

# Television

# IS BIGGER BETTER?

Will consolidation help TV tip the scales against the tech giants?



# Do you want a career in factual TV?

We've invited some of the busiest and best factual companies in the Yorkshire region for a day of careers advice and networking.

Hear how the producers of award-winning shows such as *The Yorkshire Vet*, *Catching A Killer* and *Teen Mom UK* work, and what they are looking for when recruiting.

1 November

2:00pm-5:00pm

At

Leeds College of Music,  
3 Quarry Hill, Leeds LS2 7PD

To register, please email  
[RTSYorkshireEvents@rts.org.uk](mailto:RTSYorkshireEvents@rts.org.uk)

## From the CEO



First of all, I'd like to congratulate Viacom International Media Networks, as the main sponsor of the RTS London Conference, for delivering such a very special day. Huge thanks to Viacom's David Lynn and James Currell for all their hard work behind the scenes and thanks, too, for their zinging conference contributions.

The RTS was proud to have Bob Bakish, Viacom's CEO and President, as the international keynote speaker.

I am also extremely grateful to Matt Baker, who worked tirelessly to help make the day the success it

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was. Matt and his Viacom colleague James Harvey project managed the conference with flair.

Matt was also responsible for producing the laugh-out-loud video featuring Comedy Central stars Joel Dommett and Nish Kumar, which opened the proceedings.

With so many weighty topics to discuss, it was brilliant to have these two talented comedians inject a lighter note. Their sketch brought some fun to one of the day's themes – how media companies shape up to the streaming challenge.

Thanks, too, to Tony Hall and Sharon White for giving us such thoughtful and considered speeches. What they had to tell delegates will help influence

some of the key debates around British media for months to come.

I was pleased that Carolyn McCall and Alex Mahon – both making their RTS debuts in their current roles – were able to share their respective strategies for ITV and Channel 4. Tim Hincks, interviewing each executive, again proved to be a master of comic timing.

Kirsty Wark's trenchant and energetic interviewing style was another high point of the conference. Thanks also to all the session producers and to the event's executive producer, Helen Scott.

This edition of *Television* provides comprehensive coverage of all 12 sessions. Videos of each session are available on the RTS website.

Turning away from the conference, don't miss this month's *Our Friend in Scotland*. In his column, comedian Daniel Sloss explains in rather salty language why there is no substitute for doing stand-up in his home nation.

Finally, the RTS's busy autumn events season continues to roll out, in London, the nations and regions. Check out our website for all the details.

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## National events

### RTS EARLY EVENING EVENT

**Wednesday 24 October**

#### Who's watching? The challenge of digital TV measurement

Speakers: Rich Astley, chief product officer, Finecast; Matt Hill, research and planning director, Thinkbox; John Litster, MD, Sky Media; Sarah Rose, director of consumer insight, Channel 4; and Justin Sampson, CEO, Barb. Chair: Kate Bulkley, journalist. Tickets: £15. Free tickets for RTS full members must be booked in advance. 6:30pm for 6:45pm

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

### RTS FUTURES

**Wednesday 24 October**

#### The One Show

Join the audience for a live episode, with Martine McCutcheon on the couch and musical guest Paloma Faith set to perform. Before the show, RTS Futures members will have an exclusive Q&A with audience researcher Emmey Little. Tickets are free but must be booked in advance. 6:00pm-7:30pm  
Venue: *BBC New Broadcasting House, Portland Place, London W1A 1AA*

### RTS EARLY EVENING EVENT

**Wednesday 7 November**

#### Screening of *Tiny Shoulders: Rethinking Barbie*

The RTS and eOne invite you to an exclusive European debut screening of the Hulu documentary, followed by a Q&A with director Andrea Nevins and Kim Culmone, vice-president of Barbie design at Mattel. Tickets for RTS Members and a guest are complimentary but must be booked in advance. 5:30pm for 6:00pm start  
Venue: *Curzon Soho, 99 Shaftesbury Avenue, London W1D 5DY*

### RTS MASTERCLASSES

**Tuesday 13 November**

#### RTS Student Programme Masterclasses

and

**Wednesday 14 November**

#### RTS Craft Skills Masterclasses

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

### RTS AWARDS

**Monday 26 November**

#### RTS Craft & Design Awards 2018

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

### RTS FUTURES

**Wednesday 30 January 2019**

#### Careers Fair 2019

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

### AWARDS

**Wednesday 27 February 2019**

#### RTS Television Journalism Awards 2019

Sponsored by Guestbooker  
Venue: *London Hilton on Park Lane, 22 Park Lane, London W1K 1BE*

### AWARDS

**Tuesday 19 March 2019**

#### RTS Programme Awards 2019

In partnership with Audio Network

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

### AWARDS

**Friday 28 June 2019**

#### RTS Student Television Awards 2019

Venue: *BFI Southbank, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XT*

### RTS CONFERENCE

**18-20 September 2019**

#### RTS Cambridge Convention 2019

Venue: *King's College, Cambridge CB2 1ST*

## Local events

### DEVON AND CORNWALL

**Tuesday 6 November – date TBC**

#### Breaking into Media 2018

Venue: *The Drum Theatre, Theatre Royal, Royal Parade, Plymouth PL1 2TR*

**Thursday 15 November**

#### Working in journalism

2:00pm  
Venue: *Southampton Solent University, Spark Building, East Park Terrace, Southampton SO14 0YN*

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

### EAST

■ Nikki O'Donnell  
■ [nikki.odonnell@bbc.co.uk](mailto:nikki.odonnell@bbc.co.uk)

### LONDON

■ Daniel Cherowbrier  
■ [daniel@cherowbrier.co.uk](mailto:daniel@cherowbrier.co.uk)

### MIDLANDS

**Tuesday 16 October**

#### RTS Midlands careers fair

10:00am-5:00pm. Tickets: £10.  
Group bookings available via [RTSMidlands@rts.org.uk](mailto:RTSMidlands@rts.org.uk)  
Venue: *Edgbaston Stadium, Edgbaston Road, Birmingham B5 7QU*

**Thursday 25 October**

#### Animorsels – stop motion special

Bottletop, Antenna and the RTS invite you to an evening of bite-sized animation and drinks with guest speaker Jim Parkyn. Book tickets at [animorsels.co.uk](http://animorsels.co.uk). 6:00pm-9:00pm  
Venue: *Antenna Media Centre, Beck Street, Nottingham NG1 1EQ*

**Tuesday 20 November**

#### RTS Midlands Awards 2018

Venue: *Town Hall, Victoria Square, Birmingham B3 3DQ*  
■ Jayne Greene 07792 776585  
■ [RTSMidlands@rts.org.uk](mailto:RTSMidlands@rts.org.uk)

### NORTH EAST AND THE BORDER

**Thursday 18 October**

#### Behind the camera: workshop

A great opportunity to get to know each department behind the camera. Suitable for early-career professionals, practitioners and students. 3:30pm-5:00pm  
Venue: *Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, Middlesbrough TS1 2AZ*

**Thursday 18 October**

#### Exploring the Nile 360 with BBC Africa correspondent Alastair Leithead

Panel discussion about the production of BBC News's first VR documentary, *Damming the Nile*. This event is part of BBC Digital Cities North East, which runs 15-19 October. Visit [bit.ly/Digi-NE](http://bit.ly/Digi-NE) for more information. 5:30pm-7:00pm  
Venue: *Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, Middlesbrough TS1 2AZ*  
■ Jill Graham  
■ [jill.graham@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:jill.graham@blueyonder.co.uk)

### NORTH WEST

**Saturday 10 November**

#### RTS North West Awards 2018

Venue: *Hilton Deansgate, 303 Deansgate, Manchester M3 4LQ*  
■ Rachel Pinkney 07966 230639  
■ [RPinkney@rts.org.uk](mailto:RPinkney@rts.org.uk)

### NORTHERN IRELAND

**Thursday 15 November**

#### RTS Northern Ireland Programme Awards

Venue: *TBC*

**Tuesday 26 March 2019**

#### RTS Northern Ireland Student Television Awards

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

### REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

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

# RTS WEST of ENGLAND FUTURES FESTIVAL

## SCOTLAND

November 2018 – date TBC

### Launch of RTS Scotland Television Awards 2019

With STV's *Live at Five* team, winner of the 2018 Daytime Award. 6:30pm

Venue: TBC

- Jane Muirhead
- scotlandchair@rts.org.uk

## SOUTHERN

Wednesday 17 October

### IBC 2018 review

Panel discussion with Q&A. Joint event with RTS Thames Valley. 7:00pm for 7:30pm

Venue: QMC Television Studio, Cliddesden Road, Basingstoke RG21 3HF

- Stephanie Farmer
- SFarmer@bournemouth.ac.uk

## THAMES VALLEY

Wednesday 17 October

### IBC 2018 review

Panel discussion with Q&A. Joint event with RTS Southern. 7:00pm for 7:30pm

Venue: QMC Television Studio, Cliddesden Road, Basingstoke RG21 3HF

Friday 23 November

### 2018 Winter Ball

7:00pm till late  
Venue: De Vere Wokefield Estate, Goodboys Lane, Reading RG7 3AE

- Tony Orme
- RTSThamesValley@rts.org.uk

## WALES

Wednesday 17 October

### Making *Doctor Who*

With Simon Winstone, head of drama, Wales, BBC Studios, and Arwel Wyn Jones, production designer. 6:00pm

Venue: USW Atrium Theatre, Cardiff

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

## WEST OF ENGLAND

Wednesday 24 October

### Preview screening of *Fortitude* plus Q&A

With writer Simon Donald and executive producer Patrick Spence. Other speakers TBC. *Fortitude* was produced by Fifty Fathoms at the Bottle Yard Studios and on location in Svalbard, Norway. The evening will start with a screening of a short 'behind-the-scenes' film by boomsatsuma students from the media production diploma, who visited the *Fortitude* set  
Venue: Watershed, Bristol BS1 5TX

Wednesday 28 November

### RTS West of England Futures Festival 2018

Aimed at final-year students, recent graduates and emerging talent in the industry. Part of Digital Bristol Week  
Venue: Watershed, Bristol BS1 5TX

Thursday 6 December

### RTS West of England Big Fat Bumper Quizmas

Venue: TBC

- Belinda Biggam
- belindabiggam@hotmail.com

## YORKSHIRE

Thursday 1 November

### Factual TV careers event

We've invited some of the busiest and best factual companies in the Yorkshire region for a day of careers advice and networking. Hear how the producers of award-winning shows such as *The Yorkshire Vet*, *Catching a Killer* and *Teen Mom UK* work, and what they are looking for when recruiting. 2:00pm-5:00pm. To register your interest, please email RTSYorkshireEvents@rts.org.uk  
Venue: Leeds College of Music, 3 Quarry Hill, Leeds LS2 7PD

- Lisa Holdsworth 07790 145280
- lisa@allonewordproductions.co.uk



Final-year student?

Recent graduate?

Interested in TV?

Join us in Bristol on  
**28 November**

at Watershed, Bristol BS1 5TX





ROYAL  
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SOCIETY

# RTS Masterclasses

## 13-14 November

- RTS Student Programme  
Masterclasses: 13 November
- RTS Craft Skills Masterclasses:  
14 November

Venue: IET London WC2R 0BL

BOOK YOUR PLACE:  
**[www.rts.org.uk](http://www.rts.org.uk)**

# TV diary

**Trevor Phillips** questions the TV industry's attitude to sexual harassment and confesses that he was underwhelmed by *Bodyguard*



**H**aving inadvertently found myself in the headlines twice in the past month, I've given up trying to understand what makes today's news media pay attention.

Returning from the summer break, I pitched up at the Big Tent Ideas Festival, held in a field near Cambridge, to debate the future of AI and machine learning. To my nerdy mind, fears of massive job losses and robot control, stoked by people who can barely spell "algorithm", are misplaced.

More dangerous is "black-box" decision-making by machines using techniques that even the nerds no longer understand. The *Mail on Sunday* called before I'd even got off the stage.

But they weren't interested in the machines. They wanted to know why, when asked about civility in politics, I'd said that the Labour Party was led by "anti-Semites and racists". Puzzling, I thought: they'd been talking about that topic before I went away, and, anyway, everyone knows it's true. How is that even news?

■ I stepped down as President of the John Lewis Partnership Council in July. The retail sector is in meltdown, but we'd kept our heads above water. Until September. Just eight weeks after my departure, the employee-owned company announced that profits for the first half-year were down 99% on 2017.

I was tempted to point out – Trump-style – that the two events might have been connected. But, when I watched the partnership's new TV ad (a riff on Queen's *Bohemian Rhapsody*), I thought, better not.

It's the best John Lewis ad for years.

**Shoppers will be back (albeit online rather than in the stores). Anyone who hasn't seen it should go straight to YouTube. Get in a wad of tissues first. From Waitrose, of course.**

■ Started as a panellist on Sky's *The Pledge*, where each of five contributors gets to peddle a pet idea, and then has to defend it against all-comers.

The show came days after Boris Johnson's use of a metaphor involving a suicide vest. You don't have to agree with the substance of his remark to conclude that the media hysteria that follows this kind of controversy is simply stifling vivid speech in politics.

We complain that politicians are dull, yet we punish anyone who says anything memorable. Worse, people such as Johnson and Trump know that provocation is a great way to manipulate feeble-minded journos into amplifying their tunes.

■ We fell out over *Bodyguard*, possibly the most misogynist piece of TV I've seen in years. All the women were dim, devious, pusillanimous or all three.

Jed Mercurio, who we know to be some kind of writing genius, had some pretty rubbish (probably male) advice on this occasion. I am lucky to have known several of the real women who occupied the jobs portrayed – top politicians, cops and spooks; all of them forced their way to the top of male-dominated, sexist outfits by sheer character, and all of them can freeze molten lead with a glance at a range of 20 metres.

■ Chaired the RTS London Conference session on diversity. Thank you for the opportunity, Theresa

and team. Of course, all the bigwigs found that they had better things to do outside the hall.

As a result, they missed some wise words from WPP's Karen Blackett, among others, calling out the absence of minorities in TV's executive pipeline.

The media correspondents also managed to miss the point, focusing only on my observation that, when I started as a TV exec, most bosses' policy against sexual harassment amounted to warning young women to avoid getting into the lifts with the company perv. A pal of four decades agreed that complicity was probably still widespread. The story won headlines and a spate of TV interview requests. I hope it will also provoke some reflection by senior folk in the industry.

■ I've taken over as Chair of an executive recruitment business. Our major clients are in the engineering, financial tech and retail sectors, as well as government and charities.

Last week, I suggested to my board that we should do more work with TV and media organisations. TV is basically about finding, developing and showcasing expensive human capital. And, like us, the industry is keen on finding diverse talent.

Everyone shifted uncomfortably, until someone said briskly, "Media people? No money. Can't trust them. And you don't really believe they're serious about the diversity thing, do you? If they were, they'd have done something by now." Next business.

Unfair, of course. But, occasionally, it's good to see ourselves as others see us.

*Trevor Phillips is Chair of Index on Censorship and of interim and executive search consultancy Green Park.*

Media companies are consolidating and seeking innovative alliances to take on the streaming giants. **Matthew Bell** logs on

**F**ings ain't wot they used to be for the traditional television industry. Netflix and Amazon are already affecting viewing levels, with Apple and Google set to join Facebook at the feast. Will it be fangs for the memory for telly?

Faangs, an acronym for the US tech and media giants Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Netflix and Google, offer TV the modern way – streamed over the internet and watched when and where the viewer wants. Television, meanwhile, is lumbered with old-fashioned schedules.

The newcomers also have deep pockets. According to figures compiled by Deloitte for the RTS London Conference, Apple, Amazon, Alphabet (Google/YouTube) and Facebook dwarf the five largest traditional media companies (see table on page 11), with Netflix not far behind.

Yet, as the audience in this opening session, “A full set of Faangs”, discovered, the linear television industry is not downhearted.

“This new money coming in is a positive thing,” argued All3Media CEO Jane Turton.

“A bigger portion of our revenue is coming from Netflix and Amazon, not yet Apple, [though] we’re going to see that change very quickly,” said Darren Throop, CEO of Entertainment One, which owns popular programmes such as *Peppa Pig*.

He offered some reassurance to traditional media companies: “The broadcasters, which have been our customers for ever, continue to be a very, very important piece of [our business].”

But, suggested session chair Kate Bulkeley, is the global Faangs’ growth coming at the expense of local

content? “These big guys want to have big stars and international themes,” she suggested.

Turton disagreed. “They’ve got a whole portfolio of content – some of their most successful shows currently are so-called ‘local,’” she pointed out, offering Netflix’s acclaimed Spanish-language heist drama *La Casa de Papel* as an example. “I don’t think local is out by any means – it’s about quality.”

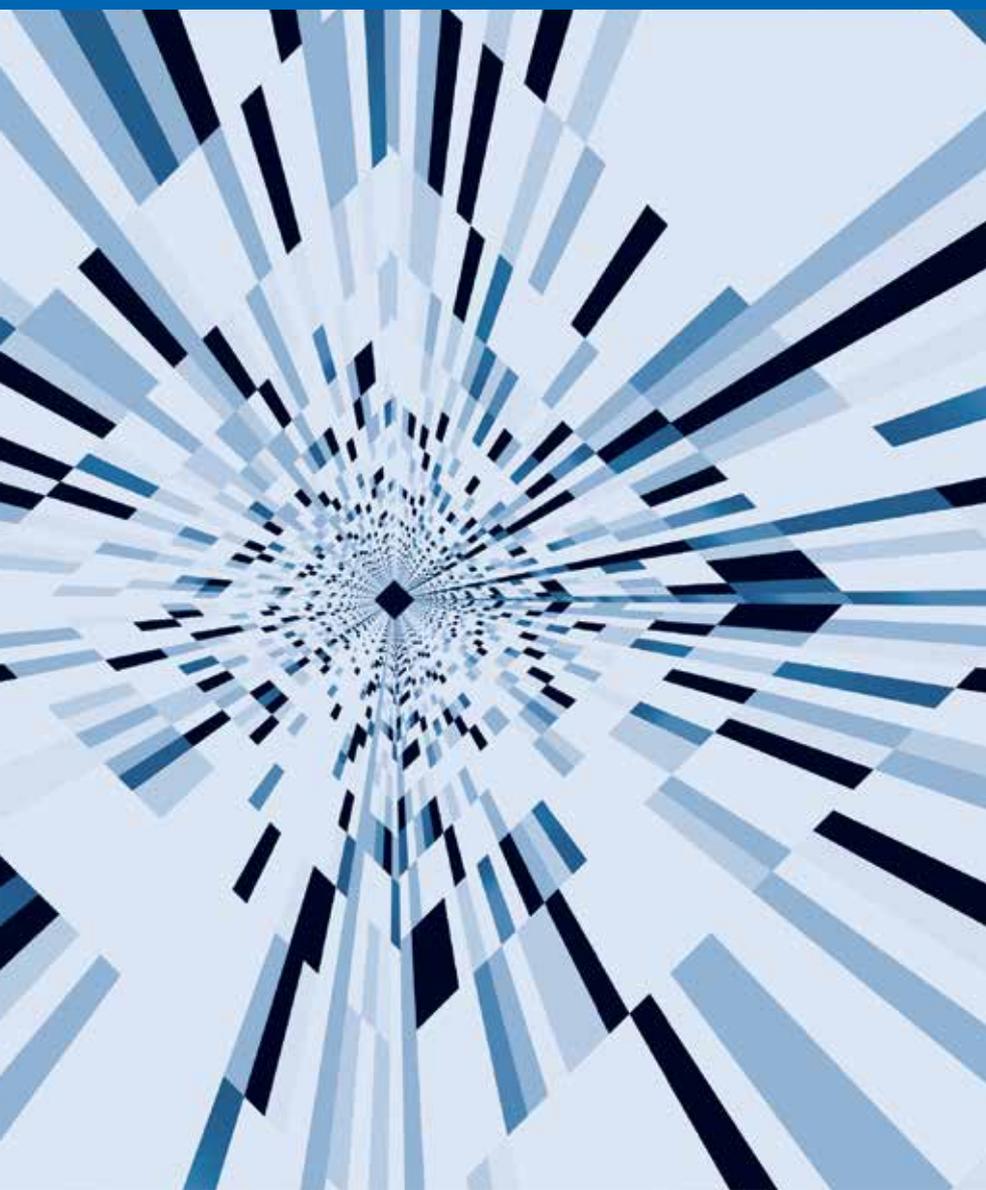
“The world is full of partnerships and opportunities,” said David Abraham, the former CEO of Channel 4, who set up his own creative company, Wonderhood Studios, earlier this year.

