

October 2017

Television



A world of opportunity

CAMBRIDGE CONVENTION 2017



MASTERCLASSES

14 November
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PROGRAMME
MASTERCLASSES

15 November
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From the CEO



The RTS Cambridge Convention not only kicked off the Society's busy autumn events schedule, it generated headlines in abundance and helped to set the media agenda.

Huge thanks to the convention's brilliant co-chairs, Sky's Andrew Griffith and Gary Davey, and to all the speakers and session producers.

We enjoyed an extraordinary line-up of world-class entertainment executives. James Murdoch's appearance on the Thursday morning was a particular high point, as he outlined the corporate philosophy of 21st Century Fox.

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It was wonderful, too, to have the two Andys – Harries and Wilman – with their tales of how they’d each sold important shows to American streaming giants. Session chair Peter Fincham brought his unique perspective – and first-hand experience – to the stories of how *The Crown* and *The Grand Tour* made it to our screens.

Another stand-out from Cambridge was a hypothetical terror attack that put news executives on the spot as they were forced to make tough judgement calls. “In whose news do we trust?” gave attendees a real insight into the thinking that occurs on the editorial shop floor as a big,

domestic news story unfolds. Barbara Serra proved, once again, what a gifted presenter she is.

No Cambridge is complete without a government minister. The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Karen Bradley, delivered a keynote speech that underlined the continuing strength of the UK’s TV sector.

This bumper edition of *Television* contains full reports of all 14 sessions. I do hope you enjoy reading them.

Those who attended the inaugural Steve Hewlett Memorial Lecture will know what an absorbing evening this was. Nick Robinson’s stimulating lecture examined the ways in which

traditional news networks can respond to the challenge from social media. And congratulations to the first Steve Hewlett scholar, Oliver Cummins Hylton.

Finally, I’d like to draw your attention to our next Joint Public Lecture with the IET, on 25 October. Our speaker is none other than astronaut Tim Peake, further proof that the RTS is aiming high.

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National events

RTS/IET JOINT PUBLIC LECTURE

Wednesday 25 October

Tim Peake, ESA astronaut

'Life, the universe and beyond': Tim Peake in conversation with Tim Davie. Tickets: £10 for RTS and IET members; £30 for non-members. 6:00pm for 7:00pm
Venue: IET London, 2 Savoy Place, London WC2R 0BL

RTS MASTERCLASSES

Tuesday 14 November

RTS Student Programme Masterclasses

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

Wednesday 15 November

RTS Student Craft Skills Masterclasses

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

RTS AWARDS

Monday 27 November

RTS Craft & Design Awards 2017

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

RTS EARLY EVENING EVENT

Wednesday 29 November

In conversation with Matt Brittin

Matt Brittin, President, EMEA business and operations, Google, will be in conversation with journalist Kate Bulkley. 6:30pm for 6:45pm
Venue: The Hospital Club, 24 Endell Street, London WC2H 9HQ

RTS FUTURES

Wednesday 6 December

Christmas quiz

6:45pm for 7:00pm
Venue: ITV London Studios, Upper Ground, London SE1 9LT

RTS FUTURES

Tuesday 6 February 2018

RTS Futures TV Careers Fair 2018

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

Local events

BRISTOL

Wednesday 18 October

Digital Bristol Week events

■ Channel 4's Humans: stunts, synths and social media

Christos Savvides, senior digital producer at 4Creative. Chair: Rob Hifle, director, BDH. 6:00-6:50pm
■ 21st-century skills for 21st-century talent: What does the industry need for the future?

Panelists: Joe Godwin, director of BBC Academy and of BBC Birmingham; Stuart Dyer, operations manager, Films at 59; Christos Savvides, senior digital producer, 4Creative. Chair: Lynn Barlow, UWE. 7:00-7:50pm

Venue: BBC Bristol, 31 Whiteladies Road, Bristol BS8 2LS

Wednesday 25 October

Have we got news for you?

BBC Points West debate on the future of local news and community. Supported by RTS Bristol and the University of the West of England to celebrate 60 years of news in the West of England
Venue: TBC

Thursday 9 November

Bristol RTS Futures Festival

Advice about production in the region and entering the industry
Venue: Watershed, 1 Canon's Road, Bristol BS1 5TX
■ Belinda Biggam
■ belindabiggam@hotmail.com

DEVON & CORNWALL

■ Jane Hudson
■ RTSDevonandCornwall@rts.org.uk

EAST

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

LONDON

Wednesday 25 October

Games and TV: what's the score?

Panel: Steve McNeil, actor, writer, comedian and streamer; Sam Pamphilon, actor, writer and comedian; and Julia Hardy, presenter, technology journalist

and YouTuber. Chair: Ellie Gibson, journalist, presenter, comedian and author. 6:30pm for 7:00pm
Venue: ITV London Studios, Upper Ground, London SE1 9LT
■ Daniel Cherowbrier
■ daniel@cherowbrier.co.uk

MIDLANDS

Thursday 30 November

Gala Dinner and Awards 2017

Venue: National Motorcycle Museum, Solihull B92 0EJ
■ Jayne Greene 07792 776585
■ jayne@ijmmedia.co.uk

NORTH EAST & THE BORDER

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

NORTH WEST

Wednesday 18 October

John Thomson: The Anthony H Wilson Memorial Lecture 2017

Chair: Lucy Meacock. 6:30pm
Venue: Lowry Theatre, Salford Quays M50 3AZ

Saturday 11 November

RTS North West Awards

Venue: Hilton Deansgate, 303 Deansgate, Manchester M3 4LQ
■ Rachel Pinkney 07966 230639
■ RPinkney@rts.org.uk

NORTHERN IRELAND

Thursday 16 November

Programme Awards 2017

6:00pm
Venue: The MAC, 10 Exchange Street West, Belfast BT1 2NJ
■ John Mitchell
■ mitch.mvbroadcast@btinternet.com

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

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

SCOTLAND

■ Jane Muirhead
■ scotlandchair@rts.org.uk

SOUTHERN

■ Stephanie Farmer
■ SFarmer@bournemouth.ac.uk

THAMES VALLEY

Friday 17 November

Annual Dinner Dance

7:00pm
Venue: De Vere Wokefield Estate, Mortimer RG7 3AE
■ Tony Orme
■ RTSThamesValley@rts.org.uk

WALES

Thursday 19 October

RTS Wales Annual Lecture: Facebook, the media and democracy

By Leighton Andrews, professor of practice in public service leadership and innovation at Cardiff Business School. In association with the National Assembly for Wales, and chaired by Bethan Jenkins AM, Chair of Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee. Register via Eventbrite. Drinks reception: 6:15-7:00pm. Lecture 7:00-8:00pm
Venue: The Senedd, Cardiff Bay CF10 4PZ
■ Hywel William 07980 007841
■ hywel@aim.uk.com

YORKSHIRE

Monday 20 November

Ninety years of the RTS:

A celebration

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

■ Open the archives

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

■ Melvyn Bragg on TV

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

■ The 90th anniversary quiz

Venue: Television Centre, Kirkstall Road, Leeds LS3 1JS
■ Lisa Holdsworth 07790 145280
■ lisa@allonewordproductions.co.uk



TV diary

Kenton Allen chills in Malibu and trades gossip at the RTS Cambridge Convention



To quote the Pointer Sisters, “I’m so excited. And I just can’t hide it.” This is not just because I’m having a pre-Emmy Sunday brunch with my long-time mentor and general spirit guide, Andy Harries. Or because my best friend and business partner, Matthew Justice, is on his way from LAX to meet us at Soho House, Malibu, where we plan to spend the afternoon drinking rosé and staring at Cindy Crawford and her mates.

It is because there has never been a better time to be a British producer in Los Angeles. I’ve been doing this trip for more than 25 years. It can be one of the most depressing experiences of your professional life.

My most memorable depressive visit was six years ago. Before I’d even got out of bed, I’d had a week’s worth of meetings cancelled and two UK series decommissioned. But, since the arrival of the SVoD players, LA trips have become incredibly dynamic and fast-moving.

■ As we all know, through gritted teeth, Mr Harries blazed a trail for us all with the game-changing sale of *The Crown* to Netflix. That trail is now white hot. This time in LA, we announce the acquisition of a series of excellent books, *Lockwood and Co.*

Within an hour of *Deadline* reporting this – yes, that’s correct, dear reader, within 60 of your British minutes – Netflix, Amazon et al are in

touch, requesting meetings. WTF? as our young Big Talk runners would say.

■ Before Los Angeles, I go to the equally glam RTS Convention in Cambridge for the first time. Again, WTF? Why has it taken me 30-plus years to get here?

Highlights include a brilliant/terrifying opening session on future tech from the bloke who started *Wired* magazine, and a fascinating and hilarious panel, chaired expertly by Peter Fincham, about the real story behind *The Grand Tour* (Andy Wilman) and *The Crown* (yep, him again).

All this and a dinner in the splendid setting of King’s College, with equally splendid company and tons of scurrilous gossip not fit for publication.

A most inspiring, invigorating and convivial time spent with 300 of your closest colleagues from across the industry. I’ll definitely be back if Theresa Wise will have me.

■ I’m often asked what the difference is between UK and US comedy. To paraphrase a quote from Eric Idle, the answer is about \$3m an episode. But the truth is that the transatlantic gap in all scripted programming is rapidly closing.

This is excellent news for the financially challenged British sitcom. Why 30-minute scripted comedy has never attracted the same tariff as drama has been the subject of never-ending and heated debate at Big Talk Towers over the years.

Thanks to the high-end tax credit and our US chums, it’s now possible – with the right mix of talent and broadcaster – to co-produce comedy with US partners.

Back, our newest show from the comedy holy trinity of Simon Blackwell, David Mitchell and Robert Webb, is a fine example. Channel 4 has backed us from the very beginning and the support of new head of comedy Fiona McDermott has been phenomenal.

Thanks to Sundance, we’ve managed to produce the show and... wait for it... not lose any money. WTF?!

■ Back in LA, the highlight of our trip is time spent in the company of a genuine genius. There’s a prize if you can guess who he is.*

I grew up watching his work on a classic cop show from the 1970s. He created one of the seminal TV shows of the 1980s. He’s a multi-award-winning writer, producer and director.

He is responsible for four of the finest movies ever made, one of which includes the perfect heist sequence, which is jaw dropping in its complexity, ferocity and sheer technical achievement.

Now, he’s working with a bloke from Birmingham and his mate from Croydon on our long-gestating SAS: *The Originals* project. As I said, I’m so excited.

Kenton Allen is CEO of Big Talk Productions.

*Answers to info@bigtalkproductions.com



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A world of opportunity

Steve Clarke listens as senior industry figures identify British TV's strengths and challenges

Convention Chair and Group COO of Sky Andrew Griffith

Paul Hampartsoumian

How well equipped is British TV to make the most of the changes that technology entrepreneurs are unleashing around the world?

There is a consensus that, creatively, UK television continues to punch above its weight. Equally, there is a fear that the unregulated tech giants threaten domestic broadcast businesses as never before.

Opening the 2017 RTS Cambridge Convention, conference chairman and Sky group COO Andrew Griffith stressed the health of British television while also acknowledging the growing competition from the online behemoths.

"We need to address the imbalance between our – rightly – regulated industry and the lightly regulated online world," he said. Griffith added that, on the internet, there was no acknowledgement of, let alone adherence to, rules such as the ban on political advertising during

elections, the protection of minors or guarding the prominence of PSBs on electronic programme guides.

"It's a lop-sided contest [between UK broadcasters and the likes of Facebook] and, left unchecked, represents a real challenge," he continued. "At best, our valued standards of content protection are being eroded and, at worst, fundamentally undermined."

Griffith insisted: "As an industry, now is the time for all of us to make a strong case for action to policymakers to level the playing field so that we in broadcasting are able, sustainably, to promote the content and the values that the British public expect."

And, during a time of political shockwaves – Brexit, Trump and the UK general election – and a decline in trust in our institutions, could entertainment companies maintain public goodwill, he asked. In one sense, however, the status quo was a good place to be, as linear TV continued to dominate viewing habits across a wide range of demographics.

The myth that young people shun live TV was exploded by Thinkbox's CEO, Lindsey Clay (see box on page 8). As proof, she reminded delegates of millennials' recent obsession with the reality show *Love Island*, a breakout summer hit for ITV2.

Sky's managing director of content, Gary Davey, stressed that, in terms of creativity and programme quality, British TV was setting new benchmarks. "There's no question that, today, Britain has the most diverse, most energised and most creative television output anywhere in the world," he said.

Joining Griffith and Davey on stage, two expert witnesses were invited to assess the themes of this wide-ranging session from the opposing perspectives of linear broadcast and the purely digital domain.

Up first was *Wired* editor-at-large and techno-evangelist David Rowan, who was followed by Thinkbox's Clay. Rowan offered some provocative thoughts for the broadcasters sitting ▶



Paul Hampartourmian

Clay on young TV addicts

'There is a lot of pessimism about young people's viewing, but they were practically clawing each other's eyes out to watch *Love Island*. Young people have not switched off.

'While it is true that the under-35s spend significantly more time on YouTube and SVoD services than older people, they spend a relatively small amount of time watching video on Facebook. But they do still watch DVDs: more than 5% of their overall video viewing per day is of DVDs.

'Live TV is young people's most popular form of video... This is what they like to do best,' Clay said.

She added that, as young people become older, their viewing habits change and they watched more TV on a TV set and less SVoD and online video. But 'that is not to say this won't change in the future'.

Lindsey Clay, CEO, Thinkbox

› in the room. His first clip featured an interview with German YouTube star JP Kraemer, who told delegates that TV was an anachronism. "I am not interested in doing TV any more," announced Kraemer, who first found fame fronting a German documentary soap for sports channel DSF. "TV is old... The main problem is most people from TV want to keep the money. When you do YouTube, it's all yours."

Rowan said that Kraemer's YouTube channel, aimed at petrol-heads, attracts 25 million views per month.

Kraemer was dismissive of the huge production budgets that companies such as *The Crown's* producer, Left Bank, could command: "I don't think I will need a big budget, because what people really like is entertainment that looks real."

If this metaphorical earthquake was not bad enough, there were further shocks for the broadcasters as Rowan got into his stride. In another clip, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg made the claim in a recent talk that physical TV sets were effectively redundant. To watch their favourite shows, people could now download a \$1 app – from

Facebook, of course – to catch up with their viewing, rather than spend a pot of money on the latest smart TV.

While emphasising the speed of technological change, Rowan reminded the convention that human behaviour was often irrational. "A survey asked people what would be the hardest thing to explain to someone from the 1950s about modern life," he said. "My favourite answer was: 'I have a device in my pocket capable of accessing the entirety of all information known to man and I use it to look at pictures of cats and get in arguments with strangers.'"

