Chinese authorities faking pollution data. These are all issues that CCTV News would normally have shied away from before the relaunch.

But I also have bad days, when I fight and lose editorial battles over whether we should cover an Amnesty International report on China’s use of the death penalty.

Living in Beijing, it is increasingly evident to me that China will have a significant impact on the future of our media industry.

Whether you work in the UK or the US, the only questions in your mind should be: how big will that impact be, and how will you respond? ■

Marcus Ryder is chief international editor of CCTV News Digital, part of CGTN.



Tech-savvy women wanted

There is no shortage of technology roles in TV but they remain, largely, jobs for the boys. At an RTS early-evening event in late April, chaired by media science specialist Maggie Philbin, an expert panel offered some solutions to a serious problem – a lack of tech-savvy women – that affects not just TV but the UK economy as a whole.

Women are grossly under-represented in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) sector [see top box, opposite].

“Women are not coming into the system in the first place,” said UKTV chief technology and operations officer Sinead Greenaway. “We have to work really hard to catch children early before they opt out of [science].”

She added: “Broadcasters have a lot to do in terms of demystifying [technology] and also by inviting young people in to have a look at the range of opportunities they offer.”

“There are people who will go into

Diversity

Why are the real opportunities for women in TV technology roles going begging?
Matthew Bell hears some solutions

science, engineering or tech no matter what – I was one of them,” said Dr Maggie Aderin-Pocock, a space scientist and a panellist on Sky 1’s popular science show *Duck Quacks Don’t Echo*. “But there are other people who are not exposed to science. We have a responsibility to get out there and tell people about the amazing things we’re doing.”

Philbin, who has presented BBC One science series, including *Tomorrow’s World* and *Bang Goes the Theory*, is a

passionate advocate for science. She co-founded TeenTech in 2008 to promote the career opportunities that exist in the STEM sector to young people.

Anna Patching, a sound engineer at broadcast services outfit OBS TV, argued that women were put off pursuing a career in science by its academic reputation.

“In your head, you say, ‘To be a scientist or engineer you have to have straight A*s.’ You don’t,” she said.

Patching, who received the RTS Coffey Award for Excellence in Technology in 2015, added: “To get on apprenticeships and traineeships you don’t have to be top of the class or go to a Russell Group university – you can do it if you love it.”

Aderin-Pocock pointed out that girls outperform boys at physics GCSE and A level, yet apply to study the subject at university in far lower numbers.

“That’s because they think that, to be a physicist, you need a brain the size of a planet. The boys apply, no problem, but girls think they’re not clever



Alamy

enough. We need to show [women] that they have the potential to do amazing things.”

For a younger audience, CBeebies is spreading the message that girls and science can mix.

One of the channel’s executive producers, Vanessa Amberleigh, who was in the audience at the RTS event, discussed the channel’s upcoming animated series, *Bitz & Bob*, in which an eight-year-old girl’s inventions come to life.

“We’re not shying away from using engineering terms,” she said. “A lot of [the show] is based on imaginary play, but every moment of jeopardy is solved by an engineering principle.”

The 44-part series, made with FremantleMedia Kids & Family, is set to air next year. Amberleigh added: “We’re also making a live-action show where real children of five and six make [the inventions] in the animation, so it shows they can be made. We’re doing our bit.”

Broadcasters and the major indies

offer training schemes and career paths to women working in technology roles. However, much of the TV workforce is now freelance.

“It’s very hard in the freelance world,” said Sara Putt, Deputy Chair of Women in Film and Television UK.

She revealed that the country’s leading film schools were enrolling lots of women on their cinematography, sound and design courses. “But when you look 10 years down the line, at the point that women consider starting a family, and the imbalance really kicks in – there are all sorts of challenges.”

Putt suggested that progress was being made: “At the moment, every one is focused on diversity of all kinds. And, because of tax credits, the film and television industry is incredibly busy, so, for once, demand is outweighing supply, which also concentrates people’s minds.

“Flexible working across the industry is at least starting to be a matter for debate. We need to keep forcing the production companies to have these conversations.”

Patching was uncertain about what the future holds for her. “I’m quite ambitious,” she said, but worried that “there isn’t a formal structure in outside broadcasts. It’s very hard to move, say, from being an assistant editor to an editor, or from a camera operator to a cinematographer, because there isn’t that sort of employment mechanism where there’s a duty of care and a human resources department that looks to help an employee to develop their career.”

“I’m desperately lucky – UKTV’s 60% female at every level,” said Greenaway, sounding a positive note. “TV is an industry where you can have such a happy time as a woman. There are so many things that happen in other industries that are utterly horrendous.”