He cited the cross-platform deal recently announced by Sky and Channel 4, under which the two broadcasters will share Formula 1 coverage and dramas such as *No Offence* and *Tin Star*, as a “really innovative moment. I think there are going to be many more like that.”

# A full set of Faangs

## TV in 2023

- By 2023, the number of all TV episodes with a 5 million-plus audience may decline by two-thirds to about 200
  - UK SVoD subscriptions may rise to 35 million by 2023, spread among 19 million households
  - There may be an average of three pay-TV subscriptions per household in the UK
  - Viewers aged 50+ are likely to watch 15% of all television content on-demand
  - Over the next five years, TV advertising spend is predicted to increase by 5%, and digital video advertising spend by 109%.
- Source: Deloitte



## QUESTION & ANSWER

**Q** Is bigger better – how far will consolidation go?

**A** **Ed Shedd, Deloitte:** Large companies are becoming even larger in order to super-serve their customers and you've got niche companies that are looking to do a small range of things really well – and there's pretty much nothing in between.

**A** **Keith Underwood, Channel 4:** The media market is one that definitely rewards economies of scale – you can see that at the moment [in] the vast amount of mergers and acquisitions activity. But I don't think scale is a sufficient or necessary condition for success.

**A** **Marie Oldham, VCCP Media:** For everyone bigger, there will be someone small that comes up from the bottom and disrupts.

**A** **Danny Cohen, Access Entertainment:** In the UK, one of the big questions is: will the broadcasters be able to successfully come together to launch a shared SVoD service? Or is it too late?

**Q** What will be the biggest shift in viewer behaviour?

**A** **Ed Shedd, Deloitte:** Everyone we talk to [has] a millennial strategy; virtually no one we talk to has a strategy for the older generation, those over 55 – economic madness.

**A** **Marie Oldham, VCCP Media:** People are now not afraid to watch a whole series of Netflix on a [mobile phone] screen – they don't need a 46-inch TV any more.

**A** **Lindsey Clay, Thinkbox:** A dramatic change tends to happen when a new technology emerges that meets an existing need in a much better way... Actually, people's viewing needs are being pretty well met by a variety of TV services that are available at the moment.

Baltana.com

"The overall message," argued Virgin Media CEO Tom Mockridge, "is that demand [for TV] is growing. "That's creating all these opportunities and it's terrific for the industry."

These opportunities exist for the UK's public service broadcasters, not just the Faangs. "The PSBs have been very innovative. Let's remember iPlayer, ITV Player and All 4 – these services were out when Netflix was still posting DVDs in letterboxes," said Abraham. "We should recognise that the British system has led into this change and can continue to do so."

The panel turned to cord-cutting – where consumers cancel pay-TV subscriptions in favour of cheaper web streaming services – which some in the industry fear will cross the Atlantic from the US, where it has been wreaking havoc on cable TV companies' revenues. "It's not an issue," insisted Mockridge. "People are continuing to buy

linear pay-TV, people are continuing to watch PSB channels. And, in addition, they'll buy the online services."

As a producer, Turton said: "The biggest challenge for us is to get people to watch content. It sounds obvious but, certainly for a younger demographic, it is to get them off Instagram and into content. How do you do that? It must be about the quality of the content.

"Our challenge is to make sure our content is so unbelievably, desirably watchable that [viewers] will find it and watch it."

"Our primary job as producers is to get the content into the hands of consumers," said Throop. His company has a *Peppa Pig* direct-to-consumer subscription app and a YouTube channel, alongside the original TV programme.

"For a brand, we're looking for exposure, eyeballs and engagement with the consumer. So, we extrapolate that same content across as many >



From left: David Abraham, Tom Mockridge, Kate Bulkley, Jane Turton and Darren Throop

▶ platforms as we can, [which] is very good for us,” he added.

The trend in the TV industry is for companies to bulk up, either through acquiring rivals or being bought themselves, to achieve economies of scale.

It is, indeed, better to be bigger in the TV industry, agreed Mockridge, “but it cannot be an end in itself”. He said that anti-trust laws were critical “to ensure that the market does work”, and to promote market-based outcomes that express “the choice and the will of the people”. He added that these laws were needed so that “new entrants” to the market “don’t get crushed”.

Mockridge, who described Virgin Media as a “biggish company”, suggested that “being a challenger is a great position to be. I like competing with BT because they’re so big and not very agile.”

Faangs had been buying up TV talent – was there a British actor of note who hadn’t appeared in a Netflix Original?, asked Bulkley. Were UK production

companies the next item on their shopping lists? “It doesn’t look like it, does it?” conceded Turton. “For them, it’s about talent. I think that what we call the arms race for content is actually an arms race for talent. That’s what they’ve been concentrating on and they’ve been doing that aggressively over the past 18 months to two years.

“Will they go out and buy Endemol and [other] producing companies? I don’t think they need to.” All3Media itself is a large, global producer, owned by Liberty Global and Discovery.

“The model works very well for us,” said Turton. “Having big parents is helpful – it’s much easier to take a risk when you know you are well capitalised and of a size that allows you to fail.”

“Scale matters,” agreed Throop. “We have been fortunate enough to get to a size and scale where we’ve got a balance sheet that supports the risks we have to take as a company.

“We’d much rather be the consolidator than the consolidated. We’re

focused on the arms race for the talent right now and the underlying creative idea. If you own [an] idea, develop and incubate that idea: that gives you a place in the marketplace.”

The key to a prosperous future for UK broadcasting, argued Mockridge, is “keeping the business competitive, keeping the ideas flowing, keeping these distribution opportunities pumping revenue into the UK and seizing those opportunities – it’s the muscle of competition that’s going to make the difference. Of course, it’s going to be challenging, but it’s also very exciting”

Throop sounded confident about the future. “From a production and creative standpoint, people want to see ideas and stories that are relevant to them,” he said. “People in the UK are going to want to see UK stories. Regardless of whether the platform is app-based, whether it’s delivered globally by one company or whether it’s a bifurcated approach, where many different instances of the same content



Paul Hampartsoumian

## ‘WHAT WE CALL THE ARMS RACE FOR CONTENT IS ACTUALLY AN ARMS RACE FOR TALENT’

are served to the customer, the customer is going to, as always, seek out what they want.

“Overall, from a production standpoint, it’s only good news and will continue to be good news for us.”

Turton agreed with Throop: “Ultimately, the quality and the desirability of the content is the test. The tech obviously has to be there to allow them to access [the content], but people will find it and they will watch it, whatever the platform, because they know it’s good.

“They will test it, they will find it’s good and then continue to watch it.” ■

*Session 1, ‘A full set of Faangs’, was chaired by media commentator and journalist Kate Bulkley. The panellists were: David Abraham, founder, Wonderhood Studios; Tom Mockridge, CEO, Virgin Media; Darren Throop, President and CEO, Entertainment One; and Jane Turton, CEO, All3Media. The producer was Matt Baker.*

# QUESTION & ANSWER

**Q** What will be the impact of the new entrants such as Apple and Facebook?

**A** **Jonathan Barnard, Zenith:** They have huge reserves of cash to invest in new content. For the existing players, this is going to mean extra competition, lower profits and a harder life overall.

**A** **Danny Cohen, Access Entertainment:** The arms race for content is going to continue to intensify over the next few years – there’s no doubt about that. The really interesting question is who will follow Apple, Facebook and so on. There’s talk of Walmart entering the industry now.

**A** **Peter Bazalgette, ITV:** While there’s going to be an arms race in international drama and that will go on... there still ought to be a fantastic demand for great content about our own territory, made by producers in our own territory.”

**Q** How fast will cord-cutting accelerate?

**A** **Nick Herm, Sky:** I’m not sure that cord-cutting is taking place in the UK; it feels like it’s a US phenomenon and we’re just importing the language.

**A** **Ingrid Silver, Reed Smith:** Video-on-demand service suppliers will realise that they

are much better off operating as “frenemies” than competing head on – Netflix being offered as part of Virgin is a great instance of that.

**A** **Ed Shedd, Deloitte:** By 2023, every household in the UK will have at least three pay-TV subscriptions.

**Q** Which technological innovation will have the biggest impact?

**A** **Lindsey Clay, Thinkbox:** It’s very dangerous to make predictions about TV – look at all the fuss around 3D.

**A** **Nick Herm, Sky:** Virtual reality – I think it will probably take a little bit longer than we expect to really deliver, but I think, when it does, it will be transformational.

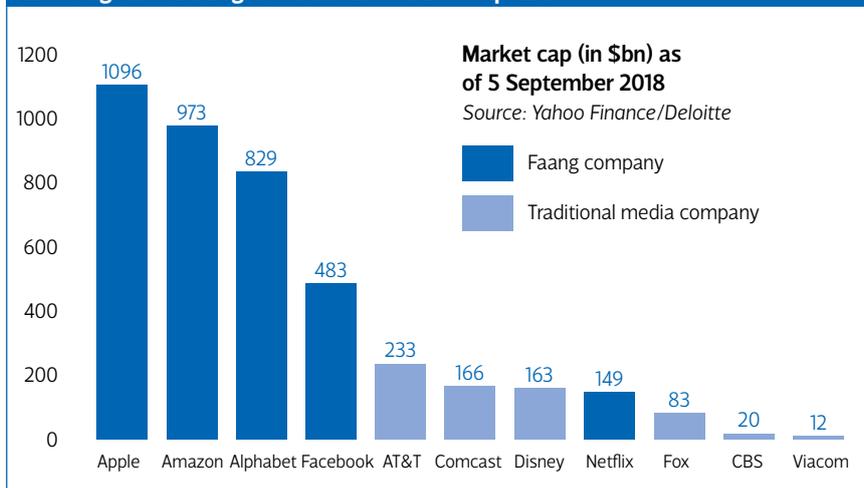
**A** **Alex Green, Amazon:** The goal of technology is to get out of the way and simply make it easier for customers to find and watch what they want.

**Q** How vulnerable is TV advertising?

**A** **Jonathan Barnard, Zenith:** TV consumption is holding up pretty well in the UK and there is still strong demand from advertisers for its brand-building powers, which are really unrivalled by other media.

**A** **Lindsey Clay, Thinkbox:** Nothing works better than TV advertising. [It] generates 71% of all the profit generated by advertising, full stop. You simply can’t get a better use of advertisers’ money than to spend it on TV.

The Faangs and the largest traditional media companies



# ‘Focus on content, and the money will follow’

Viacom chief **Bob Bakish** explains how he is reinventing the company for streaming. **Tara Conlan** reports

**I**t was Viacom founder Sumner Redstone who coined the phrase “content is king”. The company’s President and CEO, Bob Bakish, is also associated with a term that defines a media era: he dubbed the streamers, such as Amazon and Netflix, “frenemies”. He used the description recently to explain the fact that, although big producers and channel owners fear the streamers for eroding viewing figures, they can also make money by supplying the tech giants with shows.

He was appointed to his post in 2016 with the backing of Redstone’s daughter and Viacom’s Vice-Chair, Shari, who is reportedly keen for CBS and Viacom to merge.

Today, the company has more than 300 TV channels, which it claims reach 4.3 billion subscribers across more than 180 countries. Its portfolio includes MTV, Nickelodeon, Comedy Central and the UK’s Channel 5. Its shows range from *Geordie Shore* to forthcoming MTV series *The Royal World*.

However, the company has had “a bunch of issues” to address, acknowledged the fast-talking Viacom veteran. Having been at Viacom for more than

20 years, many of them overseeing its international business, he said he had experienced the company through different ages. Since 2016 (when Bakish took over from Philippe Dauman), he has focused on turning round its “performance issues”.

Areas he cited for improvement included distribution, ratings and *Mission: Impossible*-maker Paramount Pictures, which lost \$500m in 2016. The group was now “in a much better place... our ratings have improved the last four quarters running... we’ve grown share every quarter”.

Bakish continued: “The world is changing and we’ve been working on evolving the company towards new businesses with new revenue streams.”

The launch of Viacom Digital Studios, the acquisition of youth digital network Awesomeness, and “our growing studio production business” were helping Viacom “mark a new

chapter in our history”, he claimed.

What are the opportunities for a content-driven company such as Viacom, asked his interviewer, *Channel 5* News anchor Sian Williams. “At the core, consumers all around the world are consuming more content, broadly speaking, than ever before,” replied Bakish. He highlighted *Jersey Shore* in the US, which recently commenced a new run. On its first night, it was the number-one TV show, beating *The Big Bang Theory*.

Another avenue that is beginning to thrive is short-form content. Since Bakish took over in the third quarter of 2016, he said the company had tripled the number of video streams it delivers.

Its events, such as the MTV Video Music Awards, create moments that can be shared. At the recent VMAs in the US, “we had 285 million streams run that day”.

Williams asked if he was pushing the company more towards short-form, smartphone-friendly content.

“There’s growth in many areas,” he said. “There’s share to be taken in traditional linear television, and you can see us doing that in the US, and you see Channel 5 performing well this quarter here [in the UK].” Other arenas

**‘WE ARE LOOKING  
FOR VIRTUAL  
SCALE THROUGH  
PARTNERSHIP’**



Paul Hampartsoumian

Bob Bakish

for expansion include YouTube and Facebook: “What we’re focused on is how we maintain a presence in the traditional ecosystem... but, simultaneously, ensure that we’re represented in these other spaces”. The rise of Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix and Google, and their thirst for their own original content, brings both challenges and opportunities.

Successes at the Emmy awards, and the rise of Paramount Television (“which didn’t exist four years ago and this year is a \$400m business and next year will be a \$600m business, as we go from nine series in production to 16”) were two indications of Viacom’s revival.

Alongside this, the group produced shows such as *13 Reasons Why* for Netflix and *Jack Ryan* for Amazon, proving that Viacom was making the most of the opportunities, said Bakish.

One of the liveliest moments of the session occurred when Bakish announced that MTV was making a new reality show for Netflix. Williams said she would not be a good journalist if she did not ask him more about the show. “And I wouldn’t be a good CEO if I didn’t tell you that you’ll have to wait!” was the reply.

To help Viacom traverse the

fast-changing media landscape, Bakish has focused the company on its “flagship brands: Nickelodeon, MTV, BET, Comedy Central and Paramount”. But there were also important local ones, such as Channel 5, said the former strategy consultant.

Each of the global brands has a full “multi-platform” presence and add-ons such as events and consumer products. Viacom is also targeting new outlets, such as Snapchat, while “maintaining the largest collection of our product in the pay-TV ecosystem”, where “we still see very significant time spent”.

But how does Viacom make money out of getting its content on Snapchat?

It is still early days, admitted Bakish: “Right now, it’s more about reach and consumption than monetisation. We have multi-platform sponsors for the MTV VMAs in the US and so, as part of that, they will get impressions in the digital native space as well.”

The acquisition of the “young, female-skewing content company” Awesomeness will help the group make content “at a very attractive price point”, which it will market and sell. “If we want to monetise content on social networks, the best way to do that... is branded content, where you

integrate messaging into the content.” Product placement, Williams pointed out, is highly regulated on TV in most countries. “[But] it’s almost exclusively self-regulating” online, responded the Viacom chief.

He called for a more level playing field, pointing out that traditional TV channels such as Nickelodeon were not allowed to advertise high-fat foods but online companies were. The issue should be discussed by Ofcom not just for the sake of media companies but “also for the good of audiences”.

In the face of such disparity, and the problem of fake news, Bakish suggested that it was “pretty clear that, over time, we will get regulation. What it looks like and how quickly it comes, those are all valid questions, but the world needs to move in that direction, as responsibility follows consumption.

“Monetisation is evolving and varies... If you focus on content... monetisation will follow.”

Tickets to events, adverts and subscription revenues are among the revenue streams that Viacom will continue to drink from.

The CEO said that Viacom would consider setting up its own kind of streaming service, but it was not interested in “creating another Netflix. We see that space as becoming crowded.”

Touching on the long-running power struggle that has prevented Viacom merging with CBS, he was asked if he was convinced that such a move would make Viacom stronger.

He responded that there had been a “lot of discussion about scale” but emphasised the benefit of looking for “virtual scale through partnership”. As an example, he cited Channel 5 teaming up with Sky Media on ad sales, which had brought “benefits without deploying capital”.

After paying tribute to Viacom’s international networks, which “haven’t been in need of turnaround”, Bakish was asked for his thoughts on the UK TV industry. He was very positive: “We’re thrilled to be a long-standing member of the British TV industry.

“We obviously increased our participation when we acquired Channel 5, and I would do that again today. Even though Brexit happened.” ■

***In Session Two, Bob Bakish, President and CEO of Viacom, gave the ‘International keynote’ speech and was interviewed by Channel 5 News presenter Sian Williams. The producer was Helen Scott.***



# The inclusivity bounty

**Matthew Bell** observes as leaders from outside broadcasting suggest ways that TV can learn from other sectors

Pictured, from left: Karen Blackett, Mark McLane, Anne Nguyen and Trevor Phillips

Television picked the brains of business leaders from advertising, banking and consultancy in this session, learning how they have boosted diversity and inclusion in their industries.

Introducing “Diversity and inclusion: lessons from outside TV”, session chair Trevor Phillips argued that there were areas of agreement on diversity, notably that it is “good for business, as well as good for the soul”.

In television, specifically, “there’s a relationship between what goes on behind the screen and what goes on it, and who sits on the other side of it,” added the former Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission. He is also a winner of three RTS Television Journalism Awards and a former head of current affairs at LWT.

Born in the US, Mark McLane moved to the UK to become head of global diversity and inclusion at Barclays seven years ago. “Within your industry, you have a great opportunity to show role models where role models don’t exist today,” he argued. “Growing up, not seeing gay men on TV had an impact – it meant you weren’t welcome.”

McLane, who has frequently appeared on the LGBT Pride Power List, said that organisations faced a simple choice: “We either continue to mirror the societal barriers that push people away or we start to break those down and invite people in.”

He urged employers to do more than simply collect data: “It’s great that you have data – and you have to be data driven – but you also have to stop gazing at the data, and figure out what it means and do something with it.”

“Much like the television industry, we have a huge responsibility in advertising because we create cultural norms,” argued Karen Blackett, UK country manager at global communications giant WPP.

