

November 2017

Television



Peake encounter



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From the CEO



I think I can safely say that everyone who attended our recent joint event with the IET came away buzzing. Astronaut Tim Peake was a brilliant guest, full of charm and endlessly informative. I want to thank him for finding the time to speak to us in the truly splendid setting of the auditorium at the IET. He is a true star.

Thanks, too, to BBC Worldwide CEO Tim Davie for hosting the evening and to our producer Helen Scott. I am also grateful to everyone who attended. This is the first time I have seen so many young children at an RTS event. The Society is very fortunate to work with the IET.

A full report of what Tim had to say about his extraordinary adventure in orbit is this month's cover story.

Mike Darcey is probably more

knowledgeable and experienced in negotiating Premier League rights than any other media executive in the UK, and possibly in the world. I was thrilled when he agreed to write an analysis for *Television*, setting out some likely scenarios of how Sky might react to a bid from one of the tech giants. This is essential reading for anyone interested in what is at stake when the bidding begins in earnest.

Of late, our screens have been blessed by some brilliant factual TV, not least *Bake Off* and the amazing *Blue Planet II*, a must watch as the evenings draw in. A fitting time, therefore, for Andrew Billen to interview the BBC's high-achieving controller of factual commissioning, Alison Kirkham.

Not for the first time, Andrew unearths some surprising facts from his interviewee.

We're delighted to have Mark Lawson writing for us again. His subject is

television's infatuation with what is loosely called "swords and sandals" drama. I love these shows and am looking forward to the upcoming, eight-part *Troy: Fall of a City*, made for the BBC and Netflix, as well as Sky's *Britannia* and the returning *Vikings*.

Also inside, don't miss Simon Bucks, Our Friend in the Forces. The former Sky News executive explains what it is like to leave Civvy Street and to broadcast from the front line.

Google is never far away from the headlines, so I am delighted that the next RTS early-evening event, on 29 November, features Matt Brittin, Google's European chief. Tickets are selling fast for what is certain to be a fascinating evening.

Theresa Wise

Contents

7 Floella Benjamin's TV Diary

Veteran diversity campaigner Baroness Benjamin shows that campaigning and creativity go hand-in-hand

8 Ask an astronaut

Steve Clarke observes a masterclass in communication skills by astronaut Tim Peake

12 Life after Bake Off

Andrew Billen wonders if BBC head of factual Alison Kirkham can fly higher still and compete against the US giants

15 Soccer's biggest battle

Mike Darcey assesses how vulnerable Sky is to a bid for Premier League rights from one of the tech giants

18 Seduced by swords and sandals

Mark Lawson asks why the schedules are full of dramas inspired by all things 'medieval'

20 The night shift

Torin Douglas questions whether TV audience figures reflect contemporary viewing habits

22 Perspectives that ignite the past

Matthew Bell hears why television is the ideal showcase for history

25 Scripting secrets

Matthew Bell takes notes as top screenwriters explain how to pen a hit drama

28 Pull their faangs or risk everything

Steve Clarke listens as David Puttnam predicts a bleak, post-Brexit world overshadowed by climate change and data capitalism

30 Our Friend in the Forces

Few media moguls can count an ice-cream van as part of their empire, but Simon Bucks can

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

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

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

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National events

RTS AWARDS

Monday 27 November

RTS Craft & Design Awards 2017

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

RTS EARLY EVENING EVENT

Wednesday 29 November

In conversation with Matt Brittin

Matt Brittin, President, EMEA business and operations, Google, will be in conversation with journalist Kate Bulkeley.

6:30pm for 6:45pm

Venue: The Hospital Club, 24 Endell Street, London WC2H 9HQ

RTS FUTURES

Wednesday 6 December

Christmas quiz

6:45pm for 7:00pm

Venue: ITV London Studios, Upper Ground, London SE1 9LT

RTS FUTURES

Tuesday 6 February

RTS Futures TV Careers Fair 2018

10:00am-4:00pm

Venue: Business Design Centre, 52 Upper Street, London N1 0QH

RTS AWARDS

Wednesday 28 February

RTS Television Journalism Awards 2018

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

RTS AWARDS

Tuesday 20 March

RTS Programme Awards 2018

Venue: Grosvenor House Hotel, 86-90 Park Lane, London W1K 7TN

RTS CONFERENCE

Tuesday 18 September 2018

RTS London Conference 2018

Venue: TBC

Local events

BRISTOL

■ Belinda Biggam

■ belindabiggam@hotmail.com

DEVON & CORNWALL

■ Jane Hudson

■ RTSDevonandCornwall@rts.org.uk

EAST

Wednesday 22 November

Breaking into broadcasting bootcamp

One-day workshop run by BBC Academy and RTS East for all those looking to improve their broadcast media skills and knowledge.

Venue: Norwich University of the Arts, Francis House, 3-7 Redwell Street, Norwich NR2 4SN

Thursday 7 December

Mandy Chang on documentary

Mandy Chang is commissioning editor of the BBC arts strand Storyville. This event is free to attend but places are limited and so booking is required.

6:00pm-8:00pm

Venue: Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge Campus, East Road, Cambridge CB1 1PT

Thursday 15 March

Annual Awards

Venue: Norwich University of the Arts, Francis House, 3-7 Redwell Street, Norwich NR2 4SN

■ Nikki O'Donnell

■ nikki.odonnell@bbc.co.uk

LONDON

■ Daniel Cherowbrier

■ daniel@cherowbrier.co.uk

MIDLANDS

Thursday 30 November

Channel 4 formats masterclass

With Deborah Dunnett, Channel 4 nations and regions manager. The masterclass will help students understand how different types of programmes fit into the schedules by unpicking popular programmes to show the simple rules of formatted factual.

The event is free but you must book a place via RTSMidlands@rts.org.uk. 1:00pm-3:00pm

Venue: National Motorcycle Museum, Solihull B92 0EJ

Thursday 30 November

Gala Dinner and Awards 2017

Venue: National Motorcycle Museum, Solihull B92 0EJ

■ Jayne Greene 07792 776585

■ jayne@ijmmedia.co.uk

NORTH EAST & THE BORDER

Saturday 24 February

Annual Awards

6:00pm onwards

Venue: Hilton Newcastle Gateshead Hotel, Bottle Bank, Gateshead NE8 2AR

■ Jill Graham

■ jill.graham@blueyonder.co.uk

NORTH WEST

Thursday 23 November

The great big Xmas telly quiz

Register for a team ticket (not individual seats) on Eventbrite (bit.ly/2uUJRMj). 6:30pm for 7:00pm

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

■ Rachel Pinkney 07966 230639

■ RPinkney@rts.org.uk

NORTHERN IRELAND

Thursday 16 November

Programme Awards 2017

6:00pm

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

Tuesday 20 March

Student Television Awards

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

■ John Mitchell

■ mitch.mvbroadcast@btinternet.com

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

■ Charles Byrne (353) 87251 3092

■ byrnecc@iol.ie

SCOTLAND

December – date TBC

The secrets of sound

Venue: TBC

■ Jane Muirhead

■ scotlandchair@rts.org.uk

SOUTHERN

■ Stephanie Farmer

■ SFarmer@bournemouth.ac.uk

THAMES VALLEY

Friday 17 November

Annual Dinner Dance

7:00pm

Venue: De Vere Wokefield Estate, Mortimer RG7 3AE

■ Tony Orme

■ RTSThamesValley@rts.org.uk

WALES

■ Hywel William 07980 007841

■ hywel@aim.co.uk

YORKSHIRE

Monday 20 November

Ninety years of the RTS:

A celebration

RTS Yorkshire will be hosting a day of events, including:

■ Open the archives

Come and explore the ITV and Yorkshire Film Archives with the experts

■ Melvyn Bragg on TV

The author and parliamentarian will talk about the continuing and future impact of TV

■ The 90th anniversary quiz

Venue: Television Centre, Kirkstall Road, Leeds LS3 1JS

■ Lisa Holdsworth 07790 145280

■ lisa@allonewordproductions.co.uk

The Boy with the Topknot

**“The most intelligent drama
we’ve watched in 2017”**
Asian Culture Vulture

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BBC

**EndemolShine
Group**

TV diary

Veteran diversity campaigner **Baroness Benjamin** shows that campaigning and creativity go hand-in-hand



We raise a glass to the late, great Victoria Wood. I succeeded Victoria as President of the Society of Women Writers and Journalists, and speak at its autumn lunch about my desire to see great parts written for women by women and, more importantly, more TV dramas for children.

■ I am still having flashbacks of euphoria about successfully getting my amendment into the Digital Economy Bill. The legislation means that commercial PSBs will be required to provide more UK-produced children's content. It took all my dogged determination and powers of persuasion to achieve this. I worked with ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5 and convinced them that it was a gift to all children and their future well-being.

■ A meeting with Sharon White to discuss how Ofcom is going to make this long-awaited change in legislation work. She is very positive.

So, I'm now waiting to hear from her team about their plans, following their consultations with all concerned. But, as an optimist, I believe that everyone will make my dream for more PSB kids' content come true.

Mind you, there has been no talk

about how the "contestable fund" will be used for children's provision, so more anxious waiting time here, too.

■ There is no hanging around at Children's BBC, though. The visionary Alice Webb calls me to share how she plans to use the £32m windfall that CBBC has received, and provides details of how her new commissioning structure will work.

I also meet Cheryl Taylor, the new overall head of children's, now that CBeebies and CBBC are under one banner. It is easy to be blown away by her enthusiasm for high-quality, diverse programming.

I am so happy about the state of play at CBBC, especially after lobbying for years to have its budget ring-fenced. I'm beginning to feel like a guru for kids' television.

■ On the Lords Communications Committee, we are involved in collecting evidence for an inquiry into the advertising industry. Falling revenue could have financial implications for the media. Without advertising revenue, high-quality content, especially children's, could be in danger.

■ In between promoting the 20th anniversary of my book *Coming to England* (selected as a *Guardian* children's book of the year 2016), I have written a sitcom. It is being developed with Endemol Shine, in the

hope of getting even more positive diversity on our screens.

Fingers – and everything – crossed that a broadcaster will commission it. After campaigning for diversity in the media for the past 44 years, laying the foundations for change. I used to feel so alone, but I am so glad to see that others are now speaking out.

■ I was asked to go for a Channel 4 board position but didn't even make the shortlist. Apparently, I wasn't talented enough.

Shame, it would have been great to work with the dynamic Alex Mahon. We are kindred spirits when it comes to pushing diversity forward in a natural and sustainable fashion.

Just think, we could have made history at the same time, her as the broadcaster's first woman CEO and me as the first black person on the board – perfect role models.

■ Happily, I did get asked to go to BBC Salford to record some *Bedtime Stories*. It was wonderful to be back in the studio, creating magic for kids and firing up their imaginations.

I must say I felt so at home. I didn't realise how much I missed the creative adrenalin and excitement of performing, which is my dearest love.

Floella Benjamin, Baroness Benjamin OBE DL, is an actress, author, TV presenter and politician.



Ask an astronaut

Tim Peake (left) interviewed by Tim Davie

RTS/IET Public Lecture

Steve Clarke observes a masterclass in communication skills by astronaut **Tim Peake**

Can you be both macho and metaphysical? Look no further than Tim Peake, the first British person to walk in space and who, in common with many astronauts, was transformed by the experience of spending time in orbit high above Planet Earth.

During a compelling joint RTS-IET Public Lecture, the empathetic Peake showed why soft skills are more important for successful space

exploration in the 21st century than the traditional, warrior characteristics famously depicted in *The Right Stuff*, a portrait of space's early pioneers, when survival rates were slim.

Yes, the charismatic Peake is a military man who once worked as an Apache helicopter test pilot. He served in Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Afghanistan. But, as anyone knows who has followed his extraordinary mission on the International Space Station (ISS), he is an unusually gifted communicator.

"These days, astronaut selection is shifting from test-pilot qualifications to softer skills such as communication, decision-making, leadership and 'followship,'" explained Peake, the son of a journalist.

As space missions become ever longer, the need to recruit astronauts who are strong communicators becomes more pressing. Peake spent

six months on the ISS, but that long-dreamt-of mission to Mars is certain to take far longer when – and if – it finally happens (see box on page 11).

"When we start doing the Mars missions, people will think one year was a short time [to be in space]," he said. "It will be common for astronauts to say, 'I've been up there for three years.'"

"As we shift our mission objectives and our strategy, we are shifting our selection criteria. I don't think it matters so much in terms of whether you are a pilot, a scientist or an engineer: we'll need a breadth of different skill-sets and the soft skills are becoming ever more important."

He approves of Nasa's decision, implemented four years ago, to ensure that an equal number of men and women are selected for astronaut training programmes.

Judged by his RTS-IET outing, Peake possesses that unusual skill of being

QUESTION & ANSWER



ESA

Q Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP, Minister of State for Digital: Why should governments put money into space exploration?

A Statistically, it's a good investment. You get a 1.8% return... It terms of technology transfers, it is huge. Then, there's the pure research taking place on board the space station... research for pharmaceuticals, drugs for osteoporosis, diabetes, Alzheimer's, Huntingdon's disease, muscular dystrophy.

The medical community is suddenly realising that micro-gravity is an incredibly valuable area for research.

One of the reasons for this is that we can grow crystals very purely in micro-gravity because there is no convection or segmentation. Growing clear, large protein crystals in space is hugely important to researching drugs and diseases.

Economics, science and medicine aside, if your kids come back from school and say, "Daddy, I spoke to an astronaut today on board the space station"... The effect of that on a community is very hard to quantify, but [think of] the inspiration that it gives to children and their subsequent careers. They see the opportunities that are available to them.

simultaneously modest and authoritative. In other words, just the sort of guy to be holed up with in space for half a year.

Peake's ability to communicate with all age groups was clear as he was interviewed by BBC Worldwide CEO Tim Davie and answered questions from an entranced audience.