More seriously, the *Wired* executive told the audience that they should consider emulating Facebook and do more to harness data to help transform their businesses. Greater personalisation was one area where traditional TV companies could deploy data to keep audiences satisfied, argued Rowan.

Meanwhile, artificial intelligence offered the potential to customise stories to suit an individual's emotional state, he claimed.

Virtual reality (VR) had been used by film-makers to allow viewers to

experience the grimness of refugee camps in the Middle East, without the intermediary of a reporter. "There's no gap between you and the programming," enthused Rowan. "There is no gap between the stage and the audience. You are immersed." He predicted that it wouldn't be long before we could travel to space via VR.

If some of this sounded rather far-fetched, Rowan reminded delegates that Spotify, Netflix and the iPhone were each initially written off by highly paid executives from rival companies. Hind-sight was, indeed, a wonderful thing.

Taking up the cudgels for linear TV, the next speaker, Clay, told delegates that British television had successfully weathered the disruption of the past decade.

This had been achieved by TV embracing online, ensuring that everyone could access content on their mobile devices regardless of location, and investing in high-quality shows.

Tellingly, if seven-day catch-up viewing is factored in, the average UK viewer watches only four minutes less TV a day than a decade ago – 3 hours 36 minutes compared with 3 hours 32 minutes, according to Barb statistics.

Add in catch-up beyond eight days and box sets, and the amount of viewing increases by a further eight minutes. If viewing on other devices is included, the time spent watching TV goes up again – by another four minutes.

In an analogy that had some delegates scratching their heads, Clay compared the medium of television to the *Game of Thrones* character Jon Snow.

"He's the show's moral centre, he has integrity and the common touch and is a natural leader," Clay explained. Many people had tried to kill him off but Snow was a survivor despite being a bit miserable – rather like people who work in TV and who tend to see their industry through a glass half-empty.

Sky's Davey, who concluded the session, made a similar point when he said that the first time he heard someone predicting the death of TV was in New York 30 years ago at a talking

shop run by... Lehman Brothers. And we all know what happened to them.

"It is clear to me that the industry worldwide, and particularly in the UK, is undergoing a genuine creative renaissance. To me, that will keep driving all our business in the right directions," said the Sky content boss, who has run TV business in the US, Asia and Europe. In the UK, companies

such as Sky had thrived by "staying ahead of the important technology curves that are important to us and help us serve our customers".

Davey continued: "If I try to quantify the scale of where we've got to, if you just look at Sky UK this year, we will deliver nine exabytes [9¹⁸ bytes] of data across our

platforms. That is the equivalent of 117,000 years of high-definition video or, if it were text, 51 times the entire writings of humankind.

"To you and me, that means shows such as *Gogglebox*, *Downton Abbey*, *The Night Manager*, *Strictly Come Dancing*, *Love Island* and *Taboo*, not, of course, forgetting *The Great British Bake Off*."

Davey congratulated Channel 4's departing creative chief, Jay Hunt, and Love Productions on the programme's successful transition to Channel 4.

The UK was rich in film and TV talent on both sides of the camera, but what singled out British TV from the rest of the world, he said, was the UK's high tolerance of risk-taking in the shows it commissioned and produced.

"This country has encouraged risk and developed audience behaviour that actually accepts risk. That's not true everywhere," insisted Davey. "In fact, in a lot of places – and I think it is true of US network TV – risk gets punished. That's something that we need to hang on to and to develop. As long as we keep taking risks, we will survive." ■

Session One, 'A world of opportunity', was introduced by Andrew Griffith, Group COO, Sky, and Gary Davey, MD of content, Sky, with presentations by Lindsey Clay, CEO, Thinkbox, and David Rowan, editor-at-large, Wired UK. The session was produced by Olivia Bonner and Lucy Aitkens.

THIS COUNTRY HAS ENCOURAGED RISK AND DEVELOPED AUDIENCE BEHAVIOUR THAT ACTUALLY ACCEPTS RISK

Griffith on blind spots and Brexit

"The EU referendum highlighted a blind spot in UK broadcasting. As a group, we failed to anticipate or understand the result. Then, to prove that it wasn't an accident, we did it again earlier this year, during the general election.

"This tells us that we weren't as in touch with the mood of the country as we thought. We were too quick to accept received wisdom. Arguably, we did so because we weren't as representative of the make-up of the UK as we should be.

"All of us have to work harder to get out of the London bubble."

Griffith on data and advertising

"Online video advertising, dominated by just two global players, is experiencing explosive growth in the UK and may already be gaining more than its fair share.

"There are opportunities for both sides to learn from each other. We in TV could embrace data, introduce greater addressability and be more adventurous in trying new business models.

"If they're to build sustainable business models for the long term, digital advertisers would be wise to open up to third-party measurement, recognise that there is a deficit of trust and share the rewards more fairly with content creators."

Andrew Griffith, Group COO, Sky

Davey on peak drama

"I disagree with my colleague John Landgraf at FX in the US, when he said that TV drama had reached a peak and too much drama was being produced. There are some 460 dramas in production right now. I find myself in agreement with Ted Sarandos at Netflix, who said, "How can it be wrong to give someone too much of a good thing?"

Gary Davey, MD of content, Sky

Zig when the others zag



CEO **Nancy Dubuc** explains how A+E Networks has prospered by taking risks and diversifying. **Matthew Bell** watches the showreel

A+E Networks has successfully reinvented itself as a producer of original global content. Giving the international keynote address at the RTS Convention, President and CEO Nancy Dubuc explained how the US media giant had moved into new broadcasting territory.

In 2002, A+E lost the rights to reruns of the long-running police procedural *Law & Order*. This was a big blow, because the network had been pulling in huge audiences on the back of the crime show.

“We had no choice but to reinvent the model for ourselves, and that began [the move] into original programming,” explained Dubuc.

Fifteen years later, A+E – a 50:50 joint venture between Hearst Communications and Disney-ABC Television Group – has become a hugely successful global operator. Its channels, which include History, Lifetime, FYI (formerly the Biography Channel) and Viceland, reach 360 million households in more than 200 territories.

Its resurgence has been partly fuelled by original non-scripted shows, which the session chair, Channel 4’s Jay Hunt, described as “very punchy for the American market. They almost speak to a British tradition of public service broadcasting, [covering] big issues of the day”.

The documentary series *Intervention*, which follows the lives of addicts, has been running since 2005. “[The show] was one of the three times I have been told I may lose my job,” recalled Dubuc, who has worked at A+E for more than 14 years – the past four as CEO.

The other two programmes for which Dubuc put her job on the line, she revealed, were A+E IndieFilms’s *Jesus Camp*, about an evangelical Christian community, and *The Kennedys*, which was pulled from History in the US.

Many suspected the demise of *The*

YOU'LL GET FIRED FOR DOING NOTHING; YOU WON'T GET FIRED FOR A SHOW NOT WORKING

Kennedys was more because of the unflattering light the mini-series shone on the American political dynasty than its supposed historical inaccuracies.

"It's my job as the creative and business leader of the company to push people outside of their comfort zone," said Dubuc, adding that these "risky" shows were motivated by a desire to hold up a mirror to society.

Cop documentary *Live PD*, which follows US police forces on the streets on a Friday night and is shown live, has proved a ratings winner for A+E since its debut last October.

British producers approaching A+E with programme ideas, said Dubuc, should "not come to my team with a 2.0 version of what we already have".

She continued: "Being the first show out there takes a lot of guts; being the 15th version of that [show] is a business model."

In her approach to programme-making, Dubuc maintained that "celebrating failure is key". She explained: "Half of what we do fails, at least – and that's a pretty good batting average, actually, if half of what you do works. You'll get fired for doing nothing; you won't get fired for a show not working."

Audience data, she said, "can point you in the right direction of a topic that might work, but it isn't going to tell a story". Moreover, she said, "We don't aspire to own the information; we aspire to own the hearts of our customers."

Dubuc said that A+E had been trying "to get away from the repeat business" and, "in primetime, we're pushing our premieres", such as *Live PD*.

But, pointed out Hunt, there was "increasingly massive inflation in non-scripted and reality. So, to populate a channel with a much higher percentage of origination is a bankrupting proposition, isn't it?"

Dubuc rejected this argument, maintaining that A+E had a good balance of genres and programming.

A+E launched an in-house scripted

production division, A+E Studios, in 2013. Notable series produced so far include History's *Roots* and Lifetime drama *Unreal*.

International markets are another area earmarked for investment. "It is a huge area of focus and growth for us as a company," said Dubuc. Here in Britain, A+E Networks UK is a joint venture between A+E and Sky. Despite reports to the contrary, Dubuc denied that she was pulling back from the relationship with Sky.

In 2014, A+E took a stake in Vice Media, before launching the millennials' TV channel, Viceland, two years later. Dubuc claimed it had been a success: "It is talking to an audience that doesn't watch any television – but I would argue that we were not giving that audience much television to watch.

"We were there at the birth of cable [TV in the US], and I watched that first video on MTV, and all of cable felt like it was made for us. [But] it has aged with us and we didn't do a great job of listening to the generation coming up behind – we need to reinvent ourselves for what they care about."

Variety is key, argued Dubuc: "I don't ever want to be known for just one genre. It's very important for us to diversify, whether that's non-fiction documentary, live or scripted – that's what's been our saviour all these years, being able to zig while others zag."

Looking to the future, which she said would be "constantly" changing, Dubuc maintained that she would continue to use "fail-fast" business practices.

This required "looking at the decisions we make" and, if they were not working, "having the courage" to change tack. "Admitting failure is hard for people," she said, "but I do believe that [it's necessary]." ■

'Session Two: International keynote' featured Nancy Dubuc, President and CEO, A+E Networks, who was interviewed by Channel 4 chief creative officer Jay Hunt. The session was produced by Helen Scott.

Standing up to the streamers

Subscription video-on-demand services (SVoD) – most prominently Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime – are changing the way we watch TV.

So, how is A+E Networks responding to this challenge?

A+E, in contrast to many broadcasters, doesn't license its programmes to Netflix. 'Netflix has an incredible business and I think all of us are a bit envious of what it has and what it is able to spend,' said A+E's boss, Nancy Dubuc.

Until a few years ago, the network had a library arrangement with Netflix, but she said that the money it received 'wasn't worth the risk that we're taking of creating a behaviour to not watch commercial television'.

She added: 'We've done more piecemeal deals with Amazon and we have a better relationship with Hulu [on] hours of programming, because 75% of the audience that's watching on Hulu is still watching the commercials.

'So, for me, it's about the audience behaviour – we all watch SVoD and things without commercials but we all also tolerate commercials in some environments because you care about that brand or that show.

'You care enough about it that you will stick with it. We don't want to become [just] "good enough", so that [people] will tolerate watching two-seasons-ago content because it's available on a service that doesn't have commercials.

'[We want] a "go-see-it-out" [attitude from viewers] because "I love History or I love those Lifetime movies and I know I can't get them anywhere else".

'It's not that we don't want to work with those [SVoD] companies, but, on a library basis, the maths doesn't work.'

This became the “Two Andys” session, the moment when veteran producers Andy Harries and Andy Wilman met for the first time to discuss the thrill of being handed huge budgets. And – they insisted – creative freedom, to work on *The Crown* and *The Grand Tour*.

“They are the cats that got the cream,” said Peter Fincham, session chair and former ITV director of television. He had his own tale to tell of the shock waves from those deals struck by Netflix and Amazon in 2014 and 2015, which continue to reverberate throughout British broadcasting.

Fincham reminded Harries: “A couple of years ago [2014], you came to see me with a pitch. You had Peter Morgan at one elbow, Stephen Daldry at the other and you had this project, *The Crown*.”

“It was palpably obvious that you were not going to have any trouble selling it. As you left the room, I asked you, ‘What happens next?’ You said: ‘We are just popping over to America, I’ll get back to you.’ In that moment, I knew that I would never hear about this project again.”

“Not true,” protested Harries, Chief Executive of Left Bank Pictures. “I took you out to breakfast and you said, ‘I suppose it’s the BBC?’ And I said, ‘No, it’s Netflix.’ At which point you shut your eyes, you dropped your head down a bit and said: ‘Well, that’s a real game changer.’”

“It was a game changer, we tested it with you and the BBC, both were very enthusiastic. I did think that we would be doing some kind of classic co-production.”

“We pitched to five US networks. Some had doubts about it being very British. It was 60 hours, the whole reign, which was a hell of an order.”

“But Netflix was very different. Ted Sarandos [chief content officer] was there, they’d got all the bosses in the room. At the end, Ted said, ‘Great, we want it, let’s have it.’”

“Netflix was about to roll out worldwide. We were a perfect brand, the Royal Family. On reflection, it was obvious to me that they had decided to buy before we went in.”

“We had sent a script ahead. I think they ran the research on *The Queen*, *The Audience*, the play we did [in 2013], and other royal films. All the research



Show me the money

Maggie Brown hears how **Andy Harries** and **Andy Wilman** made TV history by signing lucrative deals with Netflix and Amazon

suggested that stuff about the Royal Family was a winner.”

The deal was reportedly £100m for two series, and Left Bank sold Netflix a licence and kept the rights.

Fincham turned next to Wilman, executive producer of *The Grand Tour*. “You and your three conspirators [Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond and James May] came to my home, my shed, where we had a long conversation about what would happen after the BBC and *Top Gear*, and I extolled the virtues of ITV and, throughout that meeting, I thought... ‘This is never going to happen, you are going to one of the streaming services.’”

Wilman agreed: “It was pretty inevitable. Ironically, the BBC had always allowed us to make the show we wanted. And when we left [*Top Gear* in March 2015], we still wanted that freedom.

“If we went to a respected, established channel, we might have to make it their way. We got American agents, and the US corporations started to call. We talked to Netflix and Amazon.

“Amazon got more and more serious. It kept saying: ‘Make the show you want to make.’ That resonated. But then the cheque really resonated! We would just make our thing and put it on a different platform.”

The deal struck was for three series, each of 12 episodes – with a budget, reputedly, of £160m.

Said Wilman: “The one thing I learned about Amazon is that it wants to make stuff that is big. It is not worried about making its version of *Bargain Hunt*. There is a lot of noise around our show, it has a big global reach.

“Amazon is so young and new, I don’t think it was thinking unscripted, it just thought, that’s big and ready-made, and jumped in.

“Amazon, wherever it goes, wants to get bigger in that market. It is working outwards all the time.”

He said there had been no pressure to change the show to suit the American market, or change the British humour, but Amazon wanted items filmed in the countries that it was targeting.

“Amazon actually said, ‘Where’s the controversy?’ We have had no notes on a film, no anything. What it wants us to do is more marketing, a hell of a lot of adverts; it never said, ‘Can you say trunk instead of bonnet.’

