

November 2019

# Television



**The art of  
screenwriting**

**Jack Thorne  
Jez Butterworth  
Russell T Davies**



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## From the CEO



Elsewhere, all eyes might be on the election but, here at the RTS, we've continued to roll out our autumn events calendar.

The early-evening session on branded content was a sell-out. Huge thanks to everybody who made this such an informative and stimulating session. I am especially grateful to all of the panellists.

The first two episodes of season 2 of Sky Atlantic's high-concept drama *Britannia* were shown at an exclusive RTS screening at the Curzon Soho.

This was followed by a Q&A with the series' creators. It was great to see so many of the show's dedicated fans at this highly entertaining evening.

It is always a thrill to get out of London and visit the nations and regions. Attending this year's RTS Northern Ireland Programme Awards, held in Belfast and hosted by Vogue Williams, was a real pleasure.

Back in London, a stellar line-up of television practitioners gave two days of RTS Student Masterclasses at the IET.

Finally, congratulations to our eight new RTS Fellows: Kenton Allen, CEO of Big Talk Productions; Sue English,

broadcaster and political journalist and former Chair of the RTS Television Journalism Awards; Seetha Kumar, CEO of ScreenSkills; Andy Lucas, vice-president, global distribution technology, Universal Pictures International; Kevin Lygo, ITV's director of television; Niall Sloane, ITV's director of sport; Jane Turton, CEO of All3Media; and Sally Woodward Gentle, CEO of Sid Gentle Films.

Theresa Wise

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# TV diary

## Ranvir Singh puts practicalities before politics as she braces for another Downing Street doorstep



**M**y alarm has been almost constantly set for 3:30am for seven years now. My body is so attuned to it that I almost always awake before it goes off. It's now 3:03am on Monday morning and I'm staring at my phone, having just been happily dreaming about glaciers.

I flew back late last night from four magical days in Iceland marvelling at the power of Mother Earth. After a few hours' sleep, it's time to get my head back into the man-made fire-works of Westminster politics.

I'll be out in the dark, freezing-cold conditions of live TV outside Parliament and No 10, talking about Brexit in the week we're supposed to be leaving the EU. You'd assume that my first thoughts of the morning/middle of the night would be about the latest news lines, but it's more important to consider the correct thickness of thermals, boots and coat for the day.

Get it wrong and brain freeze sets in very quickly. Practicalities before politics, people.

■ Later on, it's time to get ready for the *Pride of Britain Awards* red carpet. It's the one big TV event that's about brilliant people, and I love meeting them but, to be honest, I don't find

it easy to enjoy red-carpet events. Some people live for them. Not me.

As I sit in make-up, 12 hours after I woke up, I'm repeating to myself, "Enjoy this, enjoy this". I get a photo with Harry Kane while I'm inside, feel humbled and inadequate hearing the stories, and flop into bed at midnight.

■ It looks likely a snap election will be passed by the Commons tonight. I'm at ITN to do the national evening news. It still excites me every time I hear Big Ben's "bongs" at the top of the show, and tonight's is a big show. There's an electric, hyper-focused atmosphere in the newsroom.

It's decided that we should take the programme out of the studio and on to the platform erected in front of Parliament. It's my first OB for evening news, and, for the first time in years, I'm actually nervous... By 7:00pm we are done and I'm genuinely thrilled.

■ The next day, I'm in Sunderland for a family funeral. The following day, after *Good Morning Britain*, which I do Monday to Thursday, I go to the gym with my personal trainer. The evening is dedicated to spending time with my son – and making Halloween fun for him.

The internal battle rages daily, sometimes minute to minute: pursuing a career that needs a lot of attention but which takes me away from

him a lot, and the pressure and guilt of being a single mum with an only child who deserves my full, undivided attention. I'm pretty sure I'm doing both badly sometimes.

■ Saturday, and we watch the Rugby World Cup final while out having breakfast. I shed a tear over the South African captain and secretly want them to win because it means so much more to them than just being a game. That's not patriotic, I know, but it's how I feel.

■ I've been invited to watch *Strictly* at Elstree Studios tonight. So, after handing my son over in Warwick services car park to my sister, I get ready and drive there with a friend. In the VIP tent we have to hand in our phones – just like you do inside Downing Street.

We're shown to our seats, and told they'll give us water and a biscuit in about two hours to keep us going. Even though I've worked in live TV for years, it's still exciting being here.

My hands hurt from all the clapping we have to do, sometimes to order for the edit. It's bloody exhausting watching close-up how fast the dancers' bodies move. Wow. Mike Bushell is saved again.

*Ranvir Singh is Good Morning Britain's political editor.*

# Ear candy



## RuPaul's Drag Race UK

Can't wait for your weekly fix? **Kate Holman** plugs into the show's podcast



**S**tart your engines! *RuPaul's Drag Race* has finally made its way across the pond for a UK makeover – and a weekly podcast from BBC Sounds for even more content about the nation's favourite drag queens.

After 11 series of the popular US drag competition, diehard fans rejoiced when it was announced that *RuPaul's Drag Race* would be heading to BBC Three for the first UK series.

While staying true to the US format, the UK version has been sprinkled with a touch of British flair. Tasks

have included *Downton Dragg*y and winning queens are awarded RuPeter badges. And, each Thursday, drag legend RuPaul is joined by Michelle Visage and an array of celebrity guests, such as Alan Carr, Andrew Garfield and Cheryl. They judge the drag queens on their talent, charisma and individuality in the search for the next drag superstar.

On Sundays, *RuPaul's Drag Race UK: The Podcast* brings the show's community viewing experience to the podcasting world. There's a full debrief of the latest episode from super-fan hosts Scarlett Moffatt and "punk-horror drag queen" Baby Lame.

The duo discuss everything from who slayed on the runway to the performance of the week's worst lip-sync.

Scarlett and Baby are joined by an eclectic mix of special guests and celebrity fans. Drag king Kemah Bob and *Derry Girls* star Nicola Coughlan have both appeared. There have also been visits from the latest queen to have sashayed away from the competition for an exclusive tea-spilling interview.

Alongside the main podcast, BBC Sounds offers a playlist created by the week's eliminated queen to help get you through the Sunday-evening blues. ■

# WORKING LIVES

## Sustainability manager

**R**ichard Smith has been the BBC's sustainability manager for 10 years. He was previously an on-screen reporter for BBC regional news programmes, including *Midlands Today*. As home affairs correspondent for *BBC South East*, he reported on drugs, asylum seekers and homelessness, and won an RTS award.

Based at MediaCity UK in Salford, Smith heads a team working to raise awareness of environmental issues within the television industry and reduce the carbon footprint of programme production.

He devised the Albert carbon calculator, which he shared with the rest of the TV industry through Bafta. The scheme is now used by more than 500 production companies in the UK and beyond.

Programmes that complete the certification can use the Albert Sustainable Production logo in their end credits.

### How did you get the job of sustainability manager?

It sounds idealistic, but I went into journalism because I wanted to change the world. After 14 years, I realised I'd probably changed it as much as I could.

My awareness of climate change was growing and I realised this was an area where I could achieve more. In 2008, I read about the BBC's new environmental strategy and contacted that

department. I had no sustainability training or qualifications, but I was enthusiastic and understood TV production.

I think my two careers share some skill sets. You have to be relentlessly resilient and persuasive, and be able to take a lot of complex information and make it understandable.

I was taken on for six months to develop a carbon calculator for TV production. I've been here ever since. I have since trained with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment to become a chartered environmentalist.

### What does the job involve?

It's very varied, from writing the BBC's sustainability strategy and reporting to management at the highest levels, to talking to a production company that's not thought much about sustainability before and is taking the first steps to becoming greener.

A vital part of the role is sharing our values with the rest of the industry, as they can't just stop at the BBC's front door.

I am very involved in training. I co-founded a partnership between the BBC, ITV and others to create what we think is the world's first training course on climate change and environmental impacts specifically for the television industry. It has been taught to hundreds of people.

This morning, I was checking a script



for a CBeebies programme. The producer had asked me for advice on conveying issues of climate change to toddlers, which is wonderful.

### How has the role and reactions to it changed in a decade?

Ten years ago, I had to explain much more about environmental issues. Now, everybody understands the phrase "climate change".

Things that seemed a challenge five years ago are now commonplace, such as casts and crews using reusable water bottles rather than endless single-use plastic bottles.

TV programmes have really helped to raise awareness. Now, it's not just in documentaries and on the news that viewers learn about climate change. The issues were bubbling away in the background of the Russell T Davies drama *Years and Years*, bringing them alive in a genre where you wouldn't expect the subject to be tackled.



Plastic pollution at Manta Point, off the coast of Indonesia

Jukka Saarikorpi

### How do carbon footprints vary in the TV industry and are they falling?

Studio-based programmes, such as *Mastermind*, make several programmes a day and are very efficient. High-end drama and documentaries have a higher carbon footprint as it takes much longer to produce footage and it might involve foreign travel.

Natural history documentaries have a high carbon footprint but that is more than outweighed by the powerful effect TV can have. The global impact of Sir David Attenborough talking about plastic waste in our oceans on *Blue Planet II* was incredible.

Awareness of climate change has never been higher but, unfortunately, the size of carbon footprints isn't falling yet. That's our big challenge.

### What can we do to reduce our carbon footprint?

The average carbon footprint across the TV industry is 13 tonnes of carbon

per hour of output. That compares to the total annual carbon footprint of three UK houses. I have no authority to tell anybody what to do. I'm not in the business of preaching, but there are things we can all do to be more sustainable.

You could sign up to a renewable energy supplier, use low-energy lighting in a studio and switch off equipment when not in use. Turn the thermostat down and wear a jumper. Think about your travel, about not flying if possible, and using public transport. If you must drive, pack the car with people. Reuse existing sets and hire props and costumes instead of buying new ones.

Everyone can play a part, even down to thinking before printing something or printing on both sides of the paper.

### Are you hopeful about the environmental future of the planet?

By the end of the BBC's Charter, in

2027, we want the BBC to have made the world a better place environmentally than if it had never existed.

It's a huge challenge but it's possible, through practical steps such as planting trees and improving our biodiversity and the volume and wealth of natural organisms. For example, we have beehives on the roof here at MediaCity UK.

When I give them the statistics, people are shocked by the severity of the environmental problem, but part of my job is getting them out of a sense of despair and suggesting what we can do about it.

I hope I can inspire them because I am full of hope for the future.

If I felt I was wasting my time, I wouldn't be doing this job. I feel like this is what I was born to do and I'm not going to stop. ■

*Richard Smith, BBC sustainability manager, was interviewed by Roz Laws.*

# Jack on the box

## Screenwriting

**Jack Thorne**, writer of *The Accident* and adaptor of *His Dark Materials*, is one of the UK's most sought-after screenwriters. He talks to **Ben Dowell**



Jack Thorne

**R**achel doesn't let me cycle," laughs writer Jack Thorne as I am leaving his north London home following our interview. Rachel is his wife, a comedy agent and keen cyclist herself, who laughs back: "Yes, he'd just be cycling along and have a script idea and that would be that."

They obviously know there's nothing funny about cycling accidents, but the point is that Thorne is a man so teeming with ideas he should probably not don the Lycra. Ever. A self-confessed "obsessive", he says he needs to have two projects on the go at any one time to help contain his fertile imagination and a rigorous work ethic.

Before fatherhood, this saw him work 14-hour days, sometimes ploughing on through the night. Now that he's a dad (son Elliott, named after the *ET* hero, is three), this has changed a bit, but not by much.

This month, he has had two major projects on air. The first series of his magisterial adaptation of Philip

Pullman's *His Dark Materials* has blazed on to BBC One. And there's the devastatingly powerful four-parter *The Accident*, which ends his Channel 4 state-of-the-nation trilogy. First was *National Treasure*, starring Robbie Coltrane as a comedian accused of historical sex abuse. This was followed by the Sarah Lancashire-fronted *Kiri*, focusing on race and the child protection system, as it told the story of the death of a young black girl in foster care.

The space where all this is made possible is a large room in the middle of Thorne's tall Islington townhouse, which positively radiates with work: books, scripts and memorabilia cover most of the surfaces. The walls are bedecked with posters of his shows, including the underrated supernatural drama *The Fades* and the sublimely funny, poignant, profound and nostalgic *This is England* sequence of dramas.

There's also a framed Harry Potter babygrow emblazoned with "Thursday's Child" – a reminder that Jack Thorne is an accomplished theatre writer, too. It was a present from the

producers of his stage adaptation of *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* (so, no prizes for guessing on which day of the week Elliott was born).

Thorne is worried that all this looks like he's a bit of a show-off. In fact, he is a nervous character who agrees that he needs reminding that all his labours do bear fruit.

The 40-year-old (he turns 41 in December) returns to his home office straight after dropping off his son at nursery. He doesn't take long walks for inspiration, he says – he thrashes away at his computer even when inspiration dries up.

The first episode of *His Dark Materials* underwent 46 drafts before he hit the right note, having gone down what he describes as "a number of wrong directions". His job, he modestly maintains, was simply to transpose the brilliance of Philip Pullman's book to the screen. "When you're given perfection, it's scary as shit," he laughs.

But does he ever rest? And would he describe himself as, how shall I put it, a workaholic? "No, that's totally fair," he





His Dark Materials

BBC

says. “There’s always something to do, and I don’t really have much down-time, but we’re good at holidays.”

And then he stops, noting that, with two shows due in August, that wasn’t quite true this summer. “When Elliott was napping I would work and disappear for an afternoon, but Rachel is understanding of it all,” he laughs again.

What clearly drives him is his intense passion, which is evident in the way he talks – short sentences, punctuated with the refrain, “Do you know what I mean?”. This passion also shows when he discusses the Channel 4 trilogy. He still wakes up in the middle of the night fretting about the ending to *Kiri*.

It concluded with the wrong man (Kiri’s biological father) being imprisoned for killing Kiri while the perpetrator, Kiri’s foster father (played by Steven Mackintosh), sits at his kitchen table, seemingly free from the consequences of his crime. For the US version, Thorne thought about adding a blue-light, police-car effect, and still wonders if he should have done so.