She agreed with McLane on the importance of “visible role models”, but added that it was “sponsorship” that had been of most benefit in her career.

“There were networks that I was not part of and couldn’t penetrate, where conversations were happening about future roles and promotions that I was not able to access,” she explained. “I needed somebody who recognised my talent and could talk on my behalf in those networks that I wasn’t part of.”

Boston Consulting Group (BCG) partner Anne Nguyen argued that solutions had to be tailored to the needs of individual organisations.

She revealed that a BCG study last year had found that, while many organisations were “spending gobs of money on diversity, we very quickly realised that they were putting their ‘diversity dollars’ in the wrong place.

“You really need to figure out what works for you as an organisation, where your organisation is on that journey and where you should be investing.”

Nguyen noted that recent BCG research showed that, in the UK in particular, employees favour “clear anti-discrimination statements and policies. They value blind screening for recruitment and in promotion.”

Sponsorship, flexible working and the necessity of senior managers making a public commitment to diversity were also important parts of any diversity and inclusion policy, she said.

McLane added an extra item to her list: talk to your employees in the workplace and take their advice. “Just because we don’t see the barrier, doesn’t mean it doesn’t exist,” he said.

Offered a notional £1m by Trevor Phillips to spend on diversity initiatives, Blackett opted to spend the money on a “cultural inclusion programme” to “ensure that existing leaders really understand what it takes to build an inclusive culture”.

She also advocated a programme to remove barriers to promotion. “Sometimes, when you don’t get talent rising to the top, it’s because there is something that is holding them down. You need to have movement in any organisation to allow creativity and talent to rise,” she explained. “I’d also

use part of that money to reward behaviour change.”

Phillips suggested that colleagues could be complicit in the harassment of young, junior employees, particularly women, in television. “How do you deal with the problem of complicity?” he asked. “I suspect that there is much more [harassment] than we think in our industry, partly because we have such high-value talent that we don’t want to interfere with.”

A company had to be built on respect, said Blackett. The message that certain types of behaviour were not allowed “absolutely has to come from the top” of an organisation. “Our new WPP global CEO has talked a lot to all staff about how we should be a company that is formed on respect and actually call things out.”

Practically, this could include an organisation providing a hotline to report harassment or a certain person who could be approached in confidence. “It is about ensuring that the environment in which people can call things out is safe,” she added.

“You have to send out that message,” said McLane. “I’m looking out at an audience of senior leaders, who [need] to speak up and say, ‘For my own personal integrity, [harassment] is not right.’ Silence is acceptance.”

“The more that we encourage people to speak about [harassment] openly [the better],” added Nguyen. “It’s not until you start to have the conversations together that you start to realise that [certain behaviour] is not OK.

“Building that culture, where you can have open conversations, is really important.” ■

**Session Three, ‘Diversity and inclusion: lessons from outside TV’, was chaired by the writer, broadcaster and diversity campaigner Trevor Phillips. The panellists were: Karen Blackett, UK country manager, WPP; Mark McLane, head of global diversity and inclusion, Barclays; and Anne Nguyen, partner and MD, London, Boston Consulting Group. Deborah Williams, executive director, Creative Diversity Network, gave a presentation. The producers were Dan Brooke and Sue Robertson.**

## A Diamond standard for television

Diamond is the online system used by the BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Channel 5 and Sky to obtain consistent diversity data on the programmes they commission.

‘It’s the world’s first, and only, online data collection and monitoring system for diversity,’ Deborah Williams told the RTS conference. Williams is executive director of the Creative Diversity Network, which runs Diamond.

The initiative has been collecting data since August 2016. ‘It continuously gathers data on people across the entire supply chain of UK broadcasting, on screen and off screen, who have been commissioned by one of the Diamond broadcasters for programmes that are first transmitted in the UK,’ she explained.

Diamond also measures how an

audience ‘perceives’ the diversity of characters and contributors on screen. Data is captured across six characteristics: gender, gender identity, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability.

At the RTS London Conference, Williams announced the launch of a new campaign to address the low numbers of disabled people in television. ‘Doubling disability’ is supported by the five Diamond broadcasters, which have pledged to double the percentage of disabled people working in off-screen production and creative talent roles within two years.

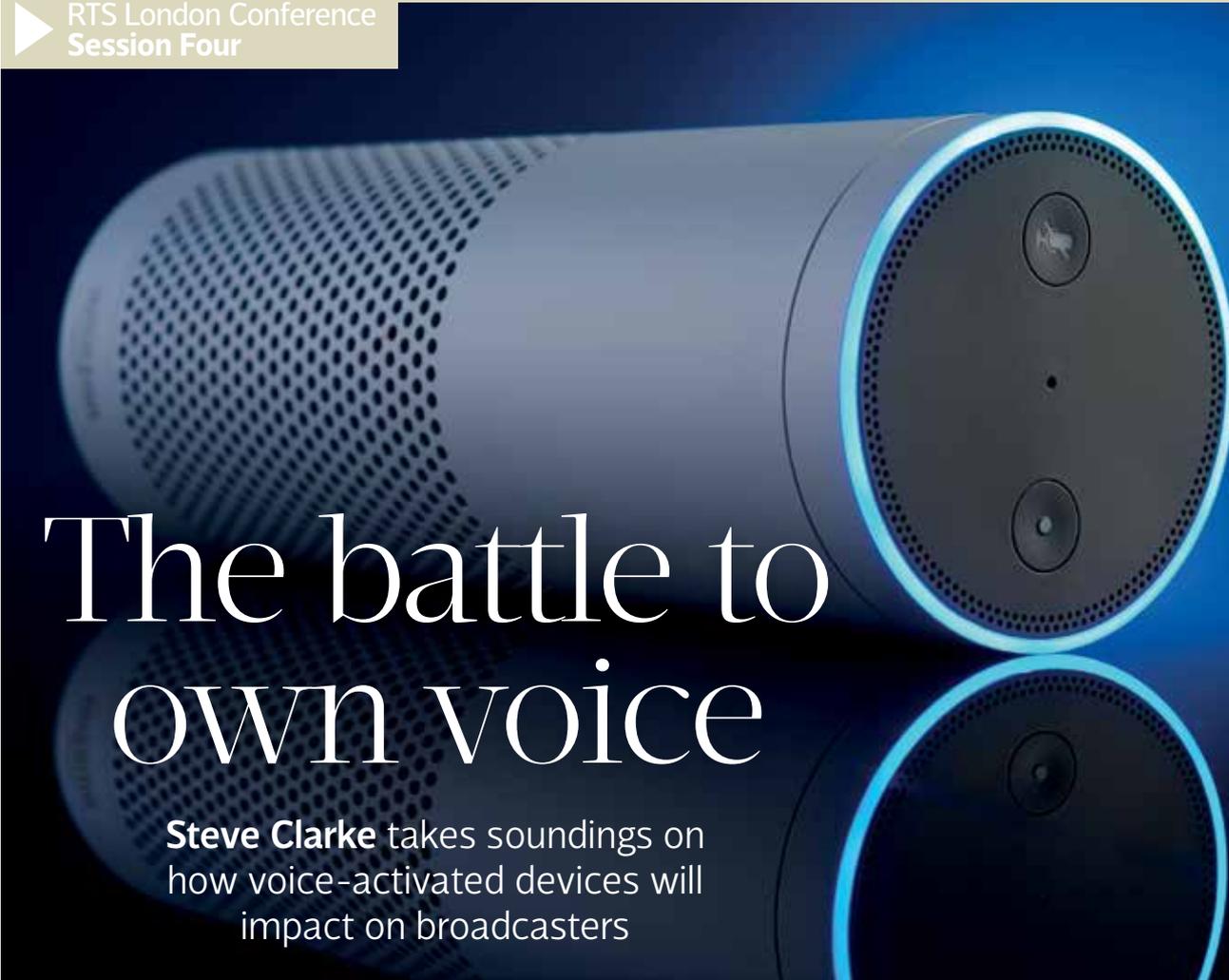
‘I think that’s absolutely doable,’ she said.

The initiative is also backed by ITN, the producers’ body, Pact, and the Department for Work and Pensions.

**Diamond broadcasters in the UK (September 2018)**

Source: Diamond

Protected characteristic	Individuals	On-screen contributions	Off-screen contributions
Gender	Female	48.1%	54.6%
Gender identity	Transgender	0.8%	0.0%
Age	50+	24.2%	20.4%
Ethnic origin	BAME	21.5%	10.1%
Sexual orientation	LGBT	13.2%	11.7%
Disability	Disabled	6.5%	5.5%



# The battle to own voice

**Steve Clarke** takes soundings on how voice-activated devices will impact on broadcasters

**A**lexa, Amazon's ubiquitous digital assistant, is always ready and willing to help. But how should British broadcasters ensure that the tech giants don't sweet-talk them into relationships involving voice activation that they later come to regret?

This was one of the main themes to emerge from an entertaining and lively session expertly presented by Kate Russell, a reporter on BBC News's *Click*.

The audience heard how smart speakers such as Amazon Echo were present in 8% to 10% of UK homes. So would they one day replace the TV remote control, a device that's been keeping coach potatoes sofa-bound for more than 30 years, asked Russell.

"In our house it already has," revealed Richard Halton, CEO of YouView. "There are capabilities it gives us that are superior to a normal remote control." For instance, Amazon Echo and Google Home have the ability to find programmes faster than the traditional remote. Also, these data-savvy companies are more effective at

delivering personalisation via voice than are traditional platforms.

"On a lot of levels, voice has got huge amounts to offer the TV experience," Halton added.

At present, voice-activated smart speakers are more likely to be used for requesting a weather update or listening to Radio 2's breakfast show than as a proxy remote, according to the research guru Ben Page, Ipsos Mori's CEO. "The data shows that there is unmet interest among people who use them to control their TV. Thirty per cent of people want to control their TV by voice," he added.

He claimed that most people's smart speakers are idle for most of the time: "These devices have thousands of skills, but only about 3% of people who have them keep using them."

Even so, Grace Boswood, COO of BBC Design and Engineering, said that Alexa and her kind represented both an opportunity and a threat for the BBC. "Obviously, a real priority is to get content to our audiences as easily as possible," she said. "We are investing heavily not just in experiences that we

deliver through voice formats, but also in the capability that allows us to control what we call the intent.

"So, when you say, 'Play something, Alexa' or 'Tell me the news, Alexa', that intent is owned by Amazon. It chooses the content that will be served back... That is a massive risk for us because, while, at the moment we may be the content provider of choice, there's nothing to say we will be in the future.

"We at the BBC want to control not just the content that people consume, but also the intent by which we serve that content."

To remind the RTS of the resources that Amazon and Google have at their fingertips, Halton revealed that at the CES show in Las Vegas this year, Google spent \$40m in one week on display advertising for Google Home. "This is a fight between the tech giants that is like the war for the front page of the internet during the late 1990s. Then, it was about who was going to be the browser that you opened when you switched on your screen.

"Now, it is about who owns the gateway to your home.... This is a much

bigger game than getting last night's episode of *EastEnders*."

So, how exactly could broadcasters and content creators protect themselves from being squeezed out by companies that had a financial interest in the consumption of their content, and who also owned the platform through which that content was delivered, asked Russell.

This would not be easy, admitted Boswood. She said that the BBC needed to fight on many fronts, including regulation, which had yet to take on board the implications of voice-enabled devices.

"I think we need to be alive to Amazon and Google's business interests. Perhaps, in the days of the early internet, we weren't so conscious of the way this was going," suggested the BBC executive. "We need to ensure that doesn't happen again and that we own that distribution environment. Things such as YouView and Freeview are important in this context, because they are much friendlier to public service broadcasters."

Halton suggested that one way forward was via partnerships. "Amazon doesn't see these devices as ways of discovering TV content, but of learning about metadata and discovery," he said. "Equally, it is happy to export our principles, for example, around prominence. At the weekend, at IBC, we said to Google: 'What's your ambition around promoting your content or your version of the owned content versus the broadcasters?'"

"Their representatives said: 'None. If we plug Google Assistant into YouView, because the search results will appear on screen as part of the YouView user interface, then those results will always be determined by YouView.'"

As Sky and Virgin had good relationships with UK broadcasters, Google and Amazon were perfectly happy to play by our rules because they trusted Britain's TV platforms to manage the interaction with the consumer, Halton reasoned. "But we need to get in there now and have those conversations," he warned.

Turning to bespoke content that works for voice-activated devices, the panellists were joined on stage by Nicky Birch, an executive producer at BBC R&D. She told attendees that the corporation was making its third "voice-driven narrative piece", having debuted with *The Inspection Chamber*, a >



## Can you believe what you hear?

Conference attendees were shown several clips in which fake voice audio had been added to video of well-known people, including BBC News's Sophie Raworth and Barack Obama.

Jose Sotelo, co-founder of Lyrebird, revealed that his company had developed algorithms with the ability to copy anyone's voice using only a few minutes of audio as the raw material.

'Record, say, 30 sentences and, based on this, we are able to create a digital copy of your voice,' he explained.

Inevitably, doing this raises tricky ethical issues that seem certain to add another dimension to the furore surrounding fake news.

'What we worry about is that the technology needed to build these fake videos is already available,' said Sotelo. He predicted that it would be possible to produce fake videos containing authentic-sounding fake voices within the next year or two. 'How would you feel if you saw a video that ostensibly featured your best friend saying horrible things about you?'

This suggested that social media abuse could become nastier still. 'This is the scary side of this technology,' warned Sotelo.

But there were also some potentially positive, life-enhancing applications that this technology opened up, he suggested: 'Think about Stephen Hawking... if he had been able to have access to his own voice. Voice is such an important part of our identities. It's easy to forget about how much they

matter to people until they lose their ability to speak properly.'

He added: 'Imagine if broadcasters could make their material available to everyone in their own language. We believe that this technology can have life-changing applications.'

Nicky Birch, executive producer at BBC R&D, agreed that there were inherent risks in technologies capable of impersonating people's voices. She suggested one reason the British were so good at identifying fake news was because of the UK's strong public service broadcasting culture.

YouView CEO Richard Halton said that the possibility of voice-activated content falling in the wrong hands 'sharpens the mind on the control points that we all need to establish with these companies. The smart move is to work with them as the technology evolves, because I think that these things are very crude compared with what we're going to see in two or three years' time.'

He asked: 'Do we talk enough about data and ensuring that the BBC or Channel 4 knows as much about who's going to watch the show tonight as Amazon does?'

'There are some first-order questions around those control points that broadcasters and platforms should have. We need to get aligned around what those are. We need to ask for them and make that a joined-up partnership with Amazon and Google that allows this technology to flourish.'



From left: Kate Russell and Ben Page

Paul Hampartsoumian

› sci-fi comedy produced for Amazon Echo. The latest piece of content is *The Unfortunates*, a collaboration with Radio 3, starring Martin Freeman.

Birch described the new project as more “multi-modal”, as it uses screens in addition to voice.

Russell asked if different ways of thinking were required to develop these pieces. “There are a lot of limitations but, from a content maker’s perspective, those limitations can be quite exciting,” replied Birch. “You can’t do everything you want. You want to have a truly interactive piece of content but the user is limited in what they can say.”

What did she want to see in the future? The pathway should be content-led, she said. These devices had originally been built for sales and commands but were now being used for listening to radio and music.

“As content-makers, we should be pushing what the content can do.... I’d like us to explore interactive content that is much broader than Amazon and Google allow.” Birch added: “Imagine being able to have conversations with celebrities or [saying] ‘I want to understand a bit more about Brexit.’ There are loads of interactive opportunities around what voice can do.”

In August, the BBC launched its first children’s “voice experience”, three games aimed at CBeebies audiences and available on Amazon Echo. “We are testing the waters,” noted Boswood. “Usage is low, which is to

be expected during the early stages of these technologies. I am sure there will be some killer format out there that does disrupt how we produce audio content.”

Ben Page reminded delegates of an intriguing statistic – 60% of people who have a smartphone say they have used voice-activated commands. “There’s definitely opportunity there,” he said. “Consider the BBC’s huge archive – how do you find things easily and quickly? The iPlayer is great, but it’s still a bit clunky. If this thing is going to let me very rapidly find an art history programme from way back, the potential is huge.”

Using voice to control car radios sounds like a no-brainer. As Page pointed out, changing stations via voice when driving involves people looking away from the road three times compared with 12 or 13 times using touch.

Inevitably, putting Alexa in car radios throws up interesting questions about data. “Who owns the data?” asked Boswood. “You could end up with a situation where the platform owners know more about our audiences than we do.”

Haltos interjected: “They already do.... Companies such as Google are innovating at extraordinary speed, so hanging on to their coat-tails is powerful. It has to start with data.

“From our point of view, we don’t just want to know who watched the show that was voice-activated, we

want to know what the context was. Did they ask for it straight out, or was it the next thing on a menu? At YouView, without voice control, we’re [registering] half a billion data points a day regarding how people find content, never mind what they are watching.

“Those journeys and discovery paths to content are becoming as important as viewing behaviour itself. There’s a richness of data there.

“These devices know who is in the room. By the way, they are going to know if you are sad or angry. When you say, ‘Alexa, find me something I might like to watch’, they’re going to take account of your mood.... There’s all sorts of interesting opportunities, but the conversation has to start with data and openness about it.”

“[On data,] the truth is that the Amazons and Facebooks are so ahead of us it’s quite extraordinary, but we are trying to catch up,” said Boswood. “We do have some advantages in our armoury.

“We have the content, and we have the content data, which allows us to be much more considered with the metadata tags we put in, and which show how people find things. How, when you’re sad, can the BBC give you the piece of content that’s going to cheer you up, how can we add value there?”

If this sounded spookily Orwellian, the BBC executive made it clear why Auntie needs licence-fee payers to sign in to BBC services online. Mandatory signing in was a possibility. Only then, could the BBC consistently provide better recommendations and “make your experience better”.

She admitted: “Frankly, if we don’t have that data, we’re not going to be able to compete on this content. If you like the BBC and you want us to survive, sign in.” ■

**Session Four, ‘Rise of the machines – voice, AI and beyond – How will broadcasting embrace the challenge?’, was chaired by BBC journalist Kate Russell. The panellists were: Grace Boswood, COO, BBC Design & Engineering; Richard Haltos, CEO, YouView; and Ben Page, CEO, Ipsos Mori; and there were contributions from Nicky Birch, executive producer, BBC R&D, and Jose Sotelo, co-founder, Lyrebird. The producers were Andrew Scadding, Nick Kwek and BBC Click.**



# The big shift

Maggie Brown hears Director-General Tony Hall make an impassioned plea for more funding

Paul Hampartsoumian

**T**ony Hall's keynote speech centred on the BBC's need for more money. Only then would it thrive and retain its role at the heart of Britain's democracy, in a world of technological change and intense competition from global media giants.

He insisted that "cracks are starting to show" in BBC services following a decade of austerity, licence-fee freezes and top slicing, which were threatening its ability to innovate and meet the digital challenge.

"While we believe the BBC's public mission is as important as ever, we do

not believe that what we currently do is sustainable with the resources we have," he warned. "Doing nothing is a decision that may look fine tomorrow or the day after, but, in two years' time, five years' time, in 10 years' time, it may look more like a grand national error."

He complained about a lopsided regulatory playing field. "It cannot be right that the UK's media industry is competing against global giants with one hand tied behind its back. Prominence, competition rules, advertising, taxation, content regulation, terms of trade, production quotas – one set of rules applies to UK companies, and barely any to the new giants.