Those present in the auditorium at the IET's London, Savoy Place HQ – incidentally, one of the capital's architectural gems – included a

government minister (Matt Hancock, the DCMS minister for digital), several children and more than a handful of teenagers and students. Some of them were studying aeronautical engineering.

Asked to account for this ability to convey the complexities of science, engineering and technology to lay people, Peake replied: "I have to make things simple for myself. When someone gives me a complex subject, I need to study it, bring it down and understand how and why it works. That's how I go about all the topics.... If I try and explain how I understand it, then other people can understand it, too."

This is a man who not only learnt Russian as part of his journey into space – all the controls on the Soyuz spacecraft that got him to the space station are in Russian – but who also possesses a very human touch.

Should he ever tire of being an astronaut, his skills would translate effortlessly to any organisation in need of a communications strategy makeover.

This ability to connect with and inspire schoolchildren was evident in the "Cosmic Classroom", in which Major Peake answered live questions while on board the ISS. More than 500,000 youngsters dialled in via a video link.

In 2009, Peake was chosen from more than 9,000 applicants for one of six places on the European Space Agency's training programme. Was there ever a point in his training when he thought, "I can't go on with this?"

"Nobody fails the training," he pointed out. "Once you're selected for a mission, you're so committed that you're going to pass the training. That's not to say that some areas are not a real

struggle. Some people struggle with spacewalk training. It's really difficult in that suit. It's really hard work."

Despite its challenging nature, Peake said that the one moment he would never forget from his time in space was the spacewalk, "when Tim Kopra

[one of Peake's fellow astronauts] and I were at the furthest edge of the space station".

Spacewalks are essential to maintain the ISS. Peake was sent outside to repair an item (a sequential shunt unit) that was crucial to the

craft's power supply.

So what was it like to walk in space? "It's a bit like rock climbing: you study and analyse the route out there. It's quite difficult getting all the way out there, past a number of different obstacles."

Further probing by Davie revealed that Major Peake had just 10 minutes to complete the repair – or risk being electrocuted as the sun rose and activated the craft's solar panels.

While risk-taking appears to be part of Peake's DNA, astronauts who carry out spacewalks do have the benefit of a spacesuit covered in 14 layers of various materials to protect them from the environment.

And, in case an astronaut drifts away, small thruster jets housed in their backpack can manoeuvre them back to safety. That, at any rate, is the theory.

"During our training we were exposed to real risk, but the level of risk you feel out on the spacewalk is much, much greater. You are completely at the mercy of your equipment," explained Peake.

The education programme at the heart of Peake's mission was something that clearly meant a great deal to him. "That was the main focus. We had no idea how successful this mission was going to be and how people would really embrace it," he said.

One young boy asked his hero what it was like to exist in zero gravity for so long. "It's very difficult to describe what zero gravity is like," admitted Peake. "If you imagine, now, that we were weightless in this room, it would be scary because it's so big and we would be floating with no handles to hang on to.

"Loads of us would get stuck in the >

YOU BECOME
EARTH CITIZENS
BEFORE YOU
LEAVE... WE'RE
JUST ONE CORPS
OF ASTRONAUTS

Peake's debt to the media

'We had no idea of what the public and the media would make of this mission,' said Tim Peake. 'In the early days, we started off with *Blue Peter*.

'It ran two competitions related to the mission, which turned out to be two of the most successful competitions it had ever had.

'There were thousands and thousands of entries. It was at that point that our eyes began to open and we realised that a lot of people were interested in space exploration. That continued with the BBC *Horizon* documentary and the



fantastic coverage of the launch and the spacewalk. Then, there were Royal Institution Christmas lectures, the "Cosmic Classroom", running the London

Marathon and Channel 4's *Heston's Dinner in Space*.

'I want to give a huge thanks to the media because all of this would not have been possible without the support

we had. This helped us reach out, not only to the young generation and STEM [science, technology, engineering and maths] students, whom we targeted, but to every generation.'

Space travel broadens perspectives



'There's this term that people use for astronauts who've come back from space – the overview effect,' revealed Tim Peake. 'I wouldn't compare what I did to the Apollo missions, but living for six months in space contributes to this feeling.

'It's a cognitive shift in perspective. The fact that you're able to place the Earth. I feel I know the Earth really well. I've seen every part of the Earth 15 times a day in orbit. I really know the terrain, the territory, what places look like – places I've never been to and, in some cases, never will go to.

'But I really know what they look like and I can place everything. You look in the opposite direction, out to space, and you realise just how tiny and fragile Planet Earth is.'

Enemies must collaborate in space

'There is no way the space station would have been built if it hadn't had a level of co-operation,' argued Tim Peake. 'Consider all the political tensions that there have been between the member states involved in the ISS programme over the past 20 years.

'While I was training in Russia before launch, we had the Crimea crisis.

People were asking, "Is Tim Peake still going ahead with his mission?" Of course I was.

'The space sector is able to transcend these political divides because each nation knows the end objectives are so important to them.

'And they will only be achieved with co-operation.'



➤ middle of the room. You need to completely readjust your whole way of seeing things.

"But the plus side is: we're all sitting in this tiny proportion of the room, but imagine if you could use the full volume for things such as storage units and extra seats. That's what we do on the space station.

"It does take a while to get used to zero gravity. For the first few days on the space station, it is not uncommon for astronauts to get a little bit lost. You come out of a module and everything is upside down. You have to spend a few seconds reorientating your mind.

"What's amazing about the human brain is how quickly it adapts to that. Before long, your brain can just flip things. It's very easy for you to be able to work upside down. So you end up coping quite well after just a short period of time."

Peake told the audience how it had taken around six months for his body to recover following his return to Earth. Despite running the London Marathon in space, albeit on a treadmill, Peake's



Astronauts working on the ISS

Nasa

When will we go to Mars?

‘The next 10 years are going to be really exciting,’ said Tim Peake. ‘We are already building the components that are going to take us beyond the International Space Station.’

‘From 2024, it is likely that we will be handing over the ISS to commercial companies... That will allow the space agencies to focus their resources on the next step – which is the Moon and then Mars.’

‘I see public and private investment going hand in hand on many different levels. Space tourism... it’s all good news.’

‘The likes of Virgin Galactic and Elon Musk are operating in an incredibly challenging environment. They are pushing technology to the absolute limit and they’re bringing down the cost of access to space.’

‘For now, it’s a sport for the rich – but so was aviation in the early 1900s. At some point, it will become affordable to the ordinary person.’

He added: ‘If you think there are challenges in getting to Mars, beyond Mars we’ve really got some challenges.’

‘We need to get the journey time to Mars down from eight months to a matter of weeks. We need to shield the astronauts from radiation and provide a habitat for living on Mars. Beyond Mars, we need to improve and develop new propulsion techniques...’

‘The ability of humans to live in space for extended periods of time is going to be the main challenge. Maybe, we’ll have people living on Mars permanently.’

‘It’s going to happen, but things do take a lot of time. It takes co-operation, resources and funding. But we will get there. These technological problems are not insurmountable.’

bones took time to regain the density lost while in a free-fall environment.

Perhaps the most moving part of Peake’s talk was when he spoke of how the experience of being in space was genuinely life-changing.

‘When I first joined the Army, I was studying Russian hardware for when my enemy would come across the North German plain. Then, I’m sitting next to Yuri [on the ISS] thinking, ‘Well, here’s a guy who’s flown Russian jets, who I would have been up against, and here we are as absolute teammates, because we’ve got a common problem.’

‘It really does give you a different perspective on life... there’s no way you can look at Earth from space and not have an absolutely mind-changing experience of how we need to look after the planet.’

Peake added: ‘I think that you become Earth citizens before you leave, because you spend so much time training with your colleagues. You forget that you are with someone who is Japanese, Canadian, French, Russian or American.’

‘We’re just one corps of astronauts. That’s certainly the case on board the space station. There is absolutely no other way to live and work aboard with six people unless you’re completely on the same side.’

‘You entrust your life to the other people. When we had our docking failure there was very little that we could do to assist Yuri... He was the only one with his hands on the controls. We could try and talk him into the docking cone but he was the one flying the space craft.’

‘That nearly went wrong but, thankfully, on the second attempt, it was an absolutely textbook docking. You really do put your life in other people’s hands. For that reason, we are one corps of astronauts.’

So, was he itching to return to space? ‘Absolutely. I’ve never met an astronaut who isn’t.’ ■

‘Life, the universe and beyond, with Tim Peake’ was a joint RTS-IET event held at the IET, Savoy Place, London, on 25 October. The producer was Helen Scott.

In television, the death of something is always being predicted. Usually, it's a genre – the studio sitcom, perhaps, or the one-off drama. On the worst days, it is television itself. Factual television had its own demise foretold – or, at least, hinted at – nearly three years ago, when Danny Cohen, then the BBC's head of television, warned that it needed to “up its game” because drama was the new comedy. Or was it the new rock 'n' roll?

Yet, here I am, meeting the BBC's head of factual, Alison Kirkham, whose shows, *Hillsborough*, *Exodus*, *Muslims Like Us* and *Planet Earth II*, won each of the major factual categories at Bafta this year. Meanwhile, *Damilola*, *Our Loved Boy*, which was a co-production between documentaries and drama, took the Single Drama prize. This autumn, her line-up includes David Attenborough's already lauded *Blue Planet II*. And, the week that we talk, headlines are being made by two of her BBC Two 9:00pm contributions: Anne Robinson's personal inquiry into abortion and Chris Packham's documentary about his Asperger's.

“That's really extraordinary, a beautiful, beautiful, film,” she enthuses. “It's a good time for factual, I think. You're seeing a lot of it across all the channel schedules, and that's really gratifying. You never want to say it's good, but we're happy with the year. We've had a good time at the Baftas and we've just secured a lot of Grierson nominations.”

As for Robinson, Kirkham had read her memoir when she worked with her on *Watchdog*. She had filed in her head the book's brief mention of an abortion.

“When you look back over a career, there are people who are sort of defining for you, who become like mentors, and she was one for me, for sure,” says Kirkham. “She confounded all my expectations. I expected her to be an amazing journalist, which she is, but she's also a really compassionate, warm, supportive woman. She's much more nuanced than I imagined she would be.” (Incidentally, Kirkham is the easiest to talk to and most open BBC executive I have met since starting these profiles.)

It is not just on the BBC or in this country where factual is prized. *OJ: Made in America* was made for the US sports network ESPN and was sensational. Netflix's *Making a Murderer* was as much talked about in certain circles as *House of Cards*.

The Billen profile

Andrew Billen wonders if BBC head of factual Alison Kirkham can fly higher still and compete against the US giants

Life after Bake Off

Is she worried by the competition? “People ask me that. I think it's a massive compliment. I genuinely remember, five or 10 years ago, people saying that it's going to be the death of factual. Factual can't have an impact in this competitive market. And look! Rio Ferdinand [on his bereavement]: 6.5 million people watched a single doc! *Diana and I*: 6.5 million people watched a single doc! I think Netflix has noticed that you can have an impact with factual.”

But has the BBC made anything long-form as impressive as *OJ*? “We've been talking about it, actually – you know: what's the British version? I absolutely wouldn't rule that out. Some stories really do merit that forensic examination.”

Kirkham was appointed last year, after acting up for 12 months when her predecessor, Emma Swain, was sent off to think big strategic thoughts and never came back. It has been two years of change in the department, with the departures of Aaqil Ahmed, Sam Bickley, Clive Edwards and Martin Davidson and

the imposition of a new structure. Three chief commissioners now report to her: Tom McDonald (specialist factual and natural history), Clare Sillery (documentaries) and the ex-Channel 4 commissioner David Brindley (popular factual).

“I think it's an easier, more streamlined department to manage,” she says, but she has her critics, particularly those indies who have not yet found their way round the new configuration. One established documentary-maker described to me the dispiriting process of ideas being dismissed by email without him being let in to pitch.

“People come in all the time,” she protests, noting that the meetings rooms are always full.

A recent briefing at New Broadcasting House for 300 suppliers was, I had been told, a frosty affair. She denies it forcefully, asserting that the department's showreel was warmly applauded. But why, I ask, had it been necessary to request that questions be texted anonymously.

She explains that questions had been



BBC

WE ARE DRIFTING TOWARDS TWO THINGS: LONGER SERIES AND BIGGER ONE-OFFS

tailoring off at these sessions: “I think, if you’re a small supplier, potentially, that room is intimidating. I just wondered whether the ability to submit questions anonymously might encourage more honest and more challenging questions.” She says the result was “a lot of questions”.

Relations with one big indie, Love, have certainly soured. Having lost its *Bake Off* flagship and recently passed on more helpings of *Crème de la Crème*, the BBC may be about to be told to buzz off by *The Great British Sewing Bee*.

“Well, we’ve gone public that we’ve put in a good offer for the next series – an increased offer for *The Sewing Bee*,”

says Kirkham. As she did for *Bake Off*? “Oh, a significantly increased offer. It was a good offer.”

On losing *Bake Off*, which, as formatted factual, was part of her empire, she says: “We put in a very good offer. Resources are finite, we’re funded by a universal licence fee and we’ve got to take responsibility, and we couldn’t go higher than what was already a significant offer. It went to Channel 4 and lots has been written about it. We wish it every success.” It is the only time during our hour together that she sounds like a press release.

We are sitting in the David Attenborough room, but even he can be critical. He recently decried to me the vogue for short runs of documentary series than can reduce, for example, the history of Vienna to a barely comprehensible three by 60-minute sprint.

Kirkham says: “We’ve just commissioned a history series, called *Icons*, which is the history of the 20th century as told through biography, and that’s eight one-hours.

“I think we are drifting towards two things: longer series and bigger one-offs. We are about to announce *Suffragette*, which is a one-by-90 that Lucy Worsley is doing to mark the anniversary of suffrage. That will feel like an event in the heart of the BBC schedule.”