“We tried to make the guys a little more American recently and it didn’t



Andy Wilman (left) and Andy Harries

BBC AND ITV ARE OVERSTUFFED WITH PEOPLE WHO CONTINUALLY TRY TO TELL YOU HOW TO MAKE THE SHOW YOU SOLD TO THEM

work brilliantly. They don’t look like Brad Pitt. We know this.”

At this point, delegates were shown a still of Clarkson, Hammond and May after a spoof makeover, with gleaming white American-style teeth.

“The perception of working for streaming services... It sounds like nirvana. Is it as simple as that?” queried Fincham.

Harries replied: “In the case of *The Crown*, we cast who we want. We cast John Lithgow [an American] as Churchill because [casting director] Nina Gold came up with the idea. “They read the scripts ahead of time, they call and have a natter, they react – but not four pages of detailed notes.”

He warned: “This is one of the reasons why the BBC and ITV are going to be under pressure. Because top talent – all talent – wants to make shows the way they want. By and large, Netflix is proving this can be done very well.

“One or two shows don’t work, but most do pretty well. It fundamentally changes the working practices that have been established in the UK and which have got worse and worse over the past few years.

“The BBC and ITV are overstuffed with people who continually try to tell you how to make the show you sold to them. Netflix, Amazon, Google and YouTube – all of them have a dramatically more direct, much simpler approach. That is the future, no doubt about it.

“The biggest challenge to British broadcasters is that the talent is going to start swinging over to places where it can do what it wants and get well paid for it.”

There was a downside to not having a big launch on terrestrial television and getting audience ratings, Wilman confessed. He said that Clarkson, a big Twitter user, missed the tabloid coverage, adding: “I really miss it, but what can you do? I have had to get on-message. I haven’t got ratings to work with. It is harder to get talent on the show because you haven’t got any ratings. They don’t tell us.”

Harries believes that another outcome is that they miss out on UK awards. *The Crown* was spurned by Bafta earlier this year.

Asked whether he thought these two very particular programme examples were exceptional, he replied that spending by the likes of Amazon and Netflix and other online services was going to go on increasing, as that of UK broadcasters stalled.

“My company is a great beneficiary of it, but we are unique, being at the forefront; the deal we did was exceptional,” he agreed. “The deals that Netflix is doing [now] are much more comparable with other free-to-air services. More sensible. It paid a lot of money because it wanted [*The Crown*] at all costs – a great place to negotiate from.

“But if Netflix became too big and monopolistic, that would be a real worry. *The Crown* won’t last for ever.” ■

‘Session Three: Show me the money!’ featured Andy Harries, CEO, Left Bank Pictures, and Andy Wilman, executive producer, *The Grand Tour*, in conversation with Peter Fincham, Co-CEO, Expectation Entertainment. The producer was Helen Scott.



Five fundamentals that guide the BBC

**BBC Chairman
Sir David Clementi**
lays out his vision
for the corporation
– and defends its
journalists from
harassment

A couple of years ago, in his MacTaggart lecture, Armando Iannucci called public service broadcasting “one of the best things we’ve ever done” as a country. It’s something I have always believed. And I believe that the British public does as well.

The BBC always features right at the top of those lists that often appear in the papers of the things that make us feel most proud to be British.

I remember reading one of those not long ago. You know you occupy a special place in the nation’s heart when you’re right up there between Shakespeare and fish and chips.

But I also noticed that *Doctor Who*, *Match of the Day*, and the Proms all featured highly in the top 50. As a *Strictly* fan, it’s surely only a matter of time before it joins the list!

Even though the BBC can bring the country together for big TV moments and national events, we know that all audiences – and particularly younger audiences – are increasingly consuming media in different ways and via an ever-growing number of platforms.

Thanks to the revised governance arrangements under the new Charter, we now have one unitary board.

The fundamental responsibility of the board is to uphold and protect the independence of the BBC.

We are also responsible for acting in the public interest and for meeting the five public purposes that are set out in our new Charter.

Upholding our first public purpose – to provide impartial, accurate news and information – is right at the heart of the BBC.

Truth and accuracy are under assault like never before. I believe that the BBC’s historic role as a trusted guide, the place people come to when they want to find out what is really happening at home and around the world, has never been more vital.

But today we recognise that it is not enough to wait for audiences to come to us. We need to make sure we go to them, wherever they are.

In an environment in which it is becoming all too easy to choose services that only provide news that reinforces our own opinions, part of the BBC’s job is to work even harder to



Planet Earth II

BBC

must confront any abuse, and make it clear that it is intolerable.

The second public purpose is to support learning for people of all ages.

One of the BBC's biggest strengths is its ability to make programmes that can inform, educate and entertain all at the same time. *Planet Earth II*, for example, was the most requested programme on iPlayer last year.

But, of course, formal learning is also a major focus of our education mission. BBC Bitesize is already used by approaching half of primary school students each term, and an incredible 80% of those in secondary school – more than half of whom say it has helped them achieve better grades.

There are areas, however, in which we need to do more to fulfil our mission. Doing more to support literacy for pre-school children, for example, or lifelong learning for adults. I would like to see the BBC do more in these areas, and I expect us to announce more later in the year.

Our third public purpose is to make the most creative, high-quality and distinctive output.

I thought about this as I watched a BBC drama that was broadcast in May and which I thought was outstanding: *Three Girls*.

I'm proud that *Three Girls* was made by BBC Studios. And I believe Studios is going to be fundamental to fulfilling our third public purpose in the years ahead. Under the new Charter, Studios is free to compete directly with other production companies, including seeking commissions from other broadcasters.

It was an inherent part of this Charter arrangement that the competition should proceed on as level a playing field as possible, with Studios not being subsidised by the public service activities of the BBC – and for existing BBC Studios commissions to be open to a contestability regime.

As part of the level playing field, it was agreed that Studios – like other production companies – would not be required to disclose the pay of those who worked for it.

So this exemption is not – as some have described it – an inadvertent loophole... it is an integral part of the

competition arrangements and is, so far as the BBC Board is concerned, an important point of principle.

We have started to build a strong professional relationship with Ofcom, built around respect for each other's duties. I look forward to the publication of the final operating licence, which is an important part of how the

BBC is held to account.

In principle, we should want a broadcaster's performance to be judged by assessing outcomes and impacts for audiences, rather than by prescribing inputs.

In particular, I am concerned about quotas that relate to hours of broadcasting, since

the driver here is around quantity not quality. Quotas relating to resource, and in particular to financial spend, are likely to be better drivers towards distinctiveness, although even they can never be guarantors of desired outcomes.

Our fourth public purpose is to reflect, represent and serve the diverse communities of all of the UK's nations and regions.

Earlier this year, the BBC announced its biggest investment in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland for decades. But, when it comes to making sure that we reflect and serve all our audiences, diversity in our workforce is a major priority. And here we have made good progress.

But we are acutely aware that there is much more to do. Not least on gender. We are confident that, when we publish our own [gender pay] gap in the next few weeks, we will prove to be significantly ahead of the national average. But we also know that the BBC should be the standard bearer.

The fifth and final public purpose is to reflect the UK, its culture and values to the world.

Arguably, it is more important than ever at a moment when Britain is seeking to redefine its international identity and reshape its relationship with the world. The World Service has long been central to the BBC's activities here, broadcasting to around 270 million people in 29 languages.

But the Government, recognising the importance of the World Service to the UK, has now made additional investment funds available. It adds up to the ▶

TRUTH AND ACCURACY ARE UNDER ASSAULT LIKE NEVER BEFORE

promote understanding of alternative points of view.

And it is no surprise that alternative or contrary views expressed on the BBC may well grate to a larger extent than they once did. Questions about government policies, which seem to some parts of our audience natural questions to ask, are regarded by others as impertinent and disrespectful.

But holding those in power – or seeking power – to account, asking them what sound bites actually mean, is a key part of our job. It is the responsibility of our journalists to ask the question – even if it is direct, awkward or unwelcome.

Speaking to our journalists, I have become increasingly aware of the abuse that some of them – particularly female journalists – are subject to, on an almost daily basis.

We must support our journalists and call out the abuse they are receiving. It is increasingly explicit and aggressive. And much of it occurs online.

But some of it also occurs in plain sight, at press conferences and political gatherings on all sides. Politicians cannot stand by and watch – they

POLITICIANS...
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CONFRONT ANY
ABUSE [OF OUR
JOURNALISTS]
AND MAKE IT
CLEAR THAT IT
IS INTOLERABLE



Paul Hamparssourmian

▶ biggest expansion of the World Service since the 1940s.

We take it for granted that we can switch on the TV or radio to get a realistic picture of national and international events. But hundreds of millions across the globe rely on the BBC for this. Worryingly, the Iranian courts have, in recent weeks, stepped up their government's harassment of Persian Service staff based in the UK by freezing the assets they still hold in Iran. We call for this harassment to stop.

I began by asking how the BBC can safeguard its relevance in the years ahead; how we can ensure that our audiences continue to choose us even in the face of remarkable change.

The answer lies in successfully defending the BBC's independence, and in meeting – often in new and innovative ways – the five public purposes I have highlighted today.

If we can achieve this – and I believe we can – we will ensure that the BBC remains at the core of British life and stays, along with fish and chips, at the top of those “great British” lists well into our second century. ■

‘Session Four: Keynote’ was given by Sir David Clementi, Chairman of the BBC. This is an edited version of his speech. He was interviewed by Lorna Tilbian, executive director, Numis Securities, who also chaired discussion from the floor. The producer was Helen Scott.

Full speech: www.rts.org.uk/article/sir-david-clementis-speech-royal-television-society

QUESTION & ANSWER

Q Now that you've had your feet under the desk for nine months... what were your biggest surprises, both on the upside and downside?

A I don't think there is anything that has disappointed me or proved in a sense really difficult, but I am really seized by the challenges that the BBC faces... we have a privileged funding model but the downside is that it's hard to increase revenues.

Q With BBC Studios, do you think there's a tension between the hard commercial reality of grinding out those margins and a truly world-class, creatively excellent product?

A We are absolutely clear that, under the new Charter, BBC Studios stands on its own two feet... it will have to compete. There may be some tension but it will have to find its way around it.

Q Diversity is a major issue across most organisations... but what about social mobility? What role does the BBC play in that [and] helping the UK become a fairer society?

A We've started recruiting without having the educational background in the application forms... so the bias that we all know exists in recruitment processes is eliminated as best we can.

Q You said in January that the BBC Board is bound to look carefully at all the services the BBC provides. Are there areas that could be outsourced?

A There are. The BBC has outsourced a lot of services and, in one or two services within the HR world, actually, the trend is the other way and [they] could be better done in-house.

Q Are there any particular areas of the world you'd like to shine a torch?

A We're likely to be jammed... but we'll work very hard to get into North Korea.

Q Does the BBC intend to pay men less and women more?

A The law says equal pay; it's not an aspiration, it's the law. The BBC actually has a low gender pay gap and, when all the numbers are out, I'm confident that we will be well ahead of the national average. We think, from the ONS, the national average is around 18% and ours is about 10%.

Reporting by Tara Conlan.



From left: Barbara Serra, James Harding, Julie Hulme, Jonathan Levy and Stuart Millar

Paul Hampartsourmian

Steve Clarke watches news executives decide how to break emerging details of a terrorist attack as online reports of the event multiply

News we can trust?

‘Publish and be damned.’ That was the credo of the great newspaperman Hugh Cudlipp, who ran the *Daily Mirror* during its glory days and was the architect of post-war popular journalism.

If only it were that simple in the age of Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. For TV news people, the digital era is throwing up new challenges and dilemmas, no more so than when a big, national news story breaks, such as a terrorist attack.

Regulated UK broadcasters BBC, ITV and Sky are constrained by codes enforced by Ofcom and by the need to maintain their reputation for trusted, award-winning journalism. Yet, dramatic footage of breaking news is likely to be available online, filmed by members of the public, long before TV news crews arrive on the scene.

It is a point of debate whether professional TV news organisations should show footage of this type. There are also profound ethical questions to consider: TV news executives need to be attuned to the possibility of endangering people’s lives and the risk of jeopardising the integrity of a police operation.

This was the background to an enthralling session in which news bosses from the BBC, BuzzFeed, ITN and Sky News were tested by a number of fast-developing fictional scenarios.

This hypothetical breaking story involved a group of armed gunmen taking hostages in a London restaurant. Dining together inside were an

MP and a British arms dealer who had been active in the Middle East.

Expertly chaired by Barbara Serra, a presenter for Al Jazeera, the first decision the news chiefs on the panel had to take was a fundamental one – when to break the story?

1 The panellists are shown footage of a TV news editor, “George”, at his desk. The incident first comes to George’s attention via reports on social media. He rings the restaurant to check the story but there is no reply.

Seconds later, one of his reporters calls to tell him that he has been told by the police that they have received a security alert from an MP. The Met won’t confirm any details “but there is a sense of panic” at Scotland Yard.

The police are asking the media not to speculate on the incident or the identity of those caught up in it. “The cops are very worried about us saying too much that might scupper negotiations with the gunmen,” George is told by his reporter.

Based on this information received would the news organisations run the story? James Harding, the BBC’s director of news and current affairs, said he would need more information before committing to broadcast.

ITN’s director of newsgathering, Julie Hulme, agreed. She would wait until a second source could corroborate the attack, ideally by getting one of ITN’s own reporters to the scene.

But Sky News’s director of newsgathering and operations, Jonathan Levy, said he “would probably go to ▶

YOU SHOULD BE WILLING TO PAY PEOPLE FOR GOOD FOOTAGE, BUT NOT IN A BREAKING NEWS SITUATION

Official verdict: too cautious?

Throughout the session, former Ofcom Content Board member Chris Banatvala was asked for his view of the panel's decisions.

Early in the session, the broadcasters emphasised the importance of always getting two sources before running a story. So, session chair Barbara Serra wanted to know if this practice was written into Ofcom codes.

'No, that's really internal journalistic good practice,' said Banatvala. 'Ofcom is not involved in making programmes... It requires due accuracy, it does not say broadcasters need one source or five sources.'

'It's purely up to the broadcaster, but the broadcaster has to be able to provide evidence that it is taking due care when it is going on air.'

Later, as the session drew to a close, noting the panellists' overall caution in reporting the incident, he wondered 'if the pressure on them [the news organisations] is greater than they're giving credence to'.

Banatvala added: 'Within about 10 minutes, this material may well be all over the web. People will be blogging about it. They'll be under huge pressure to put this out... There will be under more pressure to show it because everyone else is doing it.'

► air with some limited information, stressing that a police source has confirmed there is a security alert".

However, the Sky report would at this stage make no mention that a siege might be taking place. BuzzFeed's head of news, Stuart Millar, said he would also break the story.

Serra asked Harding if he would feel left behind. How much pressure would there be on him to run the story? "We'd want to get something more before we went on air," insisted the BBC executive.

2 In the next phase of the scenario, lobby journalists hear that an MP is eating in the restaurant with arms dealer Craig Summers, an old school friend of the MP. This information is also being tweeted by credible journalists.