“My sister said the other day that we

## ‘SEX, RACE, CLASS, GUILT, INNOCENCE, JUSTICE ARE WHAT INTEREST ME’

made absolutely the right choice and that’s how the criminal justice system works: ‘Guilty people aren’t found guilty, that’s all you’re saying there.’ But that thing of not providing people with closure... I think I did rush it and I was speeding towards the end.

“So whatever decision we’d made about the way it should have ended, we probably didn’t do it confidently enough and we probably didn’t do it quite well enough. I’m really proud of the show, but I’m annoyed with myself for the ending. If I had my time again I would probably do something very different.

“I think I fell too in love with my

own rules, which screwed me up. I think I got a tiny bit pretentious as a writer. Which isn’t to say that it’s the worst thing I have ever made. It’s a piece I’m totally proud of. This trilogy is really important to me: it was my opportunity to do something that was so personal and so important, which I may never get again.”

*The Accident*, as we have just seen, also starred Lancashire (whose talents Thorne greatly admires) and is the searing study of the impact of a devastating accident on a small Welsh town.

While *National Treasure* explores culpability and guilt in the sexual sphere and *Kiri* looks at racial injustice in the world of mixed-race adoption, *The Accident*, he says, is firmly concerned with class.

The Grenfell tragedy was the inspiration for this piece. As he discusses the failures heaped on the residents of the west London tower block, he gets very emotional.

They were let down, he believes, not squarely because of their race (most of the victims were non-white), but >



The Accident

Channel 4

› because they “were working class and easily dismissed”.

However, the Bristol-born writer (whose family later moved to Luton) firmly resists the label working class for himself: “I’m from a middle-class family. I went to a comprehensive school. We didn’t have a shit tonne of money – we had some and my parents were both white-collar workers. My dad was a town planner, my mother was a teacher, who became a carer for adults with learning difficulties.

“Sex, race, class, guilt, innocence, justice are what interest me,” he says, before explaining why he believes class has sometimes been overlooked in today’s diversity-conscious TV landscape. “Class is fundamentally about access. And theatre’s not doing well on that any more – there was a time when theatre was really good at it.

“It is a complicated time, and it’s complicated because nobody has any money. Outreach is the first thing that gets forgotten, and telly isn’t very good at it. But people are trying.”

After graduating from Pembroke College, Cambridge, just before the turn of the millennium, Thorne first wanted to be an actor or politician. But he remains forever grateful to his brother, who let him live in his flat for a mere £150 a month for six years when he first came to London.

## ‘WHEN YOU ARE GIVEN PERFECTION [TO ADAPT], IT’S SCARY AS SHIT’

This allowed him to find his feet as a writer.

From there, he “grabbed whatever training I could”, including on a Royal Court young writer’s programme and work experience with the *Harry Potter* producer Heyday Films (which spawned a good relationship – he has just written an upcoming movie adaptation of Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden* for the company).

He then got a job in development with the acclaimed director Pawel Pawlikowski before writing for such shows as *Shameless* and *Skins* prior to penning his own triumphs.

Thorne intends to continue riding his success. He was mired in writing series 2 of *His Dark Materials* when we met. He is also working on a new four-part drama for the BBC, *Best Interests*, which recounts how the parents of a seriously ill daughter fight to keep their child alive despite doctors insisting she should be allowed to die.

The writer continues to follow the inquiry into Grenfell Tower closely. He reveals that he has received three separate offers to write a drama about the tragedy but felt unable to.

He is hopeful that one day someone will write it, “when things are a bit clearer about what’s to be said”.

“TV is good at this stuff,” he adds. “TV’s good at spotlights”

I also notice that he has a copy of Charles Dickens’s *A Tale of Two Cities* on the floor by his desk. Is that in the offing, too? “It might be in the near future,” he laughs. “It’s sitting on top of some *Buffy* scripts and I’m not redoing *Buffy*.”

As to the future of TV in the streamer-rampant space, he still feels optimistic: “I don’t know what the future will hold but I think Peter Kosminsky is right when he recently said that the danger is that local stories might not be told in the streaming world.

But then, one of the biggest dramas of the last year was an incredibly local story – *Chernobyl*.

“I think the landscape is constantly evolving but, at the moment, it feels like good drama is being made and I dearly hope that continues.”

With him still plugging away – and staying off his bike – you can bet that it’s got more than a fair chance. ■



Sky

# Sky's big spender

## The Billen profile

**Jane Millichip**, Sky Studios' deal-maker extraordinaire and supporter of Extinction Rebellion, tells **Andrew Billen** how she came clean to her bosses about her left-wing views

**W**hen Jane Millichip got her job as Managing Director of Sky Vision in 2013, she felt she should confess all to her boss – after all, the broadcaster was still almost half-owned by Rupert Murdoch. The thing was, when she was 21, she had stood on the picket line at Murdoch's Wapping plant in solidarity with the printers he had just fired.

“My boss at the time, Rob Webster,

fell off his chair laughing,” she says. “It was just that I would never want to embarrass Sky.”

Is it true, I ask, that her current boss, Sky Studio's CEO, Gary Davey, once said she was really not too bad for a commie? She smiles. “It wasn't quite that. He joked about the fact that, despite my socialist leanings, he rather liked me.”

That sounds like a careful paraphrase, I say. “Well, it's a source of great humour between us, but I'm a massive advocate of Sky as an employer.”

She now believes that the Wapping

print revolution and everything that has happened in the 30-plus years since contain the lesson that the media must always evolve. Nevertheless, her core politics have not changed much. Having voted Labour all her life, she is “struggling with”, but has not ruled out, voting for Jeremy Corbyn on 12 December. Much more dangerously, she leads a militant Facebook group known as Archers against Brexit, whose rallying cries are “We believe Ambridge can deliver, where Westminster has failed” and “Joe Grundy says no thank you, Theresa May”. >

► Millichip's main home is in the Cotswolds, where she and her husband raise a modest number of livestock. It is at the Sky Central café in unpastoral Osterley, west London, that we meet, however.

She has this year been promoted to chief commercial officer of Sky Studios, Sky's beefed-up production arm. The company's new owner, Comcast, this summer pledged an unprecedented £1bn for productions over the next five years. Already, 52 shows are in development, led by an HBO co-production starring Jude Law about an island of disturbing atavism off the British coast. "It's kind of barking," she promises of *The Third Day*.

Has she ever had so much money to spend? "I know. It's extraordinary. If you'd asked me six years ago if I would be managing that kind of risk at such a big player, I couldn't have conceived it.

"I don't know whether it's something about the way we work at Sky but, although you feel absolutely responsible for that money, there's a bravery around risk management, a sense of commitment. It's not a blame culture."

The thrill of her job, she says, is finding the deals to green-light a project. "It's amazing when you come up with a solution. It's very enabling."

Has she ever had to say no to something the creatives wanted to do? "We rarely end up saying no, because those 'nos' will be weeded out along the way as part of the development process. No, we haven't so far under Studios."

Inevitably, a turkey will peck its way into the line-up eventually. But she claims that Sky Vision, the distribution arm that she ran until her promotion, was not responsible for a turkey on her watch.

It depends how one categorises poultry, I suggest. The second season of *Fortitude* froze out many of those who had stayed with the first.

She assures me that the shivery noir fantasy recovered its investment. "It's sold very well around the world and I was keen for us to do a season 3, even though the sales, though still going well, were starting to tail off.

"We knew that we couldn't go to four or five seasons. But we felt, for the hardcore fans, we needed to close the story. I couldn't bear leaving it at the end of season 2, so we did a short season 3."

She says that Sky was on the path to doing more of its own productions long before Comcast bought the company last year. That, I suggest, must be because behemoths such as Disney



Sky Vision show *Riviera*

will jealously hoard home-made content while they launch their own direct-to-consumer services (although, under a new deal, Sky will still have first dibs on HBO shows).

"Well, it's not like we all woke up and thought, 'Oh fuck, the SVoDs are taking over'. I mean, when I joined Sky six and a half years ago, Jeremy Darroch [Sky's CEO] – even then – was saying, 'I don't want to rent content for the rest of Sky's life. I want us to own our own content, be in charge of it, own our own destiny, build our own creative story.'"

At this stage in our chat, Millichip becomes the latest of many Sky executives over the decades to try to explain to me Sky's commissioning strategy for drama. In recent times, the company has been building on "ensemble-cast multi-season series", she says.

Yet that does not seem to describe the two dramas that have brought Sky its perception-changing accolades, *Patrick Melrose* and *Chernobyl*. "I was just about to say, in the last couple of years, we've also given ourselves a licence to do closed-ended, big minis, but what you need is a whole portfolio of returning series before you go to those.

"I think there is a real respect for quality here but also a kind of respect for popular television, wholeheartedly commercial television. Sky works as a

multifaceted business, able to draw on different revenue models, but the fact is that we're premium pay.

"At the top of every decision is: 'Is this content worth paying for?' It's a very simple notion and we often remind ourselves of it in the meetings when we're having an argument about something: 'Is this going to be content worth paying for?'"

"I certainly also believe that what we're not doing is adding to that kind of mass-produced gorge that is happening in the wider marketplace."

Is there too much telly right now?

"There probably is too much telly around. And there probably is too much mediocre telly."

Growing up in Worcestershire in the 1960s and 1970s, she likely watched plenty of mediocrity on her parents' black-and-white set. They were a working-class family, her father a carpenter, her mother a dinner lady. The home had no car or phone, which may explain, she thinks, her technological incompetence (at a TV sales conference she once tried to load a VHS tape by aiming her calculator at the player).

She went to Sheffield Polytechnic to study languages and political science and was studying in Verona when the real *Chernobyl* happened in 1986.

"Leafy veg was taken out of

supermarkets all over Italy because the cloud was blowing our way," she recalls.

Having been intent on journalism from a young age (*All the President's Men* came out when she was 11), she left Sheffield to join Haymarket's magazines training scheme. Her first published article was on in-car air fresheners for *Car and Industry Trader*, a three-page triumph. She began to report on the media and became fascinated by the "innards" of that world – so fascinated that merely writing about it turned out not to be enough.

As editor, next, of *TV World*, she published a cover story on the Australian children's show *Bananas in Pyjamas*. "That was my nadir. That was when I thought, 'I've got to get out of this. Anthropomorphic bananas in striped pyjamas is not Woodward and Bernstein.'"

She found a job in sales at Intel, a now defunct distributor. But straight selling was not her thing, either. She went to Living TV, then owned by Flextech, as a commissioning editor, and it was there she viewed a pilot for *Most Haunted* and realised – although she would never have bought the show on the basis of a written pitch – that its makers were on to something.

What was it really about, these people stumbling round old buildings at the dead of night, intent on scaring themselves? The power of suggestion? "No, it was about ghost hunting."

Were there ghosts? "We had a scientist and a historian on hand..."

So there was no cheating? "No. Not by me anyway. We had orbs. We always had orbs."

Orbs? "They're kind of balls of light that look a little bit like camera flare – but, obviously, aren't."

There was a bit of a hoo-ha with Ofcom, which banned ITV from making a copycat version, citing its public service obligations. Happily free of these, Living persuaded the regulator that its show was entertainment, not religion. Living went on to buy in a seance with Diana, Princess of Wales. Millichip looks less convinced about that one.

Out of the blue, she was offered the "great adventure" of a job as Managing Director of a production company in New Zealand. Upon arrival, she discovered *Most Haunted* was shown even there. "I thought, 'This damn thing is following me around the planet.'"

By now, she had two very young sons with her husband, businessman Paul Freedman, who, it turned out, had

been to Sheffield Poly at exactly the same time as her (spooky or what?). He loved life on Auckland's north shore, but she felt disconnected. "I felt really weird living somewhere that was quite irrelevant."

After three years, they returned to the UK, where Freedman now runs an upmarket picture-framing business for the likes of Tracey Emin. Their main home, the one with the animals, is now in Stroud, an epicentre of climate-change protest. Not only does she know the Extinction Rebellion co-founder Gail Bradbrook, but extinction rebels have stayed in her flat during the London protests.

Does she join Bradbrook in her naked dances beneath full moons? "I do not."

Perhaps she is too busy. In 2007, Millichip became chief operating officer of at RDF Right and then MD of Zodiak Rights, before embarking on her biggest adventure of all, at Sky Vision. There, in six years, she took revenues from £8m to £240m.

First, however, there was that owning up to do. She told Rob Webster that, back in the 1990s, she had organised strikes for the NUJ when the union was derecognised by magazine publishers across London. And, what was more, as a student, had joined the picket line at Wapping a couple of times. ("It was very rainy.")

"I actually never had any problem coming to Sky and I'd say that it's very old-school thinking to [even] consider that you might. I know you'll think this is fluff, but it's not: Sky is, by a country mile, the best employer I have ever come across. The work practices here are better than at any other. The rigour with which we adopt proper work practices by doing the right thing by the staff, setting up networks for women, LGBT+, multiculturalism, parents, networks for the staff by the staff, the whole Sky Ocean Rescue campaign..."

Receiving a lifetime achievement award at a ceremony in Cannes in October, the glamorously dressed Millichip berated the TV industry for handing out "crap and pointless corporate gifts" at markets and festivals that harm the environment.

Webster, now Managing Director of Sky Sports, messaged: "Love this Jane, just love it."

Now that she explains it, her journey from Wapping to Osterley no longer looks quite so convoluted. Jane Millichip is one of those people who make their own way through life. ■

## 'SKY IS, BY A COUNTRY MILE, THE BEST EMPLOYER I HAVE EVER COME ACROSS'

### Jane's journey

**Jane Helen Millichip, chief commercial officer, Sky Studios**

**Lives** A smallholding in Stroud, plus a flat in London and a home in Cornwall ('It's like indoors camping')

**Married** To Paul Freedman; two sons

**Born** 17 August 1965 in Bewdley, Worcestershire, daughter of Brian Millichip and Kathleen Lloyd

**Educated** Bewdley High School and Sheffield Polytechnic (BA in modern languages and politics)

**1989** Journalist, Haymarket

**1992** Editor, *TV World*

**2001** Senior commissioner, Living TV

**2005** MD, South Pacific Pictures, New Zealand

**2007** COO, RDF Rights

**2010** MD, Zodiak Rights

**2013** MD, Sky Vision

**Greatest achievement** Turbocharging Sky Vision revenues

**Most dubious move** Commissioning *Most Haunted*

**Hobbies** Cocktail mixing, surfing, keeping pigs and sheep

**Watching** *Succession*, *His Dark Materials*, *Sex Education* (with her sons)

**Reading** William Boyd's *Sweet Caress*

**They say** 'She's a content visionary' (Content Innovation Awards 2019)

**She says** 'We're not here to make shows that make us feel good about ourselves'



# Message in the magic

Natural history

Caroline Frost meets some of the producers of the BBC's latest natural history blockbuster, *Seven Worlds, One Planet*

**F**rom the opening moments of *Seven Worlds, One Planet* we know that we're in safe hands. Orchestral strings soar as a deserted, sun-dappled beach comes into view. Sir David Attenborough strides out across the sand, a big, warm coat the only concession to his 93 years.