"All this comes at a time when the BBC is also faced with taking on the full cost of free TV licences for those aged 75 and over. This has potential implications both for the BBC's funding and for licence holders.

"The concession, as it is currently formulated, comes to an end in 2020. The BBC Board will have to consult on possible options and then decide. It could be the same, it could be different. There are a variety of options."

For the BBC, this is the most serious legacy of the 2016 Charter and Agreement, overseen by former Chancellor George Osborne, claimed Hall. He raised the issue with the Digital, >

› Culture, Media and Sports Committee in a session on 11 September.

In response to a question from his interviewer, BBC reporter Zeinab Badawi, Hall referred to the political pressures weighing on him and his predecessor, Mark Thompson: “We have never had the space to say, ‘What is the right level of funding for the BBC?’, and I think we now need to have that debate. The line has always been: ‘It’s too big, cut it.’”

The compensation paid to the BBC by government for the current 4.55 million free TV licences (introduced in 2000) is being phased out in three steps – falling from £655m in 2017-18 to £468m in 2018-19 and a final £247m payment in 2019-20. At that point, the value of the free licences could be £725m.

Hall juxtaposed the constraints on the BBC and the decline in public service TV spending with what he called “the big shift”, as global media giants have created new definitions of market scale. At the same time, younger people have drastically changed their viewing habits.

“Ten years ago, when the App Store first launched, not a single member of Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix and Google (the Faangs), were among the top 30 most valuable companies in the world. Fast-forward 10 years... all but one is now ranked in the top 10 most valuable companies. Audiences have changed. *Bodyguard* may have us all on the edge of our seats but, for young British audiences, Netflix is now roughly the same size as Channel 4 and close to the size of BBC Television and iPlayer together.”

He added: “Across the same 10 years that the internet giants took over the world, what the BBC could spend from the licence fee on its UK services has been cut by a fifth – £800m – in real terms. It is the consequence of a decade of top slicing and then freezing the licence fee for seven years – and then more top slicing.”

In addition to paying for the over-75s’ TV licences, the BBC has taken on responsibility for funding a variety of services: the World Service (£268m), S4C and BBC Monitoring, plus assisting broadband roll-out and local news.

“Here’s how much Netflix is spending a year on content: \$8bn. Amazon is spending \$5bn. And here’s how much Britain’s public service broadcasters are

## ‘WE MUST HAVE THE FUNDING THAT ALLOWS US TO RESPOND EFFECTIVELY’

spending on new programmes: £2.5bn, all of us together. While their spending is going up, ours is going down. In those 10 years, while the big shift was getting going... public service broadcasters reduced their annual spending by around £700m in real terms”.

“High-quality production costs money. A decade ago, premium high-quality drama might have cost £1m an hour in today’s money. Premium drama today routinely costs many times that figure. This has resulted in the BBC needing to spend significantly more just to stand still.”

Moreover, Hall pointed out that “Netflix and Amazon are not making up the difference” for UK production. Ofcom data suggests that less than 10% of their catalogues is made up of UK content, with spending on new UK programmes at around £150m a year.

“Co-production has helped... for a while, but those deals are becoming rarer. You can argue about the size of the future gap, but there is no doubt that there is a gap today in funding public service broadcasting, and there’s going to be one in the future.

“This isn’t just an issue for us economically and commercially, or as institutions. There is an impact on society. The content that we all produce is not just an ordinary consumer good. It helps shape our society. It brings people together.

“It helps us understand each other and creates an incredibly powerful shared narrative. And people feel that

## ‘THE CONTENT THAT WE ALL PRODUCE IS NOT JUST AN ORDINARY CONSUMER GOOD. IT HELPS SHAPE OUR SOCIETY’

deeply. They want content that is relevant to their lives and they want to see people like themselves.”

Hall acknowledged the opportunity that the new environment of choice offered but observed that “reinventing our services will also cost more. We need to continue to invest in technology and product development.

“People now expect to be able to watch programmes when they want over a long period of time. To keep up with audience expectations, we’ll need to increase the availability of our content for much longer, from 30 days to months or possibly even years.”

But the reality was that “more cuts have been taking place over a far longer period than at any other in the BBC’s history”. He itemised the major cuts: a decade of saving 4.5% a year; reducing the “controllable costs” of running the BBC to 6%; decommissioning great programmes or having them move to other broadcasters (examples included losing Formula 1 and sharing the Six Nations tournament); and closing BBC Three as a broadcast channel.

All this had been done simply to meet savings targets, “while what the BBC can spend from the licence fee on its UK services has been cut by a fifth. These pressures are really intense. We have been through a long period of holding back and cutting back. The BBC made its contribution as the nation sought to get back on track financially.

“But now, is the country going to seize the moment and adapt and invest in the face of what is going on – or are we just going to sit back and let it wash over us? We must remain true to our mission. We must have the funding that allows us to respond effectively. And we must be able to make innovative changes.”

He identified five key areas for action. “First, we will have to spend more on the highest-quality content. We cannot allow any further narrowing of the range of distinctive British content. *Bodyguard*, *Three Girls*, *Mother’s Day*, they tell stories that are important in connecting to our audiences.

“Second, we need to keep reinventing our services, reshaping BBC Online. It’s the only UK website in the top five and it’s the only one powered by its own content.

“That’s why we are focusing on building just eight world-class services (iPlayer, news, music and spoken word,



weather, sport, children, BBC Bitesize and BBC Home). We are transforming iPlayer from a catch-up service to a destination, and a new audio service, BBC Sound, will replace iPlayer Radio.

“Third, we must invest more in children and young adults. We need to safeguard the future of public service broadcasting for coming generations.” The BBC is currently the largest provider of media for young adults, at eight hours a week, while the next nearest competitors, Spotify and YouTube, are at four hours each.

“This new competition has meant that the time young audiences spend with the BBC has fallen in recent years... but we all know that, with the right content and right services, we can introduce a new generation to the enduring values of what public service broadcasting can offer.” The corporation is investing an extra £34m in children’s content.

Fourth, “we must help counter threats to democracy globally. And these are real. The plague of disinformation and fake news needs to be challenged not just in the UK but around the world, too. We need a strong BBC to push against fake news and hold those who produce it – here and abroad – to account. BBC News is trusted across the globe. Sustaining and building on this has to be a priority for our country.

“Fifth, most significantly, the BBC will spend more outside London.” (See box left.)

Hall concluded on an upbeat note: “Britain’s media output is a source of soft power and global persuasion. We are going to need it more than ever at a moment when we are reshaping our relations with the world. It’s a beacon for liberty and democracy and truth that shines bright, and can – and must – shine as brightly in the future.

“I have huge confidence in our future. Yes, the big shift is happening but, with the right backing, we can win.”

What touched the delegates was the heartfelt nature of his plea for more resources. One delegate summed it up: “I saw an executive saying it has got to end. I don’t think the Director-General is bluffing.” ■

**Session Five, ‘Tomorrow’s BBC: Meeting the challenges of the future’, was produced by Sue Robertson and Martin Stott. BBC Director-General Tony Hall was interviewed by BBC World News reporter Zeinab Badawi.**

## Why the BBC must have more of its staff outside London

‘Already, more than half of our teams and our spend on commissioning is outside of London,’ said Lord Hall. ‘But, to truly reflect the whole of the UK in our output, the BBC not only needs to invest more, it needs to do so outside of the M25.

‘That will mean more money spent around England and the nations. And more of our staff will be located outside London. The BBC’s move to Salford is a game changer, it is wonderful. Ten years on, MediaCityUK’s success is something that we need to build on.

‘This is what we can do for Britain. And it is what the public expects from us: distinctive programmes that reflect

their experiences and outlook on life, available and relevant to everyone, of all ages and demographics.

‘We have a special duty to make programmes and services about British people and British culture. And we have a duty to do this for everyone, because, in a democracy, everyone should have the right to share in the best our culture has to offer: the front row, the best seat, the finest programmes and services, the most trusted news for everyone.

‘I will repeat those last words. For everyone. Because we’re funded by everyone, we feel a moral duty to serve everyone.’



ITV drama *Unforgotten*

Tara Conlan takes a ringside seat as Carolyn McCall sets out her vision for ITV

# ITV: contemporary, modern, relevant

**A**s a programme supplier to ITV, Expectation co-founder Tim Hincks felt he had to deny that he might pull some punches when interviewing ITV CEO Carolyn McCall. He announced to laughter that he would be asking her all the difficult questions, such as “where she went on holiday and what her favourite colour is... I will absolutely go for it.”

McCall looked relieved at the distraction of Hincks’s humour as she

was appearing at her first RTS London conference just two days after reports that the broadcaster might be bidding for Endemol Shine Group (ESG).

Hincks kicked off proceedings with an easy one: what does ITV mean to the former EasyJet and Guardian Media Group CEO? She listed its “amazing programmes” and said “it’s very friendly, it’s accessible... it’s not patronising. People, internally, say how creative ITV is. What I’ve found is that people weren’t really saying that externally. Bridging this... is interesting.”

ITV has long been on an acquisition drive and also been eyed as a target for takeover. McCall said the company’s strategy was “evolving”. “Everything is changing, so you have to have a strategy that evolves.

“At ITV, it’s all about the change in viewers, the change in advertisers and also this thing about being a contemporary, relevant and modern brand.”

People like ITV, said McCall, who took over from her predecessor, Adam Crozier, in January: “People have described it like a cup of tea on a cold winter’s

night, very comforting. Those are good qualities.... We also want to be seen as innovative and give people things when they want it, where they want it.”

Interestingly, she added, “we know that people would watch us more if they thought differently about the brand”. She noted that when the broadcaster puts up a range of its programmes – dramas such as *Liar, Trauma* or *Unforgotten* – viewers “ascribe them to BBC or Netflix, never to ITV, which is really interesting. They don’t see the brand as doing really brilliant, high-quality drama consistently, which it does.”

Yet, BBC hit *Bodyguard* is an ITV Studios production, she pointed out. Hincks asked how it felt to have supplied BBC One with a hit that was up against its own autumn drama jewel, *Vanity Fair*. “I think it’s a win for TV. What we say consistently is that the only place you can get these massive audiences is TV, and it’s actually the BBC and ITV.”

“That’s very important for us because we’re a commercial PSB and we make a lot of advertising money on those audiences. We’ve obviously made quite a lot of money on *Bodyguard* because we produced it.

“But we still did a co-pro [with Netflix], so it is a win for us on both and that’s what the strategy is: to strengthen the broadcast division [and] to invest in content.... The budget is not going down. It’s £1bn and we hope it will stay at that level.”

Diversifying into other revenue streams beyond advertising by investing in intellectual property and companies in the US has paid off, and ITV is consolidating in those areas now.

When asked if ITV is in the race for ESG, unsurprisingly, McCall put her corporate hat on, saying: “That’s speculation; we never comment on speculation.” Later, she said she had “no idea” who might buy ESG if ITV didn’t, and was “not going to comment” on whether, in line with the theme of the conference, ITV would be better off if part of a bigger outfit.

All she would add was that ITV is not growing for growth’s sake but to make a return to shareholders: “The most important thing for us is that we can organically grow Studios... whatever we looked at from now would have to be very financially disciplined.

## ‘WE MADE QUITE A LOT OF MONEY ON BODYGUARD, BECAUSE WE PRODUCED IT’

“We have to be incredibly disciplined about any acquisition we make, whether that’s small or large.”

Should independents “who are not part of the ITV family” bring their ideas to you, asked Hincks, adding to laughter: “I’m asking for a friend.”

“I’m surprised you ask that, as the relationship between ITV and indies is a strong one,” said McCall. “Even when we are talking to people who are looking to exit their own businesses and be bought, one of the biggest attractions of ITV is creative autonomy.

“The second thing is, they might get on to ITV1 and that gets them the most amazing showcase... then, they get global IP that can be monetised.”

She paid tribute to the ITV commissioning team and assured Hincks that “they will take the best ideas. I know we’re an integrated producer/broadcaster... but they want the best creative ideas. So just bring your ideas to them.”

“It’s annoying they have to be good, that’s all,” joked Hincks before moving on to the ITV boss’s thoughts on the Faangs. She gave the same response that many others had: they provided “opportunities and challenges”. Companies had to be “more flexible” working for groups that they also competed with. But, like other broadcasters, she called for a “level playing field” in terms of regulation of the online giants.

PSBs were “critical to Britain”, declared McCall. She denied she was “whingeing”, and pointed out that ITV provided “a very safe environment – all those things are critical for our society and democracy. We are highly regulated... and you

## ‘THE ONLY PLACE YOU CAN GET THESE MASSIVE AUDIENCES IS TV’

go on Google and they just self-regulate. It’s a big disparity.”

Having lauded the popularity of *Love Island*, she moved on to discuss the latest state of play in the drive to come up with a successor to the ill-fated Project Kangaroo. Hincks noted reports that ITV was in talks with the BBC about setting one up.

“We’re not going to be a British Netflix,” McCall responded. “ITV is ITV and we need to play to our strengths. I’ve said publicly that we’ve done a huge amount of research and there’s no question that there’s a demand for British content that people have missed. And they’re willing to pay for it.

“So there’s ample evidence [that] this thing about multiple subscription services is coming through loudly. I think that’s good for us as it gives us an opportunity. We are strong on VoD. We are investing in the ITV Hub – it will become much more than catch-up.”

Despite Hincks pressing for more details, she would add only that “we are talking to partners there, but I can’t say what we’re up to or how we are doing it. The first people we should talk to about that would be our shareholders.”

It would not “start with a big bang.... Very few streaming services start with everything they’re going to do. Any streaming service will need some original content, but I think that comes maybe further down the line.”

ITV will “definitely be investing” in the ITV Hub to make it “somewhere between iPlayer and Hulu”, said McCall, adding: “it’s got decent technology” but “the functionality and the user experience are not as good as we’d like them to be”.

A key area for her is bringing ITV closer to its consumers. “ITV has this great fan club but it’s quite passive,” she suggested. “They are really excited about us but we don’t really communicate with them [when] they want to know about drama, sports... events coming up, when a live final is, and so on.

“Those make people want to spend more time with you... and [maybe] spend more money with you.” ■

*In Session Six, Carolyn McCall, CEO of ITV, was interviewed by Tim Hincks, Co-CEO, Expectation Entertainment. The producers were Sue Robertson and Martin Stott.*

**T**ake three very different commissioners, all united by a common purpose: securing and showing content that satisfies their audiences. But achieving that simple aim is rarely straightforward in an increasingly complex media environment.

First things first. Picking up from Tony Hall's impassioned plea that policy makers act to protect the BBC, session chair Kirsty Wark asked Georgia Brown and Zai Bennett – from Amazon Studios and Sky, respectively – whether public service broadcasting was still necessary in these content-rich times.

The two competing commissioners didn't hesitate in giving the PSBs their fulsome support. "They are hugely important to the ecosystem of the broadcasting landscape," said Brown. "That's why we work very closely with them. It's really important that we support them."

Amazon Studios has partnered with the BBC on such scripted fare as *Fleabag* and *King Lear* (starring Anthony Hopkins). In a previous life, Brown worked for BBC Worldwide.

"They're incredibly important for our platform," added Bennett, who used to run BBC Three, before it was reduced to an online-only service.

So far, so good for traditional TV, as Wark turned her attention to each individual commissioner, starting with Amazon. Critics routinely accuse the online giant of seeking global domination as it spends jaw-dropping sums on content – its remake of *Lord of the Rings* will cost a reported \$1bn and run for a minimum of five seasons.

One of the highlights of Amazon's summer line-up was a documentary series on Premier League title winners Manchester City, *All or Nothing*, clips from which were shown to the RTS audience.

Wark asked how many people had watched the documentary. Unsurprisingly, Brown, who joined Amazon's new, London-based commissioning hub in June 2017, declined to give a figure. What she was willing to share was that Amazon Prime Video had in excess of 100 million international



For programme-buyers, building subscriber loyalty and channel identity can trump a show's expected ratings, learns **Steve Clarke**

# Commission accomplished

Michaela Coel in *Black Earth Rising*

viewers. The retailer's main criterion for measuring a show's success was audience "fanaticism", frequently conveyed via social-media buzz.

"I love getting on the Tube in the morning and seeing how many people are watching it on their iPad," she said.

Did Brown agree with the BBC Director-General's view that British audiences demand British content?

Absolutely, she did, and noted that shows such as *King Lear* and the new BBC One thriller *Informer* (an Amazon co-production) proved her point. "I think we are slightly different. We are very invested in supporting the British broadcast industry. We're not here to compete... we're looking at the wider space."

Wark looked sceptical. So, what audience was Amazon trying to garner? "We have an incredibly broad audience. Our Prime audience ranges hugely in terms of age and demographics. It's about finding pockets of audiences who are particularly fanatical about our shows."

Then it's all about getting something different? "Which is incredibly hard, which is why we're relying on the production community to come to us with things they are passionate about."

What, precisely, was Brown looking for? "It's the golden question. I hate to say it, but you know it when you see it... We are commissioning very locally, we don't commission necessarily through a global lens. I want shows that will resonate locally."

Turning to Ian Katz, who started work as Channel 4's director of programmes in January, Wark asked what he regarded as a channel-defining show.

He said that James Graham's new Brexit drama, starring Benedict Cumberbatch, was "a very good example of the kind of thing I'd like to make more of.... It grapples with the biggest arguments of the day and plunges into the kind of contested territory that is less appealing to other broadcasters.

"It is quintessentially Channel 4 and in that great tradition of political drama that goes back to *GBH* and *A Very British Coup*."

Does it matter how big the ratings are or is it all about Channel 4's reputation? "Of course, you always want both," replied Katz, adding: "Look,

we're all having to ride two horses. We're commissioning linear television with an eye to driving digital growth. That means looking at the types of programmes that prosper on digital."

So how does the broadcaster find the money for drama when its budget is not large compared with Netflix or even BBC One? "In the eight or nine months I've been at Channel 4, I've been encouraged by a growing sense among writers, some on-screen talent and producers that they want to see their stuff on UK PSBs.

"There are all sorts of attractions to the SVoDs – initially, tons of money – but, increasingly, I'm hearing people saying: 'We want to see our stuff landed with the audience where we're writing and getting a huge amount of TLC and it is not going to be one of 500 productions that come with a massive platform.'"

But, surely, writers are drawn by the big bucks that Netflix and co can offer? "Yes, it's huge but along with new competition have come amazing opportunities for collaboration."

Talking of which, Katz was sitting alongside his new best friend, Zai Bennett – Channel 4 and Sky had recently announced a content-sharing agreement that initially involves drama and Formula 1.

Nonetheless, the ex-*Newsnight* and *Guardian* executive acknowledged that there were new pressures as Channel 4 sought to be distinctive in a crowded content space. "The challenge we've got is that viewers have got access to an unlimited number of flavours," he said. "That's great for viewers. But it means that we've got to be a stronger flavour. We have to go almost back to basics and ask ourselves what the core ingredients of the flavour that we are supposed to be are and dial them up."

Finally, it was the Sky man's turn in the limelight. Flush with success in scripted shows such as *Patrick Melrose*, Sky has nimbly provided an answer to

the SVoDs by ramping up original scripted shows and by its deft marketing of Now TV.