Would Sky News name the MP? "No, we'd need more verification. Her family might be watching and they're likely to be shocked and upset," said Levy.

The BBC and ITN said they would now break the story because more details of the incident had emerged. However, they both agreed with Sky about not identifying the MP.

Explained Hulme: "By now, we have a reporter at the scene and we might be getting off-the-record briefing from the cops, but we would not name the MP. We could be alerting the hostage takers that there is an MP in the room, which might change the situation. That is the last thing you want.

"Also, our security correspondent will be talking to the authorities and getting some sense of what is going on."

Harding stressed that BBC News was still at the stage of saying: "We are hearing reports of a security incident."

3 The third phase takes place approximately an hour after the raid on the restaurant. Social media is now all over the story and running details of how many people are trapped inside.

Some leaked CCTV footage has emerged. It shows a group of armed men entering the restaurant by the back door. "These first images of this story are so crucially important to our visual narrative," said Serra. Would the news executives publish the video?

The panellists stressed the need to

verify its accuracy. "There are gizmos that you can check to see if it's been on social media before," said Hulme.

Serra pointed out that the footage was uploaded by a security guard and posted on WhatsApp.

In that case, said Hulme, ITN would want to speak to him. A key consideration before publishing the footage was whether it could endanger the lives of the people inside the restaurant and "jeopardise anything operational happening at the scene".

Levy, too, emphasised the importance of verification: "We'd search the internet and see if there is any similar footage that we could check it against."

BuzzFeed's Millar pinpointed one of the difficulties: "The problem with all big, breaking news stories is that people will use fake videos just for the clicks, just for the retweets. It's done deliberately to mislead. Your starting position, when you're dealing with social media in a live, breaking-news situation, has to be: 'Why are these lying bastards lying to me?'"

4 Video that hasn't appeared so far on social media has come to light. George asks his news organisation how much it is prepared to pay – the supplier wants £20,000.

Sky said it was prepared to pay £3,000-£5,000; ITN, £5,000; and BuzzFeed, nothing. Said Levy: "Assuming that the source is credible and a bystander to the event, and not in any way connected to it, it is reasonable to pay for it. We pay people who supply video all the time. Also, you have to factor into how much you bid that there will be quite a lot of other video out there as well. There always is."

Harding said he wouldn't pay for it. He explained: "You can't use it. You have to run it by the police and look at privacy issues and ongoing security responsibility questions."

He added: "You should be willing to pay people for good footage, but not in a breaking news situation."

5 The next test for the news executives is the appearance of a ransom video, hosted on what looks like an Islamic State website. It contains threats of violence against the hostages.



News editor 'George' at his desk

Would panellists show the film?

They were unanimous in saying no. "The police will be very active at this point," said Hulme. "They may impose a blackout or request us not to report certain things. When people's lives are at risk, we will always be very reasonable regarding those risks."

6 Online reports begin to name the lead gunman, and there is some corroboration.

The panel agreed that it would be wrong to name him. Levy summed up their thoughts: "Until the police name him, there is no motivation for us to. This session is about whose news do you trust? You're trusted for being right."

7 Three hours after the start of the siege, reporters on the ground are hearing that the police may soon storm the building. A woman living opposite the restaurant, who can see everything happening inside, is offering the chance to film from her flat. She also has video from her phone of what's taken place so far.

Would any of the news outlets show

this video and would they accept her offer of the live position? Levy said he would decline on the grounds of the risk of compromising the police operation and the hostages' dignity.

Harding, however, was in two minds. He said: "This one is a much tighter call. I'd be quite tempted to run it. You'd probably lean towards it because, if you look at these pictures, you don't compromise any of the individuals and you do get a sense of the scene.

"If you did put it up, the police would be on you really fast. Then, there is a practical point – we would be clambering all over each other to get to that live point.

"The one thing that I think is an argument for it is that it gives you a sense of what's happening."

8 In the final video clip, being sent live from the woman's flat overlooking the restaurant, the audience hear gunfire and explosions – the last of which, apparently right under the flat, terminates the transmission....

Summing up, the news executives

were keen to emphasise how their jobs relied on a tried and tested professionalism that was valued by audiences.

"What we've identified is that regulated broadcasters are much more responsible than social media, where you'll get much more information online – some of it true, some of it not," Harding said. "I think we were much more haunted by this three years ago than we are now.

"What you are seeing is that people really ascribe a value to having news sources they trust... even if they have to wait a little bit longer to find out what's happened." ■

'Session Five: In whose news do we trust?' featured Chris Banatvala, independent media consultant and former Ofcom Content Board member; James Harding, director, news and current affairs, BBC; Julie Hulme, director of newsgathering, ITV News; Jonathan Levy, director of newsgathering and operations, Sky News; and Stuart Millar, head of news, BuzzFeed. It was chaired by international broadcaster Barbara Serra and produced by Esmé Wren, with VT production by Amy Hitchcock.

During an authoritative performance at the RTS Convention, Ofcom chief Sharon White offered a frank appraisal of the day's big issues. She called broadcasters' performance on diversity "woeful" and strongly criticised the "paucity" of information that they had shared. The BBC, she added, "really ought to be leading the pack", rather than running in the middle of it.

Turning to social class, White argued that unpaid internships could "reinforce and propagate inequality".

She also defended Ofcom's advice to the Government not to refer 21st Century Fox's proposed takeover of Sky on the ground of broadcasting standards, but which the Secretary of State had rejected 48 hours earlier. This advice had been "careful [and] detailed", and stood up to scrutiny, White insisted.

It has been a busy year for Ofcom. In April, it became the BBC's first external regulator, taking over from the BBC Trust, and, in July, it published a draft operating framework, outlining how it planned to regulate the corporation.

"We are seeking views and, as an expert independent regulator, the decisions that we take are independent of both political influence but also commercial influence," said White, a career civil servant who took up the reins at Ofcom in March 2015.

Under questioning from *Newsnight* presenter Kirsty Wark, White denied that the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Karen Bradley, was trying to interfere in regulating the BBC.

Asked whether she felt "under pressure", White replied: "No, not at all."

Defending Ofcom's new role as the BBC's regulator, White said: "[With] the system we had previously, [there] was general, wide agreement that it was lacking, because there was this fuzziness between regulation and governance.

"Although the BBC is a new responsibility, we've been regulating the rest of the broadcasting industry for years. I believe we've got a wealth of experience and expertise."

In July, the BBC published the controversial list of what some of its top talent earns. This revealed that two-thirds of its highest-paid presenters and journalists – those earning £150,000 or more a year – are male.



The enforcer

Matthew Bell is attentive as Ofcom CEO
Sharon White talks tough on diversity

"I guess I'm surprised by the extent [of the gender gap]. It clearly isn't right that men and women are paid different rates simply because of their gender," said White.

She suggested that the figures were another illustration of "the importance and power of transparency". White continued: "There's an analogy between the gender pay data and what we're trying to do on diversity – you can't

fix what you don't understand. Some people fear transparency; personally, I think transparency creates trust."

Turning the conversation to the UK's withdrawal from the European Union, Wark asked: "What worries you most about the impact of Brexit?"

"As a regulator, we have no view on whether Brexit is a good or bad thing but, having taken the temperature of the industry in recent months," replied >

White defends Ofcom's work on Fox's bid for Sky

The day before the RTS Convention began, culture secretary Karen Bradley announced that she intended to refer 21st Century Fox's £11.7bn proposed takeover of Sky to the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) on the grounds of both media plurality and genuine commitment to broadcasting standards.

The Murdoch media giant expressed 'disappointment' that Bradley had not decided to follow the advice of the regulator, Ofcom, on the issue of broadcasting standards. The regulator had advised: 'We consider that there are no broadcasting standards concerned that may justify a reference.'

The minister, however, raised so-called 'non-fanciful' concerns about compliance procedures at Fox News and corporate governance at the Murdoch companies.

Bradley had been concerned about a number of sexual harassment



Kirsty Wark

Paul Hampartsoumian

**WE TOOK THE
UTMOST CARE
– IT HAS BEEN
A VERY, VERY
DETAILED, VERY
RIGOROUS
PROCESS**

allegations at Fox News and the channel's editorial independence.

Ofcom boss Sharon White described her organisation's work on the Sky takeover as 'very, very careful [and] detailed'. However, she added: 'The way the system works is that the Secretary of State has statutory discretion – she is the decision taker...

'There is transparency – it is absolutely clear at each stage. We did advise that there was enough evidence to justify referral on media plurality but not on the broadcasting standards consideration.

'We took the utmost care – it has been a very, very detailed, very rigorous process.

'Our works stands now for scrutiny. The Secretary of State has made a decision and it's over to my good friends at the CMA to do further scrutiny.'

QUESTION & ANSWER

Q Deborah Williams, CEO, Creative Diversity Network: Do you think there are synergies between the data we produce [the "Diamond" diversity monitoring system created by the BBC, Channel 4, ITV and Sky through the CDN] and what [Ofcom] has produced, and do you think we should be working closely together to get the industry more aligned?

A Sharon White: Yes to all the above. We're very strong supporters of Diamond... the more Diamond and we can work together so that there is an open and consistent picture of the make-up of our industry, the better.

Q Wilfried Genest, analyst, DE Shaw: How much assistance is Ofcom going to provide to the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) as it reviews broadcasting standards, which is not something the CMA traditionally usually does?



Deborah Williams

Paul Hampartsoumian

A Sharon White: The CMA is going to have to decide its process... [It] may call on us as an expert witness, almost, but how that process is going to run, we don't know.

Q Ed Shedd, head of UK TMT, Deloitte: Are Google and Facebook media companies?

A Sharon White: I think they are.

Q Ed Shedd: And do they need to be regulated?

A Sharon White: I don't think regulation is the answer, because I think it's really hard to navigate the boundary between

regulation and censorship of the internet. I do think that the companies need to take more responsibility as publishers as well as platforms, and I also think, to be frank, that content providers and advertisers, as we are beginning to see, need to be increasingly fussy about the environment in which they put their [content].

Q Kirsty Wark: Do you think the BBC and other broadcasters have a responsibility to make sure their material doesn't go on a page which is in any way dodgy?

A Sharon White: Yes... and I think that's the driver – not regulation, but pressure from the content providers.

Q Katherine Rushton, Daily Mail: Do you think the BBC has really taken [the gender pay gap] to heart and got a handle on it?

A Sharon White: Gender pay... is not us. The transparency on gender pay is very specifically an agreement between the Government and the BBC.

What our report [released today] on the workforce shows is that there is definitely more to be done for the BBC to be leading the industry.

[BROADCASTERS' DIVERSITY DATA] SHOWS SHOCKING, WOEFUL... SIGNIFICANT UNDER-REPRESENTATION

▶ White, "the issue that flashes red within my remit is the country of origin principle". This creates a common area for broadcasters in the EU, and the UK is the most popular location for US companies to base their European subsidiaries.

"We are very lucky to have lots of broadcasters in the UK who don't necessarily broadcast to a UK audience," said White. "We've been discussing with the Government and making the case and I think it's understood. And it's obviously a subject of the [Brexit] negotiations."

Big players such as Disney, Discovery, and NBC, suggested Wark, could up sticks to another European capital if their Ofcom licences were no longer recognised in EU countries. "Whatever you think of Brexit," Wark said, that would be "detrimental" to the British economy.

"I agree," replied White. "That's why, of all the regulatory issues in my in-tray on Brexit, the country of origin principle is the single most critical one."

Any loss of freedom of movement following Brexit, added White, would be "a big issue for the industry", although not one that "comes directly into our purview. It's a concern that we hear a lot in the discussions that we have on both the media and the telecommunications sides of our work." ■

'Session 6: Sharon White in conversation with Kirsty Wark' featured Sharon White, CEO of Ofcom, who was interviewed by Newsnight presenter Kirsty Wark. The session was produced by Sue Robertson and Martin Stott.



Unequal opportunities in
1966: *The Frost Report*

Ofcom shines a light on TV's unequal opportunities

On the morning of Sharon White's appearance at the RTS Convention, Ofcom released its report 'Diversity and equal opportunities in television'.

There were two main messages for broadcasters, the Ofcom chief said. First, was 'the paucity of data' available: 'Too few broadcasters are routinely monitoring the make-up of [their] workforces.'

According to the report, the TV industry could provide ethnicity data for only 81% of its workers and disability figures for just 69%.

'Second, to be frank, the information we do have shows shocking, woeful – choose your adjective – significant under-representation, whether it's women, disabled people or people from an ethnic minority background, particularly at a senior level.'

Addressing TV executives in the audience, White said: 'We need to take responsibility at the top of the organisation to set targets and take action.'

According to Ofcom's report, women hold only 39% of senior roles at the five major broadcasters – the BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Sky and Viacom, the owner of Channel 5. Percentages range from 31% at Sky to 48% at Viacom.

Singling out individual broadcasters, White said: 'Channel 4 does well, the BBC, interestingly, as the UK's national broadcaster, is in the middle of the pack. For me, the BBC really ought to be leading the pack.'

People from an ethnic minority background account for 12% of workers at the five broadcasters compared with 14% of the population as a

whole. At the top of the range, Channel 4 employs 18%; ITV has the fewest at 8%. Ethnic-minority representation is even lower at senior levels.

Disabled people make up just 3% of the workforce across the five broadcasters, compared with 18% of the UK population.

Currently, Ofcom requires the broadcasters licenses to provide data on ethnicity, gender and disability. White, however, called on culture secretary Karen Bradley to give Ofcom the statutory power to ask for information on sexual orientation and age.

Fifty-seven broadcasters failed to provide any information for the diversity report and White promised to take 'enforcement action' against these.

Pressed by session chair Kirsty Wark on the absence of data relating to social class, White accepted that it was an 'important issue, because you want diversity of thinking, not just physical diversity. Next year, we're going to ask the broadcasters to start thinking about providing us with more data on social class. Unpaid internships, in my view, have the strong potential to reinforce and propagate inequality.'

White noted that a number of broadcasters were moving away from this practice, adding: 'I would love to see a position in which we no longer have unpaid internships in the TV and radio industry.'

'Moving to a more open and meritocratic way of bringing people into the industry and then moving people up could be a transformative way to make faster progress.'

Sky higher

James Murdoch makes the case that a wholly Fox-owned Sky is what a post-Brexit UK needs



Paul Hampartsoumian

The title of this year's convention is "A world of opportunity" and I'm happy to be here to suggest that, in answer to the challenges that present themselves today, it's of paramount importance to embrace opportunity with open arms.

Tomorrow's commercial media needs to be able to compete globally, and at an unprecedented scale, and the opportunity this provides – creatively and commercially, for our businesses, our customers and our communities – is immense.

An appetite for disruption has been the essential ingredient for success in the digital world, a world we all inhabit today, like it or not.