With his unique authority, he introduces a montage of images drawn from seven continents to give us hints of the emotion-stirring, jaw-dropping stories to come. It is immediately clear that, once again, both Sir David and the BBC's Natural History Unit have excelled themselves.

Executive producer Jonny Keeling first worked with Attenborough two decades ago on *Life of Mammals* and

marvels at his colleague's continuing enthusiasm. "He was extraordinary then, he's phenomenal now. We took him on two trips for this series, to Iceland for that opening scene, then to Kenya for the summing up. We'd spent a few years going back and forth with clips, and he was getting more and more engaged. He still just wants to make a really good story."

Around this broadcasting totem, much else has changed. Keeling is being modest when he explains: "We're not reinventing anything, you can't change this kind of television dramatically, but we've taken steps and moved it on a bit. We've become more sophisticated in how we tell our stories."

That evolution includes the way that, for the first time, producers have

divided the narrative into continents. Keeling believes this helps bring home the planet's diversity and makes it more personal for viewers ("We all belong to one of them"), but the advances in filming technology are more striking.

Drone cameras have come such a long way in the past decade that they have transformed how producers approach their subjects. "We can fly further, quieter, longer," explains Keeling. "We've been able to take them through a volcano at night, over oceans, through jungles, and get a completely fresh perspective."

Arguably most revolutionary, though, is the message about the importance of conservation, one that runs throughout the series rather than being tacked on at the end. Just as *Blue Planet II* brought



*Seven Worlds, One Planet* presenter Sir David Attenborough filming in Iceland

BBC

home the perils of single-use plastics, this series contains powerful stories of climate change, both sad and uplifting.

Whether it's the triumphant comeback of whales since the international ban on commercial hunting in 1986, or the way that melting glaciers have affected animal behaviour, the message is fully integrated into the narrative, and all the more effective for it.

"You just can't ignore it any more," reflects series producer Scott Alexander. "There is an appetite for it now. I think that, if we'd made this film and not included any conservation, we'd have been shot down in flames."

Emma Napper, one of the team's producers, who had the formidable task of helming the Australia and Asia episodes, welcomes the chance to

engage on the topic with a mainstream audience. "We've been talking about conservation for 30 years or more, but now there's an awareness, people wanting to be told more.

"I think we've struggled in the past because TV commissioners don't want people to feel sad. And if you say a lot of negative things on the same subject, there's a danger of just creating white noise.

"But this show is about the diversity, beauty and personality of each continent – so, when you do give that conservation message, it's not just that everything is sad and you should feel mildly guilty, but that, while things are wrong, we can change. We want to empower viewers."

For Keeling, Attenborough puts it best in the film. "He asks us, 'The natural world is critical, but every breath we take, every mouthful of food, is dependent on it, so why wouldn't we take care of it?' I find that really powerful and important."

*Seven Worlds* is a massive enterprise: four years in the making, 1,500 people working across 41 countries on 92 shoots across 1,794 days to create more than 2,200 hours of film. The talents of the BBC's Natural History Unit were boosted by the deep pockets of co-producers in France, Germany, China and the US.

Keeling explains the careful line he had to walk in "making sure that those producers are happy, but that the British audience gets a quality programme, too".

For Alexander, the "most important things we wanted were to find new stories. That was the biggest demand we made of all the researchers and producers – as much new stuff as they could get their hands on."

How does one go and discover new nature? "We rely heavily on the scientific community," he says. "But it can come from anywhere. I saw a picture of a hamster in a magazine, and I thought, 'Hamsters are in Europe?' It was just a moment of curiosity, and that's ended up in the show."

After a year in the office spent carving out themes and storylines, planning and making choices about what to leave out, the producers were generally allotted two shows each, depending on

logistics. "We try to keep people in the same time zone," says Alexander, "otherwise, nobody would ever get any sleep."

For Napper, the Australia gig meant the chance to film lots of animals that weren't really known, while Asia involved "a third of the land mass of the world, with just 60 minutes to say something sensible".

Despite the long days, weeks and years spent waiting for an elusive creature to appear and behave according to script, it's clear that the whole team retains a sense of wonder for all that they have witnessed. And each has a favourite moment that they still hold dear.

Keeling remembers his time in Australia, filming dingoes hunting kangaroos: "It took us two years to find the right place, six weeks with multiple cameras to get the sequence, so that felt like a personal triumph – if not for the poor kangaroo."

For Alexander, it was the big cats of South America. "The puma is [a] big, beautiful cat, and we had a mother with three cubs. We'd been there many times, but never caught her hunting, and we'd already stayed for six weeks. I rolled the dice, we stayed an extra week and that's when it happened, as is often the way with nature."

And Napper holds close to her heart the fact she managed to get on film the golden snub-nosed monkeys native to western China's snow forests, a breed that Attenborough had been wanting to film since the 1960s but never managed until then.

"It was tricky to get access to them," she says. "People knew there was something there, but they weren't sure what – it's where the story of the yeti came from. They walk on their hind legs and are incredibly striking-looking. The adults are perhaps a bit ugly, but the babies are super cute."

She adds: "That's the amazing thing about the natural world. People think we must have run out of stories by now, but we rely heavily on scientists, on research, new behaviours, new locations. And when you find them, it's hard, hard work, but, my goodness, it's good if you can find something even David doesn't know about." ■

# Britannia – ‘There’s no Jane Austen here’



Druid Mackenzie Crook in *Britannia*

## Drama

**Jez Butterworth** and colleagues tell the RTS how his ‘gloriously bonkers’ historical saga repurposed the English costume drama.

**Steve Clarke** reports

Period dramas come in myriad forms. Latterly, few have been as high concept as Jez Butterworth’s bloody and somewhat bewildering saga, *Britannia*, set roughly 2,000 years ago as the invading Romans attempt to “civilise” an island of warring Celtic tribes.

Co-produced by Sky Atlantic and Amazon Prime Video, the skill of the make-up department alone is worth tuning in for. The prosthetic work done to Mackenzie Crook, who plays druid mystic Veran, is extraordinary.

At an RTS screening of the first two

episodes of *Britannia* season 2, followed by a panel Q&A session, the overwhelming impression from Butterworth, his brother Tom (a writer on the series) and producer James Richardson was of the fun the trio had in conceiving and executing what one reviewer described as a “gloriously bonkers” show.

Richardson, who founded *Britannia*’s maker, Vertigo Films, back in 2002, claimed that the series was dreamed up “over lots of bottles of red wine”. Judged by some of the more trippy sequences featuring what looks like a druid rave, and the clever use of music from the psychedelic 1960s (especially Donovan’s *Season of the Witch*), you wonder if the



wine had been spiked with something a tad more mind-altering.

“Jez and I had never made any TV,” explained Richardson. “We knew nothing about how it worked. We’re used to film. Tom had done TV. He was the expert who helped us steer *Britannia*.”

Butterworth, the brilliant playwright responsible for *Jerusalem* and *The Ferryman*, admitted that, for the first nine episodes that comprised series 1, he was learning on the job.

This might have been so, but his name on the credits was enough to secure such A-list actors as David Morrissey and Zoë Wanamaker, who respectively play Roman general Aulus and Celtic queen Antedia.

So, did Butterworth have to learn to use a different muscle as he switched from the stage to TV drama, asked the evening’s chair, journalist Caroline Frost? “Spending 10 or 20 hours with one character.... My plays are pretty long but they’re not that long. That chance to pick up something and make it run and run is something I’d never attempted.

“In film, it’s over before it’s even begun. It’s like a haiku, filming keep getting shorter. When I started out, they took 120 days, now they’re 90. TV is completely different, all the rules are different.”

How did they get it past Sky, whose most successful drama, *Game of Thrones*, has been compared to *Britannia*? “Bizarrely, when I said, ‘Let’s do druids, Celts and the Roman invasion of Britain, they madly went, ‘That sounds cool!’,” replied Richardson. “They were massively supportive of the idea: ‘Let’s just dive into this world that we know nothing about.’

“They were very good about us not making a particularly historically accurate show.”

With scant historical knowledge of Britain in 43CE and no novels on which to draw (*Game of Thrones* is, of course, based on George RR Martin’s best-sellers), the imaginations of *Britannia*’s creators were free to go into overdrive.

“As you can see, it’s quite an ambitious show. The three of us were literally sitting round a table going, ‘What can we make all these people do now?’” recalled Richardson. “The historical accuracy was never part of that process. The historical advisor actually said: ‘We know about 40% of what the

Romans did, about 20% of what the Celts did and we know nothing about what the druids did. So you can do what you want.’

“Even the bit that the Romans wrote was written later and it was written from the perspective of how brilliant they were.”

Bloody rituals, full-on violence and



Jez Butterworth

Paul Hampartsoumian

## ‘IT IS ABOUT ONE RELIGION DYING OUT AND ANOTHER ONE COMING ALONG’

cod mysticism aside, *Britannia* does engage with a topic that down the ages has been a recurring preoccupation for human societies. “In all seriousness, it is about one religion dying out and another one coming along,” said Butterworth. “There are massive tectonic shifts in faith around this time, as one set of gods bully the other lot off the ball. That was the reason for me wanting to do it.

“To have characters who were under those kind of pressures, where their entire world of belief is crumbling and under threat – that is the reason for choosing the period.”

Charismatic female characters are an essential element of “historical” fantasy TV. *Britannia* is no exception. On the panel were two: Annabel Scholey,

who plays Amena, (queen-in-waiting of the Cantii tribe) and Eleanor Worthington-Cox, cast as Cait, a young woman from the Cantii tribe due to undergo an initiation into womanhood on the eve of the solstice. The procedure was knocked off schedule by the invading Roman hordes.

Scholey said she was attracted to the series because its female characters were all strong, independent women.

She added that she wouldn’t have been interested in playing Amena had the part required her to be “a bod-ice-ripping prop for a man. That’s not why I became an actor. She’s equal to the men, if not greater.”

Worthington-Cox was 14 years old when she began working on *Britannia*. She is the youngest recipient of a Laurence Olivier Award, won when she was just 10 for her performance in the lead role in *Matilda the Musical*.

Three years ago, she played Janet Hodgson in Sky’s *The Enfield Haunting*, nominated for a Bafta supporting actress award.

She said: “I feel so lucky because I started out on this when I was 14.... To be honest, it’s been an absolute roller coaster.... From day one, Nikolaj [the actor Nikolaj Lie Kaas, who plays Divis, an outcast druid] and I got on like a house on fire. He is insane and so am I. I don’t think I could have worked with anyone better.... With this guy, there isn’t a dull moment.”

She added: “I can say on behalf of all of the women in this series that we feel we’ve been treated as equals.”

Scholey told the RTS that she particularly enjoyed the show’s salty language and dry humour: “The scripts were so refreshing. You’re in a big period dress and to have the freedom of speaking quite colloquial, hilarious dialogue is brilliant.

“The juxtaposition is not what you’d expect. There is no Jane Austen here.”

You can say that again. And for the record, Jez Butterworth claims he has never seen a single episode of *Game of Thrones*. ■

**The RTS screening of *Britannia* season 2 and panel discussion was held at the Curzon Soho, Shaftesbury Avenue, London, on 29 October. The chair was journalist and broadcaster Caroline Frost. It was produced by the RTS in conjunction with Vertigo Films.**

# An audience with a TV revolutionary

## Screenwriting

**Russell T Davies** explains to **Gethin Jones** why TV still needs to get out of its straight, white rut. **Matthew Bell** has a front-row seat

In just 20 years, Russell T Davies has left an indelible mark on British television. From *Queer as Folk*, via *Doctor Who*, to this year's dystopian chiller *Years and Years*, Davies has written unforgettable drama. His work – like the writer in person – is opinionated and loud, but also warm and human.

The Swansea-born writer was in expansive mood as he discussed his career with Gethin Jones at a sold-out event in late October at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama to mark the 60th anniversary of RTS Cymru Wales.

The TV broadcaster had first met Davies 15 years earlier when, as a *Blue*

*Peter* presenter, he was running a *Doctor Who* monster competition. Jones went on to appear on the show twice himself, albeit as a couple of villainous extras – a Dalek and a Cyberman.

Davies told his compatriots that he grew up in “a very bookish house”, which boasted a full set of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. His parents were the “first in their families to go university”, he said, but added that they “revered television almost as much as they revered books”.

Davies was a talented artist – he turned down a job as a football cartoonist on the *Sunday Sport* – but settled on a career in television, moving to Manchester to work in the BBC's children's

department. He tried his hand at directing, editing, dubbing and much else, recalling that, in children's TV, “the budgets are small so you get thrown into these areas.... After a few years, you've learnt an awful lot more than you would if you were in a role as a *One Show* researcher.”

Davies produced children's shows, including CITV's *Children's Ward*, before graduating to adult telly, storylining ITV's *Coronation Street* and writing scripts for the same channel's period soap *The Grand*.

His breakthrough came with the groundbreaking 1999 Channel 4 drama *Queer as Folk*, set in Manchester's gay scene. TV had seen nothing like it



Russell T Davies with Gethin Jones (right) and Judith Winnan (left), who presented him with his RTS Fellowship

Aaron Lowe Photography

and eclectic career, which has seen the writer move seamlessly between family (*Doctor Who*), children's (*The Sarah Jane Adventures*) adult (*Cucumber*) and even period (*Casanova*) drama.

Throughout, he has unapologetically chronicled the lives of gay people.

A boyhood fan of *Doctor Who*, Davies persuaded the BBC to regenerate the sci-fi series in 2003. Filming started the following year in Cardiff.