Another will be a “landmark” documentary, *Grenfell*, which will look at Kensington through the eyes of the troubled London borough’s residents. “The difference in life expectancy between north and south Kensington is the same as the difference in life expectancy between North and South Korea,” she points out.

Other new commissions look more doubtful. I just cannot see how a new makeover show presented by Claudia Winkleman (and simply called *The Makeover Show*) fits with Kirkham’s public promise, above all, to take risks.

What impresses, however, is the range of her department’s output, and Kirkham’s hands-on interest in all of it. She can be as enthusiastic about Nadiya Hussain’s *British Food Adventure* rating 2.5 million in the once forlorn 8:00pm slot as about the really problematic and Bafta-winning *Muslims Like Us*.

Eclecticism, however, has run through her life and career. Kirkham may have been brought up in London, the daughter of two business owners, and spent 11 years at the fee-paying North London Collegiate School before heading to Oxford to do PPE, but her childhood was broader than that reads.

She spent a spell in Chicago, where her father worked for American IT companies. After Oxford, she, herself, worked for a year in Washington as a researcher for the legendary US Democrat senator Dianne Feinstein, who became a seminal influence on her. She returned to do a journalism course at City and then took her first job as a broadcast assistant at Radio 4’s *Today*.

Although her passion for news is still obvious, her next job was on *This Morning*. “We don’t do it enough in TV any more but, by working there, you learnt live studio, you learnt filming, you learnt being in an edit suite, you learnt interviewing, you learnt to do formatted items. I could not have asked for a better-rounded apprenticeship.”

She also surprises me by naming Trevor McDonald as one of her mentors. She was working as his producer on ITV’s *Tonight* at the time of 9/11.

“We interviewed Colin Powell nine days after 9/11 in DC and then Paul Wolfowitz. We did the UK interview >

Alison Kirkham: feats and facts

Picture redacted

Alison Kirkham, controller of factual commissioning, BBC TV

Born 14 March 1974, brought up in London and Chicago

Father John Kirkham, IT executive

Mother Hilary Kirkham, ran a recruitment agency and then worked in local government

Married to Gideon Joseph, CEO, Transatlantic Entertainment; two sons; lives in Willesden, London

Education North London Collegiate School; Wadham College, Oxford, 2:1 in PPE

1997 Broadcast assistant, *Today*

1998 Assistant producer, *This Morning*

2000 Producer/director, *Tonight with Trevor McDonald*

2004 Producer, *I'm a Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here!*

2004 Associate editor, *Richard and Judy*

2006 Acting controller, BBC daytime

2007 Commissioning executive, BBC formats and features

2010 Head of commissioning, BBC formats and features and events

2015 Acting controller, BBC factual

2016 Controller of factual commissioning, BBC

Hits *Eat Well for Less*; *Back in Time for Dinner*; *Britain's Spending Secrets with Anne Robinson*; *Exodus*; *Muslims Like Us*

Miss *The Big Family Cooking Showdown*

Watching now 'A lot of factual – ours and other channels': *Strictly*, *The X Factor*, *Ray Donovan*, *The Vietnam War*, *Match of the Day*

Not watching 'I tried *Tin Star*, as I love Tim Roth, but gave up'

Reading *What Happened* by Hillary Clinton

Mentors Dianne Feinstein, Anne Robinson, Trevor McDonald



› with George Bush nine months after. We interviewed Laura Bush.”

McDonald gave her some advice that she says she has “always held on to and tried to share with the team. We’d done the George Bush interview and fed it back and we went out to celebrate over a drink and he said to me, ‘It won’t always be like this.’ He said: ‘Remember it now and celebrate the achievement now because, when you’re young, you think everything is going to be like this, and it’s not always going to be.’ And it was quite paternal advice to live in the moment. Youth doesn’t always afford you that insight.”

For *Tonight*, she flew to Montreal two days after the Twin Towers attack and then drove through the night to New York. It was a pivotal moment in modern history but also for her. Before leaving, her editor suggested emailing a former colleague, Gideon Joseph, who was in New York, working on a documentary, to see if he could help with setting up interviews.

A few days later, they met in person. Reader, they married and have two sons, 10 and 8, who are as mad keen on TV as their mother has always been. Her present job is, she says, more suited to her family life, but she had courted the idea of managing a team ever since she witnessed

her father doing so while she briefly worked in credit control for his company.

She enjoys nurturing talent, adding a dash of experience to younger colleagues’ passion. Her department is only about 25 strong, but she thinks it is happy. “I love seeing commissioners grow. I love that spirit of camaraderie and team building.”

Yet, she is also clear that, on some projects, she will demand to be in the editing suite and, on others, such as *Diana and I*, she will be executive producer. And she still directly commissions ceremonial and royal events. “So I keep my little slate.”

Will the Queen’s funeral be hers? “I couldn’t possibly comment on that.”

We discuss how much better documentaries look these days, just how cinematic *The Detectives: Murder on the Streets* was, for example. Maybe, I say, Cohen was right to say factual needed to up its game. And, maybe, it did?

“Well, maybe, we did,” she concedes. “When I was less experienced in my career, I always used to hear people saying that a genuinely competitive landscape is exhilarating, that you need competition to be strong. And I never really understood that. But, now, I do. It’s hugely motivating and exciting.” ■

Soccer's biggest battle



Sports rights

Mike Darcey assesses how vulnerable Sky is to a bid for Premier League rights from one of the tech giants

The triennial Premier League bidding season approaches. Since around 2006, it has been traditional at this time for stories to emerge that a scary, cash-rich bidder might swoop and take the rights from Sky. Sometimes, the stories feature a berated-as-irrational TV player, such as beIN Sports, but, often, the bogeyman is one plucked from a list of global web or tech players.

These stories are then quietly encouraged by those who would seek to talk up the price, whether Premier League executives, club chairmen or players' agents. But the stories usually gain little traction and the claimed usurper never turns up.

So, it is no surprise that the stories have started, with YouTube initially in the frame. So far, so predictable. But

then, with exquisite timing – at least if you are Richard Scudamore, boss of the Premier League – Amazon outbids Sky for a rumoured £50m deal (£10m per annum) for ATP tennis rights in the UK.

Meanwhile, Facebook is revealed as a \$600m bidder (albeit unsuccessful) for digital IPL rights in India. So, do we have to take things more seriously this time? If tennis and cricket, why not football, and why not the big one? Perhaps, but there are plenty of arguments to say this is unlikely to happen.

First, it's a very long way from the ATP World Tour (which does not include the grand slams) to the English Premier League: the financial gulf is huge – a 170-fold leap, from £10m to circa £1.7bn per annum; the complexity of the auction process is on another level, as BT has discovered; and the

intensity with which the incumbents will defend is of a very different order.

Was Sky even defending the ATP rights fully? Ever since the 2015 Premier League auction, Sky has been trying to get its cost base back in shape. Was Sky, then, simply clearing the decks for the coming Premier League bid?

Sky Sports has never been overly keen on tennis; it dropped the US Open last year; and, perhaps, it judged that the recent era of Federer, Nadal, Djokovic and Murray will soon be at an end.

There is also a gulf between the two competitions as regards production responsibilities. With the ATP tour, someone else is responsible for production, with Amazon simply receiving and redistributing the central live feed(s) and perhaps not even bothering to wrap around a studio >

› discussion. But bidding for the Premier League means stepping up to undertake primary production of live matches, given that the bar has been set very high. History tells us that the audience is very unforgiving if standards drop. Of course, Amazon could bring in external expertise, but that is a major undertaking, and not without brand risk.

Second, the global web titans tend to prefer a business model that they can replicate with a degree of consistency around the world.

Commissioning or producing their own comedies, dramas and documentaries fits the bill, because, if they bid enough, they can control the IP of the shows they make, so they can deploy the content in all territories. This means they have a broadly consistent proposition and brand story everywhere.

But sport does not fit so well. If Amazon, say, was to acquire Premier League rights in the UK, where does that leave its strategy in all the other countries in which it operates?

A full replication of the strategy would require La Liga rights in Spain, cricket in India, the NFL (at least) in the US, and so on. That sounds difficult to execute, especially when you only get to take the market by surprise once. And would you really signal your intent by picking up the ATP tour?

If Amazon was to succeed in such a series of auctions, the total bill for the primary sports right in each territory might be in the region of \$50bn-\$100bn per annum, a large figure even for Amazon.

More likely, it would fail in some places, leaving an inconsistent patchwork quilt, with analysts asking what was next. It would face constant challenge, being asked if its strategy was compromised where it still had gaps.

Third, could the UK (or global) web infrastructure cope? Streaming or downloading drama and movies over the web is one thing, because people watch at different times, but sport demands to be watched live. The

Picture redacted

SKY'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE AMAZON BUSINESS MODEL IS THIN, SO IT IS HARD TO ESTIMATE WHAT AMAZON COULD RATIONALLY BID

strains on the core network would be more severe.

Beyond the core network, how many homes lack a local connection suitable for watching streamed sport? We are a long way from universal fibre availability in the UK. Does any web titan want to suffer the brand damage from denying access to the national game to those whose connection is not up to the task?

Fourth, do the web titans have the business model? I don't buy the simplistic "they've got lots of money so they can afford it" type of analysis, because most bidders are answerable to rational shareholders and are working to a spreadsheet. The trick is to understand their spreadsheet.

At one level, sports bidding is very

simple. The company with the best machine (that is, business model) for converting sports rights into revenue and contribution can rationally bid more and so should win the rights.

In years past, we saw that the pay-TV business model drove more value than free-TV. As a result, the former could outbid the latter.

Subsequently, it became clear that pay-TV platform economics beat those of a standalone pay-TV channel. More recently, we learnt that triple play economics (including making an additional margin on connected products such as broadband), as enjoyed by Sky and BT, were essential to remain competitive in bidding for premium sports rights.

Now, the question is whether there exists a new machine or business

THE FINAL DECISION [ON A BID] WILL BE TAKEN IN THE LAST DAYS OR EVEN HOURS

Picture redacted

model that can generate even more value and so support even higher bids – perhaps because football could drive the Netflix base further or help Amazon to drive Amazon Prime or generally take a greater share of the total retail wallet. That question is too big to analyse fully here but, suffice to say, I have my doubts.

Of more immediate interest, however, is how all of these questions are being analysed by Sky and BT. For the sake of simplicity, I refer in what follows to Sky and Amazon, but Amazon stands for itself and other tech giants.

Sky certainly knows these arguments and it might believe the odds are strongly against Amazon bidding.

But are the odds so low that they can be ignored entirely? Sky will be pilloried if it loses and pilloried if it overpays, so how should it play the game?

Sky has three broad options. One is to disregard the risk in the first round and bid as normal. If it judges correctly, and Amazon does not show up, then all is well. If it has got things wrong and Amazon arrives with a large bid, then Sky will hope to get a chance to

respond in a second round, but knows there is a risk that a second chance might not be offered.

Another option for Sky is to accept that the risk is too great to ignore and to bid aggressively in the first round, as if Amazon is certain to be there.

This presents many challenges: Sky's knowledge of the Amazon business model is thin, so it is hard to estimate what Amazon could rationally bid. This scenario is probably odds-against, so Sky risks looking like a fool who jumps at shadows if Amazon doesn't show up; and Sky might already be close to the limit of its rational bid envelope.

Neither path looks attractive. So, Sky may be tempted to go for the third option and hedge its bets, bidding somewhere in the middle. But this is a very bad idea, almost guaranteed to end in disappointment.

If Amazon is not there, you have bid more than you needed, but if it is there, you have probably lost anyway.

But maybe the focus should be on the dilemma for BT. If Amazon is attracted to a sport-lite strategy, consistent with picking up some tennis

alongside its drama offering, perhaps a more consistent and likely move would be for it to seek to replace BT.

Remember, there are seven packs of live Premier League matches sold separately, with no bidder allowed to win more than five. BT has the two packs that Sky did not win. Rather than contesting the majority position with Sky, Amazon could try to pinch the minority position from BT (as BT once did to ESPN).

This possibility could be particularly bad news for BT. Before Amazon emerged as a threat, BT had the option of seeking a significant saving on its two Premier League packages. By stepping away from its previous efforts to contest the leadership position with Sky, BT could opt to bid less than Sky and still pick up the two packs that Sky would not be allowed to win.

If it judges that there is no one else to beat, there is potential for BT to save money on its sports costs while maintaining its current rights position.

It is, therefore, rather inconvenient that the Amazon story has emerged when it has: BT now has to decide whether it has no choice but to defend itself against the mere possibility of an Amazon attack.

How much risk will the incumbent rights holders take? Sky and BT, themselves, probably do not know yet. Based on my experience of defending the Premier League rights five times, I suspect that the final decision will be taken in the last days or even hours.

What is clear is that bidding for sports rights is as tricky as ever.

Arguably, there is no more stressful experience in UK television than submitting multi-billion-pound Premier League bids in the morning and then waiting for the phone to ring that afternoon. ■

Mike Darcey now works as a Media Strategy Advisor. He previously worked at Sky for 15 years, including six years as COO, and ran News International for three years.

Seduced by swords and sandals

Content

Mark Lawson asks why the schedules are full of dramas inspired by all things ‘medieval’

It is said that costume suppliers can spot the next television trend by the sudden emptying of certain bins and racks.

A run on tuxes and flapper dresses heralds more 1920s dramas in the schedules; a rush order for spats, monocles and driving goggles means that another PG Wodehouse dramatisation is on the way.

By this measure, chain mail, hessian tunics, saddles, sandals and swords should be almost impossible to hire at the moment. Although *Game of Thrones* (HBO, since 2011) ends next year, commissioners continue to turn the clock back to a time before clocks.