She continued: “If we can fill the pool better, it’s such a delight to be here [working] in a creative [world]. TV offers so many opportunities. You can get to the top and do it in a way where your work is judged, not what you’re wearing.” ■

The RTS early-evening event ‘Breaking barriers: how can the TV industry encourage more women into technology jobs?’ was held at The Hospital Club in central London on 26 April. It was produced by Vicky Fairclough, Kerry Goode and Terry Marsh.

The scale of the imbalance

■ Women make up only 12.8% of the total science, technology, engineering and mathematics workforce in the UK

■ In higher education, women comprise 15% of enrolments in engineering and technology courses

■ Just 8% of engineers in the UK are female – and this figure drops to 4% for jobs involving coding

How I got my first break in TV

Sara Putt: ‘I applied for the BBC production trainee scheme and failed to get on to it.... I wrote to the woman who sent the letter turning me down and... I asked if I could have a chat with her....’

She told me that there was a job, the lowest of the low, in the appointments department in BBC Radio.... Once you’ve got that first job... you can see so many more opportunities when you’re on the inside.’

Sinead Greenaway: ‘I dropped out of university but thought I’d return within a year. In the intervening period, I applied for jobs.... This lovely job came up at Kiss FM for a ‘traffic assistant’ – I had absolutely no idea what it [entailed]....’

It turned out to be trafficking the adverts.... They gave me a chance – I literally had no experience to offer, but they hired on potential. I never returned to the degree.’

Maggie Aderin-Pocock: ‘My very first television interview was with Maggie [Philbin].... I was so excited because, as a child, I watched *Tomorrow’s World*.

I was working for the Ministry of Defence on landmine detection and my boss, who did all the interviews, was away.... I’d been working on [landmines] for a number of years and the opportunity to tell people about it was so exciting.... I did the interview and I’ve never looked back.’



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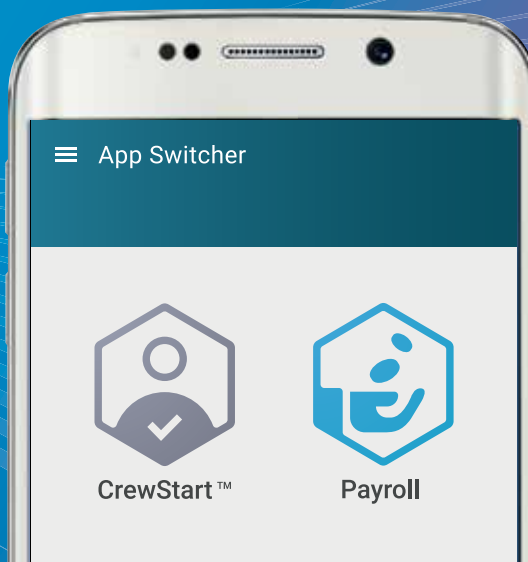
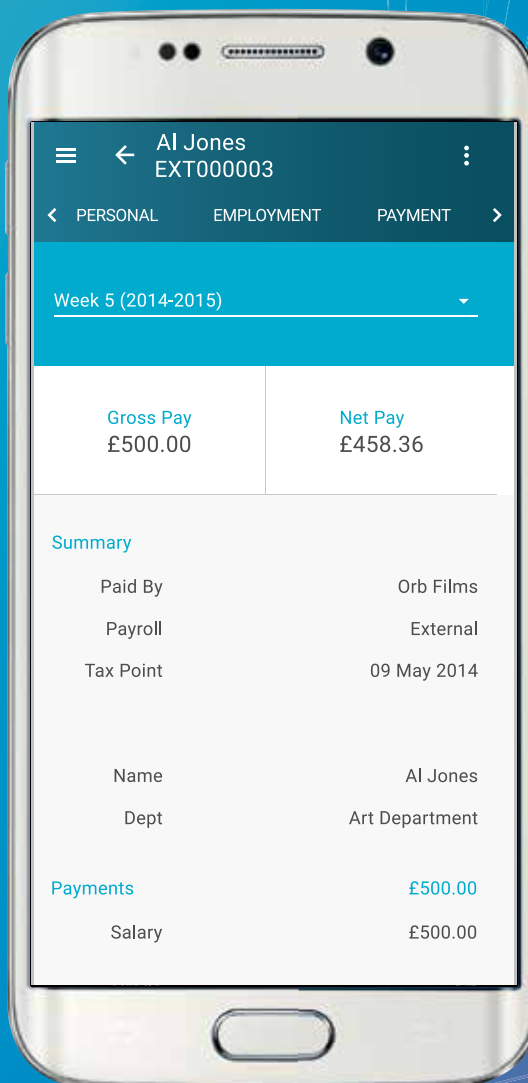
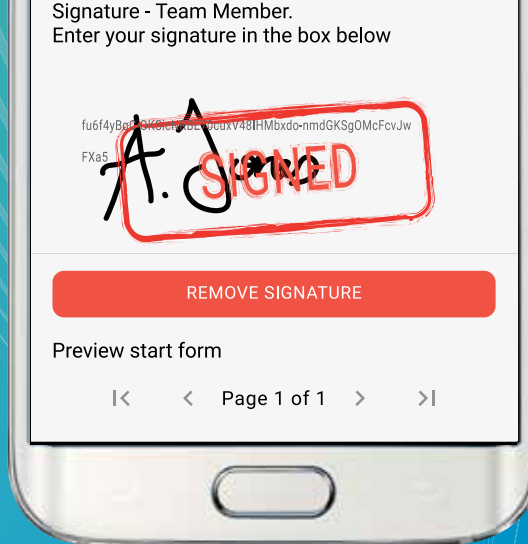
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Midlands given Baird natural history lesson