When the show aired in March 2005, with Davies as lead writer and executive producer, it proved a huge ratings and critical hit – and a shot in the arm for TV production in South Wales, especially when two spin-offs, *Torchwood* and *The Sarah Jane Adventures*, followed.

"I remember a time when a lot of my friends in the TV industry were struggling for work, and then *Doctor Who* happened and they worked for a long time. You brought the industry, that we have now, to Wales," said Jones.

Davies's much-garlanded 2018 drama for BBC One, *A Very English Scandal*, told the story of Liberal Party leader Jeremy Thorpe's affair with Norman Scott and his attempt to murder him.

"It's a story that had never been told by a gay man. It is from a very brilliant book by John Preston. The tone, wit and style of [the drama] is from the book – he's a brilliant writer. But he is a straight man writing the story," said Davies. "For 40 years, it has been a mystery why these men behaved as they [did]. Frankly, it's the story of a middle-aged gay man falling in love with a beautiful gay man who takes too much drink and drugs. I understand that."

Earlier this year, BBC One's *Years and Years* offered a nightmare vision of a near-future Great Britain. "It wasn't a ratings success, but I'm genuinely immensely proud of it," said Davies. "I think it's one of my favourite things in my whole career."

Davies's next project is *Boys*, a drama about Aids in the 1980s, which is set to air on Channel 4 next October. One of its stars, Welsh actor Callum Scott Howells, was in the hall.

Responding to a question from the audience on whether gay and transgender actors should be cast in gay and transgender roles, Davies replied:

"Right now, especially." On *Boys*, he continued, there were "up to 40 or 45 gay characters, all played by gay actors.... I've cast trans people: Bethany Black, in *Cucumber*."

"I think television is astonishingly... white and straight – and straightforward, as well. It's 2019 now, and you've got to get with it." ■

*The RTS Cymru Wales event 'In conversation with Russell T Davies' was held at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff on 28 October and produced by Edward Russell.*

## Davies on...

### ... The confidence to sell a drama

"That's a lifelong battle.... You have to summon up the nerve to go into a room to pitch to people. You don't get any written treatments off me... but I can talk pretty well.... I will sit in a room and sell it. You have to – it's my job."

### ... Casting Welsh actors

"As I get more power... I try to put Welsh characters into everything. When I was young, there were no Welsh characters on television at all, and that's a fact. I remember my dad calling us in from the street when [Swansea-born actor] Margaret John was in an episode of *Z Cars*."

### ... Writing for TV

"When I was young, there were three channels, two soap operas and *Casualty* – and that was it. It was hard to be a writer then, frankly.... If you're out of work as a writer and you're not generating your own YouTube material, whether it's sketches or dramas... then what are you doing? There are a million outlets now to find your expression in stuff. I know it's still hard but it's not as hard as it was...."

"Read lots... the BBC Writers Room has thousands of scripts. Read film scripts, read plays, because that's the way to learn how to do it."

# Soccer's moment of truth



## TV sport

It's not only the fans who will be watching Amazon Prime's live Premier League kick-off next month, as **Ross Biddiscombe** discovers

A run-of-the-mill English Premier League fixture on a Tuesday evening early next month is set to be one of the most significant football matches to be played in more than two decades.

That is because the game between Crystal Palace and Bournemouth will be the first ever to be broadcast live and exclusively by one of the tech giants.

Amazon, the global digital platform and retailer, is showing this and 19 other Premier League games to UK audiences during December via its subscription service Amazon Prime after paying about £90m for a three-year deal.

After more than 25 years of Premier League live games being carved up by pay-TV platforms, Amazon's entry into the UK football market will be studied intensely across the sporting world.

"We're entering a new era of sports rights valuations," says Enders Analysis research analyst Julian Aquilina. "This

is the moment of truth for British football's value, and its success or failure will be noted and reflected around the world."

Amazon's offering will include a few innovations, such as a live "around the grounds" goals show, with action from as many as six matches happening simultaneously. The coverage, however, will feel similar to Sky and BT Sport, especially in terms of on-screen talent.

Game experts include Thierry Henry and Alex Scott, while Gaby Logan and Peter Crouch from Amazon's own *Back of the Net* football entertainment show will also appear.

"On Boxing Day alone, we will have more than 50 on-screen presenters, pundits, reporters and commentators. We wanted to create a broad line-up of presenters, pundits and commentators, with a mixture of familiar faces and newer ones," says Alex Green, Managing Director of Amazon Prime Video in Europe.

Green is confident that Amazon's

technological infrastructure will cope with streaming multiple concurrent matches, despite concerns expressed by fans, who complained of buffering issues during live ATP men's tennis games earlier this year on Prime.

Fans also said navigation was "clunky" on the busy Prime home page. Yet Amazon's "test and learn" approach – like that of all software companies – means Green is convinced of the success of what he calls "one of the biggest streaming events worldwide".

So, will football fans subscribe to yet another service? It's been estimated by Ampere Analysis that Amazon will need at least 600,000 new or retained subscribers for each of the three years of this deal in order for it to make financial sense.

Classic Premier League fixtures, such as Liverpool vs Everton and Manchester United against Tottenham, will certainly help, says Aquilina: "But it's also about database collection for Amazon, and the good thing is that, historically it's done very well at retaining customers; it has a very low churn rate, particularly when customers sign up for a whole year, which is what Amazon is hoping".

However, estimating potential Premier League income is complicated because, at the moment, Amazon is offering a free one-month trial. In other words, some core fans may choose not to buy a long-term £7.99 monthly subscription package that includes all other Prime TV shows and free delivery on any online purchases.

Yet the analyst community believes that the key 600,000 subs number is achievable. Ampere Analysis estimates that only 25% of current Prime subscribers like to watch Premier League games, which suggests that there are many football fans who have yet to sign up for Prime.

Richard Broughton, research director at Ampere, is betting on Amazon's deal succeeding financially: "It's a relatively small Premier League package and it can easily afford it. Amazon will make money not just through subscriptions but with its margins on products sold

through its retail [platform]. That's why, of the online services in the UK, Amazon is the best fit for live football."

While Amazon experiments with football, major sports rights bidding in the UK by other digital giants is at best patchy. Facebook has broadcast a few niche sports live, such as triathlons, and it discussed a \$600,000 Indian Premier League cricket deal in 2017 but it was eventually outbid.

Meanwhile, YouTube (owned by Google) has twice screened the Champions League final live thanks to a partnership with BT Sport. Netflix seems content with having a few sports documentaries.

But, whether or not Amazon suc-

## 'OF THE UK ONLINE SERVICES, AMAZON IS THE BEST FIT FOR FOOTBALL'

ceeds or fails with its Premier League package, the whole live sports rights market is set for huge changes as the pay-TV companies hint at belt-tightening to come.

Crucially, despite the Amazon deal, the total value of the current domestic Premier League rights income fell, compared with three years ago.

The 2015 auction was worth £5.4bn (paid by Sky and BT Sport), but the current deal (which also includes Amazon's money) is worth just over £5bn, despite more games being sold and a couple of smaller game packages being created to attract bids from a tech giant.

The other bad news for sports TV rights owners is Amazon's low churn rate. "If [low churn] happens with football fans, then you don't need to buy the Premier League rights again to keep that Amazon Prime customer," says sports broadcasting consultant Phil Lines. "You would only buy the rights again – or more rights – if you

think it will add significantly more football fans than you've already got as a result of your initial Premier League purchase." If this is the case, a second Amazon bid for Premier League games may be unlikely.

Other significant voices are also suggesting difficult times for sports rights. Enders Analysis boss Claire Enders has already gone on record this year predicting a 20% drop in the value of the Premier League's domestic rights in the next auction in 2021.

Analysts believe that, if the price declines for the League, then so could the value of all other UK sports rights.

At the RTS Cambridge Convention in September, Sky CEO Jeremy Darroch said that losing some sports rights would no longer have a big impact on his business.

Darroch said that fewer than half of Sky customers nowadays take sport, compared with 93% in 2004, when he joined the company. "At the time, we were very, very wedded to sport and I didn't like the look of that," he said. "We are very, very value driven. Our ability to analyse the value of sport and understand where it fits into our business... we'll decide where that is at the right time."

Sky Studios is emerging as a significant content producer, not least in drama, with *Chernobyl* expected to dominate TV awards ceremonies. The economic case for investing in drama rather than premium sports makes sense.

Yet, as a new generation of direct-to-consumer services becomes available (both Apple TV+ and BritBox launched earlier this month) only a fool would write off the appeal of live TV sports.

"In the next year or two, more studios will have moved aggressively into international markets with direct-to-customer offerings of their own and they will withhold rights to their programming to third parties such as Sky," said Richard Broughton. "Yes, that will free up budget for pay-TV companies to make their own programmes, but it also makes remaining rights, like sports rights, more valuable.

"Perhaps, this could be a silver lining for the Premier League." ■

# Television's biggest fan

## Profile

Jane Turton, CEO of All3Media and the new Chair of the RTS, tells **Steve Clarke** why she lives and breathes TV

From her first days working in television as a founder member of Meridian, the South of England regional ITV company, Jane Turton knew that she'd landed in exactly the right place professionally.

"I've always loved being in TV. It's full of interesting people," she says. "TV is always exciting. The product – if we're allowed to call it that – is fascinating – part manufacturing business, part creative, part art, part commerce. TV brings all that stuff together in a way that is challenging and interesting."

That was in the early 1990s when, prior to consolidation, separate ITV franchises were sold to the highest bidder after clearing a quality hurdle. Today, Turton runs All3Media, the London-based production powerhouse that owns a spread of independent producers across the UK, Germany and the US.

The range of content All3 is responsible for is, putting it mildly, eclectic. Here's a taste: *Fleabag*, *Gogglebox*, *Call the Midwife*, *The Circle*, *Race Across the World*, *Gordon Ramsay's 24 Hours to Hell and Back*, *Hollyoaks*, *Drowning in Plastic*, *Free Rein* and *Three Identical Strangers*. In other words, shows that embrace a wide range of drama, entertainment and factual.

In September, it was announced that Turton would succeed Tom Mockridge as Chair of the RTS. "I am incredibly flattered and excited. I've got a lot out of television and I'd like to give

something back," she says with barely a trace of her native Edinburgh accent.

We are speaking in her 10th-floor All3Media eyrie situated in London's West End. The CEO is softly spoken and discretely immaculate in a dark business suit. Her compact, modest office – tasteful and cosy in a contemporary way – provides stunning views of the capital. As we talk, the light begins to fade on a moonlit, late autumn afternoon.

Turton read French at St Andrew's (spending some time in Paris, which is perhaps where she acquired her characteristic chicness) before working in the paper industry. Her father owned a local printing company, Tullis Neill.

An MBA led her to PwC (one of her jobs involved crunching some BBC numbers relating to the licence fee and what was then BBC Worldwide) and on into the TV industry with Meridian.

She held various roles at United Productions and Granada Television, before becoming director of commercial and business affairs at ITV Studios and later ITV Network.

She joined All3Media in 2008 as deputy chief operating officer, becoming COO in 2011 and then CEO in 2015. After taking over leadership of the company, growth has been rapid – four years ago, All3 owned 17 companies, today it owns 40.

"Weirdly, we don't measure it like that. I don't think of it as a collecting of companies, more of the people, the



talent... What I think is amazing, what we've tried to do, and I hope we've achieved, is introduce some incredibly exciting people to this business," she explains, reeling off names such as Pippa Harris of Neal Street Productions (maker of *Call the Midwife*) and Harry and Jack Williams of Two Brothers, the company responsible for *Fleabag*.

Turton describes *Fleabag* as "a phenomenal success. It opens doors. In itself, it's valuable, but the knock-on effect of having a show like that is incredibly valuable."

She adds: "At All3, we have a highly talented group of people. I think that there is scope to own more companies, but I don't know if there's an answer to how many. People always ask that. You add companies in such a way that you're not creating conflict and competition, but something that works as a whole within All3 and the distribution business [All3Media International], which we manage centrally."

So what is a typical working day for



## 'I'VE GOT A LOT OUT OF TELEVISION AND I'D LIKE TO GIVE SOMETHING BACK'

the organisation across the length and breadth of the UK.

"The nations and regions are very important to the RTS," she notes. "With its regional centres, the Society has always been very good at that. I want to help to continue to drive that and to make sure the word gets out about what an exciting sector television is."

She adds: "In terms of RTS conferences and conventions, the agenda has got bigger and broader and more global. As a sector, maybe, back in the day, we were a bit British-focused and parochial.

"There is nothing parochial about the RTS now. The people who speak at RTS conferences are very global. There's a huge international interest in what we do."

In a world of social media and constant digital connectivity, the Society's ability to bring people together in the same room across all sectors of television remains unique, she argues.

"There's nothing like live, real content with an expert or someone who's going to help you get started in your career. There's no substitute for that..."

"I think it's very important that these things don't become exclusive clubs. They have to be inclusive and that must be part of the challenge when you've got something that sounds like the *Royal Television Society*. It can sound a little bit patrician but, actually, it isn't. In fact, it's the opposite and we must make that point." ■

All3Media

Jane Turton? "The honest answer is that there isn't one. Most days, I will talk to the production companies. I am often doing shareholder stuff with our owners, Liberty and Discovery. If we've got corporate activity going on, there'll be meetings around that."

She is a frequent traveller to the US and to All3's German HQ in Munich. When she is in the UK, Turton is at her desk by 8:00am working until the early evening, when often she will attend a function.

Twice a week, at 6:30am on Tuesdays and Thursdays, she does a spinning class. She also walks a lot – "I am violently opposed to driving in London" – and is an avid golfer. "I'm a proper Scot," she laughs.

Her introduction to the Society was around a decade ago when, for the first time, she attended the Cambridge Convention.

"I thought it was extraordinary and exciting," she recalls. "It was where all the grown-ups went, and intellectually

stimulating. You saw the secretary of state speak, the people who run the UK broadcast platforms and the Americans and all the big producers."

Having been an RTS Trustee since 2015, Turton has got to know the Society from the inside and seen it increase its activities in outreach and education, and the expansion of the student bursary scheme.

"I think the RTS has become even more conscious of its educational remit," she says. "[RTS CEO] Theresa [Wise] and her team live and breathe that. The RTS takes very seriously things such as increasing diversity, accessibility and making sure, as a sector, that we're properly representative.