Troy: Fall of a City, an eight-part BBC-Netflix recreation of the famous 13th century BCE siege, is close to transmission, and a third season of *The Last Kingdom* (BBC-Netflix), adapted from Bernard Cornwell's novels set in the ninth century, is expected next year.

Historians' definition of the Middle Ages is contested, but stretches from as early as the sixth century to as late as the 16th. Although the civilisation depicted in *Game of Thrones* is fantastical, George RR Martin's acknowledgement of the influence of the Wars of the Roses places it in the later part of that range. There, among TV fictions, it overlaps with *The Borgias* and *Da Vinci's Demons*.

At the earlier end of the spectrum are *Merlin* and *Beowulf*, set in the 5th or 6th centuries, and *Vikings*, which began its narrative in 793CE. The middle of the Middle Ages is represented

televisually by *The Pillars of the Earth* (Starz-Channel 4, 2010) and this year's three-part, Dan Snow-hosted drama-documentary, *1066: A Year to Conquer England* (BBC).

So why is TV drama suffering from Middle-Ages spread? As often in television, the explanation

is partly envious emulation: faced with the phenomenon of *Game of Thrones*, commissioners sent in their clones. But the best explanation for the glut of such stuff lies in the often-quoted opening line of LP Hartley's novel *The Go-Between*: "The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there."

In the case of medieval-TV, part of the attraction is that, in the global sales market, the past is less of a foreign country than the present.

Producers of a drama set in pre-Brexit Britain are likely to find commercial interest restricted to the UK. But shows such as *Game of Thrones* or *Troy: Fall of a City* present pictures of divided civilisations that resonate in multiple territories.

Long historical distance also eases the passage of these series through the editorial and impartiality issues that affect television both internally (via network guidelines) and externally (via scrutiny from traditional or social media).

A drama set in contemporary Syria or Iraq or in Northern Ireland during the Troubles would be interrogated for imputing greater violence or validity to either side. But, when the warring factions are the Seven Kingdoms in *Game of Thrones*, the Trojans and Achaeans in *Troy*, or the Saxons and Danes in *The Last Kingdom*, political and military chicanery can

be depicted with far greater freedom.

The worst pushback that such shows suffer is allegations of historical inaccuracy: *The American Spectator* complained, for instance, that *Vikings* misrepresented the form of government then in force.

The very widespread appeal of *Game of Thrones* is helped by its central situations – divisions between north and south, border walls, ancient tribal feuds – having parallels in most civilisations that buy TV programmes.

One reason

The Last Kingdom



that *Beowulf* was cancelled after a single mediocre season may be that its milieu was too specifically Ancient British, lacking the canny universality of the franchises derived from the Martin and Cornwell books.

As the Danes are the aggressors in *Vikings* and *The Last Kingdom*, the biggest bias these series risk being accused of is the relatively uncommon prejudice of anti-Scandinavianism.

Yet, as the events were so long ago, and the region is still shaped and

fascinated by its Viking history, even this aspect fails to affect the popularity of the genre. Tales of Danish medieval pillage and invasion attract investment and actors from, and sales to, that nation and its neighbours.

Even more relevant to the success of the woad-and-mead genre, though, is the part of Hartley's aphorism after the semi-colon: they do things differently there. This particular part of the past appeals to producers and commissioners because these people are not only doing things differently, but those things are almost impossible for people to do in present-day dramas.

Although *Game of Thrones*, in one way, sanitises history – the show's parade of strong, independent, female leaders is surely greater than would have been the reality of the period – in other ways, it is licensed by the setting's antiquity to feature scenes and speeches that would be considered unacceptable in a 21st-century setting.

In *Thrones* and its clones, rape, racism, graphic violence and female nudity occur in the pre-industrial mud with a regularity that would, in contemporary fiction, require the provision of helplines for viewers "affected by any issues in this programme" – and also invite fines from regulators. A medieval setting means not having to say sorry very often.

The rise of these storylines has also been helped by technology. As the astonishing mass battle scenes and snowscapes in season 7 of *Game of Thrones* showed, the imagining or reimagining of ancient civilisations has been greatly aided by developments in CGI.

This is particularly true when the pictures being digitally manipulated were filmed in locations that would remain recognisable to ghosts from many centuries ago.

In Britain, the genre has

been good for the devolution of production: *Game of Thrones* is based in Northern Ireland, while *Merlin* is made in Wales. Similarly, *Vikings* is shot in the Republic of Ireland and *Beowulf* in Northumberland. The landscapes of the UK and its close neighbour seem especially adept at representing ancient nations.

The economy of Hungary has been another beneficiary of the woad-and-mead explosion, having provided locations for *The Borgias*, *The Last Kingdom* and *The Pillars of the Earth*.

With spin-offs from *Game of Thrones* already being planned, and networks keen to take a slice of the subscription and advertising groats freed up by the impending departure of the motherlode show, TV costumiers and prop shops would be wise to stock up on goatskin coats, drinking horns and Viking helmets.

At their best – in *Game of Thrones*, *The Last Kingdom* and *Vikings* – these depictions of the Middle Ages offer parallels for contemporary crises of democracy and war via characters and narratives that appeal to viewers from the middle-aged to the young.

They have created a television safe space for discussion of how countries should run themselves and deal with

their enemies. Similarly, series set in 15th- to 17th-century England – *The Tudors*, *Wolf Hall* and *Gunpowder* – permit the exploration of religious fundamentalism and terrorism in ways that, in a modern setting, would bring protests from bishops and imams.

At their worst, though, these medieval series are a cunning way of evading contemporary sensitivities by taking refuge in a time when men sliced each other's heads off, denigrated other ethnicities and raped women with impunity.

So any goblet of mead we raise can only be half-full. ■



BBC

The night shift

Ever since TV technology made it possible to measure overnight ratings, there have been some in the industry who wish it hadn't.

Programme controllers and advertisers have been accused of not giving new dramas or comedies or entertainment formats enough time to establish themselves. Journalists are blamed for rushing to judgement with headline-grabbing claims that can damage a programme's prospects.

And, as viewing habits change, overnight figures are giving a less accurate picture of a programme's total audience – including hit shows such as *Game of Thrones* and *Love Island*.

Is it time we found a new way of reporting TV audiences?

Sky UK's director of programmes, Zai Bennett, recently issued a clarion call for the industry to change the way it reports and focuses on viewing figures.

In a blog, he claimed that broadcasters were failing to count millions of viewers and should better reflect the way people are now watching TV – with more viewing online, on mobiles and on-demand, more “binge” and catch-up viewing, and some programmes released before they're broadcast or as box sets.

Bennett warned that, by not reporting all viewing figures, TV broadcasters were “underselling themselves” – in marked contrast to online players such as Netflix and Amazon Prime.

Barb, the joint industry TV research body, is on the case – but is it moving quickly enough?

For years, its “gold standard” time-frame for the Top 30 TV audience charts has been the seven-day “consolidated” viewing figure, not the overnight rating.

Barb also records any viewing on a TV set up to 28 days after the first broadcast and, via its Project Dovetail, online viewing through TV players.

But how many people in the industry, apart from researchers, ever bother to look at these? Many may think that Bennett has a point.

“The way the industry talks about TV viewing isn't reflective of the ways

Ratings

Torin Douglas asks if the way TV audiences are measured needs overhauling to reflect contemporary viewing habits

people are watching today,” Bennett wrote. “We're supportive of Barb and its work with Project Dovetail to improve the way that TV viewing is captured, but there are gaps in the audience numbers that the industry uses.

“Any new TV series that we release as a box set on-demand, alongside a traditional week-by-week transmission, such as *Tin Star*, *Riviera* or *Fortitude 2*, can have more than 60% of its audience completely missed in official figures,” he claimed. “So, at Sky, we're going to completely change the way that we measure and report on the performance of our programmes – and we won't talk about overnights at all.”

He said that, at the end of a series such as *Tin Star*, Sky would report on its “total programme consumption” – by “using Barb's seven-day cumulative audience figures alongside our own internal data that Barb isn't able to capture, such as any on-demand viewing of a show before it has had a linear transmission.”

That pronouncement has caused a

WE'RE GOING TO COMPLETELY CHANGE THE WAY THAT WE MEASURE AND REPORT ON THE PERFORMANCE OF OUR PROGRAMMES

stir at Barb and among other broadcasters. ITV's managing director for commercial, Kelly Williams, says: “I sympathise massively with Zai as a programme-maker and commissioner, but we must be careful not to compare apples and oranges, and not mix different metrics, particularly for advertisers.

“We must not fall into the trap that the online industry falls into almost daily, in claiming stuff that isn't necessarily true. At a time when Procter & Gamble and other advertisers have become highly critical of the digital companies' claims, we've got to maintain the rigour around TV audience measurement.”

Barb CEO Justin Sampson says that it can already do what Sky is asking for and is discussing this with them. “For two years, we've been publishing our weekly *TV Player Report*, which shows the viewing to on-demand and live-streamed content via mobile and online TV apps,” he explains. “Now, through techniques such as audio-matching, we can also measure programmes that can be viewed before they are broadcast – but we do need the co-operation of the broadcasters (and, increasingly, the rights holders) to do so.”

Sampson says *Top of the Lake* on BBC Two provides a good example: “Before the new series was broadcast, viewers could watch it on-demand on a TV set, a tablet, a PC or a smartphone – 643,000 people watched episode 3 before it was broadcast; 768,000 viewers watched it live or on the same day as broadcast on a TV, tablet, PC or smartphone. Over the next seven days, 799,000 people watched it on timeshift or on-demand, and a further 582,000 viewers saw it in the three weeks after that.”

That gave a total of 2,792,000 viewers – compared with the “overnight” figure of 768,000 – all measured by Barb.

Sampson adds: “Sky is now actively planning to measure programmes such as *Tin Star* on Barb, using the same approach that the BBC has with *Top of the Lake*. The next stage of Project Dovetail, which is due to launch in March 2018, will bring more precision to this kind of analysis.”



just 61% of the total. For instance, *Sherlock's* audience grew by 59% in the seven days after its 8 January broadcast and by 15% in the following three weeks, giving it a total of 10,968,000 viewers.

BBC analysis shows that younger viewers – the 16-34s – are more likely to come to a series later in its run. Therefore, relying on overnight ratings can underestimate a show's appeal to the young. For example, only 6% of the audience who watched *Apple Tree Yard* on the day of broadcast were aged 16-34, but they formed 15% of viewers between eight and 28 days later.

The success of ITV2's summer breakout hit, *Love Island*, was also understated by traditional viewing figures. Its average TV audience was 2.5 million – with 1.9 million watching on the day of broadcast and 650,000 on seven-day catch-up.

But it also had no fewer than 1 million live streams and 1.8 million catch-up streams on the ITV Hub. Analysis by Thinkbox, the TV marketing body, suggests that many young people watched it live on their mobiles because "those still living with mum and dad could avoid having to squirm through the awkward sex chat – they could still enjoy the sex chat but separately".

Unfortunately for ITV, those extra live viewers didn't emerge publicly until Barb published its *TV Player Report*, which showed a huge increase in viewing to the ITV Hub.

ITV's Williams says: "We knew how well it was doing but it wasn't public at that stage. But now that we know how well it did, we can shout about it for next year."

And that's the problem with taking a longer view of audiences. By the time the 28-day Barb figure – or Sky's "total programme consumption" figure – is published, the caravan has moved on, the ad breaks are over and the media (not to mention social media) are talking about different, newer shows.

Many will support Bennett's contention that the industry should put a greater focus on the totality of the TV audience, but it is hard to know where, how and – perhaps most importantly – when this should be done. ■

Barb's data is already used by the BBC to help it understand how viewing habits are changing. Head of audiences Sue Gray says: "Overnights are still useful for many genres, as they capture the 92% of BBC viewing that is either live or on the same day as live. But we are highly aware of the overnights'

limitations when considering young audience behaviour and genres such as drama, comedy and children's."

Last year, 98% of viewing of BBC news and weather was live, while it was 94% for sport and only 74% for comedy and 66% for the soaps. For drama series, the live audience was

Content

Matthew Bell hears why TV is the ideal showcase for history

To paraphrase the renowned historian EH Carr's question, what is TV history? Is it knowledgeable big beasts – David Starkey, Mary Beard, Simon Schama and Lucy Worsley among them – lecturing as they stride across the historical stage? Or is it “living history”, where modern-day Britons relive the experiences of their ancestors, as in *The Victorian Slum*? Or is it the long-running series *Who Do You Think You Are*?

Even the chair of a lively RTS early-evening event in early October, Sir Tony Robinson, was at a loss to explain. “I don't know what history is,” he confessed. “To me, it's a bit like comic timing – I know how it works and I know what people's reactions to it are, but, precisely what it is, I haven't a clue.”

Robinson was well-qualified to host the event: as well as playing Baldrick in the BBC's classic historical comedy *Blackadder*, he was also the host of Channel 4's archaeology series *Time Team*, which ran for 20 years until 2014.

Helping Robinson assess the current state of TV history was a panel of two TV historians, a programme-maker and a commissioner.

The consensus was that British TV makes great history programmes in a multiplicity of styles – but not enough of them. “Genres go through cycles and I feel a lack of confidence about the genre, at the moment, across British broadcasting,” said the BBC's history commissioner, Tom McDonald.

As head of specialist factual and natural history, he commissions a wide spread of shows for the

corporation. He praised the efforts of his rivals: “When Channel 4 does history, it does it very well and differently to us; Channel 5 does some really fantastic history.” But “the ecosystem only works if everyone is doing it”.

He continued: “I don't worry about finding the next generation of on-screen historians. I worry about the next generation of programme-makers, because they can only become experienced history programme-makers by being a researcher, an assistant producer and then a director on history programming.

“If there's less of it and [history] just becomes the role of the BBC, you won't have the plurality of voices



Perspectives
that ignite
the past

Left: *Horrible Histories* – ‘Wicked William I’

that I think history programming needs to thrive.”