Planet Earth II executive producer Mike Gunton gave this year's Baird Lecture, drawing a capacity crowd of 300 to the University of Birmingham's Elgar Concert Hall at the end of March.

The Baird Lecture traditionally focuses on how technology influences TV production and BBC One's *Planet Earth II* is the perfect example of recent innovation.

Gunton, who is creative director of factual at the BBC's Natural History Unit, explained how the latest technology has shaped the content of such programmes.

The production team used infrared cameras to shoot *Planet Earth II*'s amorous rhinos and the baby marine iguana who outran the snakes hot on its tail.

The story of the snow leopards would have been



BBC

Planet Earth II

impossible to film without hidden, modern cameras. These captured the leopards leaving their mark on trees to attract mates, explained Gunton, who has notched up three decades' experience of natural history programmes.

For TV audiences, the arch storyteller is Sir David Attenborough, whose commentary

Gunton used to relate the important conservation message behind the series.

Planet Earth II is the most successful natural history programme of the 21st century in the UK, reaching peak overnight audiences of 10.8 million and consolidated audiences of some 15 million.

Dorothy Hobson

Shiers aids Pebble Mill oral history

■ The 2017 Shiers Trust Award will be used to expand the Pebble Mill project, an online oral history of the programmes made at BBC Pebble Mill in Birmingham from 1971 to 2004.

The funding will be used to record interviews with former programme-makers, which will be shared on the website, pebblemill.org.

Media students and recent graduates from Birmingham City University will work on the recordings, which will also be used as teaching materials on the university's media and communication courses.

At its height, Pebble Mill produced around 10% of BBC TV and radio output, including *Top Gear* and *Countryfile*.

It was home to the English Regions Drama Department in the 1970s and 1980s and responsible for dramas such as *Nuts in May* and *Boys from the Blackstuff*.

The building was closed in 2004 and demolished.

The Pebble Mill website currently hosts an oral history collection of more than 1,500 media artefacts, and includes blogs and photos plus audio and video clips.

Since the first award was made in 2000, the Shiers Trust, which is administered by the RTS, has funded a range of projects, including the digitisation of back issues of the *Radio Times*.

The grant is funded by a bequest from the late US TV historian and long-standing member of the RTS, George Shiers and his wife, May.

USW dominates Wales awards

The University of South Wales had an outstanding night at the RTS Wales Student Awards, which were held this year as part of the Wales International Documentary Festival in early April.

USW won five awards, for Animation, Factual, Camera-work and Editing, Short Feature and Production Design. Aberystwyth and Trinity St David's universities took the Drama and Comedy awards.

"We saw some excellent films," said jury chair, Zoë Rushton. "The standard of production was as high as ever. Congratulations to all the students and their tutors."

The ceremony was hosted by *Line of Duty* star Vicky McClure and actor and producer Jonny Owen, who won a Welsh Bafta for his documentary *The Aberfan Disaster*.

The Wales Centre took part in a discussion on disability as part of the festival.

Playwright Kaite O'Reilly told the session that disabled people had been demonised in fiction, from Shakespeare's *Richard III* to Bond villains. She said more opportunities must be found to portray disability on TV properly.

RTS Wales also joined the festival careers day, which provided an opportunity to introduce students from Bridgend and Merthyr colleges to the work of the Society.

Tim Hartley



Mads Johan Øgaard and Katie Wyman

College's Laura Brainwood took the News award for *Prickles and Paws*.

Constance Richards from The University of St Mark and St John won the Short Feature award with *Madness/Magic*. Charlie Mason, Alex Harrison, Sam Healey and Hayden Brown, also from St Mark and St John, were commended in the same category.

The Craft Award winners were: Adam Read, Plymouth University, for Camerawork (Factual); Jedwab for Camerawork (Drama); Giacomo Ghigo and Leonie Isaacs for Production Design; Ingrid Holstad, James Crump, Lewis Meaden and Edel Fowell for Sound, all from Falmouth University; and Richards from the University of St Mark and St John for Editing.