Bennett revealed that he had had to wait a whole two years for Benedict Cumberbatch to sign on the dotted line and noted: "It's about being there at the inception of the idea that works for us as a commissioning process."

He showed the RTS a clip from Karl Pilkington's new comedy, *Sick of It*, described as "quite an audacious thing for us to have done". Sky's "scripted

strategy has been going from strength to strength. Our drama is on fire."

Was the aim to boost subscriptions or increase ratings? "It's about subscriptions, making sure those customers feel they are getting value," Bennett confirmed. "The number of viewers is important, too. Lots of our drama gets 2 million-plus. If we sometimes get half a million, that's fine."

As for the competition, creatively, he saw Amazon and Netflix as Sky's chief rivals, "whether we're looking at writers or directors". He added: "We show the best of the US. That's an important part of what we do but, increasingly, we're devoting more effort to original productions. They are tent-pole events for our customers."

The BBC, ITV and Channel 4 have all collaborated with the digital giants but will the streaming services soon stop investing in shows that are broadcast by the British PSBs? Georgia Brown refuted this: "We will continue to invest heavily in co-production. Taking a stake in those UK shows is very important to us. It is not something we're about to pull out of."

But Bennett had a different view: "I think there is probably less co-production with Netflix. It would be great to do more. We have done some, but it looks like it's dwindling. There are fewer places to go to.

"But the main thing when you're originating new shows is that you are willing to put your money where your

## 'IT'S ABOUT FINDING POCKETS OF AUDIENCES WHO ARE PARTICULARLY FANATICAL ABOUT OUR SHOWS'

› mouth is. You've got to be prepared to fully fund it."

Regarding the key question of rights ownership, Brown insisted that Amazon was committed to negotiating fair deals with producers. "My background is in the business of funding shows for indies and helping them to get that funding together," she said. "The idea of warehousing rights and sitting on them and owning these things globally so people can't make money in the future is mad. That will kill our industry."

Channel 4 knows from bitter experience with *Black Mirror* (poached by Netflix), the disruptive power of the on-demand behemoths. Katz noted that, nowadays, it was more difficult to forge long-term relationships with talent. Once Michaela Coel broke through via *Chewing Gum* people were queuing up to hire her; her latest showcase, BBC Two's *Black Earth Rising*, will be shown on Netflix after its UK BBC window.

But Katz also struck an upbeat note: "I came into this feeling a bit glass-half-full regarding Netflix et al, particularly regarding the conversations concerning talent, but the conversations I have had at Channel 4 have been heartening.

"People value your creative input. We often hear that people love working for Netflix because they don't give you notes, but, actually, when you talk to people, they value notes. Also, people like knowing how their show's done."

He revealed that younger audiences discovering old episodes of a show on Netflix can help boost ratings for the broadcaster as they then seek out the show on the original platform: "We've just had the most successful ever series of *Friday Night Dinner* on Channel 4. Did it have something to do with the fact that the first two series had recently gone on to Netflix and a new generation of younger viewers had discovered it?"

So have the SVoDs upped people's game? "Absolutely," said Bennett. "It's competition. There's always been competition and that's good for the ecology of what we're doing." ■

**Session Seven, 'Commission accomplished', was chaired by journalist, broadcaster and writer Kirsty Wark. The panellists were: Zai Bennett, director of programmes, Sky Entertainment UK and Ireland; Georgia Brown, director of European originals, Amazon Studios; and Ian Katz, director of programmes, Channel 4. The producers were Alan Clements and Charlotte Elston.**

# What the world wants to watch

**Matthew Bell** takes stock as producers share strategies for winning in a fast-evolving market

**T**wo programme "sellers" occupied the chairs vacated moments before by "buyers" from the broadcasters and Amazon in the previous discussion. Endemol Shine's Peter Salmon and NBCUniversal's Jeff Wachtel are TV veterans. After decades in the business, one could forgive them a little world-weariness. Yet both had clearly been energised by an industry currently in a state of ferment.

"It's almost numbing, the pace of change and the revolutionary climate we are in right now," said Wachtel. "There's never been a time like this."

"The world is changing," agreed Salmon. "You've got to be in the game. You want to be part of a big gang. You've got to bring it on."

Wachtel, who is based in London, runs the television side of NBCUniversal's international business, which includes the UK indies Carnival Films (*Downton Abbey*) and Monkey Kingdom (*Made in Chelsea*). The exec took up his present role in January, moving from Los Angeles, where he had been working as NBCUniversal Cable Entertainment's chief content officer.

He argued that programme-makers in the US had picked up production methods from the UK: "The US has been moving towards the UK model

for a long time", with shorter series supplanting longer seasons of shows. "When I started, 25 years ago, we were talking about what happens in episode 100. Nobody talks about that any more."

Wachtel brought with him a clip of *Safe Harbour*, "an absolutely beautiful piece of local programming", made by NBCUniversal's Australian indie Matchbox Pictures.

The critically acclaimed, four-hour series about asylum seekers, said Wachtel, cost "one-third of one episode of *The Crown*. We would have liked to have had a little bit more money, but it turned out that we didn't need it. If you're doing *The Crown*, you need to spend \$10m an episode."

Yet, despite its small budget and local subject, Wachtel was convinced that the drama would also sell globally.

The world of TV distribution – thanks to SVoD outfits such as Netflix, which he described as "enablers" – has changed. "Before Netflix, no one was talking about global content," said Wachtel. However, he coined a new, less positive, word – "fradversary" – to describe the SVoDs: "They were very seductive at first; they paid us incredible amounts for second [release] windows. They were an enabler, but now they are, for many people, moving a little bit more towards the adversary category."



The Australian version of *All Together Now*

Seven Network

“So it’s more like *Jaws* – they’re coming after you?” wondered session chair Kirsty Wark. “Ah, but if the shark fed you first...” quipped Wachtel.

Salmon joined Endemol Shine in 2016 as chief creative officer, after 35 years at Channel 4, Granada and (mostly) the BBC. He sets the super indie’s creative direction globally and runs the UK group, which includes leading production companies such as Kudos and Tiger Aspect. Explaining his role, Salmon said: “Programme-makers need a creative voice in the boardroom.”

Salmon argued that the SVoD and other streaming platforms have provided a much-needed shot in the arm for creativity. “The pushing against the homogenisation of content, forms of storytelling and voices is incredibly important,” he said. “We work with nearly 300 platforms and the range of stories and voices, in all shapes and sizes, is a glory.”

He showed the conference audience a clip from the Australian version of BBC One’s singing show *All Together Now*, which Endemol Shine has so far sold to 10 territories.

Worldwide, Endemol Shine’s 120 companies are members of what Salmon described as a “big United Nations of ideas”. He added: “This is our supply chain – it makes a lot of

business sense. They come up with ideas that I couldn’t possibly generate, great ideas.”

For a producer, size matters in making the best possible deal for your content. “You’ve got to be good at making shows but you’ve also got to be good at making deals these days,” argued Salmon. “One of the reasons producers often like to be in the same hull of a bigger set of companies is that you can use your leverage, clout and knowledge of the market.”

He added: “You want to pitch locally, but you ought to encourage your producers to do a deal centrally. Most of us, as producers, have been pretty desperate to get the gig – I certainly have and have probably given a few things away. That doesn’t best please those back at HQ.”

Channel 5 has axed one of Endemol Shine’s biggest shows, *Big Brother*, in the UK, yet it still thrives elsewhere. Salmon pointed out that the reality show had been CBS’s number-one programme during the summer, reached a 50% share in Brazil, airs in six versions in India, and has returned to Italy and Germany after taking a breather. “It’s one of those shows that has its own life,” he said. “The UK is only one of 20 territories this year in which *Big Brother* has played, which is five more than last year.” >

## QUESTION & ANSWER

**Q** Ed Shedd, partner, Deloitte: Is this a golden age for producers?

**A** Jeff Wachtel: It feels like the golden age is giving way to a gold rush. What might have been an incredible opportunity for people to find platforms and... to make anything [is changing]... Now, there is this panic, a gold rush mentality, and everyone is looking for safety.... People are now afraid to do their own thing and are looking for well-known brands.

**A** Peter Salmon: It’s a great time to be a producer... but in terms of making shows, I wonder whether we are embracing technological change... I visit a lot of productions all over the world and they remind me of galleries and locations that I filmed in 20 years ago... Being braver and making stuff differently and more cheaply wouldn’t half be useful now.



NBCUniversal's Safe Harbour

NBCUniversal International

› Nevertheless, Salmon admitted that it is harder for formats to make their mark now than a decade or so ago. “The war for attention, given there are [so many] platforms, means that it is harder to command eyeballs,” he said. “The role of talent, either behind the scenes or in front of the camera, is more and more important. Once upon a time, the format [sold] and the talent was interchangeable.”

Would a format such as *The Great British Bake Off* work on Netflix? asked Wark. “It might be good for the brand,” proposed Wachtel, who said that SVODs can bring new viewers to a show.

“You can make a version on Netflix or Amazon [Prime] for Britain,” agreed Salmon, “but the fact is that its roots are in the UK with a quirky, interesting, comedic, eccentric talent, which has given it that particular flavour, and made it this thing that audiences in the UK hold to their hearts.” He conceded, though, that big brands are now traded like sports rights.

Wark made the point that an audience is “agnostic”: “They want the best telly wherever they are going to get it.” ■

*Session Eight, ‘Making it on the global stage’, was chaired by journalist, broadcaster and writer Kirsty Wark and produced by Alan Clements and Charlotte Elston. The panellists were Peter Salmon, chief creative officer of Endemol Shine Group and Jeff Wachtel, President of NBCUniversal International Studios.*

## Dealmakers in the spotlight

NBCUniversal, in the guise of its parent company, Comcast, and Endemol Shine have been ever-present in the financial pages over the past few months.

There were two ways to build a business, suggested session chair Kirsty Wark – grow it organically or bulk it up more quickly via a merger or acquisition. An example of the latter, she said, was Comcast’s campaign to buy Sky. The US giant had been engaged in a drawn-out bidding war for the UK broadcaster against 21st Century Fox.

NBCU’s Jeff Wachtel was cagey about his company’s bid for Sky. All he would confirm was that the European broadcaster was ‘a very exciting company, but I’m not in a position to comment.

It would be wonderful, but that’s a separate thing’. (Four days after the RTS conference, Comcast secured Sky following an auction ordered by the Takeover Panel, which regulates bids for British-listed companies.)

Wachtel added: ‘What we are able to do – and are going to do – is to acquire a number of non-English-speaking territories – you can’t be global unless you are local everywhere. We are going to be growing through acquisition.’

NBCU would be developing its existing production companies, including UK film-maker Working Title, which has made movie classics such as *My Beautiful Laundrette* and *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*. The real question, he said, was:

‘How do we turn their attention to TV?’

Endemol Shine is looking for a buyer and opened its books to potential buyers during the summer. ITV is thought to be one of the leading suitors for the company, which makes formats such as *MasterChef* and dramas *Black Mirror* and *Peaky Blinders*.

‘We’re working around the clock at the moment on some of this stuff,’ said chief creative officer Peter Salmon. ‘Ultimately, if you’re in one of our 120 production companies, you [probably] don’t even know we’re up for sale – it’s a management issue.

‘Hopefully, we just keep stocking the pipeline with good shows – that’s all we can do at a production level.’



# Channel 4: 'More important than ever'

Alex Mahon argues that the broadcaster's role is crucial during a time of disruption. Maggie Brown reports

Echo Location Talent

If Channel 4 was being set up for the first time today, “you would not plonk it in SW1,” observed Alex Mahon, its newish Chief Executive. She explained that she had an advantage coming in fresh to the London-based broadcaster in October 2017, when it needed a deal with government on a new national HQ and dispersing jobs to the regions.

“I went back to basics and asked what would be right for us in terms of public service broadcasting, the remit, and the strategy. If you are there to represent the whole of the UK, appeal to diverse audiences that are not being reached, [setting up in London] would be bonkers.”

She said the Brexit vote had also influenced the broadcaster's strategy, because “we know London called it wrong. So part of this is about us representing the UK, spending money outside of London” and employing 300 people in new centres.

Mahon added that there was also a commercial advantage. Hiring specialist staff outside the capital should be easier, especially the engineers and IT people who are expected to develop Channel 4's digital platform.

It was also an opportunity to change the employment mix and promote social mobility: it would mean “recruiting many more people out of London, bringing our apprentices through”.

Channel 4 was dubbed the poshest

of the UK broadcasters in a detailed study by the London School of Economics, commissioned by the broadcaster and published at August's Edinburgh International Television Festival. London is seen as an unattainably expensive destination by many.

But Mahon did not play down the challenges of splitting up the broadcaster: “It is a big change for us. We are only 850 people, so it's about ensuring the organisation stays stable, because it is not an easy thing to do, nor easy for my staff.

“It will definitely force us to do many things that we might not have done in one building. We are not particularly agile in the way we work... as you can just run between floors.... It >



Alex Mahon (left) and Tim Hincks

Paul Hampartsoumian

► will make us modernise the business, which we might not otherwise have done.”

Challenged by her interviewer, Tim Hincks, as to whether she was Channel 4’s “change candidate”, Mahon said that she was attracted by places where change was needed.

When she was running the production company Shine, “there was huge growth in the sector, it was amazing and fun.... You could ask, why go into broadcasting at a time when linear broadcasting is under threat? The environment is changing... and that makes it really interesting.

“For me, the amazing thing about Channel 4 [is that] it feels more important than it ever was. Basically, we live in a divided nation, so the channel possibly has a more important position in society than it did even in 1982.” The broadcaster’s properly resourced and independently regulated journalism was another key draw for her.

She continued: “Before I started, I went and talked to all the people who had held the [CEO’s] post before, and they all said they felt a tremendous responsibility to make sure Channel 4 was safe at the end of their tenure.

“It was very different to a commercial thing. Everyone made the same comment that they wanted to carry it forward to the next stage. It is about making enough change to grow if we possibly can [within its niche]. For all companies, that is more difficult than it has been before.”

## ‘WE HAVE TO HAVE THE FRESH, THE ORIGINAL, THE NOISY AND THE ANARCHIC’

She added: “In this quite crowded landscape we can’t be the everything shop. We can’t be the Netflix, we don’t have that money. So, it has to be about being really clear about having sharper flavours, dialling up what you stand for; which means some things in the middle have to disappear.

“We have to have the fresh, the original, the noisy and the anarchic. That’s what people expect, as well as the commercial things. *The Big Narstie Show* on Friday nights – only Channel 4 would run that.

“It has to be about increasing our reach in diverse audiences. Channel 4 is still the youngest [by demographics] broadcaster, so the question as we move into the digital world is: do we still make an impact with those people? Channel 4 is, at its heart... the youth-skewing PSB.

“We see that as a fundamental part of what Channel 4 was set up to do, and I don’t think we should give up on that at a time of debate about bringing society together.”

Mahon explained that, when bringing new shows into the schedule, trying to grow them, or finding new

talent, the focus was on young audiences. But C4 always had to balance that with commercial imperatives, such as attracting older ABC1 viewers.

The rise of streaming services and the internet giants meant that all broadcasters had to sharpen up: “We [have to] operate faster, without the smugness of thinking, because you have a licence, you can take time.

“You also have consumers consistently saying that [on] Netflix, they don’t know what to pick. Linear broadcasters do have the power of marketing and prominence – it’s a massive advantage to have.”

The crux was how to exploit that advantage – something that she was thinking hard about.

Asked about the newly minted relationship with Sky (which involves sharing certain Formula 1 rights and exchanging some drama series), Mahon said it was an opportunity to increase audience reach. “Ten years ago, other broadcasters were seen as the enemy. I’m not thinking like that now.”

Mahon had less to say about whether the BBC, ITV, Channel 5 and Channel 4 might combine in a UK Netflix-style service. She confirmed only that everyone was talking to each other about possibly collaborating – but each organisation had its own motives. “What you *do* see is consumers having faith in public service broadcasting”, she said, so the question was how to enhance that belief.

Increasingly, the PSBs were working together on regulatory issues and lobbying. This included the campaign to safeguard the prominence of their programmes on both EPGs and voice-controlled devices.

“We have [given] speeches to Parliament and different government departments, asking what prominence looks like in a different environment. What it means, for example, on voice search for news, when you might get Russia Today as news when you open a smart TV.

“These are complex debates but I think there is a groundswell of support for it now, compared with a few years ago. That is good.” ■

**In Session Nine, Alex Mahon, CEO of Channel 4, was interviewed by Tim Hincks, Co-CEO of Expectation Entertainment. The producers were Sue Robertson and Martin Stott.**



Paul Hampartsoumian

# Audience safety in the digital age

One of the hottest topics at this year's conference was internet regulation. Fortuitously, Ofcom had released a discussion document about it on the morning of the RTS event, and its findings were explored in a session devoted to the issue.

The panellists learned from Ofcom that one in five Britons say they've been harmed by something they've seen online, and 12 million have experienced harassment, fraud or abuse through the medium.

Unregulated online channels such as YouTube are now available on smart TVs, creating a media minefield for millions of parents. Session chair and Sky News deputy political editor Beth Rigby asked how the regulatory playing field could be levelled for broadcasters.

With a potential white paper on internet regulation due by the end of the year, Damian Collins MP said he wanted to see an end to the platform-neutrality status that technology companies enjoyed.

## What should policymakers be doing to regulate the internet? Tara Conlan assesses the options

The Chair of the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee also wanted a regulatory system in which, "where there is harmful and illegal content, and the company has been notified of it, they have to take it down within a period of time – and if they don't, they become liable".

Collins went on: "We're going to have to put the right process of regulation in place to deal with problems today and with problems coming down the track."

He noted that, by the time of the next general election, people could possibly be using editing technologies to publish fake-news videos of politicians making "derogatory remarks".

Collins added: "The tech companies have a responsibility for the way people use their platforms, particularly

when they are aware of it. There's another perfectly legitimate question coming down the track, too: when does YouTube, with its multimillion audience, become a broadcaster?

"More than half of the households in this country have a TV connected to the internet. If, as far as the TV viewer is concerned, their favourite YouTube channel, their favourite Netflix series and BBC One are all TV – because they consume it on the same device in the same way – and some of it is very heavily regulated, and some not, is that right?

"Does there need to be a more equitable system of broadcasting [regulation] in the future?"

Thinkbox Chair and Advertising Standards Authority council member Tess Alps said it was important to see the internet as a "public asset that needs to be managed for the benefit of everyone".

She went on: "Talking about it like the wild west isn't very helpful, other than to say that the Wild West was eventually tamed through the community deciding how it wanted the place to be and having impartial >

## Why Germany imposed new laws

Germany has tried regulating the internet. A new law banning hate speech online came into full force in January. Called the NetzDG law it gives platforms 24 hours to take down offensive posts or be fined up to €50m (£44m).

Damian Collins MP said Facebook had removed hundreds of posts since

the law was introduced. This proved regulation could work: 'These companies are more or less public utilities now. They are the gateway into the internet every day and there are certain standards we expect. They can't be totally neutral about content served on their platform.'

## How web ads are regulated

'Lots of people have said today that advertising online is not regulated. It's the only bit of the internet in the UK that is properly regulated,' pointed out Tess Alps of Thinkbox.

She said that the Advertising Standards Authority covers 'all advertising online... more than half of complaints are about online ads and 88% of complaints upheld are about online ads.

'The slight problem is that the

companies earning profits from online advertising don't necessarily contribute the money that it takes to regulate them as they should.