The genre’s future seems secure at the BBC, at least. “I still have an incredibly healthy amount of money to spend on history, and that means I can commission a huge range of history content across a year,” said McDonald.

He explained that he wanted to “reach the biggest, broadest audience possible, and convince them that this is history content which will speak to them, resonate with them and, most importantly for me, might reveal something to them about the now.”

“Thank God for the BBC,” said Wall to Wall boss Leanne Klein. “There has been a complete lack of confidence in history on a lot of our British channels, certainly for the past five years.”

She said that ITV had stopped taking history shows and Channel 4 “doesn’t commission much history any more, compared with the *Time Team* and *1900 House* days. We were making hours and hours of history for Channel 4 and it’s really hard now to find a story that they want to tell.”

Historian and broadcaster David Olusoga argued that, despite airing fewer history programmes, television had a “pretty healthy ecosystem of different approaches that allow us to tell almost any story we can imagine”.

Olusoga talked about the British people’s enthusiasm for history, which is reflected in the huge number of visits they make to cathedrals and stately homes, and the growing number of history festivals.

“My frustration is that we’ve not managed to harness this huge energy and appetite for the past,” said the historian, who, with Schama and Beard, will present *Civilisations*, a new BBC Two series, next year.

“I’ve also been frustrated that there are histories that we do not tell. We’ve spent a lot of time, in my experience, telling the same stories over and over again.” He said that the stories of women and Britain’s relationship >



Wall to Wall is currently making series 15 and 16 of *Who Do You Think You Are?* for the BBC. Is it a history programme? Perhaps not in the strict sense, but history is at its core.

The series, argued the indie’s boss, Leanne Klein, takes people ‘on a journey into their own ancestry and, through that, it’s incredibly moving. It’s also an amazing history magazine show by default, because you get little bits of history on BBC One at 9:00pm on a Thursday night that you would never get [otherwise].’

‘What we’re here to do is to move people to learn more about history. I don’t think television is a great place to give people information; I think it’s a great place to interest and engage them in something. And the best way to do that is to give people an emotional experience, whether they’re laughing or crying or shouting.’

‘In the end, I don’t think you can engage people – and I know this may be controversial – by two historians having a row on television. It’s never going to engage people like someone actually learning something about the past that is meaningful to them.’

The BBC’s Tom McDonald accepted that *Who Do You Think You Are?* was a ‘brilliant engine both for unfamiliar and familiar history’, but argued that there was a place for experts on television.

Referring to BBC Two’s *The Last Days of Anne Boleyn*, which featured panellist Suzannah Lipscomb, David Starkey and historical novelist Hilary Mantel among its cast of experts, he argued that ‘a multiplicity of voices giving multiple perspectives’ could make for a riveting programme.

‘Hearing five people debate Anne

Boleyn is trying to do exactly the same thing [as *Who Do You Think You Are?*], which is to bring the people of the past, and the past itself, back to life,’ said McDonald.

He continued: ‘A discussion where you try and turn a figure in history into flesh and blood, where you can vividly imagine what that person might have been like... is something that television is actually rather good at, but also that I, genuinely, think you can bring a very big audience to.’

David Olusoga argued that such an approach ‘only works if those historians really, really care’. Starkey, he said, was such a historian.

‘When I watch somebody who really cares about the people from the past that they’re talking about, their emotion is infectious,’ said Olusoga. ‘History on TV can make you touch people from the past, at its best. I don’t think it teaches you the facts but it does teach you to care and then maybe go out and buy a book or go to Hampton Court Palace.’

‘The viewing figures for *The Last Days of Anne Boleyn* show that people are interested [in this approach] – lots of people watched it,’ said Lipscomb.

The show attracted 3 million viewers in its 9:00pm slot, according to Barb’s overnight figures. It beat the opposition on BBC One, *Britain’s Biggest Hoarders*, and made the argument that high-quality genre programming can win large audiences in primetime.

The Last Days of Anne Boleyn, suggested Lipscomb, offered both emotion and experts – perhaps the ideal combination for a history programme: ‘Emotion is important, and that comes from historians who really engage with and know their material,’ she said.



From left: Tony Robinson, Suzannah Lipscomb, David Olusoga, Leanne Klein and Tom McDonald

Paul Hampartsoumian

› with the outside world had been neglected.

Despite its present difficulties, Klein was positive about the genre's future: "History is telling stories about the past and there are a huge number of stories to tell. I don't think we've even scratched the surface." The Wall to Wall chief executive said that most of her indie's current output told "women's stories or the stories of groups of people who have never had a voice". Although a "bleak watch", Klein ascribed the popularity of *The Victorian Slum* to the fact that "a lot of people know they come from that background". She added: "We don't tell ordinary people's stories enough."

History academic and presenter Suzannah Lipscomb pointed to *The Great Fire*, which she presented with fellow historian Dan Jones and engineer Rob Bell for Channel 5, as another series that concentrated on normal people rather than the great and the good. "We were looking at the ordinary lives of the people involved, moving street by street through the fire, hour by hour. I felt like it really brought it to life," she said.

Lipscomb continued: "If you think of history as lived experience, then it suddenly feels different. You think of what it might be like to be that shoe-maker whose house is about to be burnt down. That's a powerful way to tell a story."

THERE ARE HISTORIES THAT WE DO NOT TELL. WE'VE SPENT A LOT OF TIME... TELLING THE SAME STORIES OVER AND OVER AGAIN

"The range of forms we deliver history content in is probably broader than it's ever been," argued the BBC's McDonald. "It's an incredibly rich time for history programme-makers."

The most popular shows in the BBC history slate over the past few years had been "living history" series, he said, largely because they were "experiential and immersive", and offered "emotion" as well as historical content.

The corporation's output, he continued, was now "pivoting more towards the 20th century, which is not to the exclusion of the centuries that went before, but one of the BBC's jobs is to be the broadcaster of record. We are at a key moment, when there is a generation of people who are about to pass away who, I think, have not necessarily told their stories. I feel

a huge responsibility to capture and tell those stories."

Another of his favourite avenues was looking at "familiar periods of history through a narrower aperture", explained McDonald. *Elizabeth I's Secret Agents*, the first part of which aired at the end of October, examined the reign of the Tudor monarch through "the prism of the spy network that underpinned her reign".

Lipscomb proposed that there had also been a renaissance in authored history. "If you've got someone who's a very good historian and broadcaster, who's telling a very good story, that's sometimes all the audience wants," she said, mentioning Schama, Beard, Jones and Bettany Hughes.

Television and history, agreed the panel, were perfect bedfellows. "I became a historian not because my history lessons at school were that fantastic, it's sad to say, but because I came home and I watched history on television," revealed Olusoga. "I am a historian because of television.

"I don't think any medium can tell these stories, or bring them to life or make people care anywhere near as well as television. It's the greatest storytelling medium that there is." ■

'The great history debate' was an RTS early-evening event held in central London on 10 October. It was produced by Sally Doganis and Andrew Scadding.

Scripting secrets



Victoria
ITV

Let out of their garrets for the evening, a panel of TV dramatists revealed at an RTS Futures event how they come up with ideas, pen words – and deal with writer’s block.

John Jackson, whose writing credits include ITV’s *Grantchester* and Sky Atlantic’s *The Tunnel*, chaired the sold-out mid-October event, “Scriptwriting for TV drama”, which featured writers from some of British TV’s biggest and best dramas.

“It’s important for me to have something to say. We’ve all written stuff that’s competent and empty,” said Sophie Petzal, whose breakthrough came on CBBC’s *Wolfblood*. More recently, she has written episodes for Sky Atlantic’s *Riviera* and BBC Two’s *The Last Kingdom*, and has original scripts in development with Company Pictures.

“Given the world we live in,” continued Petzal, “you should say something, even if that’s just to make people happy in a dark time.”

RTS Futures

Matthew Bell takes notes as top screenwriters explain how to pen a hit drama

Rachel Flowerday, whose credits include BBC One shows *EastEnders*, *Father Brown* and *The Moonstone*, admitted to spending “a vast amount of time procrastinating on the internet”. Yet, she added, “That is where my ideas come from. I’m pretending not to work and I find that I’m working, after all. It’s really insidious.”

Flowerday, who is working on original material for ITV and Channel 4, puts her ideas into an email, which she always fires off: “If I put it into a Word document, it’s too scary and [the idea] has to be perfect. I capture my enthusiasm and don’t edit it away into nothing.”

“If I have an idea and I like it, then I get very enthusiastic about it,” said Daisy Goodwin. “I like to pitch in person before I send people drafts, because I think that there’s no substitute for telling the story yourself.” After a stellar TV career as a producer of factual shows, such as Channel 4’s *Grand Designs*, she turned to fiction, creating and writing ITV’s hit series *Victoria*.

A common complaint about TV drama is that it is obsessed by the past. Goodwin, however, makes “no apology” for writing about the 19th century. “If you forget history, you’re condemned to repeat it,” she said.

Recent episodes of *Victoria* have featured the Corn Laws, a huge political conflict that split Britain much as Brexit does now, and the Irish potato famine: “That, amazingly, is something that has never been done as a drama on British TV,” she said. “I try, wherever I can, to show that Victorian England was much more diverse and polymorphous in its attitudes towards race and sexuality than we think.” >

Getting started: David Hancock



'I'd always written; I have some terrible abandoned novels in drawers.... I decided I wanted to try screenwriting, opened a page and stared in fear

and horror at the blinking cursor, so I decided that I needed to know more about film-making before I could possibly [write].

'I started out as a runner and then moved into the locations department... working my way up to the dizzy heights of location manager....

'It was a convenient excuse not to do any writing, so I moved across into script editing... and took some time out to write....

'I started working on [Netflix drama] *The Crown*, which is written by Peter Morgan, and Peter asked me to write the odd speech... now I'm writing an episode for series 3.'

Getting started: Rachelle Constant

'I did the same MA [producing] course as Rachel [Flowerday]. I knew I wanted to produce – I can't write.... I was fortunate enough to get a job as a PA at ITV. The head of drama, then, was Damien Timmer, who now runs Mammoth Screen, and he was fantastic....

'He supported me in becoming a script editor and I worked at ITV on *Miss Marple*, *Poirot* and *Lewis*....

'Then, I moved to the BBC to work with John Yorke at the Writers Academy, looking for new writers for the continuing drama shows – *EastEnders*, *Holby City*, *Casualty* and *Doctors*.

'That got me meeting lots of emerging talent... going to the theatre and watching films.... I set up a short-film scheme for BBC Three... and I also work in film as a producer.'

Getting started: Rachel Flowerday

'I did a lot of theatre at university and worked out that I wasn't any good at acting, and certainly not at directing, which led me to the path of producing.

'I thought people had to be incredibly clever to be writers, so I couldn't possibly do that. I did a film- and TV-producing course at Royal Holloway....

'It was run by Tony Garnett, who was running World Productions at the time – he was brilliant and set us this challenge of writing a treatment for a show.

'I was hooked and got a job with him and went on and did all sorts of jobs in in-house development in TV and, finally, from that, got a script [away].'

Getting started: John Jackson

'I saw an advert in a newspaper to be a runner for ITV.... I didn't get it, but they kept my CV and I got a call for [another] show.... One day, I was photocopying and someone got sick or was sacked and I was asked to write something and then I was writing....

'To get those jobs, it helps to have something on your CV. Before that,

I'd been an agent's assistant on work experience from school – the tea and fax person.... It was how I found my first agent.

'I went back when I had my first [writing] job and asked them to do the contract for me, and then I got more work.... Try and get in somewhere – it is hard to start as a writer.'



► "Not every idea has to be a perfectly formed creature," said David Hancock, a script executive and writer at Left Bank Pictures, who is currently working on Netflix drama *The Crown*. "There should be a high attrition rate until the [good idea] comes along."

Drama development producer Rachelle Constant receives writers' ideas, whether good, bad or indifferent. She is looking "to be excited by [a writer's] excitement".

Constant began as a script editor at ITV, working on series that included *Lewis*, before moving to the BBC, where she currently works for the BBC Writers Room.

New writers, she argued, need "a really strong sample script to show off your work – without that, there's not much hope".

Agents help writers place their scripts and, crucially, negotiate with producers when a programme is commissioned. "I got an agent when I needed one to do a deal," recalled Hancock.

It is possible – though harder – to find work without an agent. "If, by some chance, you do end up writing, agents will beat a path to your door," he said. "Agents, development people and producers are desperate to read something good, even if it's rough around the edges.

"When a script by a new or newish writer jumps off the page at you, it's



From left: Sophie Petzal, Rachel Flowerday, John Jackson, Daisy Goodwin, David Hancock and Rachele Constant

Paul Hampartsoumian

Getting started: Daisy Goodwin

‘[Following] university and... [an MA at] Columbia’s film school in New York... I went to the BBC as a production trainee and then... made arts documentaries for about 10 years...

I went to work for Talkback... and started its factual department – pretty much every property porn show you’ve ever watched, I probably had a hand in.

I left and started my own factual company [but] I parted company with the parent company that had bought my company because I realised that I was quite good at having ideas but really bad at running a company.

‘I’d written two novels and Victoria had crept into both of them, so I thought about [writing] a novel about the young Victoria. As I thought about it, I had a fight with my teenage daughter, who was so... full of hormone-driven fury that I thought, “I wonder what it would be like if she were to wake up tomorrow morning and to find herself the most powerful woman in the world?” Which is exactly what happened to Victoria....

I bumped into an agent at a party... sent him a treatment... and Mammoth Screen commissioned a script. It got commissioned about four months later. It was unbelievably lucky.’

Getting started: Sophie Petzal

‘I didn’t know that people wrote film or television until I was about 15, when my mum got me *Screenwriting for Dummies*.... since then, that was all I ever wanted to do.