"The judges – drawn from the thriving television industry operating in the region – were delighted with this year's entries, which combined strong craft and storytelling skills," said Kingsley Marshall, Chair of the Devon and Cornwall Centre.

"The standard of the entries this year was superb, and the nominees should be very proud of their work."

Matthew Bell

Falmouth wins in West

Falmouth University won three of the top prizes at the Devon and Cornwall Student Awards, which were held in Plymouth at the end of March.

The university's Mads Johan Øgaard and Katie Wyman scooped the Animation award with *I Am Dyslexic*;

Adam Gunton and Michael Brown won the Comedy and Entertainment award for *The Reunion*; and the Drama prize went to Max Jedwab for *Ockham's Razor*.

Dan Adamson, TwoFour's director of programmes, who hosted the awards, told the students: "Your talent, skill

and energy are needed to fill hundreds of hours of content on the TV and online. Television needs new blood, it needs new ideas and it needs new talent – all of the time."

Sean Valentine from Plymouth University was awarded the Factual prize for *Wild Swimmers* and Cornwall

Scotland showcases local journalism

Scotland's latest event, at the end of April, brought together four generations of journalists – students, young writers beginning their careers, established professionals and elder statesmen – to celebrate the work of the nominees for the Young Journalist of the Year category at this year's RTS Scotland Awards.

The first of the two nominees, Kevin Anderson, showed his piece about

Cadbury's "proudly British" image, which contained the discovery that the chocolate was, in fact, made in Poland.

Rachel Coburn's emotional video was about an older woman, Mary, who had exchanged letters with her best friend every day since the friend left family behind to elope during the Second World War.

During an after-show Q&A, Anderson, who is an assistant producer at Firecrest Films, said: "There's

scope for everyone in Scotland to take journalism and use it in their own area; it's what people are looking to see these days."

Coburn, a BBC researcher, said: "I think there's still a need for good-quality journalism on social media – you have to fight for people's attention."

"I had to use a more traditional method to get in touch with Mary, but I liked that. She's a great character."

A panel of journalists

– Andrew Browne, the editor of BBC news programme *Reporting Scotland*, BBC Scotland education and local government correspondent Jamie McIvor and ITN CEO John Hardie – offered advice and comment throughout the night.

"Next generation of TV journalism" was hosted by the City of Glasgow College.

The RTS Scotland 2017 Awards will be held at Òran Mór in Glasgow on 17 May.

Rhiannon Ramsay

The people behind BBC Two's *Hospital*, which tracked the pressures faced by the Imperial College group of five hospitals in London, discussed the making of the series at an RTS London event in early April.

"We thought that it was the right time to do something big about the NHS – it was encountering lots of problems and it was being treated as a political football.

"We wanted to get over what was happening right now in the NHS and aimed for broadcast in January, when the NHS often faces a winter crisis," explained BBC Two commissioning editor Danny Horan at the event, which was held at ITV London Studios.

The executive producers, Simon Dickson and Lorraine Charker-Phillips (and co-founders of the indie Labell) developed the idea for *Hospital* using their experience in previous jobs as commissioning editors at Channel 4 (Dickson) and Sky (Charker-Phillips).

Between them, they'd made *One Born Every Minute*, *24 Hours in A&E*, *The Family* and *Seven Days*. The fast turnaround of the latter, particularly, informed the way that they approached *Hospital*.

Dickson emphasised the importance of tight collaboration between Labell and the corporation.

Horan commissioned a taster tape from Labell and worked closely with the indie to get it right – and to get buy-in from the BBC for such an ambitious project.

A large crew was recruited to shoot the six-part series, which was made in just six weeks. The team featured two series producers, Tom Currie and Gilly Greenslade, a series editor, Graeme McAulay, another executive producer, Helen Littleboy, and an average of five crews



BBC

London Centre admits BBC Two's *Hospital*

filming every day. In total, there were eight shooting producer/directors employed on the series.

Several crews would shoot different aspects of the same story to explain exactly what was happening, in a way that a single-camera documentary could not have achieved.

This ensured the series hit home with the audience who saw some of the best surgeons in the UK pounding the corridors of a hospital desperate to find a bed to enable them to operate on a seriously ill patient, alongside the stories of their patients.

"We never dreamed we'd have sequences of surgeons tracking down beds like that.

It's an unbelievable waste of time, money and resources – but it was a gift for a TV series," said Horan.

"We came away quite humbled by the scale of what they faced and the pressures they're under," added Greenslade.

"Most hospital series follow patient stories, but what excited me about *Hospital* was that the staff there really wanted to tell the behind-the-scenes story about how decisions were being made, and the impact they had on other patients – I couldn't believe the access they offered would be that good," said McAulay.