'They're getting much better... But one of the problems is that they don't pre-vet the content. That's the single biggest issue.

'It's not good enough to wait for someone to complain about it; the harm's already done.'

## What policymakers should do first

One of the biggest hurdles to internet regulation is that the tech behemoths are global players. Moreover, the sheer volume of content being uploaded to the likes of YouTube, or available live on platforms such as Instagram or Microsoft's Mixer, is problematic.

Pre-vetting is a big issue, said Thinkbox's Tess Alps, but she pointed out that traditional TV companies did it and were responsible for a huge volume of content around the world. It cost broadcasters millions of pounds every year in compliance procedures. Alps stressed that the technology companies could afford it.

Damian Collins MP highlighted how the tech firms used machine learning to monitor adverts, so that they could also use it 'to keep you safe [and] identify... harmful sorts of content, which could then be referred to human [moderators]'.  
He dismissed the idea that it could not be done ('This sector could easily

find a way!'), and added that, if people uploaded pirated video of football, it came down pretty quickly, 'because there are pretty big commercial incentives to stop that happening'.

He raised the idea of an independent body that could ensure the tech firms were meeting the standards that were set.

Rachel Coldicutt of Dot.everyone said she wanted operating systems where 'you choose at set-up' whether a media device would operate, for example, 'in safety mode for a 12-year-old... Apple and Google could be doing that'.

The Information Commissioner's Office and Ofcom had 'different, complementary roles to play' in regulating the internet, noted Collins. The ICO and Ofcom should be resourced well enough to carry out those roles, added Coldicutt.

Collins agreed and said he thought that tech companies should play a part in funding this.



▶ sheriffs to administer the rules that the collective agreed on.

"Lots of these internet companies do have their own rules, but that's how gangs operate. What we need is a commonly agreed way of using this fantastic asset, this amazing technology. It then needs to be regulated impartially."

Rachel Coldicutt, CEO of tech think tank Dot.everyone, said that "the breadth of the internet" complicates the issue... the thing that's been going on for ages is: 'Are you a publisher or not?'" She suggested that "the platforms need to have their own status... recognised as their own entity, and, if that happens, then a different set of rules should apply to them."

When asked if freedom of expression could be damaged by internet regulation, Coldicutt said Dot.everyone's research confirmed that significant numbers of people were unhappy about things they had been exposed to.

Sky policy and public affairs director David Wheeldon later said that "tech companies are very adept at stirring up" fears over free speech, and "mobilising people to oppose any intervention". He added: "And yet, most of these firms are editorialising to some



Alamy

user-generated content and videos that are not mediated [being] uploaded – that’s really where the harm comes. The companies that enable this... are, to me, publishers. Whatever they do, it’s tantamount to being a broadcaster.”

Alps stressed that tech organisations “algorithmically” had knowledge of harmful, controversial content on their platforms – “which is why [they are] promoting it and ranking it and making money out of it.

“These companies are huge, why aren’t we expecting them to behave responsibly? God knows, they’ve got plenty of money – Facebook has a 40% profit margin; the idea that they can’t pay to pre-vet content is just absurd.”

Collins chipped in: “I don’t have a lot of sympathy with these companies. You have to comply with the law in the countries in which you trade.”

He said accountability was important – newspaper readers know they can contact the editor. But, “if you take issue with a Facebook page that’s being derogatory about you... you go to Facebook and tell them it’s not true, they say, ‘we don’t have to tell you [about it, and] we aren’t responsible for the content – so good luck!’”

He believed that “the threat of legislation” and the creation of a regulatory framework would ensure that tech companies invested in protecting users. “They curate user experiences and have a responsibility to the user. Most of the harmful content... is already in breach of [the companies’] own community guidelines.”

Alps concluded: “One day, maybe all broadcasting will stop and [go] online”, so this issue was key for Ofcom. “The advertisers are a very powerful lever in this. Facebook, Google and so on are based on advertising companies and [feel] pressure from advertisers.

“What would be more important is for Ofcom to set standards and set rules, because most advertisers would not wish to support companies that broke those rules. Even if Ofcom couldn’t impose those rules, advertisers could observe them and that would bale out a lot of water.” ■

**Session Ten, ‘How to regulate the internet – audience protection in a digital age’, was chaired by Beth Rigby, deputy political editor, Sky News. The panellists were: Tess Alps, Chair, Thinkbox; Rachel Coldicutt, CEO, Dot.everyone; and Damian Collins MP, Chair, DCMS Committee. The producers were Ali Law and Sky News.**

extent – restricting what you can say on the basis of their own policies.

“So, isn’t it actually the case that the oversight and transparency of their policies are a means of ensuring that there’s freedom of speech?... Should we not be making that case more loudly, so that they don’t stymie any effort to bring this world into some sort of order?”

People were “not completely free” in the comments that they could make offline in public, Alps pointed out. Collins agreed and noted that “a lot of what we are talking about here is informing the user and making it harder for people to mislead users”.

He argued that users had to be “empowered” so that they could recognise “disinformation”, such as if [a website] was not what it claimed to be.

“We need algorithm auditing”, proposed Alps, and an “algorithm standards agency” to check that tech companies were not suppressing information, and also to investigate how such companies went about deciding what was true or false.

Rigby asked if new laws were needed, or whether tech companies needed more time to self-regulate.

Alps pointed to the newspaper

industry, which “would claim its self-regulation does work”. She conceded that not everyone would agree with that claim, but it was better than the internet: “At least, in newspapers, there is a code and forms of redress.”

However, Coldicutt wondered how self-regulation would work beyond Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix and Google: “It [also] needs to work for smaller tech companies.” She argued that the way to get better content was “by regulating the business model”. Regulation could target the way people were currently “incentivised” to create algorithm-friendly, click-bait content that could be easily ranked.

Rigby suggested that an alternative to internet regulation would be leveling the playing field by lightening the regulation of broadcasters. Alps said she thought the public would not want that to happen.

She continued: “We’ve been sold this rather romanticised version of what the internet will do for us... when, in reality, it’s acted as a camouflage for very large, quasi-monopolistic, greedy corporations to grow up and not necessarily help society.

“The single biggest disparity is...

# How to end the standards lottery

Ofcom CEO **Sharon White** examines what lessons from regulating TV could be applied to police the internet. **Steve Clarke** takes notes

**E**arlier in the day, several speakers had drawn attention to how their tightly regulated organisations and companies were forced to compete with the generally unregulated Faangs. They called for a level playing field – but taming the internet will be an enormous challenge for policymakers and politicians.

Now it was the turn of Ofcom CEO Sharon White, described by her interviewer, Kirsty Wark, as probably one of the UK's hardest-working public servants. The former Treasury official used her speech to examine whether lessons from broadcast regulation could be applied to disciplining the domain dominated by Google and Facebook.

The British Government was considering legislation to address “online harm”, she said. The growth in online services “has been fuelled by a free and open internet, unencumbered by most of the rules and regulations that apply offline.... But we see growing evidence that, for all its undoubted benefits, that growth has come at a price.” Four out of five adult internet users have concerns about going online, according to joint research by Ofcom and the Information Commissioner's Office.

“Some of those concerns relate to areas like hacking or privacy,” said White. “But the most common, raised by two-thirds of people, relate to content – particularly when aimed at children. Some 12 million people using the internet have personally experienced online content or conduct that they found harmful.

“All of us care about this – whether as parents, programme-makers, policy-makers or regulators. France and Germany have passed legislation. Here, too, as the Government prepares its white paper, internet safety is a matter of urgent debate across the major parties.

“In July, the DCMS select committee completed its interim report on disinformation and fake news. Among other things, it looked at the principles that should apply to future regulation.

“Content could be harmful because it is illegal, dangerous, misleading or inappropriate for its audience. And it can be delivered in many forms – from TV-like programmes, to videos, images and text. Often these are served up at the same time, on a single screen. And different rules apply, depending on the mode of delivery.”

Ofcom, she said, was “very conscious of the growing disparity between the safeguards that everyone in this room is required to observe when making traditional TV programmes, and the much more limited ones that apply elsewhere”.

She illustrated her point by considering the viewing of a typical British child, who spends around 90 minutes a day watching broadcast TV, and more

than that on her phone or the internet.

The protection afforded to her, by a complex set of regulations, varies depending on the service that she happens to be looking at.

Viewing, say, *Absolutely Fabulous* on TV, the show “must abide by a range of detailed rules covering areas such as crime, sex, drugs, language, violence and self-harm”.

But enjoying the same episode of the classic sitcom via Netflix or catch-up, the regulations were “more limited to a set of standards under general European law. For example, there are rules on violence, but nothing on swearing. Patsy is off the leash.”

She continued: “If our typical child picks up her phone to watch a clip of the same show on Facebook or YouTube, there is no regulation at all, beyond the general law to protect her from harmful content.

“The broadcasting and online worlds are competing under different conditions, even as the online world takes up an ever greater share of our time. This has profound consequences for viewers, especially for children, who may well not distinguish between the two.

“Without even knowing it, viewers are watching the same content, governed by different regulation in different places, or by none at all. This is a standards lottery.”

There were “welcome signs that the technology giants are increasingly alive to their responsibilities. Facebook and YouTube are hiring around 30,000 content moderators this year.

“But trust in them is already weakening. Our research shows that people see social platforms as the single biggest

**‘IF REGULATION IS TOO BLUNT, IT COULD UNDERMINE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION’**

source of online harm and most people want the rules to be tighter.

“The role of regulators is evolving, too. New European laws will give national regulators some oversight of video-sharing platforms, requiring companies such as YouTube to address child harm, terrorism and hate speech.

“But most online content will remain unregulated, including words and images on social media, and videos that aren’t on sharing platforms.

“The UK Government is already considering how to level that playing field. And the DCMS Committee has suggested that broadcasting standards, as defined by Parliament and implemented by Ofcom, should provide the basis for setting standards online.”

The answer was “not simply to transplant traditional broadcast regulation, unamended, into the online corpus. Clearly, the internet is fundamentally different from television and radio in its nature, audience and scale.

“The sheer volume of text, audio and video that is generated or shared online far outstrips the output of traditional media.” It could be “impractical to review platforms’ decisions about content case-by-case. Most online content is moderated after it is published. There are no producers or compliance teams checking it beforehand. So sanctioning platforms for every undesirable post that gets online might not be practical or effective.”

Evidence suggested, she said, “that people see the internet quite differently to television. On TV, viewers value impartiality in news, and want to see that guaranteed. But when they go online, they are content to pick from a wealth of different views, often one-sided and opinionated. On an individual level, the internet is an unrivalled tool for people to express their views. If regulation is too blunt, it could undermine freedom of expression.

“Can these hurdles be overcome? Based on our experience, we believe they can.” She proposed that four broad lessons could be relevant:

■ Present broadcasting regulation started with a clear set of aims. The industry was held to high standards “by a clearly articulated set of rules that evolves with public opinion”.

■ Far from undermining freedom of expression, effective regulation could promote it. “Parliament has shown the way, by requiring regulation to balance >



Paul Hampartsoumian

› strong audience protections with the broadcasters’ right to transmit ideas, and people’s right to receive a variety of views.”

■ How to deal with the volume of unmoderated online content? “One approach that has worked well in our arena is to regulate companies’ complaints processes, as we do with telecoms firms. Companies are penalised not for the harm itself, but for their failure to address it quickly and effectively.

“As in Germany, this could mean requiring tech giants to be much more transparent about how they tackle online harm. Likewise, people expect regulators to be equally transparent about the reasons and evidence for their decisions. And to impose meaningful sanctions to deter poor behaviour.”

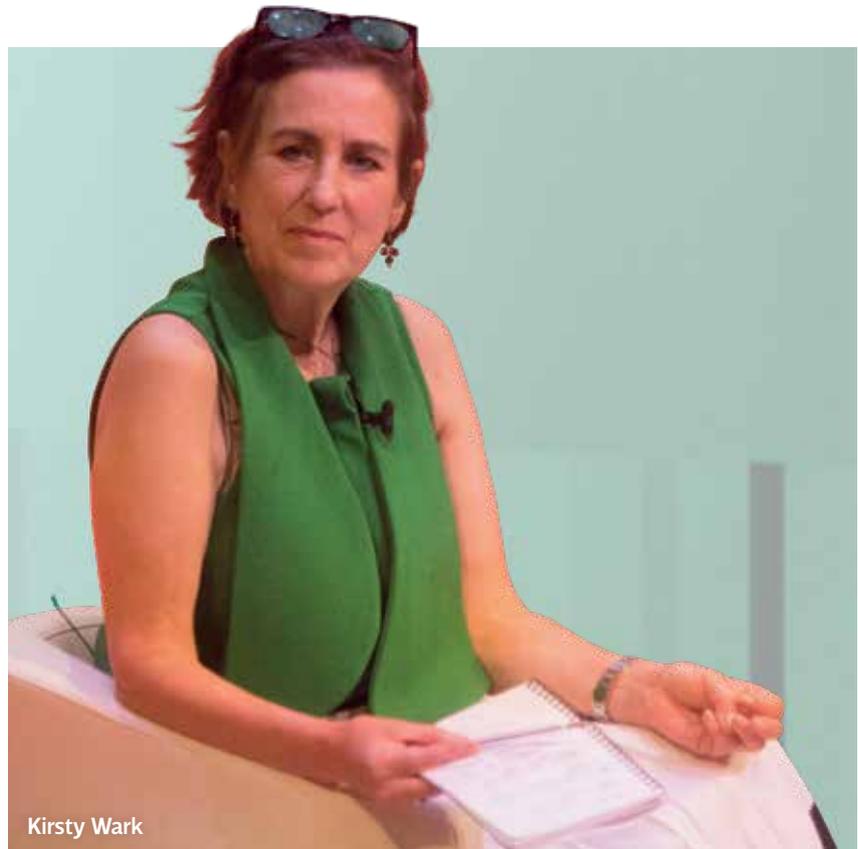
■ Finally, “in broadcasting, independence has proved fundamental to the regulator working in the interests of audiences, free from commercial or political influence. It helps ensure credibility in the system, and builds public trust.”

On the question of exactly how regulation might be applied, and by whom, White said that Ofcom was agnostic: “Those, rightly, are matters for government and Parliament to decide.”

The Ofcom chief had delivered her speech. It was now time for Wark to dissect the implications. If the Government asked Ofcom to regulate the internet, would the regulator do it? “We’re not seeking any powers,” White replied. “We’ve got quite a big job as it is. What we’re trying to do is point out that there are some principles from the broadcasting world that could be relevant, but the matter for institutional arrangements is clearly something for government.”

Do the tech giants have the ability to police themselves? And how helpful is the German model? “Our research tells us that the public are concerned about consistency, uniformity and transparency,” said the Ofcom CEO. “What the tech giants have started to do in the last year [regarding self-regulation] is not reflected in growing confidence – trust has gone down.

“That’s why Germany is an interesting example, partly because it



Kirsty Wark

Paul Hampartsoumian

shows that something practically can be put in place. What’s also very interesting is they’ve focused on... the transparency of the process.

“So, when the tech giants say they have taken down a certain amount of content, with a certain amount of speed, are they doing so? There are effective sanctions if they don’t.”

But, pressed Wark, are there really enough people who understand how to police the internet to do so? “The market changes in all sorts of new ways. We’re all developing that expertise,” said White. “At Ofcom, our core job is to protect audiences and to ensure that we’ve all got great programming to watch.

“We have seen such a dramatic shift, particularly among young people, that they don’t know what the television is. They watch mainly through catch-up or YouTube.

“We are deepening our understanding [but] whether we really understand the commercial pulses of the tech companies, as opposed to how viewers are shifting their habits in the UK, is a very good question....

“We’re consulting at the moment on prominence and particularly on

whether there might be practical ways to introduce prominence if the Government decides to regulate the online world.”

Ofcom supports UK broadcasters collaborating in order to compete more effectively with the digital giants. In particular, it would back a British SVoD service run jointly by Britain’s PSBs. “With the benefit of hindsight, it was a mistake for the Competition Authority to rule against Project Kangaroo,” opined White. “We want to signal very strongly that the PSBs are stronger together.”

She added: “Personally, I am very confident about the future of the BBC and the future of British TV, because the quality is there. All our audience research shows that people want to see British TV reflecting the diversity and breadth of the UK.

“For all the glory of Netflix and the other steamers, they are directed at global audiences.” ■

*In Session Eleven, Sharon White, CEO of Ofcom, was interviewed by Kirsty Wark, journalist, broadcaster and writer. The producers were Sue Robertson and Martin Stott.*

# TV's essential asset: trust

Paul Hampartsoumian

I feel very fortunate to have been in this wonderful role for three months. For the media, and for the television industry in particular, trust is a vital commodity. It may not capture the imagination in quite the same way as a new drama, be as immediately celebrated as an overnight Barb rating, or even be treasured quite as much as new revenue. But all broadcasters need trust to succeed.

So I want to talk today about what the TV industry – and public service broadcasters in particular – can do to maintain that trust, and help us address some of the most pressing issues in our society and democracy.

The most obvious aspect of trust is in relation to the accuracy of news. Disinformation is one of the most significant issues of our age. We have all seen how it can sow discord and pose a risk to free and fair elections.

As the digital revolution continues to transform our lives, the potential to disrupt our civil society and democratic institutions grows.

Given the speed of technological change, it is perhaps no wonder that, according to Reuters, only 42% of

**Jeremy Wright,**  
the new culture  
secretary, sets out  
why democracy needs  
strong public service  
broadcasters

**‘WHILE 83% OF VIEWERS THINK IT IS IMPORTANT THAT PSBs PORTRAY THEIR REGION FAIRLY, ONLY 63% THINK THAT THEY DO’**

people trust the news they read. Crucially, however, 70% of viewers consider television a trustworthy source of news.

But, while TV is still where most adults in the UK turn for their news, this is not true for younger audiences. Indeed, Ofcom found that, for 82% of 16- to 24-year-olds, the internet is their first port of call.

Although people are increasingly turning to the online space for news, less than a third of people believe that the majority of news apps and websites are trustworthy.

We are developing a range of regulatory and non-regulatory measures to improve transparency and accountability online, and thus tackle a range of online harms.

Following the Salisbury incident, Russia has begun a blatant disinformation campaign, with misleading procedural questions and more than 40 different official narratives, all false. Many of these were carried and promoted on Kremlin-backed media.

Russia Today, funded by the Russian state, is a major concern. Ofcom has repeatedly found violations of standards by RT. These include cases ▶

› where Ofcom has labelled RT's coverage "materially misleading".

Ofcom currently has 10 investigations into the impartiality of RT's news and current affairs programmes. I welcome these investigations and I await their conclusions with great interest.

It is true that the tech sector, and Twitter in particular, has been taking action to make it more difficult and costly for those who would mount disinformation campaigns.

This has included the development of algorithms to spot fake accounts and the deletion of hundreds of thousands of suspect accounts, many linked to hostile states such as Russia.

But, of course, they can and should do more in this battle. Our democracy depends on it.

And, as well as tackling sources of inaccurate information, we want to strengthen and support high-quality sources that people can trust. Properly researched journalism is the best possible weapon in our battle against fake news.

The PSBs and other trusted broadcasters have a vital role to play. As well as continuing to provide high-quality news on linear TV, PSBs must also work to reach a wider audience.