At 21st Century Fox, and at Sky, we always talk about change not as an outside force, but as a tool, an energy that must be deployed. We strive to stoke a zeal for change, not a hardy defence against it.

Much of what drives it is born out of a 100-year history fuelled by

exploration, invention and a restless taste for disruption. We're a company built by asking big questions and taking even bigger risks. We know from experience they'll be the ones that actually shape the future and make history. It's a culture that is more valuable, and necessary, by the day.

New entrants, along with long-standing storyteller competitors, will shape a future defined by constant connectivity, nearly limitless choice and non-stop innovation.

And many of these firms are competing and creating across multiple geographies, with vast resources, in the pursuit of engagement from millions and billions of customers. The competitive environment is unprecedented and the demands it places on any storytelling business are profound.

William Fox founded the Fox Film Corporation in 1915, with an independent mind, global outlook and zeal for innovation. For our company, which acquired the studios [in 1985], his legacy inspires our quest to tell great stories – which, for us, began

with journalism. Since acquiring 20th Century Fox Film, we developed the Fox Broadcast Network, a venture almost universally dismissed at its inception, which went on to become the fixture of the US media landscape that it is today.

We founded Sky Television in the UK and Ireland, Sky Italia, and Sky Deutschland, dramatically enabling a step change in plurality in all five markets we serve.

Before long, all video entertainment, sports and news will be consumed over IP streaming networks. The net effect is that all content will be available to everyone all of the time. We're almost there – a world of ultimate plurality. We approach this [by remaining] fanatically focused on building brands that matter. The best brands enable a curatorial identity that doesn't diminish serendipity in the way that simple search and algorithmic optimisation for engagement does.

Viewers know what to expect from National Geographic, Fox Sports, FX or Sky Atlantic. And, within these ▶

QUESTION & ANSWER



Paul Hampartsoumian

Q Sarah Sands: This time, what went wrong with the Sky takeover? You played nicely, less aggressively, and yet the decision is the same. I wonder if the problem is that you presided over this rotten culture at News International and, again, at Fox News. People don't trust you. Is that the message?

A James Murdoch: No, I don't agree. They are completely different processes. When we first sought to acquire the balance of Sky, it never went to the Competition and Markets Authority. And the decision was made to offer a number of undertakings probably insufficient to deal with concerns about plurality.

At the time, we discovered real governance issues at News International in the past – phone hacking, illegal things, and we had to focus on that.

What's changed is that the companies have separated. News Corp is a separate entity and 21st Century Fox has continued to grow.

As we look at the marketplace going forward, scale and simplicity

are going to be fundamental. We were disappointed at the CMA reference, but we are looking forward to engaging. We have a clock ticking, we have a process, a reputation for probity and seriousness, and look forward to presenting evidence in a very straightforward way, and are confident it will go through.

In a large organisation, there are always things that go wrong. The question is how you respond, deal with them. Fox News: we had a situation where we learned of sexual harassment. The key issues for me were: what are the facts, how do we react, and [how to] do it quickly, loudly, so that everyone understands certain things are intolerable. No organisation is going to be perfect.

Q Even if the companies change, isn't the same family in control?

A You put in place hotlines, avenues for complaints. The first we heard of the Roger Ailes allegations was in the *New York Times* story, that a lawsuit was about to be filed. In less than two weeks, we made the decision we had to move on from Roger Ailes. You have to say it clear and hard. That's not acceptable behaviour.

Q Are there any concessions you are going to make [to the CMA] – do you sacrifice your own role? Do you still need Sky News?

A I don't think now is the time to get into that. We will see what issues they identify. We are pretty confident, because the independent external regulator [Ofcom] did a very good, thorough job.

Q Were you wounded by the standards issue, that there is this lack of trust, [over] the Murdoch "toxic culture"?

A You are over-personalising it. The record should stand. We owned 100% of Sky News for many years. There were no issues. When I was Chief Executive, no issues. When I was Chairman, no issues.

Whether or not, 30 years ago, someone had a grievance about a political decision a newspaper took that is no longer a part of the business is irrelevant to a process that should be transparent and evidence-based.

Q What's your position on Donald Trump? Do you discuss politics with your dad?

A My politics are not an issue here. It's an irony that, in the US, some sectors think I am a raging liberal, environmentalist, tree-hugger. Here, I'm a right-wing demon who is going to "Foxify" everything. Mystery is important [audience laughter].

Q So Sky News would not become like Fox News if you were given more power over it?

A Fox News is highly designed for a US audience, a polemical market and very different dynamic. We took Fox News off [in the UK, in August]. Fewer than 2,000 viewers watched it – it did not make commercial sense.

Impartiality is about balance, it is the [UK] law, and it is the right way for Sky News to operate. Ofcom concluded that our record was comparable to others, including the BBC: there was no material difference.

Q Claire Enders, Enders Analysis: Are you threatened by Amazon and Netflix's activities and the talent drain from UK television – is it dangerous for the traditional pay-TV model?

A From a talent perspective, no one talks about our business and says we are underpaying... We have partnerships with the creators [of series such as *The Simpsons*]... For a lot of creators, Netflix is where your shows go to die. They become another hour on the shelf among the billions of hours... It's a different business model: rather than buying a cost-plus licence fee for the life of a series...

Amazon, for example, spends a lot of time making a lot of noise about how much it is investing. It shows up, does a big, splashy deal and everyone fawns all over it.

There are very few companies that really invest over the long term and put thousands of people on the ground in markets such as the UK, Italy and India.

We have to be cautious about the shiny, new thing.

Reporting by Maggie Brown.

› brands, the diversity of our storytelling is paramount. We've moderated presidential debates, connected communities with local news, mapped the farthest corners of the planet, explored the opioid epidemic, gender identity and race relations, reinvented the ancient Indian sport of kabaddi, told stories of slavery in America, the rights of women in Pakistan and the coming exploration of Mars.

These projects do not simply chase blockbusters or commission by algorithm, but empower artists to say and do hard things.

In the UK, 21st Century Fox and Sky invested around £700m last year in original production and we intend to continue at least that level of investment. The creative powerhouse of Endemol Shine is also one of the country's leading producers of scripted programming – *Black Mirror*, *Broadchurch* and *Humans*, watched in more than 100 countries.

Globally, Endemol Shine is among the most prolific creators, with 700 productions in 66 countries.

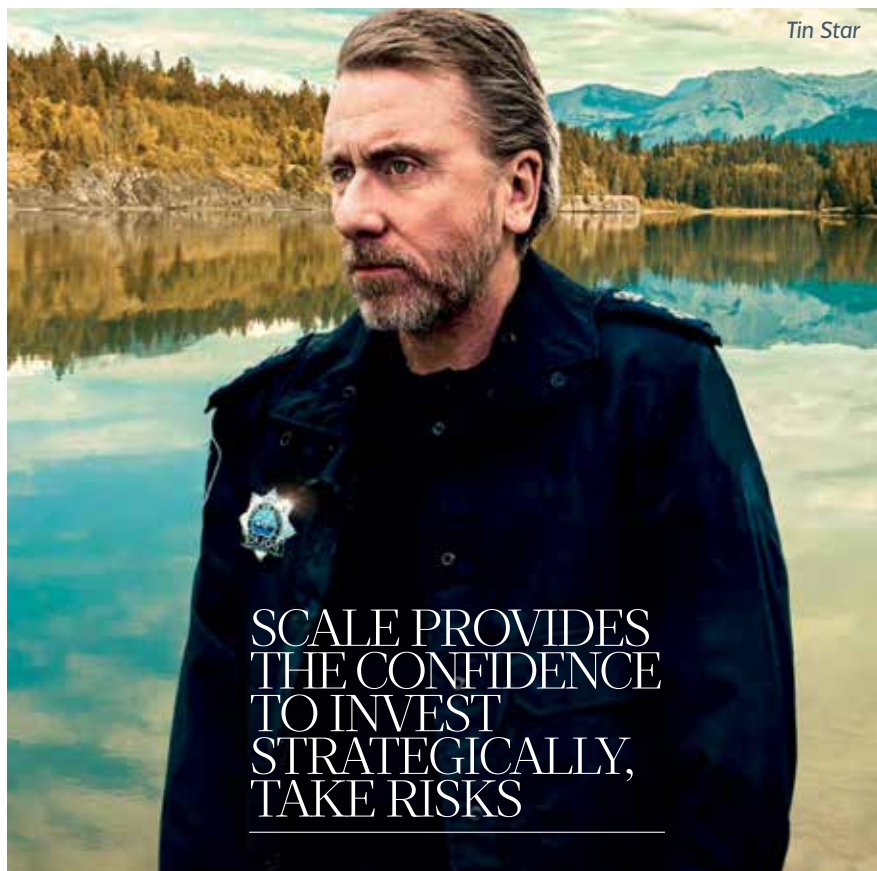
It's one of many film and TV brands stamped "Made in the UK", shorthand for storytelling that is smart, acerbic, relevant and entertaining. Such distinctiveness is a tremendous asset to the UK, an important element of any country's ability to hold a place in the future content economy.

This, for us, is the best place to be proposing a near-£12bn investment, that we expect will be a significant driver of the UK creative industry's long-term success in a global market.

Sky is everything a great creative company should be: it is imbued with a culture that nurtures ingenuity and innovation. It has reach, room to grow, and has worked diligently to become one of Europe's great, trusted brands.

When I joined Sky in 2003, there was a special opportunity to innovate... and to create a new business out of a successful, but decelerating, company. We invested more in programming, technology and new services such as Sky broadband. We also maintained and increased our investment in Sky News. I am deeply proud of the journalistic standards at Sky News.

At 21st Century Fox, we often speak about simplifying our business, as part of a core realignment of the company around the future of video. And with our December announcement to acquire the



balance of Sky and wholly consolidate the business, we took another major step in pursuit of that goal.

Scale provides the confidence to invest strategically, take risks... it's what allows us to take big, creative swings and empower a diverse range of creators to tell breakthrough stories that can drive meaningful change. Those factors all played into our rationale for moving forward with this transaction.

Inward investment in the UK creative economy, and the positive signal it sends to companies around the world, is more important than ever as the UK prepares to chart a course outside the EU. Indeed, the soft power of the UK's creative identity is going to be a big part of that story.

And so, if the UK is truly "open for business" post-Brexit, we look forward to moving through the regulatory review process and this transformative transaction for the UK creative sector becoming an affirmation of that claim.

Our commitment is about more than market success. Companies have to mean something to their communities, customers and shareholders. What the team at Sky is doing with Sky Arts and Oceans Rescue is all part of this same

belief system – that companies should embrace what their customers and people care about and that, by so doing, it makes them stronger.

At only three years old, but with a rich heritage, 21st Century Fox has both the spirit and the stamina to help define and shape what this business of ideas looks like over the next 100 years.

And I am hopeful that, here in the UK, a major chapter of our company and the entire industry will be written, with benefits shared broadly across the economy and society. Indeed, everything we have done has been about increasing choice, amplifying diversity and adhering to the highest broadcast standards inside a plurality machine that we optimistically call 21st Century Fox. ■

This is an edited version of the speech given in Session Seven by James Murdoch, CEO of 21st Century Fox, who was interviewed by Sarah Sands, editor, Today, BBC, who also chaired discussion from the floor. The producer was Helen Scott.

Full speech: www.rts.org.uk/JamesMurdoch2017

All the world's a stage

Tara Conlan learns that the Chinese TV market is developing fast but remains problematic for distributors



In a globalised world where, paradoxically, the demand for local content is booming, how are the big broadcasters and producers adapting and coping? This was one of the key questions in a session that provided insights into the rapidly changing Chinese TV market.

Endemol Shine Group CEO Sophie Turner Laing began proceedings by pointing out that new money was pouring into the industry: Amazon and Netflix have a combined annual content budget of £10bn.

In 2016, the UK was responsible for 25% of global programme exports – still a global leader but down on the 40% high that it hit in the last decade.

With international hits coming from as far afield as Israel and South Korea, what does that mean for established global players?

Australian Broadcasting Company Managing Director Michelle Guthrie said that, “as somebody who came from Google, I know where the money went from broadcasting and newspapers.

“The great news for the ABC is that, in some ways, we become even more important. We’ve actually increased our investment in regional precisely because that’s an area of strength for us and it’s very much an area that commercial broadcasters have pulled back from.”

Guthrie, who took on her role just over a year ago, said cutting management by about 20% and a “rebalancing of our resources” had freed up A\$50m (£29m) for investment in content.

Experimentation was key and ABC was trialling “a number of new shows where we start them entirely online”, such as a comedy by Ronny Chieng. The most popular were green-lit for TV.

Turner Laing asked the panel if the decline in the UK’s share of format exports was an inevitable “consequence of increased globalisation”.

“As markets mature, they require their own programming” and not just US imports, replied FremantleMedia CEO Cécile Frot-Coutaz – “so it’s inevitable that you’re going to have more and more formats from other places.”

She added: “But, if you look at the formats that end up on the big channels, they are predominantly UK or US formats and, in my view, that is not going to change. It’s highly unlikely you will see Kevin Lygo pick up a Croatian format for Saturday night on ITV.”

Rebecca Yang, co-founder of International Programme Content Network, has brokered deals for around 5,000 hours of content in what is widely regarded as the most complex TV market in the world, China.

These include *Secret Millionaire* and the *Got Talent* formats. Yet, said Yang, when *1 vs 100*, an Endemol format, was

first sold to China, the sales rep’s air tickets cost more than the format sale.

“Less than seven years later, *Got Talent* was sold in China and became a phenomenal success and had 500 million viewers,” she pointed out. Now, the prize is “significant” and the “commercial value is increasing massively”, particularly of massive hits such as *The Voice*. *Downton Abbey* went for about \$1m per episode, she added: “There’s definitely money there, the question is: how to unlock it.”

When asked how foreign companies should navigate China’s rapidly changing regulatory landscape, Yang admitted: “No one can tell what’s going to happen in an hour’s time.” Moreover, “the country is gigantic... that’s why smaller companies often find it easier, because they are more agile.”

Frot-Coutaz said that she had found it difficult to do business in China, and had encountered the notion that entertainment was not welcome in prime-time, when the emphasis should be on factual. Yang agreed: “Yes, there has been a winter for foreign business... there is a restriction on foreign formats.” But, she added, “I think they just want to encourage diversity.”

Viacom International Media Networks President and CEO David Lynn said all markets “start off as importers” but then “people start to look for local content. We are blessed that we have a



From left: Michelle Guthrie, Cécile Frot-Coutaz, Sophie Turner Laing, Rebecca Yang and David Lynn

Paul Hampartsoumian

global pipeline we can use across the world. If you go back 10 years, I'd say a lot of that would be US content. Now, we actually source a lot of that global pipeline from all over the world."