‘I went to Bournemouth University and studied scriptwriting, film and television writing but, in my second year, I left and [entered] the BBC production traineeship.

‘That led me to CBBC drama, where I was assistant script editor on *Wolfblood*, which led me to writing for it and, then, other CBBC dramas.’

NOT EVERY IDEA HAS TO BE A PERFECTLY FORMED CREATURE

one of the biggest thrills [you get] working in development.”

In the early part of her career, Flowerday was able to generate her own work, largely because her place in the BBC’s Writers Academy led to regular gigs on the BBC soaps *EastEnders* and *Casualty*.

“There wasn’t a great deal for [my agent] to do apart from negotiating [contracts], but that’s the key thing – having someone on your side,” she said.

Once an idea has been accepted, the writer has to produce the script. Goodwin admitted to a “Stakhanovite” work rate, knocking out seven to eight pages a day, and taking 10 days to write an hour of TV.

She works at the members-only London Library, surrounded by fellow writers. “It’s a good feeling – you’re all tapping away and feeling the pain,” she said, adding: “You can get four good writing hours out of a day.”

Hancock argued that “starting early

is crucial, before the snow globe of your brain has been shaken by emails, phone calls and life happening – all the things that can distract you”.

Writers draft and redraft their copy, taking on board the advice, or “notes”, of the script editors and producers who read their scripts. “Often, I send stuff in too early because I like to have notes,” said Petzal. “I love discussing how you’re going to make [scripts] better.”

All writers experience doubt – at their lowest ebb, some are so gripped by fear that they are unable to put pen to paper. Hancock described the feeling of being “frozen” while writing a first draft, a problem he solves by disgorging words, the so-called “vomit draft”. He added: “You can rework it – something written is better than something not written.”

“You can do all the planning and outlines, but you just need to sit down, write and let it go. Sometimes, you’ll get up and think, ‘Who wrote that?’ – and that’s really exciting,” said Goodwin. “You have to apply the seat of the pants to the seat of the chair and stay there and write – set yourself a target and don’t move until you’ve done it.” ■

‘Scriptwriting for TV drama’ was held at the Den, Bedford Square, in central London, on 16 October. It was produced by Carrie Britton and Jude Winstanley.



Pull their faangs – or risk everything

Regulation

Steve Clarke listens as **David Puttnam** predicts a bleak, post-Brexit world overshadowed by climate change and data capitalism

Apart from being highly influential figures of the 20th century, what do John Maynard Keynes, Karl Marx and Bob Dylan have in common? They were all referenced by Lord Puttnam in a passionate, high-concept RTS lecture that made the case for regulating the US tech giants.

“Data capitalism” is one of the biggest threats to society, according to the Oscar-winning movie producer, a self-confessed child of the 1960s. (He even had a brief romance with Mary Wilson from the era’s biggest girl group, The Supremes, when he was a successful London advertising executive.)

Although hippie utopianism is now a distant memory, he invoked a mid-1960s Bob Dylan in a postscript to the

RTS lecture. Black-and-white footage of Dylan in full *Like a Rolling Stone* rage seemed to imply that, even in our troubled age, there might still be a chance to save us from ourselves.

But, 50 years on from those days, the grizzled Puttnam, now 76, was anything but optimistic as he struck an apocalyptic tone in his opening remarks. He feared that climate change and Brexit were potential agents of disaster.

Rising temperatures and the destruction of once-fertile lands may lead to a global refugee problem on an unprecedented scale. The refugee crisis that had recently seen millions flee Syria would look small by comparison. Puttnam warned that 200 million people were at risk of losing their homes and livelihoods [by the middle of the century] as a result of climate change.

AS DEMOCRACY STRUGGLES, DATA CAPITALISM COULD WELL BE PROVED TO BE UNCONTROLLABLE

His concern for the environment is reflected in his latest film venture, *Arctic 30*. The movie tells the story of how a group of Greenpeace activists were seized by Russian troops in 2013 as they protested against drilling for oil in the Arctic.

Warming to his dystopian theme, Puttnam forecast that Brexit would “prove an unmitigated disaster for the British people”.

The growing power of the US tech behemoths, however, was the main focus of his talk. Puttnam suggested that democracy itself was threatened by the FAANG companies [Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix and Google].

Using film clips – including one of himself, from 1981, in which he predicted that the BBC licence fee would be replaced by pay-per-view – the Labour peer called for media regulation to curb the excesses of “data capitalism”.

“Tech monopolies – Google, Amazon, Facebook – are taking over the internet,” he warned. “A pernicious form of corporatism could, under the wrong set of circumstances, replace democracy as we have known and enjoyed it.”

It was “nonsense” that these companies were too big to regulate, insisted Puttnam: “As democracy struggles, data capitalism could well be proved to be uncontrollable. This is a very, very serious issue.

“What on earth allows us to believe that the corporate state and corporatism, left unchecked, are going to provide for us a world that we actually want to live in? It is a nonsense and it must be exposed, eventually, as a nonsense.

“That does not mean I am a passionate supporter of Jeremy Corbyn. I am not. But I certainly do believe that we are putting our faith in the wrong people at the wrong time.”

To audience laughter, Puttnam reminded the RTS that Keynes had said that “capitalism is the extraordinary belief that the nastiest of men, for the nastiest of reasons, will somehow work for the benefit of all”.

The former deputy chairman of Channel 4, said that, as a nation, we were “sleep walking” to a world in which companies such as Cambridge

Analytica had the ability to manipulate public opinion via algorithms.

He argued that, only by exposing the lies of politicians through robust journalism and extending media regulation, could citizens operate effectively in a fully functioning democracy.

In particular, the likes of Facebook and Google needed to acknowledge that they were media companies – and accept the responsibilities that came with this. If they did, regulating them would be easier.

Ofcom’s powers should be clarified and, if necessary, extended to avoid the rise of “phoney” journalism online, said Puttnam.

Digital literacy was paramount in an internet age but, to date, Ofcom had failed to act. He said: “In the 2003 Communications Act, we went to extraordinary lengths to ensure that one of the statutory responsibilities given to Ofcom was digital literacy.

“I have to say that it has failed miserably. I don’t think it was ever taken seriously. It may well be that it was under-funded. But if it was, somebody should have come back and told us.

“Digital literacy is now at a crisis point. We’ve got to address this.”

Impartial, accurate broadcast news was a fragile medium that needed to be protected, so he welcomed the recent arrival of the BBC’s Reality Check service.

“We all have a personal responsibility to question the facts offered to us. It’s a challenging, but necessary, discipline,” said Puttnam. But he also wondered why the corporation had taken so long to introduce Reality Check as a response to fake news.

The BBC’s reporting of the EU referendum campaign had not been its finest hour, he suggested: “It was tortured over apparent balance. A lot of things that should have got said were not.” One example was a filmed BBC

interview in which Boris Johnson gave his unqualified support to the EU.

Lord Puttnam wanted to know why Johnson wasn’t confronted on *Newsnight* during the referendum campaign with a clip from “a BBC programme, five or six years ago, [in which] Boris said: ‘It is absolutely vital that Turkey finds its rightful place in an ever-expanding Europe.’”

The EU gave some protection to the UK to stand up to the giants of “data capitalism”, he argued, so abandoning this was asking for trouble.

He also claimed that most Chinese people thought the UK was crazy to leave the EU. He quoted research suggesting that they regard Europe as a place of stability in a troubled world: “They think that this group of 28 nations can get together and work together and create peace in a region that has been tortured by war, [and] is a remarkable achievement, and it gives them hope.

“Why on earth would we not wish to be part of that extraordinary global experiment? Believe me, they think we are mad.”

Lord Puttnam insisted that it was possible to resist the excesses of the internet giants, but only if “every single one of us” upped our game.

In a subsequent question and answer session, chaired by ex-culture minister Ed Vaizey, Puttnam criticised press regulator IPSO for being run and funded by the people it was intended to regulate. He also called for the implementation of part two of the Leveson Inquiry (intended to look into the specifics of the phone-hacking scandal) and hailed the *Financial Times* as a beacon of journalistic excellence.

“If the *FT* is untruthful, it goes out of business. There is nowhere else for it to go. It is totally reliant on people’s belief in it,” he said. “It’s trapped, if you like, in its own truth. Why shouldn’t that be true of other forms of communication?” ■

‘You ain’t seen nothin’ yet!’ was an RTS lecture given by Lord Puttnam at Channel 4’s London HQ on 4 October. The producer was Sue Robertson.

DIGITAL LITERACY IS NOW AT A CRISIS POINT

OUR FRIEND IN THE FORCES

How many TV-channel bosses run an ice-cream van? Plus a broadcast centre beaming television worldwide, a string of radio stations, a website and a cinema chain. Not to mention a live-events outfit and a media-skills academy.

Being chief executive of the Services Sound and Vision Corporation (despite the name, a charity) is arguably the ultimate media-mogul job, if you don't measure it by profit but by the sheer breadth of activities.

Let's face it, not even Lord Hall has a Mr Whippy in his empire. Not yet, anyway. Stand by for one in WIA.

SSVC has been informing, entertaining, connecting and championing the British Armed Forces since the early 1980s, when it took over the British Forces Broadcasting Service. The first BFBS radio station opened in Algiers in 1944, apparently above a brothel.

When the Cold War was at its most frozen, there were six stations in Germany, alone. No British Sunday lunchtime was complete without *Family Favourites*. Some of the most famous broadcasting names did stints at BFBS: Cliff Michelmore, Raymond Baxter, David Jacobs, Sarah Kennedy and Gloria Hunniford.

Today, both the media and military landscapes look very different. The return home of thousands of troops from Afghanistan and Germany ("rebasing" in the jargon) prompted my predecessor, Nick Pollard, to set up Forces TV, initially dedicated to military news, on donated channels on Sky and Virgin. This autumn, Forces TV launched on Freeview HD.

The channel has evolved into an action and armed-forces channel, playing an eclectic mix of classic

Few media moguls
can count an
ice-cream van
as part of their
empire, but
Simon Bucks can



SSVC

comedy and drama, such as *Knight Rider*, *Airwolf*, *Goodnight Sweetheart* and *Hogan's Heroes*, as well as our own military news, sport and factual programmes.

The daily, half-hour *British Forces News* show reflects the forces' activities on land, at sea and in the air, covered by a team of reporters, crews and VJs, including correspondents in Cyprus and Germany. Our own reporting is supplemented by generous support from our friends in the mainstream newsrooms, especially the BBC.

Although SSVC is partly funded by the Ministry of Defence, Forces TV is quite separate and doesn't cost the taxpayer a bean.

Forces News, which is also online and on radio, is impartial, editorially independent and regulated by Ofcom – but "forces friendly".

Its twin missions are to inform the "armed forces family" of serving men and women, reservists, cadets, veterans and their kith and kin, while keeping their work firmly in the public eye.

It covers defence and security stories in much greater depth than the mainstream channels. When the new carrier *HMS Queen Elizabeth* departed from Portsmouth, the coverage ran to 18 minutes, compared with 15 seconds on the *BBC News at Ten*.

Many staff are security-cleared but, just as importantly, are experts at decoding the acronyms and abbreviations beloved by the military. Did you know that 2 PWRR is the Second Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment? Or that they are generally known as "The Tigers"?

After a career in civvy TV, it's been a steep learning curve. The nearest I came to joining up was an inglorious stint in the school cadet corps, when I nearly blew off someone's head with a blank from a .303 rifle, fired at close range.

That was the fun bit; the square-bashing and the kit-cleaning with "Blanco" rather less enjoyable. Now, I have an unconditional VIP pass to the fun bits of military life, such as career-ing around the Canadian prairie in the commander's truck and joining a live-fire exercise in the Brunei jungle.

And the ice-cream van? That's another fun bit. It was one of the first welfare bills I signed off as a new CEO, and it's worth every penny. When it rolls into military bases, the free cornets and cones put huge smiles on the faces of children and adults alike – 99, anyone? ■

Simon Bucks is CEO of Services Sound and Vision Corporation. Forces TV is on Freeview HD channel 96, Sky 264, Virgin 277 and Freesat 165. The daily, half-hour British Forces News is available online at www.forces.net.

How C4 teased Humans

Christos Savvides discussed the development and delivery of the award-winning, multi-platform promotional campaign for Channel 4's sci-fi drama *Humans* at an RTS Bristol event during Digital Bristol Week in October.

The innovative campaign for the first series in 2015, which displayed no Channel 4 branding, was designed to hoodwink the public into thinking that "synthetic humans" were available to purchase.