"That was exactly what the

Imperial College Trust wanted us to show," said Dickson. "The NHS is fed up with being bashed when the public doesn't understand the difficulties it faces. Since the series went out, the Trust has seen a significant drop in complaints from the public and an equally significant increase in people applying to work in its hospitals."

"A lot of these institutions are ready to open up and talk, as they're feeling the same pressures," added Horan. "The police, schools, social services – they're being vilified by the press, and feel no one is making the case for them in a fair way."

Nick Radlo

Pope brings his crime message to Salford



Mark Lawson (left) and Jeff Pope

Jeff Pope offered a masterclass in true-crime TV at a North West event held in Salford in late April. Interviewed by journalist Mark Lawson, Pope discussed his career, which,

as a writer and producer, has seen him win Baftas for *See No Evil: The Moors Murderers* and the film *Philomena*.

His credits also include *Appropriate Adult*, about serial killers Fred and Rose West.

Pope's latest project is the heart-rending *Little Boy Blue*, which tells the story of the murder of 11-year-old Rhys Jones, an innocent victim of gang conflict in Liverpool.

A key scene from *Little Boy*

Blue features the family standing on the pitch at Goodison Park, the home ground of Rhys's beloved team, Everton. The scene was filmed during the half-time break of a match.

"I don't know if that will happen again in my career, but we had 39,000 extras that day," said Pope, who wrote the four-part ITV drama. "It was the city [speaking], so many thousands of people, saying, 'This is Liverpool and we're not having this.'"

At the "True crime stories" RTS event, Pope also spoke about the sensitivity of using highly personal information in true-life dramas and, in particular, on *Little Boy Blue*.

"It's not a copyright issue; it's not a libel issue. It's a moral issue, an ethical one," he said. "It's too private, if [the family] don't want it to be used."

Thomas Taylor

Claire Harrison

Industry experts offered advice on how to compose a CV to kick-start a career in TV at an RTS Futures event in late April.

Audrey Cairo, a senior consultant at Searchlight Recruitment, hosted the session in central London and explained that "people can look at your CV for just a few seconds".

Clearhead Digital founder Alex Lawrence highlighted the three things he looks for on a CV: "What you've done, what you're doing and what you're going to do."

CVs should be "factual, accurate and personal", added Sasha Breslau, head of acquired series at ITV.

Lawrence warned that a person's social-media presence could be a factor. "First thing I do is Google you and put your name into Facebook – if you don't seem professional, why waste the time getting you in?" he said.

Nail your CV



Sasha Breslau

The panel advised that a covering letter should be short and include the applicant's skills. It should also show an interest in the company and be tailored for each application; however, it should not repeat much of the CV itself or be too casual.

A CV should be two pages. Cairo said that the first page is "crucial in showing an employer what you've been doing", and that key information should be up front.

The discussion ended with general dos and don'ts for structuring a CV: do make your CV clear, tailor it for each job, play to your strengths and use bullet points; don't make silly mistakes, be too informal or add selfies – unprofessional emails could cost a person an interview.

The RTS Futures event was produced by Sasha Breslau and Tara Magan.

Kate Holman

Paul Hampartsoumian

Tom Savage

1940–2017

Tom Savage, a recent Chair of RTÉ, died at the age of 76 on 30 March after a short illness. He was a former Catholic priest, who went on to have a successful career in TV and radio, and as a communications expert.

Tom served in a number of roles at RTÉ over many years. He was the founder producer of RTÉ's flagship radio programme, *Morning Ireland*, and a familiar voice on the show's *It Says in the Papers* slot. He also presented religious shows on RTÉ television and UTV.

During his term as Chair of the RTÉ Board, from 2009 to 2014, Tom was dragged into a controversy over *Mission to Prey*, a programme that libelled a priest, leading to an estimated bill of €1m for RTÉ.

"Tom's life and career intertwined with RTÉ over many years, as a reporter, producer, editor, presenter and, ultimately, as Chair,"

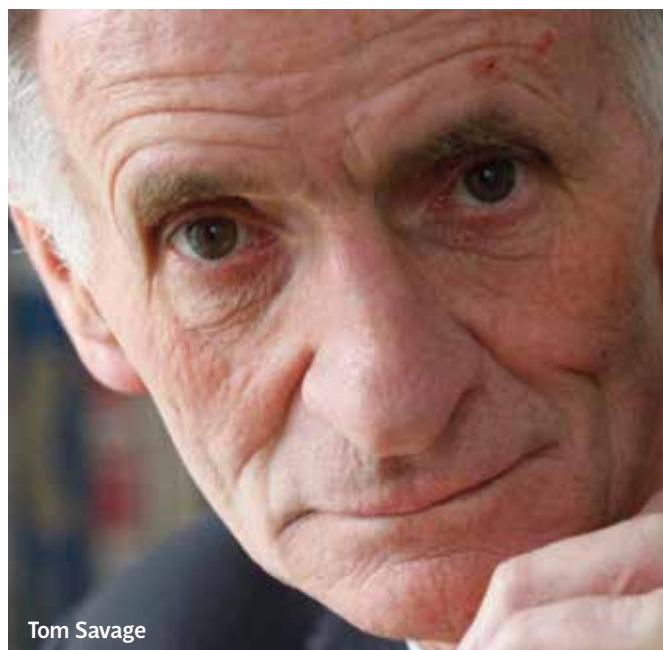
said RTÉ Director-General Dee Forbes. "He had a passion for broadcasting – radio in particular – and, beyond news and politics, he was also a huge sports fan."