"We're proud of the progress we've made in terms of ensuring that social inclusion is at the top of our agenda. The inclusiveness of the bursary scheme is something to celebrate."

She wants to see as many people as possible participate in the Society's educational initiatives and engage with



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# OUR FRIEND IN SCOTLAND

Audiences flock to the BBC during moments of national importance. That's the received wisdom, anyway. Think World Cup finals, the Queen's Speech or big news days. After a career in commercial TV, I'd become resigned to this. Until I moved to Scotland, that is.

It's different here. Partly, that's because Scots watch more TV than anyone else in the UK, an average of 25 more minutes per day last year, to be precise (thanks for asking).

No doubt there are cultural factors at play, but the real reason is that it rains a lot. When I swapped London for Glasgow nearly two years ago, there was lots that excited me, including the prospect of walking to the office every day, rather than sweating my way to work on the Tube. I love my 20-minute stroll in the mornings – though I'm invariably wet when I arrive.

Audiences also want TV they can relate to. STV is now the most popular channel in peak time in Scotland, ahead of BBC One. A lot of that is down to the performance of our local programming. Our flagship news show, *STV News at Six*, regularly beats the BBC because it focuses on people, their communities and their stories.

Ratings are up 15% in the past 18 months alone. Our nightly current affairs strand, *Scotland Tonight*, goes from strength to strength and is about to be rewarded with a peak-time slot. And this summer, *Sean's Scotland* (hosted by perennially popular STV weatherman Seán Batty) beat *Love Island* and *EastEnders* on the same night.

What does this tell us? Not that you need to be parochial or clichéd to succeed, but that, in a world of Netflix

In an era of Netflix and Disney+, play to your strengths, recommends  
**Simon Pitts**



STV

and Disney+, you've got to play to your strengths. And ours is unashamedly our Britishness and, yes, our Scottishness.

The resilient performance of our TV channel means we're still, by far, the biggest marketing shop window in Scotland, which, in turn, has led to more than 100 local brands advertising on TV for the first time in the past 12 months. This is thanks to our STV Growth Fund.

I can honestly say that Grizzly Bear Hot Tubs in Carnoustie would not be Scotland's No 1 hot-tub retailer without us.

In digital, as have other broadcasters, we've had to embrace the necessity of cannibalising our old business to build a new one.

We now have more than 70% of the

Scottish population signed up as registered users of STV Player, and a host of new content partners. We like to think that we've got something for everyone – OK, especially if you like *Taggart*.

But the most exciting opportunity lies in TV production. Scotland is full of talent, but many still feel they need to go south of the border to fulfil their dreams. And I don't mean Carlisle.

Big-budget, ambitious, new, network dramas such as *The Cry* and *The Victim* (that's ours!), as well as the forthcoming *Elizabeth Is Missing* (that one, too) and *The Nest* celebrate Scotland's creativity and its beauty. They prove that our dramas can hold their own on a world stage.

They also demonstrate the BBC's intent around nations and regions production, by the way, with Channel 4 hot on its heels. What we need now are returning series. That's the absolute key to long-term success.

One of the most rewarding days since joining STV was last month, when I met our crop of new bursary students. We've partnered with the RTS to offer funding, mentoring and work placements to 10 talented young people from lower-income households pursuing journalism, TV production and technology courses right across Scotland.

There's no other scheme like it in the country. Reading the students' CVs makes you swell with pride, as well as wonder what the hell you were doing at university, while they were writing code and making award-winning films...

The future might be damp up here, but it's bright, too. ■

**Simon Pitts is CEO of STV, Vice-Chair of the RTS and Chair of the RTS Technology Bursary Scheme.**



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# TV's tech pioneers

## Careers

**Anne Dawson** looks at how the RTS Technology Bursary Scheme encourages young women to consider careers once seen as off limits to them

**T**he RTS launched its Technology Bursary Scheme in 2015. The initiative supports students from lower-income households studying science, technology, engineering or maths (Stem)

subjects, with the aim of tempting them into a career in the media industry when they graduate.

Our first group of five students comprised four men and one woman. This year, we awarded eight bursaries.

For the first time, we have equal numbers of male and female students. Is this a blip, or are we moving towards a more equal gender balance?

How much do students – and the industry – think has been achieved?



**Kyliya Prince-Anastasiou**  
BSc (Hons) Computer Science with a year in industry, University of Kent

Kyliya first became interested in computers by playing games with her three brothers. As the only girl in the family, she is used to being the lone female. This helped her persevere when she found she was the lone female studying physics A level, and then one of the few women on Kent's computer science degree course.

"At times, I felt I shouldn't really be studying physics," says Kyliya. "I wasn't very good at it at first [but] I kept working hard and my grades improved."

Kyliya has grit and determination. Her interest in computers was not supported by her school's curriculum, which did not offer the subject at GCSE or A level. However, a (female) teacher pointed her in the direction of the Coding Academy website. This enabled her and a friend to teach themselves coding.

It had never occurred to her that it could lead to a career in the TV industry, until she spotted the RTS bursary. Looking at the Society's website, she found videos of earlier students who seemed to be having a lot of fun.

She is thrilled that there may be a career involving a subject she loves in a creative working environment.

"I'm interested in cyber security, among other areas, but I am really looking forward to finding out about the sort of jobs that are available," says Kyliya. "It's very exciting to be an inspiration for future women who may want to follow my example."



**Lea Racine**  
BSc (Hons) Computer Science, University of St Andrews

Lea's first contact with computer science was at primary school, aged 10, when she was introduced to a simple coding app that allowed her and her classmates to create a website.

"It was so amazing to be able to create something," she recalls. "At my secondary school there was no opportunity to study computer science, but a friend had some books >

## The industry perspective



### Susie Buckridge

Chief Executive, YouView

We asked YouView's boss what her experience was of the gender imbalance in tech, and what companies like hers can do to boost the number of women working in the sector.

She quotes a 2016 report\* that: 'In the UK, only 5% of technology leadership roles are held by women. A shocking figure given the history and status of our industry on the world stage.'

'The barriers to women entering technology are well documented, yet the

pace of change to lower these barriers has been slow.'

Buckridge believes this gender bias comes from a number of factors, including female pioneers of technology being glossed over. Charles Babbage is widely credited with inventing the computer, while Ada Lovelace's role in recognising and proving its potential is rarely mentioned.

'To shift the societal barrier, we need to change two things,' she says. 'The first is school education, where either schools are not providing the opportunity to learn computer science or, where they are, it is

**'AT YOUVIEW,  
WE ACTIVELY  
SEEK FEMALE  
ENGINEERS'**

not being taught in a way that piques the interest of girls.'

Research shows that the more computer science is presented as a way to improve lives and resolve social problems, the more girls relate to the subject.

'The second [issue] is that fundamental changes need to be made in the workplace,' she continues. 'Technology workplaces can carry the same biases that have existed traditionally in wider society. Gender bias... is then perpetuated by the fact that there are few female role models in the industry.'

'To break the cycle, companies must take a proactive stance to drive tangible change.'

The CEO adds: 'At YouView, we actively seek female engineers. We keep an eye on our recruitment processes and have adjusted accordingly to remove unconscious bias.'

Great role models in the TV industry include Alex Mahon, CEO of Channel 4, who previously ran post-production house Foundry, Mitzi Reaugh, President and CEO of Jaunt XR, a leader in augmented reality, and Fani Sazaklidou, VP of product design at DAZN.

'All of these women are inspirational, and their careers demonstrate the breadth of technology roles available and the heights that are possible,' Buckridge says.

\*<https://tcrn.ch/2CJ0FQk>

› about [the programming language] Python, so I borrowed those and taught myself coding.”

Lea chose to study computer science because she loved the problem-solving aspects. As part of her work experience over the summer, she supervised a graduate scheme coding test taken by four women and seven men. “The men all completed the test first but – you know what? – all the women did a better job and produced better solutions.”

At St Andrews, she was surprised to find that around 40% of her class were female. “So far, it’s fantastic.”



## Milena Stefanovic

BSc (Hons) Computer Science,  
University of St Andrews

Milena was drawn into the world of computer science by playing video games with her older brother. “I thought it was so wonderful,” she says. “When we got to study computer science at high school [in Scotland], I was so excited.” Computer science was compulsory for the first two years, so the gender balance wasn’t an issue at first.

But for her highers and advanced highers she was one of only a few girls in the class.

“Computer science isn’t a skill you’re born with,” she says. “It’s something you learn, like any other subject. However, when you walk into a room of guys, you feel you shouldn’t be there.”

Milena was delighted when she found the gender mix at St Andrews was much more equal: “Things are changing. But we need more women involved as teachers. There was one [computer science] female teacher at my school, who was part-time. I didn’t even know

she existed until my last year. Even at St Andrews, the tutors are mostly male. We need to explain computer science better to girls at a younger age – and that anyone can learn it if they want to.”



## Mariatu Davies

BEng (Hons) Mechanical  
Engineering, University of  
Birmingham

Sociable and confident at school, Mariatu could have chosen a number of different degrees to study, but she is very happy with her subject choice. “My mum came here from Sierra Leone just after she had me. She was desperate for me to go to university and have all the opportunities she never had.”

Mariatu became interested in engineering when she got to know a female friend of her mum’s who ran an electrical engineering business. “My mum’s friend had a really successful career and she was rich.” The woman explained that there were lots of careers in engineering.

In secondary school, Mariatu had work experience placements with Crossrail and the Department for Transport. She particularly liked the latter: “Everything was planned and well organised. I work well in that sort of environment.”

Achieving a first in a foundation degree in engineering at Leicester, she has decided to specialise in mechanical engineering.

“My friends think studying mechanical engineering means you are going to be a mechanic and work under a car with oily rags,” she worries. “We need better advice on careers that are available to women.”

“The world is changing. People understand that diversity is important. As a woman studying engineering, I think there will be lots of career options available. The world is your oyster.”



## Abbie Howell

Developer, Theodo

Abbie is the first Technology Bursary student to graduate. When she joined Theodo, she discovered she was one of only two women developers out of 30, and one of eight women in a workforce of around 40 employees.

Abbie says that, for women to become confident in male-dominated environments, they have to support each other. She and her colleague Kamile Matulenaite have set up a network, Embolden Her ([www.emboldenher.org](http://www.emboldenher.org)), to provide mutual support and mentoring for other women working in tech.

She is also a volunteer coach for Codebar, which gives practical training and support and speaks up for women. Abbie believes the industry can’t wait for the gender balance of graduates to change, and that there are many young women out there who can quickly learn to code.

One route is via training companies such as Flatiron School ([flatironschool.com](http://flatironschool.com)). It runs online and face-to-face courses for career changers, including the initiative, Women Take Tech, which awards scholarships and runs programmes specifically for women.

Abbie is concerned that many “think it’s not possible for them to learn to code or attain leadership positions in tech. We need more role models for young women and girls, and more female teachers in schools and universities.” ■

# Brands boost budgets

## Advertising

Advertisers are increasingly stepping in to close the funding gap, discovers **Matthew Bell** at an RTS early-evening event



From left:  
Greg Barnett,  
Saj Nazir,  
Kate Bulkley,  
Simon Wells,  
Emily Hudd

Paul Hampartsoumian

**W**ith programme budgets under pressure, TV is turning to advertisers to fund shows

directly. And the amounts that brands can bring to the table are significant – anything up to half a million pounds for an hour of TV.

This was the message from a packed RTS early-evening event in October, at which a panel of leading commissioners, producers and advertising experts discussed how they make branded programming.

Greg Barnett, long-serving commissioning editor for factual entertainment at Channel 5, argued that the way programmes are being made is changing.

His channel's brand-funded *Britain by Bike with Larry & George Lamb* is supported by pain-relief brand Voltarol, and offers a synergy between programme subject and advertiser – the aches and pains caused by cycling.

But, said Barnett, the broadcaster is in charge. "The idea started with the broadcaster, so we retain editorial control," he explained.

Saj Nazir, head of integrated delivery at "next generation" media agency Wavemaker, argued that, for a brand, funding a programme "isn't about selling more products – it's potentially a way for you to own a conversation around a topic, without having to out-spend your competitors".

Simon Wells, controller of funded content and creative solutions at

Channel 4, suggested that audiences now "accept" branded content on TV: "Every other platform is full of it."

Channel 4, he revealed, had "an ambition to make prime-time entertainment with brands. The important thing to say is that we do the editorial but we are really happy for the brand to fill its boots with the assets around that show, with the extra content on social [media], advertising...."

"If you make an entertainment show with us, you can then take those assets... and create advertising, work with the talent."

For brands, the attraction of funding entertainment shows is that "it's a great way to engage audiences emotionally", he added.

And brand funding can do much

more than fill holes in budgets. “We are talking about shows [with] £2m-plus brand investment,” said Wells. “A lot of the time, we do bring some money to the party – [but] not always.”

Nazir noted: “It’s such a wide scale: I’ve had brands fund shows for £150,000 an hour and then I’ve had brands fund shows for close to half a million pounds an hour, so it really depends on the talent.”

Using TV talent in brand-funded programming is relatively new, said Emily Hudd, joint MD of entertainment and comedy indie Rumpus Media. “Some people are a bit tentative about it, she conceded. “We work a lot with comedians. We’ll meet them and talk them through the idea first, then explain and reassure them about what the brand involvement is.”

When looking at potential talent, the producers of branded-content look, first and foremost, for the “reach” of a person, whether that’s on social media or traditional TV.

“Most talent I’m finding nowadays are going, ‘I’ll do it because I know that show won’t happen unless brand X [pays for it]. And as long as I’m not asked to say brand X is great,’” said Wells.

But the Channel 4 executive added that, if the talent does endorse brand X, “there will be more money involved”. “The option exists, if you want a deeper relationship, and you want the [talent] to be in your ads straight after the show, during the commercial break, you can [have that]. And this won’t be at an editorial rate – it [will be higher], more of an advertising rate.”

Rumpus is making a documentary for MTV UK that is ad-funded by Timberland, a supporter of the charity National Park City Foundation. It features UK hip-hop artist Loyle Carner, who highlights “urban greening” projects – a subject close to his heart – in Croydon, south London.

In addition to the MTV show, content will be distributed across VoD, digital and social platforms.