And we have seen a lot of success here - for example, *Channel 4 News* on Facebook gets 60 million views per month - the most for any British news programme. And last year it had 2 billion video views across Facebook and YouTube.

The accuracy of news is not the only way for PSBs to generate trust. For decades, they have entertained, informed and educated, establishing a trust that was inherited from generation to generation. As national institutions in a multichannel world, our public service broadcasters must work to secure the trust of the whole UK.

One example is making younger viewers just as engaged in PSB programming as their parents were. This change in consumption habits is showing no sign of slowing down. So you must reach them where they want to be reached. And they must find you where they expect you to be found.

I want to see the PSBs being nimble, working across platforms, innovating and collaborating. Internationally, this



Russia Today interviewing President Putin

has been a success: BritBox is showing the best of British to viewers in the US and Canada. PSBs should not be afraid of building on this success at home.

At their best, PSBs have an innate ability to tap into the mood of the nation. This is their competitive edge. And, so, it is crucial that these organisations are made up of the people that they serve - both on and off screen.

We all know that people want content that speaks to them and their experiences - this means people from different regions, ethnic backgrounds and social groups. Proper representation is vital to maintaining the trust of different audiences. While 83% of viewers think it is important that PSBs portray their region fairly, only 63% think that they do.

I am very pleased that the BBC and Channel 4 have agreed to increase their regional impact, and I hope other broadcasters will continue to do more.

More than half of black viewers felt that there weren't enough black people on TV, and when they are, 51% feel that they are portrayed negatively.

This means asking some searching questions, too, about the make-up of our media organisations. To meet the needs of younger, more diverse audiences, it is easier if you employ them.

This means providing genuine

## 'DISINFORMATION IS ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ISSUES OF OUR AGE'

opportunities for those who have talent but may not yet be the finished product, or might not know the right people. Michaela Coel talked compellingly in Edinburgh just a few weeks ago about how, in her early years in the TV industry, she felt like a misfit or an outsider.

As national institutions, it is your job to invite people in. By doing so, you will not only create and solidify that trust: you will secure it for generations to come.

In exchange, the government will support PSBs to ensure that they continue to thrive, and stay prominent, as part of a healthy, sustainable and dynamic media landscape.

So, I can assure you that I will be looking closely at the results of Ofcom's work on prominence, and will work with the PSBs and the whole sector, to ensure that the Government is playing its part in supporting the future of public service broadcasting at the very heart of our vibrant media sector.



Russia Today

Broadcasting is one of this country's greatest success stories. Our extraordinary content and talent are respected around the world. Indeed, the UK recently reclaimed top position in the global soft power index, driven in large part by our cultural and creative industries, not least our superb broadcasting sector.

Shows and formats such as *Doctor Who* and *Bake Off* are known and admired the world over, and one study found that, among US readers, four of the 10 most trusted sources of news are based in Britain.

We need to build on this. Because a strong media means a strong democracy and a strong nation. And we cannot be complacent.

Those sowing discord want to undermine this trust and the institutions upon which our liberal democracy relies. Trust is a precious commodity and bolstering it is vital to our future. ■

*This is an edited version of a speech given by the Rt Hon Jeremy Wright MP, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. The full version can be found at <https://bit.ly/2PfNpHr>. Session Twelve was chaired by David Lynn, RTS Conference Co-Chair and President and CEO, Viacom International Media Network. The producers were Sue Robertson and Martin Stott.*



Jeremy Wright MP (left) and David Lynn

All pictures: Paul Hampartsoumian

## QUESTION & ANSWER

**Q** On internet regulation, what are the Government's plans for legislation and what is the timescale?

**A** **Jeremy Wright:** As to when, that's putting the cart before the horse. The first question to ask is: "What?" What you need to do in this is to approach it in a logical way. I apologise for the fact that I am a lawyer, so bits of this is my lawyer's brain talking.

I think you've got to ask the right questions in the right order. What I mean by that is you've got to start by asking yourself, what are the harms you are trying to minimise or, if possible, remove altogether?

You've then got to ask yourself what responsibilities do online companies have for minimising or removing those harms...?

You then ask yourself, how do you put in structures to enable those responsibilities to be carried out?

Finally, you ask yourself, if those responsibilities are not met, what should happen to those online companies? Who is responsible for holding them to account...?

None of this is straightforward. There are interesting examples abroad. I am going to be in Germany next week, speaking to my counterparts. I am sure this subject will come up.

I want to look at the German

example and other examples of how this needs to be done.

I am conscious of the need to get it right because, if you don't, two things will happen. First of all, you can guarantee that, whatever system of regulation or restriction you might come up with, it will be robustly challenged by those subject to it.

The second thing that will happen is that the rest of the world will look at what we're doing. I want to make sure that what we're doing is a good example, not a flawed example.

So I will apologise now if it takes a little bit longer than people might like... it's more important to get it right than to get it done fast.

**Q** Tony Hall made a strong argument today for improved funding for the BBC. Looking forward to the next licence-fee settlement, will you turn a deaf ear to those requests or are you minded to increase the licence fee?

**A** **Jeremy Wright:** I am certainly not going to turn a deaf ear to requests. I'll listen carefully to the arguments that are made, but it's worth recognising a couple of things.

First, the BBC licence fee brought in a lot more money last year than it did the year before. We closed a loophole in relation to the iPlayer, which helps the BBC considerably in terms of its funding settlement.

It isn't true to say that the BBC is starved of cash.... I will listen to the BBC's arguments, but I will expect the BBC to do its best with the resources it has available to it now.



# TELEVISION CAREERS FAIR

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# OUR FRIEND IN SCOTLAND

**T**he thing I absolutely adore about being Scottish is that it doesn't matter where I gig in Scotland, it's a homecoming gig. If you're a scouse comedian, your homecoming gig is in Liverpool. If you're a Manchester comedian, your homecoming gig is Manchester. If you're a London comic, you're fucked because nobody cares.

But the joyous thing about being Scottish is that the Scots are disgustingly supportive of their own. They're loyal to a fault. It's just nice because it's "local boy done good" regardless of where I am in Scotland. I love that.

My style of humour is a darkness. It definitely comes from being Scottish. When you grow up in the rain, it's very different to growing up in the sun, but you learn to see the goodness in the shite.

My comedy has been shaped by Scotland, it's where I started doing my comedy. Whenever I'm doing new jokes, I'll do them to a Scottish audience. I love the fact that, when I gig here, the fans that have seen me for years, that saw me when I was 16 years old, give me so much shit.

They've got my sense of humour. If they laugh it's like, "OK, the rest of the world will" because I trust them.

My Netflix stand-up specials are out in 187 countries. They have been translated into 26 different languages. I now have fans in South Korea, Panama, Brazil, and Venezuela. These are all places I never expected to have fans.

I truly believe that comedy is universal. Fortunately, my Scottish accent

**Daniel Sloss, making a global splash via Netflix, explains how his nationality is critical to his comedy**



Daniel Sloss/Jill Furmanovsky

isn't too thick. If you ask Americans, to them I obviously sound Scottish, but if you ask Scottish people, I either sound English or like a posh twat. This is why I make sure I pepper every sentence with swear words.

I was raised with swearing. I think that, in itself, is a very Scottish thing because swearing isn't at all offensive in Scotland. One of my earliest jokes was: "In Scotland, we swear so much, there's no space bar on the keyboard, it's just the word fucking."

I've always said that swearing is the percussion of language. I think it's hysterical. You'll never convince me that it's not clever. I use it a lot in my

stand-up because it's a very quick way of weeding out the weak – if you get offended by swearing, you're not going to survive my show – because my language is the least offensive part of it.

The Netflix specials, *Dark* and *Jigsaw*, have just blown up a thousand times larger than I ever anticipated. I always limit my expectations. In this industry, over the years I've learned to do that.

My stance was that, if they increase my venue size by 50 everywhere I go, that's a huge win. Everyone else was thinking, "It's going to be much bigger than that". I said: "Don't tell me that, I don't want to get any high hopes", because I think it's very good to be a pessimist.

If you're an optimist, you expect the best to happen. When the worst happens, you haven't prepared for it. When you're a pessimist, you expect the worst to happen and, if it does happen, you're prepared. But if good happens, you're pleasantly surprised. Being a pessimist is literally a win-win.

It's a very British attitude, especially a Scottish one. I genuinely haven't expected this in any way.

I have never understood people who say that success is humbling, because it absolutely is not in any way whatsoever. My ego is about to become the most untameable beast that any of us have ever witnessed. Good luck trying to bring me down. There's not a chance that anyone can get me off this high horse. ■

**Daniel Sloss is a comedian, actor and writer.**

# Better brainy than big



**T**hese days, bigger is considered to be better by most executives in the media industry but, even as consolidations such as Comcast/Sky continue apace, some nuance is creeping into the thinking about size.

This year's IBC technology exhibition and conference in Amsterdam was a case in point. The cognoscenti, both on stage and in the exhibition halls, were talking about achieving the clout they needed. And not just by getting bigger, but through partnerships, collaborations and using smarter technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and the distributed digital record-keeping systems known as blockchains.

Traditional media companies realise that working alongside the big tech players takes more than simply being big. "Scale isn't a sufficient or necessary requirement for success," said Keith Underwood, COO of Channel 4, in his opening keynote. "David didn't beat

## IBC review

**Kate Bulkley attends IBC and finds that media companies need to embrace AI and be nimble if they are to compete effectively**

Goliath by piling on the pounds. The victory came by being agile, nimble and deploying smart technology."

Traditional broadcasters and producers commonly sign co-production deals with the giant newcomers Amazon and Netflix. And other sources of money are being tapped by companies such as BBC Studios, allowing it to commission at the fast pace set by the Faangs.

Tim Davie, CEO of BBC Studios, told IBC that "creative deal-making at

speed" is the only way to ensure that the BBC owns the "cut-through content" necessary to compete for UK audiences, and globally in distribution.

"The days when broadcasters held all the power and you could make someone dance in the corner for two years waiting for a project to be green-lit," were over, he said.

BBC Studios commissioned Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, backed by investment fund Anton Capital Entertainment. Having the cash up front allowed the BBC to start production on the big-budget series before securing a distribution deal with HBO.

"If you don't have financial muscle in the areas you want to win in, there's a problem," said Davie. "This is a spread-betting business."

Meanwhile, services such as Netflix and YouTube are accelerating their moves on to the home TV screen. YouTube says that TV is its "fastest growing screen", largely because YouTube is now available on 500 million certified



Facebook drama *Sorry for Your Loss*

Facebook Watch

Lindsay Pattison, chief transformation officer of marketing and services group WPP. The remaining 25% is split among print, outdoor, radio and so on.

Commercial broadcasters and media companies must reimagine their business models now that online companies can personalise content for audiences, argued Pattison. She warned that content creators needed to be “wary of what Facebook Watch can do”. There is a huge buzz around the first Facebook global TV drama series, *Sorry for Your Loss*.

The migration of TV advertising spend to digital and, especially, to mobile, is clearest among younger audiences, noted Maria Garrido, chief insights and analytics officer at global advertising agency Havas. “More innovation is required to grab the attention of Millennials, Generation Z and Tweens,” she said.

Kelly Day, President of 10-month-old Viacom Digital Studios, suggested that part of the answer was to create new forms of content for younger audiences. VDS has revived the iconic MTV brand *Cribs* for the Snapchat generation, with three-minute episodes. The reinvented series has been seen by tens of millions of people.

The company has also created a new series based on secondary characters from the 20-year-old *SpongeBob SquarePants* franchise. Called *Bikini Bottom Mysteries*, it is distributed on Facebook, where it taps into the nostalgia that many Millennials have for the show. “Distributing across the social landscape on channels such as Facebook is such a huge opportunity, it’s worth the revenue-share component. If you do the maths, it works out in your favour,” said Day.

YouTube’s move to the living-room TV screen is being driven by significant investments in how consumers search for and discover content. “As the technology evolves, the potential is truly endless,” said Neal Mohan, YouTube’s chief product officer. “Imagine turning on your TV in the morning for the local news and then coming home to get recommendations for a cooking show right before dinner.”

Elsewhere at IBC, Google’s Android TV was talking up its “operator tier” version. This allows pay-TV companies to adopt the “broadcast-to-IP” platform, but retain more control over search, data and user interfaces than with the standard Google TV platform.

Alongside the tug of war over who controls the user interface and the

customer relationship, another trend evident at IBC was the continued growth of online video.

From Disney, NBCUniversal and Eurosport to start-ups such as Walter Presents and iflix in Asia, all want to launch their own over-the-top apps. As consumer demand for this kind of content rises, so does the bandwidth required. This, in turn, creates opportunities for revamped satellite delivery technologies.

“We know that the trend is towards 4K Ultra-HDTV. There will be another number next year, so... the requirement is for more bandwidth,” said Gerry O’Sullivan, Eutelsat’s executive vice-president for global TV and video. In this scenario, the reliability and fixed costs of known networks such as satellite are going to play an increasingly important role.

Meanwhile, smarter technologies are helping to uncover new ways of tracking and monetising content, so IBC delegates heard a lot about blockchain technology and AI.

Blockchain can build an immutable, transparent and immediate global system for tracking transactions, including the tokenisation of media payments, where a user’s bank details are not exposed online.

Although it is in its infancy, blockchain has the potential to give rights holders and consumers more accurate and up-to-date information about what they are buying. The technology could also be useful in battling fake news by verifying the provenance of content.

AI machine learning has many applications in media but one of the most exciting was outlined at IBC by Yves Bergquist. He is director of the data and analytics project at the Entertainment Technology Center think tank at the University of Southern California. The ETC is funded mainly by Hollywood studios.

Bergquist’s team has developed an AI-based analytical platform called Corto. It is able to assess which narrative attributes of a piece of content do better with specific audiences.

“Systems media, rather than siloed media, is going to revolutionise the industry,” claimed Bergquist.

Leveraging smart technology is no longer optional in the fast-changing media business, but a must-have. This is especially true given the moves by the tech giants.

It was a pretty potent takeaway from IBC 2018. ■

devices globally, including smart TVs, games consoles and set-top boxes.

And YouTube’s phenomenal growth as a video consumption platform is no longer confined to advertiser-funded content. Taking a leaf out of Netflix’s playbook, YouTube now offers a subscription VoD service called YouTube Premium, which recently launched in 21 countries outside of the US, including the UK.

Netflix’s vice-president of business development for Europe, the Middle East and Asia, Maria Ferreras, told a packed crowd at IBC that making Netflix “available for everyone” was about ensuring easy access. “The television is very important in creating these partnerships,” she said.

The challenge to traditional TV business models is nowhere more apparent than in the advertising space.

This year, for the first time ever, digital spend will overtake TV ad spend globally. “In 2018, the ad spend will be 38% for digital and 37% for TV,” said

## Society launches in Isle of Man

**Isle of Man Centre** The Isle of Man became the Royal Television Society's 15th regional centre in September. RTS Chief Executive Theresa Wise, who attended the launch at the Isle of Man Film Festival, welcomed the new centre: "It is a testament to the health of our industry and the hard work of our volunteers and members."

The centre will host events for industry professionals on the Isle of Man, and those who want to break into TV or who simply have an interest in it.

Isle of Media – the development agency for television, film and video on the island – supported the launch of the RTS centre. It has also become a Major Patron of the national RTS.

"It will be a huge assist to our creative sector to have an RTS centre based on the island. We look forward to supporting its development,"



From left: John Rhys-Davies, His Excellency Lieutenant Governor Sir Richard Gozney, Theresa Wise, Richard Arning and Michael Wilson

Steve Babb Photography

said Michael Wilson, CEO of Isle of Media. He added: "Opening a centre here adds strength to the sector, and helps develop skills, education and awareness of the arts and craft of television

and the wider creative and digital industry." Until last year, Wilson ran UTV in Northern Ireland. He is also a past Chair of RTS Northern Ireland.

Isle of Media works to

attract new investment, and to promote the island's TV and film industry and talent. It is a not-for-profit, public-private partnership with the Isle of Man government.

**Matthew Bell**

## Four weddings and a funeral

**Thames Valley** RTS award-winning lighting director Bernie Davis was the special guest at Thames Valley Centre's late-July event.

Davis, who has more than three decades' experience in TV lighting, discussed some of the major royal events he has covered in his talk, "Four weddings and a funeral".

He began with the 1999 wedding of Prince Edward and Sophie Rhys-Jones at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle. The lighting director spoke about the challenges

of trying to match the bright light flooding through the stained-glass windows against the unforgiving light-soaking dark wood lining the aisle.

Turning to the 2005 wedding of Prince Charles and Camilla Parker Bowles at Windsor Guildhall, Davis discussed the lighting he used to balance the low canopy of Sir Christopher Wren's open ground floor against daylight hotspots and changing colour temperatures.

Westminster Abbey was the venue for the 2011

wedding of Prince William and Catherine Middleton, where a combination of swaying flags, chandeliers and high towers conspired against him. Davis revealed how difficult it was to install covert lamps and maintain a shadow-free aspect.

More than five centuries after his death, Richard III was finally laid to rest in 2015 in a televised memorial service at Leicester Cathedral. The king's remains had been discovered three years earlier at the site of the former

Greyfriars Friary Church, Leicester. Davis recalled how he dealt with health and safety officials unfamiliar with the might of a full outside broadcast unit descending on a small cathedral.

He concluded his talk with the 2018 wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle at St George's Chapel.

High dynamic range UHD cameras were used at the wedding, making the need to deliver precise lighting even more critical.

**Tony Orme**

**S**ocial media has become a key part of TV's publicity machine. But, as the audience at RTS London's first event in its new home at digital services company Atos discovered, broadcasters need to choose the right platform to maximise its effect.

"Building a buzz 3: social media masterclass" in September was the third in a series of events run by the RTS centre over the past 18 months. It followed "Building a buzz: what makes a good PR campaign" and "Building a buzz: what makes a good promo". It was chaired by the presenter and voice-over artist Gavin Inskip.

"You can pretty much guarantee that your [TV] audience is on social media," said Jo Booth, head trainer and director of publicity agency Social Media Makes Sense. SMMS works on dramas such as BBC One's *Poldark*. "Broadcasters want to know that their audience is engaged and will come back for more – if you can prove that, you've got a high chance of being recommissioned.

"Budgets are always tight, so social media offers [TV] a huge platform to reach millions of people at relatively low – even free – cost."

Most of the shows SMMS promotes have Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts. Facebook, with 2.2 billion monthly users worldwide and 33 million in



Ackley Bridge

Channel 4

## Social media builds a buzz

RTS London

Matthew Bell learns how to engage and boost audiences

the UK, was the best social-media platform for short-form video content, said Booth.

Twitter had a far smaller reach, with just 336 million global users, but it was "where we engage with our audience – we reply to them daily", revealed Booth. Text and images were effective on the platform, videos less so. She

warned, however, that Twitter attracted trolls: "You are going to hear a lot more negativity on Twitter than on Facebook."

Photo- and video-sharing social network Instagram has 1 billion monthly users worldwide. "Branding and branded content does really well on Instagram," she said.

David Levin is creative

director of social-media producer That Lot. He began his working life at MTV, before turning to writing. Embracing Twitter, Levin began tweeting for his local pub in Hackney. A hobby became a job when he landed the role of "professional tweeter" on *The Voice*.

"Platform specificity – content that works well on a specific platform" was key, said Levin. He co-founded That Lot with writer and actor David Schneider, who starred in *Alan Partridge*.