He said he sought "the best content, no matter where it is", name-checking shows such as *Ex on the Beach* and *Lip Sync Battle* (with 20 versions around the world). When Viacom had bought Channel 5, he said that people had expected it to be filled with US acquisitions, but "it's now two-thirds commissioned in the UK.... That's what the audience wants [and] advertisers like relevance."

Live TV still accounts for the vast majority of viewing but Lynn said there were opportunities for over-the-top internet distribution.

Yang gave the example of a successful Chinese app, Pear Video, which specialised in news-themed, short-form content.

Frot-Coutaz highlighted Fremantle's venture to make *American Gods* with Amazon, but admitted "the payment terms are a challenge". She suggested that the next big talent show might come from one of the new platforms: "The OTT players have made [more] shows possible in the local language... from places that weren't exposed before.... I think that's positive for creatives out there who have stories to tell."

The panellists were asked about the

impact of new technologies. Yang volunteered: "In the UK, when it comes to tech, it's still very much concentrating on content and distribution. In China, we are more focused on the user experience.... Last year, we invented two live streaming shows.... And 200 live streaming apps were launched last year in China.

"Most of the revenue that comes to us is not from sponsorship, but from virtual gifting. The in-app consumption is so advanced there." Yang said she hardly ever needed to carry cash.

She explained that Chinese viewers of live streamed shows often sent contestants they liked fake Lamborghinis or virtual versions of sponsors' products: "Those things can cost you hundred of pounds."

Lynn said that, having a global view, helped to tap into the latest trends, and pointed out that cheap smart phones were being sold in India for around \$5. "We are big believers in mobile," he said, because of its high penetration compared with pay-TV.

Frot-Coutaz said that *The X Factor* and *Britain's Got Talent* meant that Fremantle had a lot of short-form content it had already been paid for that could be spun off, but since "no one is making money [in short-form]... are the economics fundamentally unworkable?"

"The audience is there," countered Lynn.

"Are views an audience?" responded Frot-Coutaz. "I'm not saying that youth is not spending time on social... but it's not monetising."

Yang joined in: "The short-form world is working for us... not because of clicks... it's the fact that it will translate into sales. Everything in that part of the world is translating into consumption."

Turning to the impact of Brexit, Lynn said that the implications for the industry included a softening in the ad market. He wanted "a workable system" for work permits for international talent.

When asked to predict the key issues by the time of the next Cambridge Convention in 2019, Frot-Coutaz named Facebook's content strategy. Yang's prediction was artificial intelligence. Lynn had the final word. His first Cambridge, 14 years ago, had discussed digital disruption and the same would be true in two years' time – "I think it's constant," he said. ■

'Session Eight: All the world's a stage' was chaired by Sophie Turner Laing, CEO, Endemol Shine Group. The panellists were: Cécile Frot-Coutaz, CEO, FremantleMedia Group; Michelle Guthrie, MD, Australian Broadcasting Corporation; David Lynn, President & CEO, Viacom International Media Networks; and Rebecca Yang, CEO, IPCN. The producers were Charlotte Elston and Patrick Keegan.

Karen Bradley MP calls for a greater emphasis on production in the UK's nations and regions

It really is an honour to address the RTS Convention. This is one of the top fixtures in a culture secretary's diary. I have the best job in government, I get to engage with such a rich variety of sectors.

They are a huge, growing part of our economy: energetic, exciting, educational, enjoyable, a major source of jobs, they export on a massive scale and showcase the UK to the rest of the world. And television does all of these things single-handedly.

It is not my job to decide what should be on TV. My role is to support and challenge you, and to be your champion abroad. Where I think the industry can and should do more, I will not be afraid to say so.

I have a particular responsibility to make sure that public service television is serving the entire public. It is precisely because British TV is so important, so good, that I want it to reach everyone.

Success cannot only be measured by how widely it is watched. It must also be measured by how well different communities are represented on and off screen, by differences in pay, and whether the industry is flourishing in every part of our nations and regions.

British television is strong because it is diverse and will become stronger, still, the more diverse it becomes. It is the window through which much of the world sees the UK. It is only right that they see a dynamic, diverse country: TV must reflect the real world, the country we live in.

Be in no doubt that TV production is excessively concentrated in London. Pact has found that just 32% of the £2bn budget for UK productions was spent outside London and supported only 35% of the jobs.

In March, I announced that the Government wanted Channel 4 to increase its regional impact. Relocation may not mean the whole business, but I am clear that Channel 4 must have a major presence outside London and, potentially, increase its commissioning [there].

In doing so, Channel 4 can play a



leading role in a system that reflects and provides for the whole country.

Today, we are publishing results from a public consultation. I can announce that the overwhelming majority of respondents stated that Channel 4's regional impact would be enhanced if more of its people and activities were located outside London.

One respondent noted that it is an important part of a sector which has "a duty to hold up a mirror to the nation". I think that is a really nice way to sum up how we feel about Channel 4.

A significant majority agreed that increasing its commissioning quotas would be an appropriate and effective way to enhance Channel 4's impact in the nations and regions. Emerging

findings from an independent economic analysis suggest there would be regional economic benefits from relocation and increased commissioning.

Channel 4 has often led the way in representing different communities. I know Channel 4 works very hard to give a voice to as wide a range of people as possible. Its Year of Disability in 2016 was a tremendous success, and developing *The Last Leg* into a mainstream success is testament to its efforts.

It is this sensibility that makes it well placed to relocate outside London, along with its unique status as a public service broadcaster paid for by commercial activity, owned by taxpayers.

Channel 4 is a great broadcaster with many fantastic programmes. However,

as a public asset, I expect it to do even more to support the whole country.

Decisions about its programming should not all be made in the bubble of Westminster. People seeking to work in the media should not feel they have to move to London. I will continue to work closely with Channel 4 – my preference is to agree a way forward in concert with it.

I am delighted that Alex Mahon has been appointed CEO. She has had a fantastic career in software, TV and retail. Alex doesn't start until November, but we have already had constructive discussions.

We have got to get this right, it is about Channel 4's long-term future, and it may take some time to resolve. We are not looking at people moving tomorrow, but I do expect change by the end of this parliament. I hope to reach agreement with Channel 4 on the direction forward by the end of the year.

The BBC has a unique place in our broadcasting ecology. I am very proud of what we've achieved with the new Charter. The public deserves to know how the licence fee is being spent.

We have required the BBC to improve its transparency and efficiency – establishing the National Audit Office as its financial auditor and giving it power to undertake value-for-money studies on BBC commercial subsidiaries. The new BBC Board brings effective, modern governance.

We have required the BBC to disclose the pay of talent, with a threshold of £150,000 – in line with BBC executives and management, and the civil service. The publication of BBC talent pay caused a stir, especially in relation to the gender gap. It is not for the Government to dictate how much individual stars are paid, but transparency will help ensure reasonable and fair pay levels.

The BBC Director-General has made clear his commitment to close the gender pay gap by 2020, and I fully support and welcome his action.

The Chair of the Digital, Culture Media and Sport Committee is eager to extend pay data as far as independent production companies, which the industry, including the BBC, currently feels would be excessive.

I sympathise with the principle that the BBC should be at the forefront of pay transparency, and we expect it to lead the way. ▶



Karen Bradley MP (left) was interviewed by Anushka Asthana

Paul Hampartsoumian

QUESTION & ANSWER

Q You've said that Channel 4 should relocate, but what if Channel 4 doesn't agree?

A Channel 4 is a statutory body. Parliament can legislate to change the terms. Many parliamentarians are looking to that. I don't want to go down that route: I would much rather work with Channel 4 to come up with a solution that works for it and the public. Channel 4 can make the most amazing additional impact in the nations and regions.

Q So you are willing to consider legislation?

A Yes, there are early day motions, private members' bills floating around. There is cross-party agreement that Channel 4 needs to do more. We can move to legislate, but I don't think we will get to that point. I am confident we can work with Channel 4 to come up with something.

We want decisions to be made outside London, and I will work with Channel 4 so that we get to a point we are all comfortable with.

More people are employed in MediaCity UK [Salford] than when they were docks. That's a fantastic outcome, a success story.

Q You referred the 21st Century Fox bid to the CMA. Have you lost faith in Ofcom? What makes

you think the CMA can make a judgement based on standards?

A The threshold for the reference I have to make is lower than the "fit and proper" Ofcom test. I think it is important for public confidence that a formal CMA review takes place.

Let the CMA do its work, it is the expert in competition and markets, and I want it to look at the concerns raised. When we publish all the material on this you will see exactly why the referral was made.

Q What was the clincher? Were you worried about the "Foxification" of Sky News?

A I am in a slightly difficult situation. I can't really get into it.

Q Did you speak to the Prime Minister before making this decision?

A No. I took this decision without reference to any one else.

Q You sent Ofcom a letter regarding BBC quotas. Is Ofcom an independent regulator as long as it follows government rules?

A It is absolutely an independent regulator but, you heard from Sharon White, I am well within my rights to set out views with regards to the consultation [on service agreements]. That is what we have done.

Q You forced the BBC to publish top salaries. What is the answer: pay rises for women, or pay cuts for men?

A It is not for me to make a decision. Leave it to Tony Hall and David Clementi. I am very pleased they are going to take action.



Channel 4's London HQ

› I make no apology for writing to Ofcom to outline the Government's position. The BBC should be leading the way with both on- and off-screen diversity. Project Diamond is very much a beginning, not the end of the story.

The first stage considered 81,000 pieces of TV content. It found that, while BAME people are statistically well represented on-screen, off-screen is another matter. People with disabilities are very under-represented, both on and off screen. People with disabilities should not be limited to experiencing television as consumers. It should be a career option as well.

It is right that I should lay down a challenge to the broadcasters, the BBC Board and Ofcom to implement the changes we all want to see.

As the UK exits the European Union, strengthening existing relationships with other countries and forging new ones becomes all the more important. Television is already a leader in this area.

Securing the right deal for broadcasters is an essential part of our Brexit negotiations. Both DCMS and DExEU are working closely with broadcasters.

I have heard how important country of origin rules and European work quotas are for the sector. In terms of talent, the whole Government appreciates that creative industries operate in a global market.

We will always value immigration, including from EU countries and especially high-skilled immigration.

I will continue to engage and to discuss these critical issues with you, so, together, we can work towards the best possible outcome, which maintains the UK's pre-eminent position in the world in TV production and broadcasting.

To conclude: diversity is not a buzzword, it is a vital phenomenon. The aggregate effect of making things fairer and more accessible can inject even more talent into our TV industry, and showcase our country to the world.

I have immense faith in you. British TV is one of our jewels and it can shine even more brightly. ■

In 'Session Nine: Keynote', the Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, was interviewed by Anushka Asthana, joint political editor, the Guardian. The producers were Sue Robertson and Martin Stott.

QUESTION & ANSWER

Q Katherine Rushton, Daily Mail: Are you going to force BBC Studios to publish its stars' salaries?

A I am not going to reopen the BBC Charter. We agreed that it would be public service talent, and not talent paid through BBC Studios, for good reasons around commercial sensitivities.

Q Deborah Williams, Creative Diversity Network: I am struggling to find a link between relocating Channel 4 and improving diversity. What evidence is this based on?

A It depends on the diversity you are looking at. Diversity of regional accents, diversity of different views, opinions. Relocation might benefit those.

Q Jane Martinson, the Guardian: James Murdoch said you refused to meet him. Does that mean previous administrations acted unethically in getting so close to the family?

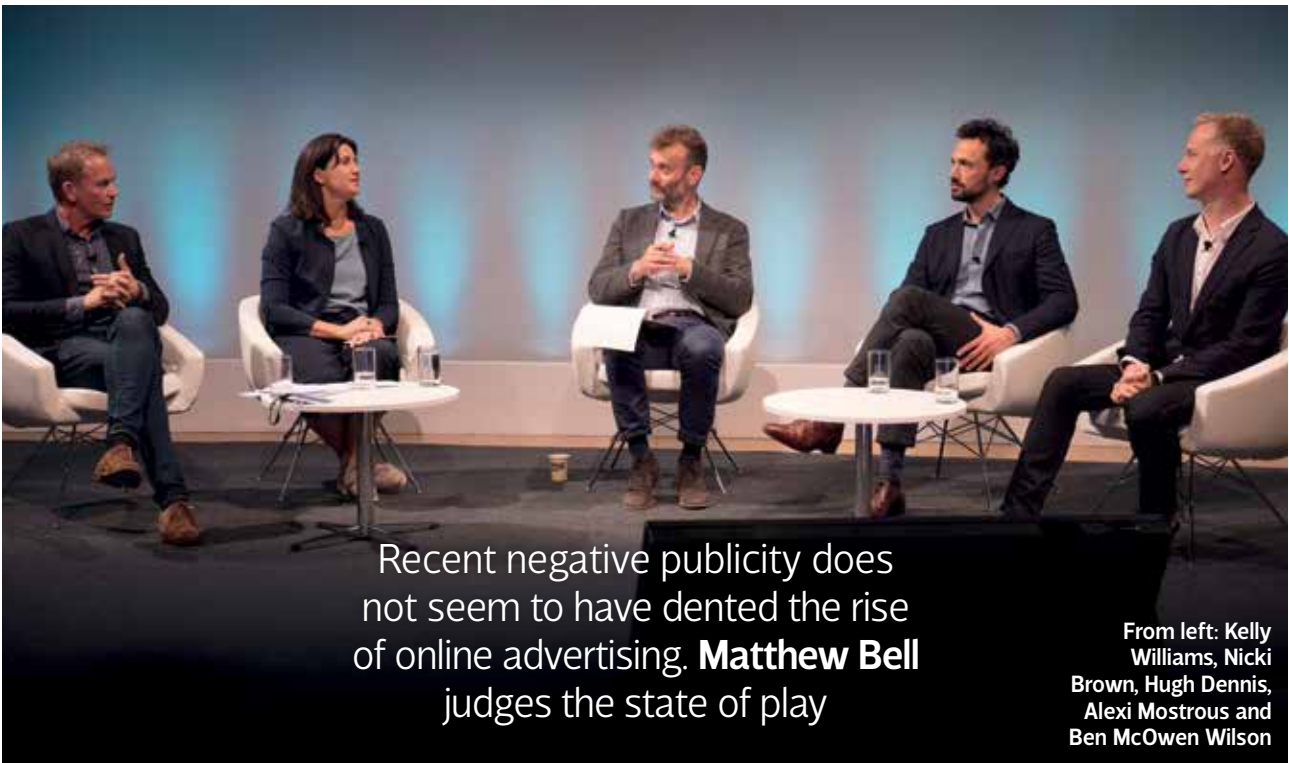
A I don't want to get into any of those matters. I am not going to the Sky party at party conference, if that answers your question.

Q Peter White, Broadcast: Do you have a preference for where Channel 4 locates?