“It’s the first time we’ve used talent in a documentary space – normally, it’s formatted entertainment,” said Hudd. “The branded part of it feels much more minimal in the way that it is executed. It’s not a piece of content about its clothes, it’s about [Timberland’s] values.”

Subtlety is key, she argued, adding that the aim is to “stealthily weave in the message of the brand”.

Wells agreed: “Not every advertiser wants to be in your face – sometimes it’s too much and the audience will know. I think that audiences are very sophisticated now.”

Technological advances are giving impetus to brand-funded programming, argued Nazir.

He identified “dual screening” – watching a show on TV while interacting on their mobile – as a “great way

world, it offered “a global opportunity for local brands to capitalise on”.

There are limits, however, as set out by media regulator Ofcom in its code, that rein in advertiser-funded programming in the UK.

These cover undue prominence of products, editorial justification and promotion.

At his media agency, said Nazir, “one of the first things we do with brands...



for brands to create really good content that people can browse and share [on social media]”.

He added: “Making engaging content is great but we need to engage our audiences via algorithms, so we make sure that any additional content that we make is topical and trending while that programme is on, so the right people see the content at the right time.”

Digital product placement is used in Australian soap *Neighbours*. This allows a product well known in one territory to be dropped into, say, a billboard featured in the programme.

“This is a classic example of how content that isn’t made in the UK can still provide opportunities for UK clients,” said Channel 5’s Barnett.

As *Neighbours* is shown around the

is sit them down and take them through the Ofcom code”.

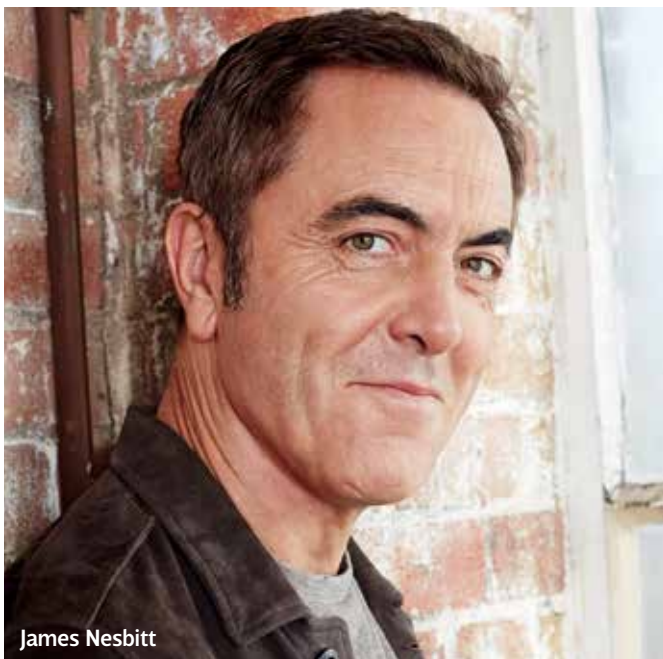
“Don’t be frightened of them,” said Wells. “It’s really important [to push] these regulations, because they are a bit outdated, frankly. This is 2019.”

Barnett added: “We’re a lot more savvy now – across the board. We’ve probably all had our fingers burned, but it’s because of this that we are where we are now. There’s greater understanding.” ■

**‘Branded content comes of age: How brands and broadcasters are rethinking advertising’ was an RTS early-evening event held at H Club London on 21 October. It was chaired by journalist and media commentator Kate Bulkley, and produced by Vicky Fairclough and David Amodio.**

**Northern Ireland** packed several major events and its Programme Awards into a busy November

## BBC unveils Nesbitt drama



James Nesbitt

Shutterstock

**K**en MacQuarrie announced a new BBC One crime drama when he gave his Dan Gilbert Memorial Lecture. *Bloodlands*, starring James Nesbitt as a Northern Irish detective, will be set and filmed in and around Belfast and Strangford Lough. The series is being made by HTM Television, the new drama producer co-owned by *Line of Duty* creator Jed Mercurio and Hat Trick Productions. Northern Ireland Screen will give funding support.

MacQuarrie, BBC Nations and Regions director, was giving the RTS lecture at the 10th Belfast Media Festival.

He revealed that the BBC is making available an iPlayer collection, *The Troubles at 50*, a range of documentaries on the Troubles and Northern Ireland's wider history.

He added that the BBC would be producing content to "mark the centenary of the creation of Northern Ireland. We want audiences... to learn more about Northern Ireland's past and how it has shaped its present."

Last year, the BBC announced that it was investing £77m

in Broadcasting House, Belfast. In his lecture, MacQuarrie said: "Ormeau Avenue has been the home of the BBC in Northern Ireland since 1941. Now we want to... transform it into a technology centre of excellence.

"We want to do our bit, not just as a major investment in the heart of Belfast city centre, but also as an investment in the technological and creative capacity of Northern Ireland as a whole."

MacQuarrie highlighted a new initiative involving BBC Three, BBC NI and Northern Ireland Screen that invites local indies to submit "youth-focused format ideas with the promise of making a factual entertainment series for the channel".

The BBC's Nations and Regions division aimed to be "the biggest champion" of Northern Irish programming, showcasing the "nation's talent to the rest of the UK and to the world", he said.

The RTS lecture is given in memory of former BBC radio current affairs editor Dan Gilbert, a major figure in Northern Irish broadcasting.

**Matthew Bell**

## Mercurio's starring role at careers fair

■ RTS Futures Northern Ireland, in partnership with Queen's University Belfast, ran another successful careers fair – including a session with leading TV writer Jed Mercurio.

More than 350 people attended a series of workshops, masterclasses and panel events run by industry professionals. BBC Studios talent manager Julie Forbes and BBC NI senior resourcing advisor Nicola McConville ran a CV masterclass. The duo

offered advice on how to break into the TV and film industries, and gave one-to-one 'creative clinics' to hone interview skills and CVs. Their tips included: 'Never send the same CV twice – get to know the companies around you.'

The second event, hosted by RTS Futures NI's Alex McQuitty, covered radio and broadcasting. It featured Q Radio breakfast hosts Jordan Humphries and Ryan Annett, Bauer Academy's David

Corscadden and Cool FM's Rebecca McKinney. 'Know your station, deliver and sell content well – and be relatable to your listener,' said Annett.

Director Shelly Love offered an insight into movie making, following the success of her debut feature, the Derry-set comedy *A Bump Along the Way*. She was joined on stage by the film's script supervisor, Orla Finucane.

The final event was held in the Great Hall of Queen's

University Belfast, and saw BBC Northern Ireland arts broadcaster Marie-Louise Muir interview Jed Mercurio, the writer and creator of hit thrillers *Bodyguard* and *Line of Duty*.

Mercurio discussed his career, and said how much he enjoyed working in Northern Ireland. Police corruption thriller *Line of Duty* is shot in and around Belfast.

The careers fair was part of BBC Digital Cities Belfast.

**Conor Finn**





Channel 4

Derry Girls

# Derry Girls doubles up

**D**erry Girls enjoyed a triumphant night at the RTS Northern Ireland Programme Awards. The creator and writer of the Channel 4 sitcom, Lisa McGee, was awarded the coveted Brian Waddell Award for her outstanding contribution to the broadcast industry. And series 2 of *Derry Girls*, made by Hat Trick Productions, won the Scripted Comedy award – for the second year running.

“It’s such an exciting time for the Northern Irish film and television industry – it’s a privilege just to be part of it,” said McGee. “The fact that some of my favourite television shows are being made at home just fills me with pride. Our work is now recognised and respected all around the world – it’s such a huge achievement. Well done us.”

The awards ceremony was held at The Mac in Belfast in front of a full house of 330 guests and hosted by TV presenter Vogue Williams.

World Productions’ *Line of Duty*, which is filmed in Northern Ireland, took

home the Drama award. *Unquiet Graves*, which details how members of the RUC and UDR were involved in the murder of more than 120 civilians in the 1970s, won the Documentary award for Relapse Pictures. The feature documentary was directed by Seán Murray, who won the Post-graduate Craft Skills: Camerawork category at the 2016 RTS Student Television Awards.

“It’s very humbling to receive this recognition at the end of many years of research for this vitally important documentary,” said Murray. “The RTS has been championing dedicated work by independent film-makers within Ireland and the UK – this is vital to the continued growth of our industry.”

Stellify Media’s Netflix gameshow *Flinch* won the Entertainment award, while *The Fitting Room* (Darlow Smithson Productions for RTÉ2) took the Features/Factual Entertainment prize.

*Reporting History: Mandela and a New South Africa* (Alleycats Films for BBC Four) won

in the Specialist Factual category, and the Current Affairs award went to UTV for *Up Close: Killer Patient*.

The other awards went to: Boom Clap Play for *When Something Happens* (Interactive); Sixteen South for Disney Junior cartoon series *Claude* (Children’s/Animation); Television 360, Startling Television and Bighead, Littlehead for *Game of Thrones* (Original Music Score); and BBC News for its coverage of the murder of journalist Lyra McKee (News Coverage).

“Congratulations to all our winners, who represent the very best of the exceptional talent we are producing here in Northern Ireland. The high quality of this year’s entries is hugely reflective of our dynamic creative community,” said RTS Northern Ireland Chair Kieran Doherty.

The awards were held in partnership with BBC Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland Screen, Channel 4 and UTV. Belfast post-production facility Ka-Boom was the headline sponsor.

**Matthew Bell**

## Watch the audience not the film

■ Film industry data expert Stephen Follows shared his work with a full house at The MAC, Belfast.

“Watching the movie watchers” explained audience behaviour, trends in film consumption and methods available to analyse film data. It covered everything from audience reactions to the emotional impact of actors’ facial expressions on film posters, to looking at the crossover between genres.

The event was staged by RTS Northern Ireland, Film Hub NI (part of the BFI Film Audience Network), and Queen’s University Belfast Film and Broadcast, as part of the Belfast Media Festival.

**Sara Gunn-Smith**

### RTS Northern Ireland Programme Awards winners

**Brian Waddell Award** - Lisa McGee

**Drama** - *Line of Duty* - World Productions for BBC One

**Scripted Comedy** - *Derry Girls* - Hat Trick Productions for Channel 4

**Entertainment** - *Flinch* - Stellify Media for Netflix

**Factual Entertainment/Features** - *The Fitting Room* - Darlow Smithson Productions for RTÉ2

**Specialist Factual** - *Reporting History: Mandela and a New South Africa* - Alleycats Films for BBC Four

**Documentary** - *Unquiet Graves* - Relapse Pictures

**News Coverage** - *The Murder of Lyra McKee* - BBC News

**Current Affairs** - *Up Close: Killer Patient* - UTV

**Children’s/Animation** - *Claude: Twinkle Toes Terry* - Sixteen South for Disney Junior

**Interactive** - *When Something Happens* - Boom Clap Play

**Original Music Score** - *Game of Thrones* - Television 360, Startling Television and Bighead, Littlehead for Sky Atlantic



## Top talent shares jobs advice

**M**ore than 900 young people attended the second RTS Midlands Careers Fair at Birmingham's Edgbaston Stadium in October.

Alongside Q&A panel sessions with top executives who work on some of the country's biggest shows, there were practical workshops in the exhibition hall. These included: how to make a drama, with BBC One's *Doctors* in a specially created hospital set; filming on smartphones; using drones; and making a podcast.

The major broadcasters joined more than 40 exhibitors from across the industry to give advice on how to break into television, creating the perfect CV and gaining professional experience.

**RTS Midlands** **Kate Holman reports from a hugely successful careers fair in Birmingham**

Away from the exhibition hall, RTS Midlands ran six sessions during the day. Regional opportunities were first on the agenda, with Rural Media and ScreenSkills showcasing their national talent schemes.

Attendees were encouraged to apply for the BBC/Rural Media Productions' New Creatives talent scheme in the Midlands (this offers commissioning opportunities for new work in film, audio or interactive media)

and ScreenSkills' Trainee Finder scheme, which places entry-level trainees on film and TV drama productions across the UK.

In the third session, Jude Winstanley, line producer and MD of The Unit List, offered advice to people looking for their first job. "Make sure everything that is public [is what] you would want an employer to see," she said.

Transferrable skills were just as necessary as TV experience, she added: "If you've got no experience but you have a driving licence or you speak another language, chances are you will get a job over someone that doesn't."

In "The soap and the glory – working in continuing drama" session, the panel

discussed the huge amount of work, across departments, that went into creating a series. "Everything starts with the story, which then feeds into script, production, scheduling, costume, post-production... one couldn't exist without the other," explained Liza Mellody, *EastEnders* studio producer.

"You have to think of 'how we are going to film it' as well as 'how we are going to write it.'"

The best way to get noticed was to make the most of opportunities, she continued. "Don't think: 'I don't want to be making tea and running around.' You've got to do the graft. Do your best in the job that you're in. It does get noticed."

In the fifth session, TV executives explained how to stand out in one of the



# TikTok: bringing Gen Z to TV

RTS  
London

The strategic minds behind TikTok offered an in-depth master-class to an RTS London audience in late October, calling on traditional broadcasters to embrace the fast-growing, Chinese-owned social media app.

“There’s a huge opportunity for news broadcasters to tell the softer or more interesting stories through the platform – also [stories] that aren’t necessarily so time-sensitive.

That’s basically what our audience want,” said Edward Lindeman, TikTok’s European strategy manager.

“I don’t really want to go on the platform and hear about [Brexit] – but I am interested in learning new things and discovering content.”

Previously known as Musical.ly – before major rebranding – TikTok is a short-video platform that boasts a large consumer base of 16- to 24-year-olds, often labelled as Generation Z.

“[Gen Z and Millennials] are difficult to get hold of, they’re constantly jumping in between different pieces of content,” explained Ryan Martin, brand partnerships strategist at TikTok. “[The platform] is starting to be a place where they come and spend a lot of time. The premise behind TikTok... was this idea of making everyone feel comfortable with editing and shooting video.”

“Short-form content generally performs the best,” said Lindeman. But he added that long-form, professionally generated content had also been successful on the app, showcasing extracts from

BBC One dancing contest *The Greatest Dancer* and talent show format *Got Talent Global*.