Its clients include Hat Trick's BBC One comedy quiz show *Have I Got News for You*. "On its Twitter and Facebook accounts, we make political and topical jokes every day in the tone and voice of the TV show," Levin explained. "Our brief was to keep the show [in the news] between episodes by doing the same sort of things they do on the show."

Video on social media, Levin said, "is becoming ever more important". For Channel 4's school-based drama *Ackley Bridge*, it made a Snapchat drama to run after the TV show out of extra scenes filmed specifically for the picture and messaging app.

The drama received 2.6 million views on Snapchat, with 96% of viewers watching from start to finish. Its success, he said, was because "we made very Snapchatty content, not just TV content that we put on Snapchat". ■

■ Craig Dillon, founder of Westminster Digital, has a tougher task than the agencies working for TV – to make politicians appear human on social media. 'We don't focus on what the message is – that's down to the politicians – we deliver the content,' he

## Humanising politicians

said. 'There's a mad scramble in all parties to figure out how to use this political weapon.'

Some are doing better than others – Dillon showed an amateurish video featuring

Conservative MP Greg Knight, who delivered his 2017 election appeal, unintentionally, in the style of *Alan Partridge*. The video was a YouTube hit, although for its comic rather

than political value. 'Often political communicators don't know how to do any modern, digital communications,' said Dillon. 'We are saying that one social-media post has the power of 10,000 leaflets – and you can't throw social-media posts into the bin.'

## ONLINE at the RTS

■ Dragomir Mrcsic is not your conventional TV star. Having served time for his role in a bank robbery, he worked as a trainer for Sweden's Olympics Committee, before starring alongside Tom Cruise in *Edge of Tomorrow*. He's now taking inspiration from his criminal past to star as corrupt cop Alex Leko in Channel 4's new Walter Presents drama *Alex*. We caught up with him to find out how he has turned his life around ([www.rts.org.uk/DragomirMrcsic](http://www.rts.org.uk/DragomirMrcsic)).

■ Being a make-up artist can mean long hours, challenging conditions and a lot of standing around, but it's also one of the most fun jobs in TV. My Alehammar, who worked on BBC One's hit drama *Bodyguard*, shares how the show's star, Richard Madden,



Jon Attenborough

My Alehammar

dealt with being covered in pints of fake blood on set, and how to succeed in make-up. ([www.rts.org.uk/BodyguardMakeUp](http://www.rts.org.uk/BodyguardMakeUp)).

■ Journalist Cherry Healey found herself in some strange situations while filming *Sex, Knives and Liposuction* for UKTV channel W, including standing in an operating theatre while surgeons performed a 'Brazilian butt lift'. She spoke to the RTS about why she'll never judge someone for choosing to have a cosmetic procedure and how she's raising her children to value themselves and other people ([www.rts.org.uk/CherryHealey](http://www.rts.org.uk/CherryHealey)).

**Pippa Shawley**



Manson: The Lost Tapes

ITV

## ITV seeks 'ballsy' docs

**RTS West of England** ITV's Jo Clinton-Davis shared her vision for factual content "which will be ballsy and stand out on the EPG" before a packed house at the Everyman Cinema in Bristol.

The ITV factual controller was in discussion with Stephen McQuillan, head of factual at Bristol indie Icon Films, at an RTS West of England event in September.

Her message to producers in the room was clear – it's the 9pm slot that is important, given there are few pre-watershed slots available. Clinton-Davis said: "I'm looking for very direct, simple

propositions, which will appeal to a broad audience."

The best way to approach her commissioning team, she said, was "a one- or two-line pitch – the title, the idea", adding: "Check, if you don't have the resources, that we're interested before spending any money on a taster tape."

Clinton-Davis revealed how a few shows had made it from idea to screen, showing a clip from *Manson: The Lost Tapes*, "a risky two-parter with a Netflix quality". The documentary, part of ITV's crime and punishment season, takes the viewer inside the terrifying Manson cult.

The factual controller said that she was very proud of *James Bulger: A Mother's Story*, which was made with the support of James's mother. She "trusted us" and would only talk to Trevor [McDonald], added Clinton-Davis, who promised more films in the crime and punishment season, including *The Parachute Murder Plot* with Fiona Bruce.

She also talked about the success of *Long Lost Family* and played a clip from a 90-minute special on foundlings, which she described as "event television with strong characters and real emotion".

**Suzy Lambert**

## Drama director looks back fondly

**Republic of Ireland** Former RTÉ drama director Christopher Fitz-Simon revealed how he fell in love with the theatre at an RTS Republic of Ireland event in Dublin in September.

Fitz-Simon recalled his life as a stage-struck teenager, including a visit to a 1950 production of *Hamlet* at the

Gate Theatre by the legendary director Tyrone Guthrie.

The production was in modern dress, which the Dublin critics snidely attributed to the management's desire to save money on costumes. In the event, the cast was "sumptuously dressed".

Fitz-Simon began his career as a TV director at RTÉ in 1961.

He is the author of many broadcast plays, including a BBC Prix Italia entry (*The Dead*) and two RTÉ Prix Italia entries (*Vina* and *A Snowman in July*). He also held posts as artistic director of the Lyric Theatre, Belfast, the Irish Theatre Company and the National Theatre in Dublin.

**Charles Byrne**

# The city state of Pinewood

Pinewood Group



RTS Futures took a behind-the-scenes look around the renowned Pinewood Studios in mid-September.

The sold-out tour featured the complex's world-famous underwater stage, post facilities and the TV studios where many of the UK's top sitcoms and panel shows are shot.

Head of television Sarah McGettigan, who hosted the tour, offered advice to the RTS Futures visitors starting out on a career in TV: "Make yourself useful, and be interested; you can never ask too many questions."

McGettigan began as a runner at indies such as Hat Trick, before joining Pinewood in 2001, first as a resource co-ordinator and then moving into sales. She says that working on "both sides of the TV business – the technical and commercial" – in various roles at Pinewood over the past 16 years has helped her to build a career in the industry.

Senior technical manager John Stemp showed the RTS Futures visitors around Pinewood's TV studios, explaining how shows are recorded

## RTS Futures Matthew Bell tours state-of-the-art TV and film facilities at Pinewood Studios

and allowing them to try out cameras. Working days can be long, he said, from early-morning set-ups and rehearsals to recording a show in front of a studio audience during the evening, then finishing off at night.

Dave Shaw of Diving Services UK was on hand to talk about the underwater stage, which he designed and manages for Pinewood. The permanently filled stage, which is 20 metres long by 10 wide and six deep, is heated to a toasty 32°C.

*Bourne* and *Bond* sequences have been shot in the tank, as well as hundreds of TV shows and commercials.

Having filmed, say, a car being driven off a cliff on location, Shaw's team of experts can replicate the moment the car falls into

the water on the underwater stage and then, seamlessly, film the actor escaping from the wreckage.

The facility mixes the hi-tech – such as green-screen filming – and more home-grown techniques, like using mashed-up broccoli to create an algae-filled lake.

Classic movies, including *Great Expectations*, *Goldfinger* and *Batman*, were shot at Pinewood's Buckinghamshire studios, which opened in 1936.

Pinewood is home to many TV comedy shows, including *Taskmaster* and *Would I Lie to You?*, and provides shooting facilities for sitcoms such as *Still Open All Hours*, starring David Jason, and Lee Mack's *Not Going Out*. Recent dramas include *Sherlock* and the Ian McEwan adaptation *The Child in Time*.

When working at full capacity, up to 4,000 people a day can be found in Pinewood's workshops and production offices, and on its stages and backlots. It is also a base for some 250 independent companies that service the creative industries. ■

## RTS events IN BRIEF

### Midlands meets the commissioners

RTS Midlands welcomed commissioners from the BBC, Sky, Channel 5 and ITV to Birmingham's Colmore Club in September to network with RTS members and indies from the region. 'We wanted an informal feel to the day to encourage honest and open discussions between the indies and the commissioners,' said RTS Midlands Chair Caren Davies. 'The indies could see numerous people in one day instead of having to go back and forth to London.'

### UTV opens studio doors to the RTS

RTS Northern Ireland members and guests were taken on a tour around UTV's new studio at City Quays 2, Belfast, in early October. RTS NI committee member and UTV head of news and programmes Terry Brennan and UTV operations manager Alan Mackey guided the 25 visitors. The new HD studio is used for regional news programme *UTV Life* as well as news bulletins, weather forecasts and politics shows.

### North West launches awards

RTS North West announced the shortlist for its 2018 awards at the Lowry Theatre, Salford, in September. 'RTS North West awards are getting bigger and better every year and this year's nominations are another truly amazing line-up of great programmes, ground-breaking journalism and incredible creative talent,' said *North West Tonight* presenter Roger Johnson, who hosted the event. The awards will be held on 10 November in Manchester.

Wales  
Centre

Drone footage is a big part of many TV shows – and now drones could also have a role to play in aerial CGI data capture. “Just a few years ago, when I worked for the BBC’s Innovation Lounge, we only had access to one drone, but now they’re everywhere,” Michael Surcombe told an RTS Wales event in September. He was speaking at the BBC Club in Cardiff, where he demonstrated the latest drone filming equipment.

“The new drones are so light they can be carried in a small satchel and be up and running in just a few minutes,” he said. “CNN has already issued them to all of its news crews in the US.”

An ex-BBC producer, Surcombe became the first head of BBC Wales’s Innovation Lounge, set up to showcase the latest digital technology. He left to launch aerial filming company Leaping Wing,



DJI Mavic Pro drone

## Lighter drones raise TV’s game

whose clients include Amazon Prime, Endemol and Visit Wales.

Surcombe explained that

his interest in drones now extends to CGI data capture from the air. The visual-effects industry is interested

in using drones to streamline the time-consuming business of creating landscapes.

Fellow panellist Alex Rumsey, a 3D artist with Bristol-based Moonraker VFX, explained that photogrammetry, the science of making measurements from photographs, makes it possible to identify the exact positions of surface points. “It’s becoming ever cheaper to get a digital copy of a landscape you have filmed, with all the creative freedoms that come with that, especially using the ‘prosumer’-type drones, which basically fly themselves,” he said.

Regulations on using drones have been tightened, said Surcombe, but for smaller, more portable drones, “licensing will become easier in future and you won’t have to go through the current hoops. This will open up the market.”

**Hywel William**

## A serious look at Welsh comedians

■ TV comedy is alive and well in Wales, according to the panel of experts assembled for an RTS Wales event at Sinemaes, a week-long pop-up cinema at the National Eisteddfod in early August

‘Are the Welsh funny?’ was chaired by ex-ITV head of comedy Sioned Wiliam, who is now BBC Radio 4 comedy commissioner. Joining her on the panel were S4C entertainment and music commissioner Elen Rhys; producer Rhys Gwynfor from Welsh independent producer Antena; producer and comedy writer Barry Jones from indie Cwmni Da; and stand-up comic and Made in Cardiff station manager Daniel Glyn.

The packed session covered

risk-taking and new talent, and debated whether it was possible to identify elements that are intrinsic to comedy in Wales.

Referring to the growing audience for online content, Gwynfor suggested that creating a short-form sketch for YouTube brings with it ‘new challenges as well as new opportunities to experiment’. Jones insisted that ‘we need to see new faces on screen and develop new writers’.

Glyn argued that stand-up was ‘an art form’ and that it should be given greater on-screen prominence. He also stressed the need to innovate through ‘disruptive technology’.

Rhys revealed that S4C is due to screen a raft of new



S4C sketch show *Dim Byd*

S4C

shows in the autumn, including a stand-up series. She said the broadcaster would continue to search for new writers and develop its YouTube platform, Hansh, alongside its TV output.

More than 3,300 attended screenings and sessions at Sinemaes in Cardiff Bay, a 36% increase on 2017. The events were supported by Welsh film and TV organisations.

The RTS centre also hosted a screening of *Dal: Yma/Nawr (Still: Here/Now)*, a remarkable documentary about Welsh poetry that features John Cale, Rhys Ifans, Matthew Rhys, Cerys Matthews and Ioan Gruffudd. Director Marc Evans and producer Ynyr Williams took part in a Q&A following the screening.

**Hywel William**

Mark Daly looked back over his career, which has seen the investigative journalist expose police racism, sexual abuse at a school and drug taking in sport, at an RTS Scotland event in late September at Film City, Glasgow.

Daly made his name with his 2003 BBC doc *The Secret Policeman*, in which he infiltrated the police in Manchester and uncovered, “the most ferocious, incomprehensible, racism”. One police recruit was heard to praise the racist killers of black student Stephen Lawrence on the programme.

Daly had joined the BBC’s investigations team “specifically to do this project”, having worked on newspapers such as the *Clydebank Post* and the *Scotsman*.

It took a year for Daly to prepare. “I had to learn how to go undercover to convince people that I was who they thought I was – that’s difficult,” he recalled. “The trick to being undercover is not to tell too many lies about who you really are, because you would get tripped up.”

He worked undercover for eight months. “Long-term, deep penetrative cover is something that you don’t know whether you can do – for some reason, I took to it. I wasn’t able to tell anyone, including my family,” he said.

Yet, despite taking great care with his cover story, Daly was caught out while texting his producer from the back of a police vehicle. He had been planning to resign from the force for “family reasons” but was “rumbled with two weeks to go”.

Daly was arrested and found himself mired in a political row when Home Secretary David Blunkett slammed the programme as a “covert stunt”. Blunkett later apologised and no charges were brought against Daly, who was named RTS Young



Mark Daly and (inset) undercover in 2003

BBC

## Exposing the bad guys

Journalist of the Year for his work on the documentary.

Daly has continued to make hard-hitting programmes for the BBC, including *The Men Who Sold the Jerseys*, which investigated the financial scandal that took Glasgow Rangers to the edge of extinction, and *Sins of our Fathers*, in which he exposed abuse at one of Scotland’s leading Catholic boarding schools.

In 2015, for a *Panorama* film, *Catch Me if You Can*, he investigated the use of performance-enhancing drugs in sport. Daly took the blood-boosting drug EPO, which he bought,

easily, from the internet. It improved his cycling markedly – but, despite being “doped for seven weeks” and “tested once a week”, Daly passed as “clean”. He said this “showed the inadequacies of the testing regime”.

At the RTS Scotland event, at which he was interviewed by 2018 RTS Young Journalist of the Year and STV Aberdeen reporter Ben Philip, Daly discussed the techniques used by investigative journalists, including door-stepping.

“I don’t think it matters how many times you do it or how accomplished a broadcaster you are, it’s really

nerve-racking, because so many things could go wrong,” he said.

Daly also offered some advice to any budding journalists at the event about becoming overly reliant on internet research.

“Social media is a wonderful tool, but it’s no substitute for what journalism actually is, which is talking to people,” he said. “You can get huge amounts of information from documents, papers, leaks and data scraping – these are all wonderful tools – but that’s all they are.

“A journalist’s job is to talk to people.”

## STV to sponsor student awards

RTS Scotland launched its 2019 Student Television Awards at STV in Pacific Quay, Glasgow, in October.

STV News presenter Halla Mohieddeen hosted the launch, at which three of last year’s winning productions were screened, including Edinburgh College of Art’s *Best Men*,

which won the Undergraduate Comedy and Entertainment award at the national RTS Student Television Awards 2018.

The awards are sponsored by STV. ‘We’re delighted to be televising the awards, showcasing the finalists’ work on STV Player and partnering the students as they develop their

careers in television,’ said STV CEO Simon Pitts. ‘We want to work with the best young talent and this promises to be a fantastic celebration of Scotland and Scottish creativity.’

The RTS Scotland Student Television Awards ceremony will be held in Glasgow on 16 April 2019.

# OFF MESSAGE

**S**o, that was the takeover battle that was. Congratulations to Comcast for winning the auction for Sky in a thrilling boardroom tussle that lasted the best part of two years. Its £30.6bn knockout offer represents another reframing of the global media map.

Given Comcast's record, it's hard not to see the US media group taking Sky to new heights.

"This is the beginning of the next exciting chapter for Sky," is how Sky CEO Jeremy Darroch put it. "As part of a broader Comcast, we believe that we will be able to continue to grow and strengthen our position as Europe's leading direct-to-consumer media company."

To think, nearly 30 years ago Rupert Murdoch bet his entire empire on the fledgling pay-TV company, so convinced was he that Sky would transform UK TV. At the time, many doubted his far-sighted strategy as Sky, initially, struggled to find customers. Murdoch, of course, won out.

Perhaps it's time for Mathew Horsman to update his definitive account of the company's fascinating early years, *Sky High: The Rise and Rise of BSkyB*.

■ **As the media sector continues to digest the theme of the recent RTS London Conference, "Is bigger better?", let's remember what Sir Peter Bazalgette said in a video shown to accompany the opening session, "A full set of Faangs".**

Asked if bigger was, indeed, better, the ITV Chairman gave a typically erudite reply: "I was taught at school

that Sir Francis Drake defeated the Armada with small ships that were agile, and so size isn't always what counts."

The Elizabethan explorer may have been a plucky Brit but, as the ever-mischievous Tim Hincks later reminded delegates, the explorer's end was not a pleasant one. While still fighting the Spanish, Drake died of dysentery, the co-CEO of Expectation Entertainment told the RTS.

No one could say that TV executives are ignorant of history.

By the way, Drake's adventures sound tailor-made for the increasingly impressive Channel 5. The broadcaster's recent, two-part *Michael Palin in North Korea* left audiences wanting more.

■ Staying with the RTS conference, on a day that was full of highlights, new media minister Jeremy Wright's maiden RTS speech was a noticeably pithy affair. His talk gave the PSBs plenty to chew on. Incidentally, it was heartening to see the Secretary of State stay on at Kings Place for a drink and chat with stakeholders.

Let's all hope that Wright remains in the job long enough to make a genuine impact. If he gets internet regulation right, he should have a lasting legacy.

Readers will know that, since Jeremy Hunt stepped down in 2012, no fewer than six different politicians have held this job.

■ **In common with most viewers, Off Message became addicted to *Bodyguard*. The show represented a huge win for BBC One and its pro-**

ducer, World Productions – owned by ITV Studios.

*Bodyguard* proved, once again, that Jed Mercurio has few equals in the art of crafting nail-biting stories that make audiences desperate for more.

*Bodyguard* was scheduled against ITV's genuinely imaginative and deeply entertaining adaptation of *Vanity Fair*. Each episode's lengthy title sequence was a mini-masterpiece; a historical mash-up, with a soulful version of the 1960s classic *All Along the Watchtower*, and a top-hatted Thackeray (played by a grizzled Michael Palin) recounting the story so far.

Olivia Cooke's performance as Becky Sharp was note perfect. The supporting cast were delightful.

As ITV puts more muscle behind the ITV Hub, *Vanity Fair* deserves to score as long-tail content.

■ James Bond's producer, Barbara Broccoli, has ruled out a female 007, but perhaps the rave reviews for Jodie Whittaker as the first female Doctor Who may cause her to have second thoughts.

Even the *Daily Mail*, not always a cheerleader for high-flying women on BBC shows, voted this latest incarnation of the Time Lord a massive success. "Jodie looks as though she's excited by the role, and bursting with ideas about how to play it," opined the paper's TV critic, Christopher Stevens.

With *Emmerdale* preparing an all-female episode to celebrate International Women's Day, and Phoebe Waller-Bridge subverting sexual stereotypes in *Killing Eve*, television's feminist credentials are starting to look credible.



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