A I have no preference whatsoever. It is very exciting to see some of the suggestions coming forward and I encourage cities – and non-cities and small towns – to come forward. There is no formal process, but if they want to write to me and the board of Channel 4, they should.

Reporting by Maggie Brown.

Will advertisers desert TV?



Recent negative publicity does not seem to have dented the rise of online advertising. **Matthew Bell** judges the state of play

From left: Kelly Williams, Nicki Brown, Hugh Dennis, Alexi Mostrous and Ben McOwen Wilson

Paul Hampartsoumian

Online advertising has seen huge growth in recent years, putting fear into those broadcasters dependent on ad revenues for their living.

But all is not lost for broadcasting, which is developing new weapons to fight back against the massing digital threat. And digital advertising is showing itself a risky business, as concerns grow about brand safety in the often murky online world.

Earlier this year, a *Times* investigation, run by panellist Alexi Mostrous, found that some of the world's biggest brands were, unwittingly, funding terrorist and hate groups.

Mostrous told the RTS Convention that he had discovered that ads were "turning up on Isis-supported videos,

al-Shabaab-supported videos and hate videos on YouTube".

"There's no place on YouTube for terrorism or hate speech," responded the company's Ben McOwen Wilson. But the YouTube exec pointed out that more than 400 hours of content was uploaded to the platform every minute. Monitoring videos was a Herculean task.

"Historically, we have relied on flagging from users," he explained, but, since March, Google has begun to harness more technology to identify and remove extremist videos.

The North American tech giant has also increased the number of non-governmental organisations it works with to deal with this problem.

"We've expanded that group, specifically targeting groups [combating] extremist and terrorist content. They

are able to flag multiple videos," said McOwen Wilson.

Mostrous gave some credit to YouTube: "The number of ads now appearing on extremist videos has, in my own opinion, diminished heavily, but there is still a lot of extremist content on sites without ads."

However, the technology being used to identify and remove ads from extremist videos, is also being used to suggest other extremist content to users, explained Mostrous. "On the Isis video that I looked at, it was a problem that it was there in the first place, but the big problem was that, on the right-hand side [of the page], eight or nine other Isis videos were being suggested to me," he said.

"Advertisers care about brand safety," argued Argos's Nicki Brown. "The steps that [YouTube] has taken have >

The battle between TV and digital

Digital video advertising has experienced explosive growth in the UK, increasing its spend by 75% over the past five years, revealed Boston Consulting Group's Jacob Rosenzweig in his presentation at the start of this session.

Television, though, is still the dominant medium for advertising: while the UK spend on digital video was more than £900m in 2016, it was just a fraction of TV's £5.3bn.

'If digital keeps growing, it can only come from one place – and that's TV,' said Rosenzweig. 'Our analysis shows that, while digital video gets just 8% of viewing time, it's getting 15% of ad share. Advertisers, potentially, value digital more than TV. One advertiser told us for this study that "no one's getting fired for spending more money on digital".'

But is it worth it? Research on advertising effectiveness reveals that digital advertising 'performs well, in particular, when it comes to data targeting', but TV is 'clearly ahead in most categories' – data reach, engagement, context and long-term return on investment.

Digital advertising faces a number of challenges: for example, studies have shown that many ads are seen only by robots, not people.

Does this matter? Perhaps not, said Rosenzweig: 'We spoke to a lot of advertisers and, yes, some of them told us that they've started to shift spend back to TV. But the vast majority said that this is just digital in its [early] years and, over the next couple of years, it will sort these issues out.'

'One thing is clear: TV and digital are

heading towards each other. Digital players are announcing huge budgets for original content, including sport, which attracts huge audiences.'

To prosper, argued Rosenzweig, TV companies will have to make 'big changes'. First, they must defend rights to premium and major live events to maintain their reach advantage over digital advertising.

Second, they must continue to invest in digital services, to compete with the on-demand platforms, and in data, to offer targeted advertising opportunities.

Most importantly, perhaps, said Rosenzweig, TV had to 'prove its worth' to the big advertisers.

Jacob Rosenzweig is MD, London, and a partner in Boston Consulting Group.



and on billboards all over the city, telling people how to download ad-blockers, because the public hates online advertising.'

David Wheldon, chief marketing officer at RBS, said that there was growing pressure to make video-on-demand work... [It] features in every media schedule... without, necessarily, having any real metrics about efficacy.'

Mendelsohn said: 'Because people can watch virtually anything at any time, they will only watch adverts that grab their attention, reward their time and are immediately relevant.'

'So, platforms such as Facebook have to help advertisers to figure out a way to cut through the noise.'

Which platform won the ad war would depend on 'who delivers the best content... because the delivery systems are becoming completely irrelevant', said Hoffman.

'We expect the opportunity to continue for every one – that is because we're all working towards the same ambition: to connect with people and to make them feel something. We all want to take them on a journey, and the best way to do that is to do it together,' said Mendelsohn.

Wheldon said it was not clear yet who was going to be the winner, 'but I think both sides in this particular game have a lot to learn from each other'.

Paul Hampartsoumian

Expert vox pops set the scene

Before the Cambridge Convention, the RTS recorded a number of vox pops with leading lights in the advertising industry.

On brand safety, Bob Hoffman, author of the *Ad Contrarian* blog, said: 'I really don't think that brands and agencies care that much about this issue, despite all the posturing and play acting.'

Nicola Mendelsohn, VP EMEA for

Facebook, insisted: 'There is absolutely no place on Facebook for hate speech or content that promotes violence or terrorism... We take our responsibility to maintain a brand-safe environment very seriously.'

Hoffman had advice for broadcasters on how to fight back: 'If I were a broadcaster, I would have slots all over the TV,



The Times' Alex Mostrous (left) and YouTube's Ben McOwen Wilson

Paul Hampartsoumian

"All of us who would like to see an ad-funded future for media and media content have to worry," replied McOwen Wilson. "At YouTube, we are very focused on [advertising] because it is our bread and butter."

The YouTube exec revealed that, in the US, his company had created a "subscription service that gives people a chance to remove ads. We are testing it [to discover] the price point at which customers would [pay for] that. So, we are making sure that we have an ad-free option."

Online advertising was in a period of change – with advertisers and platforms constantly chopping and changing. "We know that non-skippable, 30-second or longer adverts on mobile phones are just not watched," revealed McOwen Wilson. "So, as of the end of the year, there will no longer be [those] adverts on YouTube."

Brown felt that the RTS session had contained "a lot of negative language about [digital] Armageddon and [the] digital versus TV [battle]."

The Argos ad controller, however, was more positive in her outlook: "There's a real power [in] these two channels to build each other. At Argos, 10 years ago, I would make an ad and I would have to use TV to get people to get off their bums and go into an Argos [store]. Now, they don't have to get off their bums [to buy] – they can do it there and then [online], and that's the power of TV and digital [working together]."

Brown argued that there was "a massive opportunity for TV". Addressable TV advertising, such as Sky AdSmart, which allows different ads to be served to different households watching the same programme, is offering an effective way for TV to compete with online advertising.

"We can move our advertising to those places where it gets a better return – on TV," she said. "I think that TV has to embrace these opportunities, and look for more of them." ■

'Session Ten: What is the future for digital advertising?' featured Nicki Brown, Argos advertising controller; Ben McOwen Wilson, director of partnerships, YouTube EMEA; Alexi Mostrous, head of investigations, the Times; and Kelly Williams, commercial director, ITV. The session was chaired by actor and comedian Hugh Dennis, and produced by Simon Pitts.

► helped us feel more confident, but we are still monitoring this carefully."

"It's almost impossible to guarantee brand safety because so much content is unregulated [and] user-generated," argued ITV's commercial director, Kelly Williams. "So I think brands that advertise on YouTube have to keep their eyes open."

According to session chair Hugh Dennis, the World Federation of Advertisers has estimated that 30% of online ads are never seen by a human. The comedian had a little-known qualification for chairing the session – for seven years, post-university, he worked as a Unilever brand manager, with Lynx deodorant among his accounts.

"The truth is that there's a lack of transparency across the media industry as a whole. Online is a new player in this and, probably, it is a little murkier than, perhaps, the other channels," said Brown.

Mostrous argued that targeting online ads at individuals could work well for both the brands and the people receiving ads tailored to their needs. "But we've also got to look at how that targeting works on the selection and hoovering up of thousands and thousands of data points on those particular individuals who are shown the ads," he said. "How YouTube, Google and Facebook are amassing all that data is a very significant question.

"You can have a view about this either way, but you can't simply say, let's look at programmatic [automated ads placed by algorithms] through a filter of whether someone is enjoying that advert – you have to look at the wider social implications around it, too."

Williams offered a strong defence of television as an advertising medium. He said that TV currently offered mass marketing, which was at one end of the advertising scale, with precise, targeted advertising at the other.

"Over the next five to 10 years, I suspect that TV will build an addressable capability to live alongside our ability to deliver mass audiences, and within a very brand-safe, regulated [environment]," he said.

In answer to a question from the floor, he said that commercial broadcasters, who "are building [their] own data [sets], maybe need to collaborate a bit more and actually bring all of that data together and create a television data platform."

"Advertisers don't want to create an individual relationship with TV channels, they want a relationship with TV."

"There is an Armageddon possibility here," suggested Dennis. "There are an increasing number of ad blockers. There's also Netflix and other SVoD [companies]. What is the likelihood that all ad content disappears because no one can actually deliver it?"

What is the secret to finding the next *Strictly Come Dancing* or *Britain's Got Talent*, asks **Tara Conlan**

A league of their own?

Wheels and deals – of the kind done with talent – were the name of the game in an entertaining look at the state of TV entertainment, chaired by presenter and Endemol creative director Richard Osman.

The audience was treated to a special version of Sky 1's *A League of Their Own*, which director of Sky Arts and non-scripted Phil Edgar-Jones joked had cost most of his development budget. It featured footage of a race at Silverstone pitting Sky director of programmes Zai Bennett against Big Talk CEO Kenton Allen, RTS CEO Theresa Wise and A+E Networks UK programming vice-president Heather Jones.

The race, won by Allen (who, Osman remarked, had “a touch of the Clarkson” about him), proved the wide appeal of entertainment as the Cambridge audience lapped it up.

Osman said that he wanted to explore the issue of several channels having huge hits, such as *I'm A Celebrity...* or *Strictly*, but most of which were at least a decade old. And why newer hits tended to be shows such as *Gogglebox*, rather than traditional entertainment shows.

For ITV's enthusiastic head of entertainment, Siobhan Greene, entertainment programmes were “the lifeblood of it all. For me, they mean everything. They're the chance to really get a connection. When you get it right, the whole nation can be entertained.

“You're uplifting and inspiring people and having a laugh and taking them out of whatever's going on for them. It's a shared experience... all the family,

everyone together, live, as it's happening, because we all want to be connected.”

BBC controller of entertainment commissioning Kate Phillips said that all the broadcasters were putting money into development at the moment (the BBC had around 50 shows it was working on) to find new hits.

“It's great when you get a big hit... but they are hard to come by. I do look at ratings but, for me, it's about having a variety of programmes,” explained

**ON THE NIGHT,
THERE'S THIS
WHITE HEAT...
AND PEOPLE
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Phillips. She said that a lot of the challenge was “keeping the shows at the top of their game”.

Edgar-Jones pointed out that five of last year's biggest shows were from the entertainment genre and they tended to “generate the most ‘talkability’ around a channel... *Love Island* was one of the most talked-about shows of the summer.”

He said one of the things about Sky getting back into entertainment was that he wanted to create a buzz and more shared experiences for viewers.

Many of the repeatable hits seemed

to come from the same people, noted Osman. He then listed some of the “awful lot of casualties” strewn “along the entertainment highway”.

Among those that belly flopped into the ratings pool recently were *Drive*, *Flockstars*, *5 Gold Rings*, *That Puppet Game Show*, *The Getaway Car* and *Pitch Battle*.

“Why is it so difficult to do this shiny-floor stuff?” asked Osman.

Greene said shows had to be allowed “to bed in”. She recounted working on *Reborn in the USA*, which got a 17% share and 3 million viewers when it aired in 2003. At the time, this was considered to be a small audience but “now, obviously, a smasher!” she laughed.

She insisted that “seeds of stuff that we would go on to do were sown there. There's always something to learn from the shows if they don't work.”

Greene continued: “When we did *Stars in Their Eyes*, it took five series to genuinely bed in. When *The X Factor* started, it was dodgy as to whether we were going to get the show back.

“Now, I'm in this unbelievably privileged position... I've got to back these shows and back the chance to do them again,” she said. Greene added that when *Love Island* (which she confirmed “is not going to move over to the main channel”) returned to ITV2, “it wobbled and, thank God, we kept going. And look at it now.”

She was given a round of applause after saying passionately, “You've got to have an attitude of looking at it positively and we're going to die trying, Richard.”

“What about ‘Celebrities Die Trying?’” quipped Osman. He questioned whether the public had the same appetite for game shows as they did 10 or 15 years ago.

"I don't think that's true," said Phillips – although "one of the challenges we have now, that we didn't when these shows launched, is social media.... On the night, there's this white heat... and people judging very fast. That's very hard. You think: just give it a chance."

"It's not only about keeping the audience, it's about getting the audience to the show," she added.

Two of the BBC's most successful new shows have been *The Michael McIntyre Chat Show* and *All Round to Mrs Brown's*. Osman argued that these shows were, essentially, talent vehicles that would be hard to sell outside the UK, unlike many traditional hit formats.

Sky has tried to compete in primetime with shows such as *Bring the Noise*, but Edgar-Jones maintained that "we are re-entering the entertainment game.... We're looking at our entertainment as being a post-watershed offering. We have to inspire producers to do something new, a bit different."

He explained that he was "taking movie-tropes as our starting point for creating entertainment shows", such as *Carnageddon*, which he described as "*Mad Max* meets *Wacky Races*".

However, as Phillips reminded everyone, "the biggest challenge" was finding shows that appealed to a broad audience.

Entertainment still rated well, compared with other genres, Greene pointed out, adding that ITV was "backing entertainment 100%", with "investment in the shows that are doing well". Audiences often built because "younger people watch it, then parents, then nans".

Phillips admitted that the BBC had to cut its cloth to accommodate budget cuts but, "if there's something we really like, we will find the slot for it". She singled out a new Avalon show set in people's homes, called *The Button*.

Sky was "making some big bets, and adopting a fewer, bigger, better strategy", said Edgar-Jones. He reminded entertainment naysayers that "the quiz

show was declared dead, then *Who Wants To Be a Millionaire?* came along."

Netflix has, so far, concentrated on drama and documentaries rather than shiny-floor shows; is it going to follow us into this world, pondered Osman?

"Unscripted is not its model," said Phillips. She said that entertainment worked best live.

Edgar-Jones suggested that something interesting could be done on Facebook Live – which Osman agreed was a useful platform for trying out new talent.