“We translated that media experience from [*The Greatest Dancer*] on to the platform and brought it

to life for our audience,” he explained. This was accomplished through “a feature of [TikTok], which allows [users] to create content at the same time that you’re watching a video”.

Through the feature, users were able to duet with the show’s dance captains, Cheryl, Oti Mabuse and Matthew Morrison. Lindeman said: “There are literally hundreds of videos of [TikTok users] going away and creating content around this.

“[*Got Talent Global*] goes against the idea that content can only be short form.

“If your content is really high quality and has an event or a narrative that encourages users to stay till the end, then they will.”

“TikTok for broadcasters” was held on 23 October. It was chaired by Founders Intelligence CEO Rob Chapman, and produced by Damien Ashton-Wellman. **James Cordell**



TV careers options for all, employing drones and phones plus gore and soap galore

industry’s most competitive genres, entertainment.

“There’s nothing like shiny floors, when you’re moments away from going live and you hear the credits roll... If that’s what you want to do, it’s the best thing ever. But with it come long hours. As TV execs, we look for dedication; you do need to do the time,” explained Ashley Whitehouse, executive producer on *The X Factor*.

“[A TV career] comes with a few sacrifices – it isn’t always glamorous,” he warned.

BBC Entertainment commissioning editor Kalpna Patel-Knight said that going far was “more about teamwork, your personality, how tenacious you are and how you can be a player in a massive team”.

The final session covered new types of careers in broadcasting.

“Local radio is a great way to get in,” said Becca Bryers, a podcast producer, who produces and presents *Multi Story*, a selection of the best stories from BBC local radio. “People sometimes see it as a stepping stone but there are great careers just within local radio.”

BBC WM’s Sunny Grewal and Shay Grewal broadcast their afternoon show, *Sunny and Shay*, from the careers fair, interviewing attendees and exhibitors and getting tips on working in TV. ■

**The RTS Midlands Careers Fair was held on 7 October, and produced by Caren Davies and Jayne Greene.**

# Batty: beware 'rubbish' forecasts



Scotland Centre

Seán Batty's journey to becoming Scotland's most recognised weather forecaster began with the present of a weather kit – which he saw on Blue Peter – for his seventh birthday.

"This is like a dream come true, doing this job. When you're young, you want to be a pop star, a footballer or a rugby player... and then

that's what's happened,' the STV weatherman told an RTS Scotland event at STV Glasgow in October.

Batty, who had always wanted to work in meteorology, said that now was "a really interesting time [to be] working in weather, with climate change".

"There's just so much happening at the moment – and a lot of denial, as well, in

certain parts of the world. It is quite a challenging time, but also very interesting, because things are changing and changing quite quickly."

Before he joined STV, in 2007, Batty worked at the Met Office, ITV and the BBC. He used clips to illustrate how the style, graphics and technology of weather forecasts have changed.

He also showed how he

went about assembling a forecast.

Anticipating future developments, Batty explained how STV was embracing new technology: "I'm now looking at trying to do some sort of augmented reality within our studio.

"I'm always wanting STV to be way up at the forefront of weather technology and to push it as far as I can."

But he admitted that the weather was unpredictable – and seasonal forecasting impossible.

"[Because of] forecast uncertainty," said Batty, "you should always stay within a time period of just a few days because the technology is not good enough [for longer]. And it will never be good enough, because there's always going to be something that will affect what happens further down the line.

"That's why the next time you read a headline such as '100 days of snow expected'... it's rubbish."

**Gillian Gunn**

## BBC boss: more work for the regions

"BBC iPlayer is not just a catch-up [service] any more – we need to keep up with the way audiences are consuming television," according to BBC Two controller Patrick Holland, who was speaking about his ambitions for his channel at an RTS West of England event in October.

"We've seen big audience demand for shows on iPlayer after their initial TV release. You can't judge numbers on the overnights any more. We don't aim for a focused demographic. It has to appeal to the whole audience and there needs to

be a big sense of purpose that shines through,' added Holland, who was interviewed by RTS West of England Chair Lynn Barlow at Bristol's Everyman cinema.

He pointed to commissioning more regional indies and looking for a 'sense of timeliness', something he found in Cornwall: *This Fishing Life*, an upcoming BBC Two series previewed at the RTS event. 'It is important, working with talent and hearing voices from across all regions. It brings a broader audience to fishing and shines a light on the issue of second



Patrick Holland

Jon Craig

stories to stand out in the schedule, more challenging ideas about the current issues facing the natural world.'

Discussing the channel's brand, Holland said: 'I think BBC Two shows should be infused with a level of mischief and adventure. 'BBC Two was the first challenger brand outside the mainstream, so I very much want it to continue producing quality programming with an emphasis on specialism and complex subject matter – to build on the very best programming across genres.'

**Sophie Dymond**

homes, all against the backdrop of Brexit,' he said.

This desire for timeliness also applies to natural history: 'I'd like to commission more films that take on species-specific

**RTS Midlands** Roz Laws joins the crew for a slow-motion chase: zombies vs a narrow boat

Actor Hamza Jeetooa has invented a new term in TV filming – the “reverse of shame”. As he told the RTS Midlands audience at the premiere of new ITV2 comedy horror series *Zomboat!*, it happens when you’re shooting on a narrow boat and make a mistake.

Jeetooa said: “If you messed up your line, the boat team had to get on and very slowly reverse the boat back to the starting spot. That’s the reverse of shame.”

The 21-metre narrow boat, called Dorothy, is the fifth star of *Zomboat!*. It plays a vital role as the very slow means of escape for sisters Kat and Jo and friends Sunny (Jeetooa) and Amar when the zombie apocalypse breaks out in Birmingham.

Dorothy offered great comedy opportunities, chugging away just a little faster than the zombies stumbling along the towpath. But filming on a narrow boat presented more challenges than just the reverse of shame.

Speaking in the appropriate canal-side setting of the IET in Birmingham, Leah Brotherhead, who plays Kat, said: “Conditions were very cramped, as there were four of us and a crew onboard. The spaces they got into were impressive. We started checking cupboards and the sound man really did live in the toilet.”

All the actors learned how to drive the boat, if not how to reverse it.

Cara Theobald, who plays Jo, said: “Driving it isn’t that hard. What’s difficult is if you are also acting and are



## ITV2’s slow boat to Brum

surrounded by a camera rig and safety boats. The pressure is to say all your lines and not crash into a wall.”

Another issue was filming with realistic zombies on the towpath, much to the surprise of dog walkers and, in one memorable instance, a primary school. The headmaster asked if they could hide the blood-caked undead during break time.

Birmingham has played host to zombies before, in the Glenn Close film *The Girl with All the Gifts*. It was also a location for another post-apocalyptic film, Steven Spielberg’s *Ready Player One*, but the city is usually disguised. It’s rare to get a drama filmed and set in Birmingham that includes iconic landmarks such as the Bullring.

Writer and director Adam Miller said: “Birmingham has 56km of canals, more than

Venice, and it felt quite important to make *Zomboat!* somewhere other than London. It’s a show that moves, and Birmingham is at the hub of Britain, so it gives us a lot of opportunities.

“I wanted to do a chase movie on a narrow boat because it’s funny. It turns out that everything is faster than a narrow boat except zombies.”

Executive producer Camilla Campbell, joint MD of the indie behind the series, Noho Film and TV, said: “When I found out it was set on a narrow boat, I thought, ‘That’s mad, in either a bad or a good way.’ I read the script and decided it was very good.

“ITV2 has been absolutely amazing and supportive. It wants shows that are vibrant and fun and will appeal to young people, and *Zomboat!* does that.

“We loved the idea of seeing this genre through female eyes. I felt like I hadn’t seen it before, certainly not on British TV recently. To add in two British Asian characters felt really organic.”

*Zomboat!*, which began its six-part run on ITV2 in early October, is a co-production with Hulu, which is broadcasting it in the US.

Campbell said: “Hulu got it straight away and it wasn’t bothered about the Brummie accents. The only problem we had was that they didn’t understand ‘Marigolds’. We considered changing it to ‘rubber gloves’, but that’s not as funny, so we’ve stuck with Marigolds.” ■

**The RTS Midlands premiere of ITV2’s *Zomboat!* was held at the IET in Birmingham on 3 October. It was hosted by Ayo Akinwolere and produced by Becky Jones-Owen.**

# Shiers rewards design and Yorkshire projects

National News

As part of its 90th birthday celebrations, the RTS has doubled the prize for the Shiers Trust Award 2019 to £4,000. This has been split between two projects – a celebration of Yorkshire Television and a history of TV motion graphics design.

The Shiers Trust jury was unable to decide between the two projects, which were part of a record number of applicants this year.

The documentary feature *Made in Yorkshire* will tell the story of how a group of young men and women took over a derelict trouser factory in Leeds in 1968 and set about creating TV studios.

“In the decades that followed, Yorkshire Television

made programmes that were viewed across the planet,” said producer/director Stuart Ramsay, who will make the film.

“It was a ground-breaking period in television history – for the first time, local news was beamed into millions of homes across the north. There were documentaries that challenged the status quo and changed society, there was pioneering drama and shiny-floor entertainment series – all created within Yorkshire TV’s Kirkstall Road studios.

“Through interviews with the key protagonists from Yorkshire TV’s past, we will record the memories and first-hand accounts of those who were there to witness, and help create, TV history.”



The Shiers Trust will also fund filmed interviews with ex-BBC motion graphics designers who worked on many different programmes, series and campaigns for the corporation over the years. These will contribute to an archive of the history of BBC

motion graphics design. Former TV graphic designer Mark Craig – now a documentary-maker, who made the feature film *The Last Man on the Moon* – will film the interviews.

“Stemming from the mid-1950s to the present day, the interviews will reveal the creative processes behind the seminal work and practices that have now passed into motion graphics history,” he said.

The Shiers Trust Award offers a grant towards work on any aspect of TV history. George Shiers, a distinguished US TV historian and member of the RTS, provided a bequest to fund the award. Normally, it is worth £2,000, but this year, to mark the 90th anniversary of the RTS, it was raised to £4,000.

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

## Norwich peeks into the future

East Centre

RTS East kicked off its busy autumn season of events with “TV futures: Virtually there”, a talk by RTS Fellow Dr Nick Lodge, a former head of strategic R&D and international standards at the ITC.

Covering a lot of ground, from the cathode-ray tube to the latest 8K displays, Lodge explained what it takes to make a production truly immersive – so that the scene feels as real as if viewers are seeing it with their own eyes.

When a viewer’s vision is

filled with whatever is playing out before them, cuts, mixes and zooms make no sense in this environment. The production needs to find other ways to lead them from one scene to the next.

Sound, sensations of motion and even smell and touch combine to draw them into an absorbing experience. The trick is to avoid any stimulus that breaks the spell, either within the production or in the viewing environment.

An appreciative audience at the University of East Anglia in Norwich in late October also heard about the problems of working on a 360° film, where everything, including the crew, is in shot, and how, in the near future, we could be experiencing these immersive productions in our own homes.

**Tony Campbell**

## New digital category for Journalism Awards

National News

A new Digital category has been added to next year’s RTS Television Journalism Awards.

The prize is designed to reflect changing patterns of news consumption, especially by young people, and the growing number of digital-only news sites.

“The introduction of the Digital category is a new departure for the Awards, recognising the growth of powerful and compelling content on non-traditional platforms,” said Simon Bucks, who was appointed Chair of the RTS Television Journalism Awards earlier this year.

He succeeded Sue English. Bucks, a former Sky News executive, is CEO of Services Sound and Vision Corporation. He said: “I am very proud to be chosen to chair the RTS Television Journalism Awards – the most prestigious rewards for quality and achievement in video journalism.”

Including the new award, the 2020 Awards will recognise talent across 19 categories. The ceremony will be held on 26 February 2020 at the London Hilton, Park Lane. All entries must be submitted by 2 December 2019.

**Steve Clarke**

# Latif graces Leeds media week

Yorkshire Centre

Award-winning television presenter Amar Latif gave an emotional insight into his life as a globetrotting champion of blind travellers at an RTS-sponsored event in Leeds in early November.

The Glasgow-born, Yorkshire-based entrepreneur, who lost his sight at the age of just 18, runs Traveleyes, a company that takes blind and partially sighted travellers on action-packed holidays around the world.

His pioneering work for the company – and as a motivational speaker – has also brought opportunities in a growing number of television shows, such as Channel 4's *The Last Leg Down Under* and BBC Two's *Beyond Boundaries*, as well as documentaries, including BBC One's *River Walks: The Nidd*.

The latter netted him and producer, Air TV, the Single Documentary award at this year's RTS Yorkshire Awards.

The focus of his "Travelling blind" session, which was part of Leeds Trinity University's Journalism and Media Week, was how blindness made him determined to explore the world.

"When I could see, I didn't see much of the world," he admitted.

"If you're blind, you become more curious. You learn to push yourself and it makes you stronger. Sometimes, things seem impossible but, if you just keep going, step by step, you'll make it. The alternative is sitting in your room, not taking any risks at all.

"If you dare to push your limits, the world becomes bigger"

**Glyn Middleton**



Amarlatif.com

## Streamers leave large footprint

London Centre

The rise of the streamers, hybrid platforms and cloud technology – and a more diverse roster of speakers – were among the big trends at IBC.

Robert Ambrose, consulting editor of IBC's 2019 conference, said the industry was going through a period of disruptive change, as content owners tried to figure out new business models. He was speaking at RTS London and the Institution of Engineering and Technology's review of Amsterdam's tech festival.

The most popular sessions involved Facebook, Amazon, Netflix and Google. "These companies are really courting the traditional broadcast

industry. They've realised that, in order to build their platforms, they need access to good content," he said.

The rise of hybrid platforms, such as LovesTV in Spain, also featured. "Hybrid services on smart TVs that allow a mix of broadcast and online content are seen by broadcasters as a key strategy to maintain relevance and increase revenue, as they can start to target advertising on the digital platform," said Ambrose.

Cognizant digital partner Saleha Williams saw more cloud technology: "The cloud will be important if you want to leverage data and the intelligence behind it to inform your scheduling, advertising,

and viewership, plus storage and management of assets."

Artificial intelligence (AI) was more in evidence this year, said Adriana Whiteley, a director of media consultancy Bonsight. "US companies are investing heavily in AI, and this IBC was the first time I saw AI used as a core part of a platform, generating metadata automatically," she said.