Tom was a lifelong member of Cooley Kickhams GAA club in Co Louth, played senior football for the county and won a junior All-Ireland medal for Louth in 1961.

As a young man, he studied for the priesthood at Maynooth seminary before going to Queen's University Belfast. He was sent, as a young priest, to greet British troops when they were deployed on the streets of Belfast and initially welcomed as peacemakers by the nationalist community.

In 1972, he was appointed to the Independent Broadcasting Commission by the Archbishop of Armagh.

While working for the Catholic Communications Centre, he met his future wife, Terry Prone. Tom was



Tom Savage

laicised in 1975 before marrying Terry.

He joined public-relations firm Carr Communications and built a reputation as a crisis-management expert. He later set up The Communications Clinic with his wife and their son, the radio broadcaster Anton Savage.

Fianna Fáil leader Micheál Martin paid tribute to Tom, who served as a communications adviser to Taoiseach Albert Reynolds in the early 1990s: "[He] played a behind-the-scenes, yet crucial, role

in the early years of the peace process".

Tom's funeral in Co Louth attracted figures from the worlds of politics, television and religion. Cardinal Sean Brady told mourners of meeting the former priest during their studies at Maynooth: "We studied the ancient classics together, played on the pitch and prayed in the same pews. We became friends for life."

Tom is survived by Terry and Anton.

Matthew Bell

ONLINE at the RTS

■ Sally Wainwright's mantelpiece must be groaning under the weight of awards. Last month, she added a Bafta Craft Award to her collection, having already scooped the RTS Drama Writer and Judges' Award at this year's RTS Programme Awards. We dropped in to her Oxfordshire home, where she is busy penning new drama *Shibden Hall*, to discuss her approach to writing hits such as *Happy Valley* and *Last Tango in Halifax* (www.rts.org.uk/SallyWainwright).

■ *Doctor Who* returned last month, with new sidekick Bill Potts joining the Doctor in the Tardis. This series is Peter Capaldi's last, so we hit the streets to find out who Londoners would like to play the Doctor next. See what they had to say at www.rts.org.uk/NextDrWho.

■ With TV experiencing a golden age, Aliyah Allen has been looking at how title sequences have evolved thanks to bigger budgets and binge-watching. As title designer Peter Anderson



SS-GB title sequence

BBC

points out, 'Titles are the only part of a drama that's watched multiple times.' Consequently,

title sequences, particularly on US shows, are becoming artworks in their own right (www.rts.org.uk/TVtitles).

■ BBC journalist and RTS Young Talent of the Year nominee James Longman began his career reporting in Syria at the start of the civil war. In our new Meet... video series, he explains why learning languages opens doors and how Facebook Live is helping the BBC reach new audiences (www.rts.org.uk/jamesLongman). **Pippa Shawley**

RTÉ's grand events: the inside story

■ The Republic of Ireland's April event heard how, in 2016, RTÉ covered two of its biggest ever live events: the February general election in Ireland and the state commemoration of the centenary of the Easter Rising.

The Centre welcomed John O'Regan and Margaret Bennett, RTÉ's executive producers for current affairs, special events, who were closely involved with both occasions.

Election 2016, a marathon, 17-hour broadcast, marked a first for Irish television, as RTÉ broadcast live pictures from every single count in the country. It was also RTÉ's first HDTV general election results broadcast.

More than 400 RTÉ and contract staff were deployed across the counts and in three TV studios at its Donnybrook base. RTÉ engineers built two separate broadcast hubs, allowing a team of senior producers to broadcast result declarations and live contributions from 40 multi-member constituencies.

One month later, RTÉ broadcast live coverage of the ceremony and parade in Dublin marking the centenary of the 1916 Rising. It deployed 30 cameras throughout Dublin, delivering feeds from TV units at key locations in the city such as Dublin Castle, as well as studio coverage from Donnybrook and aerial shots of the parade.

The RTÉ live feed was available to TV news outlets, while an online feed was provided free to Irish newspapers. Pictures were also fed to large TV screens across Dublin city centre.