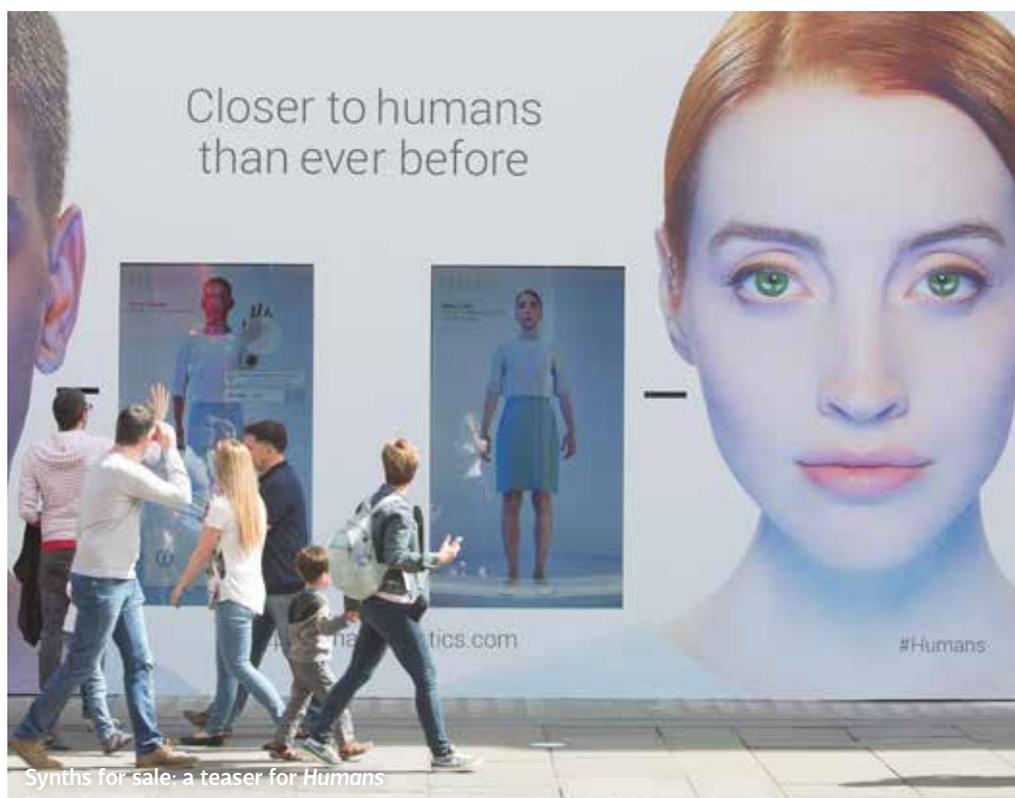
As part of a teaser campaign for the series, senior digital producer Savvides and other members of Channel 4's in-house creative agency, 4creative, devised a fictional brand, "Persona Synthetics", which purported to manufacture the "synths" – artificial humans – in the show.

The campaign also featured the first fake auction permitted by eBay and a bogus shop front, on London's Regent Street, masquerading as Persona Synthetics' flagship store.

"I liked the idea of having a physical place where you could see the product," explained Savvides at the event, which was chaired by Rob Hifle, director of Bristol-based design company BDH.

The first episode of *Humans* attracted 6.1 million viewers, Channel 4's biggest drama audience in 20 years.

Persona Synthetics trended



Channel 4

as the top search on Google and Twitter on the drama's opening weekend; within three weeks, Persona's website had received more than 1 million hits.

Savvides said that he was delighted "with how much people played along with" the promotional campaign. "They had fun with [it] and tagged their friends to see if they got it, too. It was all about entertaining people, getting them to interact and giving people more."

The campaign to promote the second series of *Humans*, which aired on Channel 4 in late 2016, featured another "first" – a partnership with Facebook that produced the first AI-powered Facebook Messenger bot created purely for entertainment purposes in Europe.

Suzy Lambert

Digital Bristol Week, a series of events across the city, ran from 16 to 20 October and was hosted by BBC Academy.

Bristol hones skills

■ In a session on digital skills hosted by RTS Bristol Chair Lynn Barlow, a panel of industry professionals talked about how to stand out in a competitive marketplace.

Joe Godwin, director of both BBC Academy and BBC Midlands, said: 'Immerse yourself in the latest technology and look at how other people are using it, but be aware that making content is still about ideas and storytelling – and understanding your audience.'

Andie Clare, director of production at local indie Icon Films, talked about researchers still needing to pick up the phone and knowing how to find a good story.

Films at 59 operations manager Stuart Dyer provided an overview of roles in

post-production. He advised: 'We can teach you the technical side of things, but be nice, hard working and positive – working in this industry is a lifestyle choice and about putting in the extra.'

Christos Savvides reflected on joining the 4creative team four years earlier and making the role his own: 'It's about [having] good emotional intelligence to help the team create better work. Don't feel possessive about your work – you need to be able to collaborate.'

Navi Lamba, social media manager at BBC Three, talked about having a so-called 'side hustle' when she was a student – she learned how to edit and write, so she had some skills by the time she graduated.

Salford lad gives NW lecture

Mr Manchester is rightly remembered each year by RTS North West's Anthony H Wilson Memorial Lecture, which this year was given by the Salford-born comedian and actor John Thomson.

Tony Wilson, who died 10 years ago, was one of the region's defining media figures. For more than three decades, he appeared on North West and national TV screens. He also ran Factory Records, home to Joy Division and New Order, as well as founding The Hacienda nightclub.

Chaired by *Granada News* presenter Lucy Meacock – a former colleague of Wilson on *Granada Reports* and *Granada Upfront* – the lecture drew a large audience of 150 people to the Lowry Theatre, Salford, in mid-October.

Thomson is best known for his roles as Pete Gifford in ITV comedy-drama *Cold Feet* and



John Thomson; and behind, Tony Wilson and Lucy Meacock in *Granada Upfront*

Claire Harrison/Granada

in BBC Two sketch show *The Fast Show*. In the latter, Thomson played the much-loved jazz-club owner with the catchphrase “Nice!”.

“If it hadn’t been for

Granada Television, I would not be sitting here now,” said Thomson, who appeared as a young comic in the 1993 Granada sketch show *The Dead Good Show*.

The night was filled with the wit of Thomson, who described working in the North as “cheap, friendly and inclement”.

Charlotte Oxborough

Thames Valley puts cyber safety first

■ There are two types of businesses – those that have been hacked and those that don’t know they’re being hacked, argued Robert May, head of IT support company Ramsac.

May, who is also ambassador for cyber security and technology at the Institute of Directors, was speaking at a Thames Valley Centre event on cyber security in October.

May told the group of broadcast professionals that companies are often unaware that hackers have broken into their IT systems. The offenders don’t always

act immediately but lie in wait, gathering information to either commit fraud or to use the computer systems to infiltrate other users.

The cost to global industry is expected to reach \$7tr by 2020, with an average cost to each hacked UK business of £300,000. The biggest sources of cyber-security vulnerabilities are outdated operating systems and users’ poor understanding and appreciation of personal security, especially when maintaining passwords.

Two-factor authentication – a user name and password,

plus another piece of information known only to the user – as used by Google’s Gmail and Microsoft’s Office 365 services, is still the most effective defence against hacking attacks.

Denis Onuoha, Arqiva’s chief information security officer, revealed that broadcast engineers mistakenly believe that the serial digital interface (SDI) used in video is immune to cyber attacks.

Encoder farms that use network connectivity for configuration and monitoring, said Onuoha, are at risk.

If hackers infiltrate a

broadcaster’s network, they will gain access to the encoder farm regardless of whether the video travels over SDI. Security is further compromised by using common usernames such as “admin” and passwords of “1234”, he added.

Cyber attacks are big business, and Onuoha spoke of the criminal and terrorist networks that are often behind hacks. “It’s not personal,” he said, “they’re just running a business, although a highly illegal one, and are generally just out to make money.”

Tony Orme

An evening with Fiona Armstrong

Over the course of “An evening with Fiona Armstrong”, an audience of 100-plus people were taken through the life and career of a broadcasting icon by radio executive John Myers.

The current ITV *Border Life* and former *News at Ten* presenter won the Outstanding Contribution to Television Award at the RTS North East and the Border Awards in February this year.

Armstrong began her on-screen career with the then-Border Television, following a stint on local radio and with the BBC news team in Manchester. She left the region to work for ITN and, later, for GMTV and the BBC.

Jim Graham, former head of Border Television, paid a heartfelt tribute to Armstrong at the Carlisle event, which the University of Cumbria hosted in early October, in association with the North East and the Border Centre.

Myers, who was born in the city, talked to Armstrong about her career in news, which included covering the 1988 Lockerbie air disaster.

He also discussed her love of fishing and how she manages to combine her role in the media with her duties as Lord Lieutenant of Dumfries.

“We were thrilled to be able to co-host, with the RTS and ITV Border, an event to celebrate the career and significant achievements of



Fiona Armstrong

Graeme Aldous

Fiona Armstrong, and to provide a real-life industry experience for [our] media and performing students,” said University of Cumbria vice-chancellor Professor Julie Mennell.

The event was produced by BBC Radio Cumbria’s Harry King, a former producer/director at Border Television, supported by BA performing arts student Katy Wright.
Philip May



Public domain

Why Ofcom should protect democracy

Facebook should be regulated like a utility, said former Welsh Government minister Leighton Andrews, who gave the RTS Wales annual lecture in mid-October.

Speaking at the Senedd, the home of the National Assembly for Wales in

Cardiff, Andrews, a former BBC head of public affairs who is now a professor at Cardiff Business School, said: “There is growing concern about the role of Facebook in the US elections and the UK Brexit referendum.

“We know that, at different

times, Facebook’s infrastructure may have been utilised by hostile countries, by criminals and by terrorists.

“We know that electoral laws in relation to Facebook advertising are inadequate.

“We know that Facebook collects enormous quantities

of data on its users and its algorithms use that data to target advertising at individuals.

Andrews said that, despite Facebook being “one of the most powerful communication companies ever created”, it largely lies outside UK and EU media laws and regulations.

He called on Facebook to be regulated as an “information utility, brought firmly within communications legislation, with a lead regulator, probably Ofcom, empowered to monitor and take action if needed”.

Andrews rejected the arguments advanced by Ofcom CEO Sharon White that regulation of social-media platforms was close to censorship. He said: “Ofcom regulates the BBC. Do people suggest that they are censoring the BBC? I think not.”

Amsterdam tech fest trends

Artificial intelligence, virtual reality and high dynamic range featured strongly at IBC 2017 in mid-September.

A panel of experts picked through the highlights of the annual media and technology convention for a London Centre event, organised jointly with the Institution of Engineering and Technology.

There were fewer “buzz words”, reckoned Sinead Greenaway, UKTV’s chief technology and operations officer. In the past, she said, it had been easy to say it was “the year of 4K or 3D” at IBC. This year “was much more evenly spread in terms of the subject matter”, which made IBC “less faddy – it felt like it had some substance”.

Greenaway was less pleased at UKTV being seen as a “traditional broadcaster” at IBC, in contrast to the “super digitals” such as Amazon, Netflix and Facebook. “The vendor community



Naturally, delegates can cycle to IBC at Amsterdam’s RAI Centre

doesn’t really understand the complexity of what we broadcast. Our business has an OTT [over-the-top] service, supplies a lot of complex platform VoD and has a thriving linear business,” she said.

Penny Westlake, European director of Interra Systems, which sells media quality-control products, agreed that no single subject dominated but said that AI had come to the fore during IBC.

“I think it’s going to be a long time before we see full AI [in TV]. It does compose music, but there will always be a role for the human dimension because, ultimately, content is produced by humans for humans. AI, by definition, is a different sort of intelligence,” she said.

Nick Lodge who produced the advances in technology sessions at IBC, revealed that AI accounted for 10% to 12% of the submissions he had received to make a presentation at the convention.

He was impressed by the use of AI at Brazilian TV network Globo, which was “revolutionising” its business.

Globo uses AI to mine public records, which the company says takes seconds to do what a journalist could do in a week. As a result, Lodge said, the broadcaster was cutting journalists and employing more IT people.

It also harnesses AI to analyse data to produce personalised programme recommendations, which

Reasons to be cheerful at IBC

■ A sell-out audience listened intently to a six-strong panel discussing the highlights of IBC 2017 at a joint RTS Thames Valley and Southern event in Basingstoke in early October.

Despite the prevalence of AI and machine learning in Amsterdam – which some fear could see workers replaced by machines – the panellists remained optimistic.

Peter Owen, a part-time consultant for IBC, offered a history of the trade fair, from humble beginnings at London’s Royal Lancaster Hotel in 1967, with just 32 exhibitors and 500 delegates, to today’s

behemoth of 1,600 exhibitors and 55,000 delegates.

The market for hardware may be shrinking but that for software is expanding, leading to many opportunities for new service providers. But Boxer Systems chief technology officer Marc Risby and Cinegy product manager Lewis Kirkaldie advised caution when adopting IP systems. The duo argued that it was important to choose the right technology – and not IP because it was the fashion.

Peter Weitzel from the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers spoke

about the successful release of the ST2110 standard and its role in guaranteeing reliable delivery of video and audio over IP networks.

NEP Bow Tie technical operator (and industry newbie) Dan Leedham spoke of his delight in seeing broadcasting giants openly sharing resources and collaborating.

Susan Pratt, course leader in TV and film production technology at Surrey University, offered a voice of caution in the IP cloud debate, however, arguing: ‘If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.’

Tony Orme

Globo claims has led to a 30% increase in views.

Lodge highlighted the work of Japanese broadcaster NHK, which demonstrated a commentary on a tennis match, produced “synthetically and driven entirely by data gathered using AI. It was simply amazing – you would not know it was produced without human intervention. It didn’t sound like a robot.”

VR was another popular technology. “I don’t think it’s going to be mass market, but it’s going to live alongside other things,” said Lodge. “There is interest in bringing together social media and VR, so we can meet our friends in virtual space.”

The consultant also revealed that an Austrian study had successfully tested a “[TV] remote control that could tell in two seconds who you are by the way you pick it up” using soft biometrics.

Digital executive producer Muki Kulhan, who ran the social-media element of the “What caught my eye” sessions at IBC, said that she felt like a “big kid in a candy store” at the convention. Kulhan was impressed by a new broadcast mobile journalism app from City Producer, which makes it easier to shoot, edit and post good-quality video from a smartphone to social media within minutes.

High dynamic range pictures, argued Westlake, “came of age”. “We’re starting to see reasonably priced consumer sets. It’s going to give people a few more creative possibilities at the production end when they’re shooting. And, also, for the home experience, particularly on a big screen in the living room, people are going to start to notice if they don’t have it.”

Matthew Bell



Archive comes alive in Dublin

The Republic of Ireland Centre was given an insight into the wonders of the Irish Film Archive at its October event, held at RTÉ Studios in Dublin.

Archive head Kasandra O’Connell explained that the Irish Film Institute’s archive collection was a unique cultural and historical resource,

spanning from 1897 to the present day. Amateur films and newsreels are preserved alongside feature films and documentaries by leading directors such as Jim Sheridan and Neil Jordan.