"Data is fundamental for the discovery of content, so the more data you can get on the consumer, the better."

Williams noted the number of women speakers – up 38% this year: "It led to a much wider range of opinions on offer."

**Nick Radlo**

## Indie shows its TT paces

Isle of Man Centre

Sports specialists Greenlight Television opened its doors for a tour of its facilities in October. Hosted by RTS Isle of Man, the tour showed how the indie produces highlights of the Isle of Man TT.

Greenlight produces same-day, hour-long highlight programmes for ITV4 during the fortnight of racing on the Isle of Man in early summer.

While the riders are racing around the course at up to 300kph, Greenlight is recovering pictures from a dozen cameras, plus kerbcams, more than 30 on-board cameras and a helicopter.

# NEWS

## Wales win is a 'calling card'

**RTS Cymru Wales** Five RTS Cymru Wales Student Television Awards winners revealed how they broke into TV at Cardiff's Tramshed cinema in October.

Winning an RTS award had opened doors. "It shows you care about your craft and take things seriously," said Josh Bennett, who went on to found the Cardiff production company Storm & Shelter.

He said the success of his student film, *Bedroom Live*, which featured live music filmed in a student's room, led to a YouTube channel and a series for Channel 4's *Project 4 TV*. "We were pretty much filming at most of the major universities around the UK. It involved three of us sleeping in a van and going on a whirlwind tour. It

definitely helped me get to where I am today. I learnt about the industry, about deadlines," said Bennett.

An award was a calling card for Ethan Blake Brooks, one of the team behind *Mathew vs Pritchard*, which won the Factual category at this year's RTS Cymru Wales Student Television Awards.

He was accepted on to Channel 4's Production Traineeship Scheme, which led to a placement as a researcher with Cardiff indie Boomerang. He had his first director's credit on the BBC Wales short-form doc *One Last Gig*.

Catarina Rodrigues and Christopher Phillips won the Animation prize at the 2018 awards with *Peach*. Both landed jobs at Cloth Cat Animation, working on Channel 5



University of South Wales

series *Shane the Chef*. Rodrigues has since moved to Bumpybox as a CG animator on CBeebies series *My Petsaurus*, while Phillips is a CG modeller at Wild Creations.

Tom Gatley's award-winner, *Cardiff Love Story*, led to work as a camera operator at BBC Wales and then as an editor.

He took a break from the industry but, five years later, returned to write and direct his first feature film. "I wanted

to make something that I believed in. I knew a lot of people who were still making films and I just tried to prove myself again so that they would want to work on something with me."

*Expiry*, the story of a couple whose marriage is close to collapse and wake up one morning to find they can no longer touch, will be released in December.

**Judith Winnan**

## Bracknell demystifies IP

■ RTS Thames Valley held a technical colloquium for engineers and technologists covering the theoretical and practical aspects of moving video and audio over internet protocol (IP) in mid-October.

Television is experiencing a technical revolution, with computer networks replacing traditional broadcast infrastructures to deliver more flexibility and scalability for programme-makers.

Hosted at Techex in Bracknell, the RTS event offered five speakers who discussed their experiences

of building and designing IP infrastructures in broadcast facilities throughout Europe.

Martin Paskin of Techex gave an overview of the standards governing IP, while BBC R&D's Peter Brightwell looked at interoperability standards.

Geoff Love from Axon Digital Design concentrated on system control; Gerard Phillips of Arista Networks spoke about signal switching; and APC Time's Rob Skinner discussed the operation of system-critical timing.

**Tony Orme**

## Students inspire Scots

**Scotland Centre** RTS Scotland launched its 2020 Student Television Awards at STV in Glasgow in October.

STV presenter Laura Boyd hosted the evening and interviewed some of the 2019 winners, including Sedona May Tubbs and Kieran Howe, part of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland team that won the Drama category with *What Separates Us from the Beasts*. "Any students thinking about submitting their work should not be afraid – and just submit and keep submitting," said Tubbs.

A similar message was sent

by Marco Di Gioia, one of the University of Stirling filmmakers behind Factual winner *The Bad Guy*. "You have nothing to lose... [make] an interesting piece that shows you've gone the extra mile."

Since winning her award, Tubbs has started work as a digital film production teacher at the SAE Institute in Glasgow. Di Gioia and his team have won a BBC commission for a 30-minute version of their winning film.

The awards ceremony will be held on 5 February at the Everyman cinema, Glasgow.

**Donald Matheson**



# RTS EVENTS

Your guide to  
upcoming events.  
Book online at  
[www.rts.org.uk](http://www.rts.org.uk)

## National events

### RTS EARLY-EVENING EVENT

**Monday 2 December**

#### Why we love... quiz shows

An entertaining and affectionate celebration. Panellists: Anne Robinson, TV presenter; Jo Street, head of daytime, Channel 4; James Fox, Managing Director, Remarkable; and Judith Keppel, the first UK million-pound winner of *Who Wants To Be a Millionaire?* Chair: Boyd Hilton, entertainment director, *Heat* magazine. 6:30pm for 6:45pm  
Venue: Cavendish Conference Centre, 22 Duchess Mews, London W1G 9DT

### RTS FUTURES

**Tuesday 3 December**

#### RTS Futures Christmas quiz

The glitterati of broadcast and production go head to head – with you on their team. The RTS Futures members on the top team win a money-can't-buy prize. Tickets cost £10.00 and are non-refundable (free for full members of the RTS, but they must be booked in advance using your membership number). 6:30pm-9:30pm  
Venue: Channel 4, 124-126 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2TX

### RTS FUTURES

**Wednesday 12 February 2020**

#### RTS Futures Television Careers Fair 2020

10:00am-4:00pm  
Venue: Business Design Centre, 52 Upper Street, London N1 0QH

### RTS AWARDS

**Wednesday 26 February 2020**

#### RTS Television Journalism Awards 2020

Venue: London Hilton on Park Lane, London W1K 1BE

### RTS AWARDS

**Tuesday 17 March 2020**

#### RTS Programme Awards 2020

Venue: Grosvenor House Hotel, London W1K 7TN

## Local events

### DEVON AND CORNWALL

■ Jane Hudson  
■ [RTSDevonandCornwall@rts.org.uk](mailto:RTSDevonandCornwall@rts.org.uk)

### EAST

**Wednesday 4 March 2020**

#### RTS East Awards 2020

Venue: The Assembly House, Theatre Street, Norwich NR2 1RQ  
■ Jayne Greene 07792 776585  
■ [RTSEast@rts.org.uk](mailto:RTSEast@rts.org.uk)

### ISLE OF MAN

■ Michael Wilson  
■ [michael.wilson@isleofmedia.org](mailto:michael.wilson@isleofmedia.org)

### LONDON

**Wednesday 4 December**

#### Christmas Lecture:

##### David Abraham

6:30pm for 7:00pm  
Venue: Cavendish Conference Centre, 22 Duchess Mews, London W1G 9DT  
■ Phil Barnes  
■ [rts@philbarnes.com](mailto:rts@philbarnes.com)

### MIDLANDS

**Friday 29 November**

#### From Liverpool Docks to Hollywood Bowl: Drama production masterclass with Mal Young

With TV producer, writer and showrunner Mal Young, now based in the US. 2:00pm-4:00pm  
Venue: IET Birmingham, Austin Court, 80 Cambridge Street, Birmingham B1 2NP

**Friday 29 November**

#### RTS Midlands Awards 2019

Venue: International Convention Centre, Broad Street, Birmingham B1 2EA  
■ Jayne Greene 07792 776585  
■ [RTSMidlands@rts.org.uk](mailto:RTSMidlands@rts.org.uk)

### NORTH EAST AND THE BORDER

■ Jill Graham  
■ [jill.graham@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:jill.graham@blueyonder.co.uk)

### NORTH WEST

■ Rachel Pinkney 07966 230639  
■ [RPinkney@rts.org.uk](mailto:RPinkney@rts.org.uk)

### NORTHERN IRELAND

■ John Mitchell  
■ [mitch.mvbroadcast@btinternet.com](mailto:mitch.mvbroadcast@btinternet.com)

### REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

■ Charles Byrne (353) 87251 3092  
■ [byrnecc@iol.ie](mailto:byrnecc@iol.ie)

### SCOTLAND

**January 2020 (TBC)**

#### AGM

6:00pm  
Venue: Glasgow Art Club, 185 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 4HU

**Wednesday 5 February 2020**

#### RTS Scotland Student

##### Television Awards 2020

Supported by STV, which will film the ceremony and show highlights on its digital platform, along with the winning and nominated films. Hosted by STV presenter Laura Boyd. Reception 6:00pm, ceremony 7:00pm  
Venue: Everyman Cinema, Princes Square, Buchanan Street, Glasgow G1 3JN

**Wednesday 3 June 2020**

#### RTS Scotland Television Awards 2020

Drinks reception 5:45pm; awards ceremony 7:00pm  
Venue: Glasgow Art Club, 185 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 4HU  
■ Cheryl Strong  
■ [RTSScotland@rts.org.uk](mailto:RTSScotland@rts.org.uk)

### SOUTHERN

■ Stephanie Farmer  
■ [SFarmer@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:SFarmer@bournemouth.ac.uk)

### THAMES VALLEY

**Friday 29 November**

#### Thames Valley Winter Ball and Awards 2019

7:00pm-1:00am  
Venue: Wokefield Estate, Goodboys Lane, Mortimer RG7 3AE  
■ Tony Orme  
■ [RTSThamesValley@rts.org.uk](mailto:RTSThamesValley@rts.org.uk)

### WALES

**Thursday 5 December**

#### Christmas quiz

Venue: TBC  
■ Hywel William 07980 007841  
■ [HWilliam@rts.org.uk](mailto:HWilliam@rts.org.uk)

### WEST OF ENGLAND

**Friday 6 December**

#### Christmas quiz

Venue: The Folk House, 40a Park Street, Bristol BS1 5JG  
■ Suzy Lambert  
■ [suzy.lambert@rts.org.uk](mailto:suzy.lambert@rts.org.uk)

### YORKSHIRE

**Wednesday 4 December**

#### RTS Yorkshire Christmas drinks

6:30pm  
Venue: Archive, 94 Kirkstall Road, Farsley, Leeds LS3 1HD  
■ Lisa Holdsworth 07790 145280  
■ [lisa@allonewordproductions.co.uk](mailto:lisa@allonewordproductions.co.uk)

 **RTS London Christmas Lecture**



**David Abraham**

CEO of Wonderhood Studios and former CEO of Channel 4

**4 December**  
[www.rts.org.uk/london](http://www.rts.org.uk/london)

# OFF MESSAGE

A great deal of attention has focused on the role of social media in the current general election. But the power of television to mould the campaign was made abundantly clear in the first of two head-to-head leaders' debates between Jeremy Corbyn and Boris Johnson.

ITV's programme, impressively chaired by the unflappable Julie Etchingam, helped to galvanise the election. This was the first time since 2015 that the Conservative and Labour leaders had gone head-to-head live on TV in an election debate.

Then, David Cameron and Ed Miliband were grilled individually by Jeremy Paxman before facing questions from the studio audience, in a joint broadcast by Sky and Channel 4.

In 2017, Theresa May declined an invitation to participate in a leaders' debate.

Still to come is another live match between Corbyn and Johnson, to be shown by BBC TV on 6 December. The host will be *Today* presenter Nick Robinson. He will be determined to shine in what, for him, is a career first. Bring it on.

■ Away from the dramas of the general election, *Off Message* was privileged to see an advance screening of Armando Iannucci's latest feature film, *The Personal History of David Copperfield*, which is backed by Film4.

And what a treat it is. Great period settings, not least the recreation of Murdstone and Grinby's warehouse, and a brilliantly diverse cast led by Dev Patel as the eponymous hero.

Peter Capaldi is a joy to watch as

the impecunious Micawber, while Hugh Laurie delights as the troubled Mr Dick, regarded by many as one of the first portraits of mental illness in an English novel.

Due for release in the UK this January, *The Personal History of David Copperfield* should provide an antidote to those dark New Year blues.

■ It's that man again, the flamboyant Channel 5 supremo, Ben Frow. At a glitzy London event earlier this month, Frow announced 11 new factual series, including a four-part travel show, *The Ganges with Anita Rani*.

Having already signed up big names, such as Michael Palin and Jeremy Paxman, getting the *Countryfile* star on board looks like another potential winner for the channel.

For Anita, it is a return to her roots. She first worked at Channel 5 back in 2002 when, under RTL's ownership, the station was rebranded as Five.

■ As every producer knows, getting a speedy decision on a commission is often, to say the least, wishful thinking. But there are exceptions, as comedy practitioner Nerys Evans told an RTS Student Masterclass earlier this month.

She recalled how Sharon Horgan's idea for the genre-defining *Catstrophe* arrived first thing one working day via email.

The script was standout. So, later that day, Horgan cycled over to a meeting with Evans and head of comedy Phil Clarke at Channel 4's Horseferry Road HQ. Co-writer Rob Delaney joined by conference call from Los Angeles.

That same day a pilot was ordered. The rest, as they say, is history. "They

don't all work like that," cautioned Evans. "Some scripts leap out and that was one of them."

■ Some sage advice was offered to the RTS bursary students attending the Society's recent Patron Dinner by none other than ITV's director of television, and noted Islamic art expert, Kevin Lygo.

What words of wisdom did this most experienced of TV executives – he's occupied senior roles at Channel 4 and 5, and been involved with key BBC shows – have to pass on to the young people present?

"You can be a little bit lazy, a little bit stupid – but, if you're good with people, you will thrive in this industry," was Kevin's recommendation for getting on in telly.

■ And, finally, to end where we began – the nexus between broadcasting and politics. It may have escaped your attention, but 21 November marked the 30th anniversary of live televised coverage of Parliament.

In 1989, for the first time, TV audiences were able to have a ringside seat at the House of Commons. At the time, Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister.

Brexit may be driving everyone barmy but it does mean that more people are watching BBC Parliament. This September, the channel achieved its biggest single-day audience, when 1.5 million people tuned in.

And, during one week in January, BBC Parliament famously attracted more viewers than MTV.

If the election doesn't resolve Brexit, BBC Parliament might become more popular than TikTok is among Gen Z viewers.



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