Charles Byrne

Brendan Slamin 1927-2017

Brendan Slamin, who died on 3 February at the age of 90, was an RTS Fellow and a Society stalwart.

He joined the RTS in 1955 and was awarded a Fellowship for his "major contribution to the development of television engineering in Wales and Scotland" in 1977. He chaired both the South Wales and Scottish centres, and was a member of the RTS Council and an RTS company director.

Brendan had joined the BBC in 1945 in Cardiff, working in the operational and communications fields of both TV and radio for the next two and a half decades. He moved to Scotland in 1969 and was technical co-ordinator of the coverage of the 1970 Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh.

In 1978, Brendan became head of engineering for TV outside broadcasts and, a year later, chief engineer, regions.

Norman Green, a former ITV head of engineering and founder of the RTS London Centre, worked with Brendan



in the 1980s. They were part of the European research organisation Eureka's high-definition TV initiative from 1986, with Brendan serving as the BBC's representative.

At the 1988 International Broadcasting Convention in Brighton, a huge pavilion was built on the beach to demonstrate the new high-definition system. The BBC's contribution, which Brendan masterminded, was an HDTV outside-broadcast truck.

Brendan and Norman won the Judges' Award at the RTS Technology Awards for their contribution as members of the Eureka team. "This was a great accolade for everyone involved in the project. Brendan not only had a great

depth of knowledge, but he was a calming influence in defusing difficult situations. I always found him to be extremely courteous; he was a real gentleman," said Green.

After leaving the BBC, Brendan co-ordinated the work of the UK Widescreen Forum, which helped ensure the successful introduction of widescreen TV to the UK in the late 1990s, and of the DTG (Digital TV Group's) HDTV television forum. In 2004, he edited the DTG book *High Definition TV: The Essential Guide for TV Professionals*.

"Long after he should have properly retired, Brendan was active and inspirational," recalled RTS Honorary Secretary David Lowen. "He based himself at the RTS HQ on some days during the week and I would often check with him on the latest developments in technology.

"He was unfailingly helpful and extremely knowledgeable. Brendan may have been of the analogue age but he understood more about digital issues and opportunities than most people half his age."

Matthew Bell

Boon lays video myths to rest

■ Thames Valley's packed event in late March, "Dolby PQ demystified", heard industry expert Prinyar Boon share his encyclopaedic knowledge of HDR-PQ (high dynamic range perceptual quantisation) imagery.

He laid several historical technical myths to rest as he dissected the assumptions that engineers have been making for the past 50 years.

Boon, who is director of

systems architecture, broadcast, for Dolby Europe, said that modern video monitors now outclass standard dynamic range (SDR) systems, so SDR needs to be redefined.

Indeed, many of the established ways that image data is manipulated to improve the viewer's experience have been revisited by Dolby. Of these, the one now dominating the industry's attention is HDR (high dynamic range).

HDR is a means of broadening picture contrast and the range of colours to present more realistic and vivid images.

Boon said that not all the dynamic range had to be used all the time: the look and feel of an image should remain firmly in the control of creatives for both live and post-produced content – and in a way that was compatible with existing working practices.

Tony Orme

Long-serving RTS Honorary Treasurer and Fellow Bill McMahon died on 16 April after a short illness.

Bill took charge of the RTS finances in 1976 and served 27 years in the role. In 1981, he received an RTS Fellowship for making an “outstanding contribution to the development of the Society, not only through successfully managing its finances, but also through the general support and counselling that he has given to Society business generally”.

In 1987, at the Society’s Diamond Jubilee Ball, Bill – together with former RTS Chair Tony Pilgrim – was presented with a gold medal for “outstanding services to television” by HRH the Duke of Kent at the Grosvenor House Hotel.

“Bill became Honorary Treasurer of the Society at a time when it was experiencing financial difficulties and his first task was to get the Society back on an even keel, which he achieved very successfully,” said former RTS Deputy Chief Executive Claire Price. “During his period in office, the Society’s activities increased enormously and Bill was there to make sure that our accounts and reporting systems developed to support this growth.”

Keith Clement, RTS Vice-Chair at the time, recalled a turbulent period for the Society when Bill’s strengths came to the fore. In 1990–91, there was a constitutional crisis as the RTS decided to move from having an honorary secretary to employing a full-time director.

“Bill showed tremendous loyalty to the existing regime while, at the same time, using gritty diplomacy to achieve

the transition to a director, which he could see would have great long-term benefit,” said Clement. “He was able to stand back from the fray and continually insist that the changes should be managed properly and that risk to the Society be minimised. The RTS benefits from this transition to this day.”

Bill was born in Edinburgh in 1931 and was educated at the city’s George Heriot’s School. He was indentured at chartered surveyors HA Brechin & Co before moving to London to work, briefly, for the London County Council, and then, for the remainder of his professional working life, Stanley Griffith and Partners.