The collection provides a wealth of material for those interested in Ireland’s moving-image heritage, some of

which O’Connell screened at the event. It includes more than 30,000 cans of film, 10,000 broadcast tapes and an extensive document collection, with original film scripts, production notes and publicity material.

“The archive collects material made in or about Ireland or with a strong Irish connection, and depositors include individuals, production companies, professional bodies and government departments,” she explained. “[It] has a non-purchase acquisition policy and acquires material from those eager to see Ireland’s moving-image heritage preserved and centralised. More than 700 donors have entrusted their material to our care over the years.”

Collections also include the Radharc Archive of documentaries and the Amharc Éireann newsreels, as well as films from a large number of religious and missionary organisations.

Recent indigenous production comes to the archive via preservation agreements with the two largest state funders of film and television works, the Irish Film Board and the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland.

Charles Byrne

Centre goes to the flicks in Belfast

■ RTS Northern Ireland Centre received a behind-the-screens visit to the Movie House cinema in Belfast’s South Side in early October to see, close-up, how a digital cinema works.

Yorkgate, which switched to digital projection five years ago, is a huge multiplex, with 14 screens. The Centre saw a mix of Barco 2K-12C and Barco 4K-23B digital projectors – although, as IT manager Brendan Leaden explained, the majority of films shown

are still shot in 2K. The Barco projectors are lamp-based, with a xenon light source, suitable for screens up to 12 metres wide.

Leaden explained that the brain of the entire site is the Theatre Management System (TMS), the central repository for all content. The TMS communicates with all other external systems, including advertising and film distribution networks. It pieces together all the content into a playlist, which it delivers to

each auditorium. And the system also monitors the quality of lighting, projectors and soundtracks.

Leaden predicted that the next step in projector technology would see the xenon light source replaced by laser technology, which is easier and cheaper to operate – and of higher quality. A laser light source has twice the brightness of the xenon-based projector and a lifetime in excess of 30,000 hours.

John Mitchell

Bristol turns spotlight on news

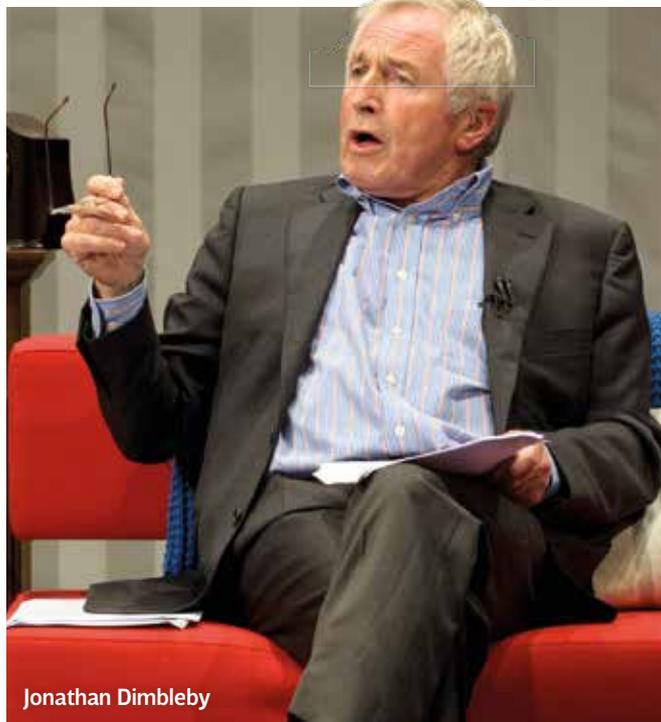
Some of the biggest champions of local reporting joined a BBC Bristol debate that celebrated 60 years of its regional news. The October event was supported by the RTS and the University of the West of England.

Jonathan Dimbleby was in the chair to lead a 90-minute discussion, “Have we got news for you?”, on the future of local news. The panellists were: journalist and academic Roy Greenslade; controller of BBC English regions David Holdsworth; Ujima FM station manager Julz Davis; and Trinity Mirror editor Rachael Sugden.

The event featured filmed provocations from Richard Sambrook, director of the Centre for Journalism at Cardiff University, who charted the decline in print media.

Sun columnist and *Loose Women* panellist Jane Moore tackled internet bots and social platforms in her film, *Separating Fact from Fiction*, and BBC media editor Amol Rajan guided the audience at the Arnolfini in Bristol through the maze of news platforms.

Sambrook set the scene at the event, outlining a “crisis in local journalism” that has seen 300 local papers close



Jonathan Dimbleby

BBC

in the past decade, 17 this summer alone. “Local newspapers used to be local institutions, now their influence has shrunk as the internet takes profits and readers away. The losers are responsible local news and the public interest. Fewer journalists, fewer hard questions,” he said in his film.

The audience of journalists, politicians, community activists and students heard Rajan

say: “I’d argue that our news ecosystems have changed more in the past five years than the past 500. The trend is for bite-sized, glance-able content. Information needs to fit in to how people live their lives – convenient, discoverable content at a time of their choice, not ours.”

The pressure to find brand loyalty is acute, he added. Half of people who view news on social media do not

know where it originated, or who wrote and produced it.

That theme was echoed in Moore’s film. She said that we were living in a gigantic global newsroom, where it is increasingly difficult to separate fact from fiction.

Moore cited a tweet from President Trump threatening North Korea. It was shared by 4,272 Twitter accounts in 24 hours – but a yet-to-be-published study by Exeter University would show that around 1,000 were accounts operated by bots, used to amplify the importance of the story. Untangling the truth from “clicks” was becoming more complex, she argued.

Davis called for more investment in community radio and citizen journalism to report the stories that went unheard and the issues that weren’t covered as the number of reporters in our towns and cities shrank.

In *Any Questions?* style, Dimbleby, the host of the BBC Radio 4 programme, fielded questions from the audience throughout the evening, adding some sage thoughts of his own, including: “A lie travels half way around the world before the truth has time to get its boots on.”

Lynn Barber

ONLINE at the RTS

■ Dumping a group of engineers in the wilderness might not sound like a recipe for success, but ex-marine Ant Middleton marshals the wayward bunch into survival superstars in Channel 4’s new reality show, *Escape*. Executive producer Simon Knight shares his stories from the shoot (www.rts.org.uk/EscapeBTS).

■ Dave aims to make a splash in the world of live sports. Not long ago the home of *Top Gear* reruns, the channel now boasts a number of prime sporting events, including a mixed martial arts series and a run of boxing fight nights. We have been charting the channel’s foray into a crowded market (www.rts.org.uk/article/livesportonDave).

■ Astronaut Tim Peake wowed the crowd at the IET in central London with his tales of space travel. He tackled tough questions from five-year-old Barnaby and an equally excited digital minister Matt Hancock with equal aplomb. Catch the full video of the terrific event at www.rts.org.uk/article/TimPeakeRTS.

■ Television is a hard nut to crack for the next generation of screenwriters. Ryan Brown, who won the Bafta new writing prize for TV drama in 2016, gives his tips for wannabe Wainwrights and budding Brookers. Take a chance on a competition, he says (www.rts.org.uk/RyanBrown).

Ed Gove

A packed auditorium at Channel 4 welcomed execs from the UK's five major TV channels to an RTS Futures event, which lifted the lid on some of TV's more interesting, but less common, jobs.

At the late-September session, "Ever wondered what it would be like to work for a TV channel?", acquisitions, commissioning, marketing, media law and scheduling – rather than running and researching or presenting and producing – were under discussion.

Jay Davidson described her route into commissioning as "convoluted". The BBC Two and BBC Four assistant commissioner moved from record labels to Radio 1Xtra to BBC television via a series of marketing roles.

"My expertise is understanding audiences, really knowing what makes them tick," explained Davidson. "I've used my marketing expertise in a commissioning situation."

Programmes that appeal to her tell "stories that have never been told" and give a "voice to the voiceless". Offering advice to the young Futures audience hoping to break into TV, Davidson said: "The best route in is doing it – it's making, writing, shooting or lighting your content. It's experiential, rather than talking about it."

Sky acquisitions manager Jack Oliver's first experience of telly was a "summer job at the BBC booking cabs" before he went to university. After graduating, he found some work experience at the BBC and then landed a job with the corporation, where he worked with fellow panellist Paul Fagan.

The latter is currently Channel 5's business affairs chief, and is responsible for negotiating commercial contracts with film studios and programme producers.



TV's less obvious jobs

Fagan studied law at university, but his "passion was for film, theatre and the arts".

He rejected a "pure legal career" and moved into theatre management, before landing a job with the BBC's artist contract department. "They wanted someone with a legal qualification but with a passion for the arts. That got me into telly," he said.

E4 and More4 channel manager Kiran Nataraja summarised her job as "looking to produce the most creatively interesting and competitive, and commercially viable, schedules".

In scheduling, she added, "you feel you are at the hub of the channel and get to liaise with people from all parts of the business".

Nataraja described herself as a "TV obsessive. The dream for me, originally, was to be a *Blue Peter* presenter." After

university, she applied for a host of TV roles, but was "knocked back so many times – it was heartbreaking". Eventually, she joined the BBC in a data-entry role and then moved into scheduling. "As a scheduler, you do become a bit of a data geek. You have to be really interested in audience figures," she said.

ITV2 marketing manager Rob Shead broke into television following a stint at Cancer Research UK, working in the same area. "If you have experience in marketing a brand, [those skills] are transferable," he said.

When a job opportunity came up at ITV2, Shead said it was a "no brainer" to apply. "I watched *TOWIE*, *Love Island* and *Celebrity Juice* – it was right up my street. So, I went to the interview and got it."

Discussing the skills

needed for their jobs, the panel highlighted the need to get on with people.

"Relationship management is really important," said Shead. Oliver added: "All of [our] jobs involve being good at relationships."

"Whenever something goes wrong, generally the scheduling will be blamed – so you have to have nerves of steel. Good communication skills and resilience are needed," said Nataraja.

"People think TV is really glamorous, but mostly it's work," added Davidson. "Be the person who listens – they are often the person that resolves stuff. If you're solving problems, you're seen as very valuable."

Matthew Bell
Capital Breakfast show and *4Music* host Vick Hope chaired the event, which was produced by Sasha Breslau and Alex Wootton.

OFF MESSAGE

In case you hadn't noticed, it's been a hectic autumn in the never ending game of TV musical chairs. Huge congratulations to broadcasting's fastest talker, Jay Hunt, who was snapped up by the biggest of the tech giants, Apple.

Flush from the success of the *Bake Off* reboot – Off Message will be returning to that subject later in this column – the erstwhile Channel 5, BBC One and Channel 4 commissioner extraordinaire brings an unrivalled depth of TV experience to her latest media perch.

It is hard to disagree with the verdict of ex-Apple analyst Gene Munster. Quoted in the *FT*, he suggested that hiring Hunt was another example of the behemoth employing “the best talent in the world”.

One minor quibble – was it just Off Message or did the *FT* caricature of Jay holding a giant Apple logo bear absolutely no resemblance to her?

■ **The size of Jay Hunt's new commissioning budget – some estimate that Apple is preparing to shell out \$5bn on content over the next five years – is enough to make her Horseferry Road spend resemble the proverbial chicken feed.**

This is something that will be concentrating Ian Katz's mind as he prepares to join Channel 4 as director of programmes in the New Year.

Some eyebrows have been raised in TV land regarding the former *Newsnight* editor's lack of small-screen experience beyond news and current affairs journalism.

But there is a precedent of sorts in

engaging someone like the mischief-making Katz at Channel 4. Readers whose memories stretch back to the broadcaster's beginnings will recall that Channel 4's first creative chief, Liz Forgan, was a newspaper person through and through.

And, like Katz, she was well versed in the values of the *Guardian*, having spent four years there as women's editor prior to being recruited by Channel 4's founder, Jeremy Isaacs.

Katz's stint at the *Guardian* lasted more than two decades and he was disappointed at failing to succeed Alan Rusbridger as editor.

So, is it back to the future for the UK's most mischievous TV station? Can we look forward to the return of *Brookside* or *The Tube*?

■ Katz's abrupt departure from New Broadcasting House leaves another big job to fill for whoever succeeds the outgoing head of news, the charming James Harding.

He, too, was devoid of TV expertise when he joined the BBC, having previously edited the *Times* and trod the media beat at the *FT*.

Will Tony Hall again go for an outsider to fill this job, or is a promotion in line for someone closer to home? The widely liked Fran Unsworth is considered to be a leading candidate. Currently head of the World Service, she is well qualified to lead the BBC's news teams during challenging times.

■ **As UK broadcasters contemplate the continuing impact of the tech giants, it is easy to lose a sense of perspective about the importance of what we must still describe as**

traditional, linear TV. It might be salutary, perhaps, for the Faang companies to consider that in the last week of October – when sex pests on both sides of the Atlantic generated headlines – that the news agenda was dominated by an altogether more cheerful topic: who would win this year's *Bake Off* crown?

Thanks to Prue Leith's Twitter malfunction, some of us discovered the winner's name before we'd put the finishing touches to our Halloween decorations.

But, far from diminishing interest in the cake contest, Leith's error was splashed over the front pages of at least two newspapers – drawing even more attention to the *Bake Off* finale.

Make no mistake, television remains smack, bang in the centre of our cultural life.

■ While we're on the subject of the power of TV, Off Message must congratulate all of those involved in the making of *Blue Planet II*. There are few superlatives that do justice to this superb piece of telly.

For once, the hype was totally justified. Imagine trying to pitch a programme presented by a 91-year-old man featuring pictures of fearsome sea creatures.

No cute animals – well, maybe a few dolphins and the odd polar bear – and a sparsely written commentary that contains some frightening stuff concerning the impact of climate change.

And then guarantee an overnight audience measured in double figures. Most commissioners wouldn't even bother to sanction a meeting.



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