As a chartered surveyor, Bill worked closely with architects the Ware Macgregor Partnership and was involved in a number of important television projects.

These included the Southern Television Studios in Southampton, Thames Television Studios on the Euston Road, London, and transmitter buildings for the BBC and the Independent Broadcasting Authority.

It was as a result of an invitation from John Ware (of the Ware Macgregor Partnership), who was Chair of the RTS at the time, that Bill joined the Society in 1967.

The year after he retired as RTS Honorary Treasurer in 2003, Bill was awarded an MBE – and received his decoration from the Queen at Buckingham Palace – for “services to the RTS”.

He continued to attend the Society’s annual general meetings and also RTS Veterans events. Bill also served on the Council of Management of the British Board of Film Classification.

“Bill was not from a media

background; he brought a touch of the real world to our trustee deliberations and was not impressed by rubbing shoulders with the famous,” recalled RTS Honorary Secretary David Lowen. “He was always prudent – as an Honorary Treasurer, perhaps, should be. His tone was carefully measured and his wit was always dry. It was a pleasure to work alongside him.”

Bill had a new heart valve fitted in January, but complications arose in March and he spent his last four weeks in St George’s Hospital, London, comfortable and in no pain. While in hospital he continued to read *Television* with great interest.

The former RTS Honorary Treasurer is survived by his wife, Margaret; his children, Keith and Alison; and four grandchildren.

Matthew Bell



Paul Hampartsoumian

Bill McMahon 1931–2017

OFF MESSAGE

All eyes are on the general election but does Off Message detect a sign of voter fatigue even among the commentariat?

The broadcasters were as shocked as everyone else by Theresa May's decision to call a snap June election.

How disappointing that the Conservative leader will not be taking part in a television leaders' debate.

It makes Off Message nostalgic for 2010, when viewers had the opportunity to see Gordon Brown and David Cameron slugging it out live on TV.

The programmes were a ratings bonanza for the TV networks and galvanised the campaign.

In 2015, there was only one TV debate featuring the Conservative and Labour leaders – a less dramatic affair than 2010, as a total of seven politicians were present in the studio.

Is there a case, perhaps, for introducing a law that would make televised UK leaders' debates compulsory during general elections?

■ They used to say that nostalgia isn't what it used to be, but some of us baby boomers need no reminding that a very important pop culture anniversary is looming.

Yes, you've got it – 1 June marks the 50th anniversary of a record often cited as "The greatest album of all time", The Beatles' seminal *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*.

Off Message has already pre-ordered the box set containing the new remix masterminded by George Martin's son Giles.

What better occasion, then, for ITV to reshow Granada's quietly brilliant two-hour documentary *It Was Twenty Years Ago Today*. The film was made with co-operation from Apple (no, not the tech behemoth) and contained revealing interviews from Paul McCartney and George Harrison, among others.

Over to you, Kevin Lygo.

■ All of us who obsessively follow the intricacies of the media miss the laser-beam sharpness of Steve Hewlett to guide us through the maze of spin and counter-spin.

Imagine Steve on the Bill O'Reilly affair or how the BBC is handling Jeremy Corbyn's election campaign.

Still, Steve's sons are keeping the Hewlett flame burning by pushing themselves to the limit, quite literally.

Billy and Freddie were successful runners in the recent London Marathon, both finishing well despite their status as marathon virgins.

And all in a good cause as the pair raised money for Macmillan Cancer Support. Congratulations to the two of them.

■ If the speculation is to be believed and the *Guardian* ends up relocating to Granada's old Manchester HQ, it would be truly ironic if the newspaper's CEO, David Pemsel, got David

Abraham's job – and was forced to move to Manchester.

Pemsel has emerged as one of the favoured candidates to land the big gig at Channel 4.

Perhaps part of his application for the broadcasting job is his apparent keenness to move out of London.

Pemsel certainly looks the part – lean, clean-shaven and heavy spectacled – and, of course, he did a stint at ITV, as marketing director, so he is a broadcasting expert.

■ The very talented and highly bookish former BBC two controller, Janice Hadlow, is setting up an indie. No surprise, there.

Her partner in what is bound to be a very interesting venture? None other than her husband, Martin Davidson, erstwhile head of history at the BBC. So what are the super-cerebral Hadlow and Davidson calling their new baby?

Clever Crows, no less. Well, there's no point in being modest.

■ Can it be true that around 18 million people in the UK have "little or no grasp of what on-demand TV is or how to get it"? This intriguing statistic comes from Digital UK, the body responsible for Freeview, so is perhaps not wholly impartial.

But, if it is true that something like a quarter of the population is ignoring catch-up and streaming services, what does it say about the huge publicity given to Amazon and Netflix?



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