On the subject of talent, he asked Greene, what had gone through her

mind, as a commercial rival of the BBC, when its talent pay was revealed this summer?

"Honestly, I thought they were quite cheap. I did, if you want the honest truth. I felt sorry for the BBC," she replied. Edgar-Jones turned to Phillips and said: "The eco-system balances out. I thought you paid reasonably well."

Reviving old entertainment hits remains an option because audiences already have a connection with them. After a few false starts, the BBC is finally bringing back *The Generation Game* – hosted by Sue Perkins and Mel Giedroyc.

However, Phillips said: "Sometimes, it's even riskier to bring back an old show. We're not bringing *The Generation Game* back because we think it will automatically get an audience... for me, it's a really big risk." ■

The panellists of 'Session Eleven: A league of our own?' were: Philip Edgar-Jones, director of Sky Arts and head of entertainment, Sky; Siobhan Greene, head of entertainment, ITV; and Kate Phillips, controller, entertainment commissioning, BBC. The chair was producer/presenter Richard Osman and the producer was Zai Bennett, with VT production by the production team of A League of Their Own and CPL.

Strictly Come Dancing



BBC

Social mobility and TV's Oxbridge bias is the latest battleground in the diversity debate, discovers **Tara Conlan**

Social mobility was centre stage in this session, which, appropriately, was attended by some of the RTS's bursary students, who are drawn from low-income families.

Session chair and Expectation co-CEO Tim Hincks asked why class and socio-economic background seemed to be “the slight afterthought” when it came to diversity. To get a rough idea about the people who had progressed to the top of the TV tree, Hincks took a poll of the audience and panel to find out who had been privately educated.

Around 30% of convention delegates put their hands up. This was over four times the UK national average: 7% of British school children attend non-state schools.

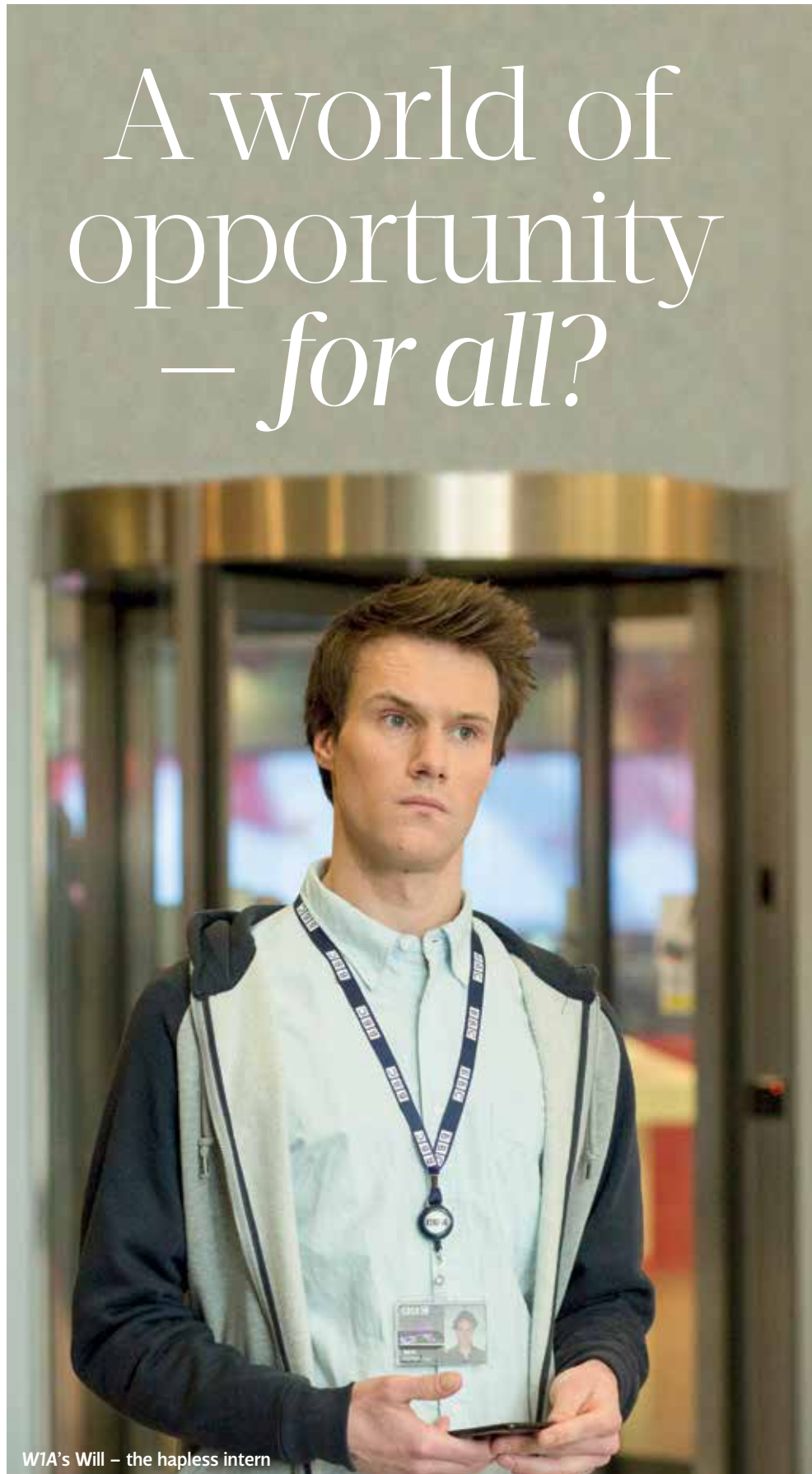
When Hincks asked how many were Oxbridge graduates, around 20% raised their hands, compared with the national average of under 1%. “Does that matter, that we are over-represented in this industry from those sorts of places?” was Hincks’s opening gambit.

He asked panellist Greg Dyke, the former BBC Director-General who famously once described the BBC as “hideously white”, if it would have been “more radical” to ask if the corporation was “hideously middle-class”.

“What was obvious to me was that our society was changing rapidly in terms of ethnic minorities and the BBC wasn't,” said Dyke, who went to the University of York. “I remember talking to a former chairman of the BBC and he said: ‘Of course, we’ve always employed the brightest and the best.’ When you tried to define what he meant, he meant white, male, public school, Oxbridge.”

“Would we have done better to talk about class? It would have been much harder.”

A world of opportunity — for all?



W1A's Will – the hapless intern

“Why is that?” asked Hincks.
“Because there were no statistics,” responded Dyke. “The great thing about ‘hideously white’ was that the BBC took me seriously.”

Sky’s head of drama, Anne Mensah, said that, at Sky, there was a “commercial imperative” to reflect the whole country. If the industry wanted to engage with the audience it had to bear in mind that the vast majority of the population did not go to private school.

“On a basic level, diversity means diversity of stories. I want the posh and also the non-posh, and everything in between,” she said.

Mensah, who attended a comprehensive school in Catford, south London, said she was lucky. Her parents were very supportive and she got her first break at Carlton TV.

She added: “You have to make sure that how you define good isn’t codified by traditional experience. So, good is not just going to Oxford or Cambridge, although it includes that... it is not just knowing how to read *Beowulf*, it might include knowing manga comics.”

Hincks asked the BBC’s James Purnell if his private school and Oxbridge education had put him at an advantage.

“I definitely had some privileges,” he accepted. “I went to a state school in France and then private school here. Oxbridge was definitely an advantage, you just know lots of people.

“I was brought up by a single mum... she was amazing but also kept everything safe. She was incredibly brave and robust. The biggest thing was social capital; when I decided I wasn’t going to go to university [she was] sitting me down and persuading me that this was a mistake.”

Hincks suggested that it was quite difficult to put people in boxes.

“Big groups are hard,” agreed Purnell. “There’s no silver bullet. For me, it’s about individuals, really. The data is inevitably going to be big groups – and that’s important and it makes us accountable and tells us where we need to do more. But the practice is about individuals and hard work.”

The next panellist to speak was the actor Julie Hesmondhalgh, who said: “I am the product of the state and therefore a great supporter of the state.

“I was given a full grant and a

maintenance grant to go to London to study at a top drama school.

“After I graduated from Lamda, I was able to sign on and get benefits. I did that for two to three years, during which time I built up a theatre company in London. But, now, that’s absolutely been stripped away.” She concluded that it was now almost impossible for someone from her background to afford to go to drama school.

Hincks introduced the controversial subject of internships and how much they favour the middle class.

The session’s final panellist, *Spectator* editor Fraser Nelson (educated at a comprehensive and Glasgow University), said internships were important but the real question was how they were distributed: “If we’re giving internships to the sons and daughters of the well-connected... we’re perpetuating our own likeness.

“Everybody is here in this room as a stroke of good luck in some way or another – it might be good luck of birth, school, a teacher.... It’s not a perfect meritocracy and the system is only as good or bad as we choose to make it.”

The *Spectator* has a no-CV policy. “We just test on aptitude” by setting seven tests. These include writing a blog and cutting a podcast so, “already, these are pretty determined people”.

He said that he was surprised at the number of Oxbridge interns, which “shows the system is not corrupt”, and revealed that one candidate was “a 48-year-old mother of three who was applying for the first time”.

Ofcom CEO Sharon White had said in a previous session that she did not want people to do unpaid work for organisations. Nelson, however, argued that having paid internships added a cost to the bottom line and thus reduced the number being offered.

Purnell explained that the BBC had banned unpaid internships and had various schemes running to broaden the social range of the people it employed. These included apprenticeships and a two-week, unpaid taster aimed at people from underprivileged backgrounds.

Sky, said Mensah, had created opportunities via the Sky Academy. These allowed a range of people to see >



Suzanne Pearson

Paul Hampartsoumian

How the system excludes talent

Suzanne Pearson, an RTS bursary student, lives in Rotherham. She studied film and television production but is finding it hard to break into television.

Pearson told the audience: “There is a miscommunication about diversity, because I feel that, on a lot of the job applications, it tends to be about your ethnicity, your sex, your sexuality and, occasionally, asks if you had free school meals – but nothing about where you live or your background.

“There was [just] one application [question] about whether you were a carer or had ever been in care.

“The other interesting thing is paid internships. I think these should be the norm because, even if there are loads of internships going that are free, it puts those who *can* afford it two weeks [ahead].... It puts everyone else at a disadvantage.

“If every internship was paid, then everyone would be on the same playing field and be able to live off that.” Fellow students of Pearson had been unable to attend difficult-to-reach TV sets daily because they couldn’t afford a taxi or stay in a hotel near by. “I don’t think it should be like that, as it puts everyone else back,” she said.

A World of Opportunity Session Twelve

From left: Greg Dyke, Fraser Nelson, Julie Hesmondhalgh, Tim Hincks, Anne Mensah and James Purnell



Paul Hampartsoumian

› what the broadcaster does and gave local students the chance to work in different departments for a year – paid. “We give people mentorship.... I worry that we bring a lot of people in at the bottom level and then just drop them. It’s not just how you get in, but how you get through the middle ranks and to the top.”

Dyke – the only BBC Director-General not to have gone to Oxbridge or private school – was later appointed Chairman of the BFI. There, “we had the classic ethnic minority policy come through and we threw it out.... They are full of good intentions and nothing changes.”

He explained that the BFI then, as a distributor of lottery money, told producers that, “if you don’t meet these criteria in terms of ethnic minorities, you don’t get any money. The BBC could do that and Sky could do that. Once you do that, you will change the independent sector.”

Hincks asked what could be done for people such as RTS bursary student Suzanne Pearson, who spoke from the floor. She said she did not feel like she quite fitted into the diversity boxes. Should there be a section on forms for not having parental support? (See box on page 37.)

Hesmondhalgh said it was important to define social mobility and think about cases such as carers; moreover, some people might not have much money but great parental support.

She said: “For me, it has to come

back to the state.... We have taken opportunities away and they have to be reimplemented.”

The BBC had collected data on social mobility, explained Purnell, including whether employees’ parents had gone to state school, and identifying the parents’ professional backgrounds.

The corporation found that 17% of its staff attended private school, rising to 24% in management; 60% of all employees had parents who were managers or had a professional occupation of some kind.

“We are now doing anonymised recruitment, where you take off name and degree,” added Purnell. “The key thing is to keep on publishing data.”

The BBC was also “thinking about” introducing socio-economic targets.

Dyke interjected: “Data is great but it’s not enough, is it? During his time as DG, heads of department were called in to “kangaroo courts” every three months if they were not meeting targets. “If the DG cares about it, they will [too]... if they think it’s [just] the HR department, not a chance.”

Mensah said that if you came from a different background, you didn’t know the rules, what to ask in interviews or what to wear. In drama, people tended to look for candidates who namechecked the right authors. “It’s not testing how you edit or write, but if you visit the Royal Court Theatre,” she said.

Sky runs a day for trainees, telling

them the kind of things they need to know in order to get into drama.

“As an industry, we’ve slightly shifted... we used to celebrate our best soaps,” said Mensah, who argued that soaps showed the diversity of the UK and had traditionally been great training grounds for talent.

“We are very nervous” about telling stories in drama about people from very deprived backgrounds unless they are factual-based, said Hesmondhalgh, a former *Coronation Street* star. “There’s a feeling that we’re not entitled to tell stories about the working class unless they are respectable; they have to be noble in some way. *Happy Valley* is a good example of that... they are flawed but they are respectable.”

Purnell praised BBC children’s department for being ahead of the curve and making diverse shows. He referenced *Apple Tree House*, set on a council estate, and care home drama *The Dumping Ground*. “They have been on to this for some time and have been determined to reflect the whole of society.” ■

‘Session Twelve: A world of opportunity – for all?’ featured: Greg Dyke, broadcaster and former BBC Director-General; Julie Hesmondhalgh, actor; Anne Mensah, head of drama, Sky; Fraser Nelson, editor, the Spectator; and James Purnell, director of radio and education, BBC. The session was chaired by Tim Hincks, Co-CEO, Expectation Entertainment, and produced by Alan Clements.

How TV finds top talent

Panellists Jon
Thoday (left) and
Wayne Garvie

Paul Hampartsoumian

A panel of TV heavyweights outlines how to build the stars of tomorrow in a hyper-competitive world. **Matthew Bell** reports

Television has to unearth and nurture new talent to thrive, but some in the industry fear that the flow of new comics and entertainers is drying up. If true, the consequences for British TV could be dire. “There’s less money spent on developing new talent [in UK broadcasting] than I can ever remember,” argued Avalon chief Jon Thoday at a session devoted to the recruitment and retention of TV talent.

The founder of the entertainment and talent management company, which has top-drawer comedians such as Frank Skinner and Russell Howard on its books, added that this lack of investment was “potentially storing up a very bad problem for the future”.

“Years ago, I remember the first winners of the Perrier Award included Stephen Fry, Emma Thompson and Hugh Laurie, and they were given a TV series that year on the BBC. It just doesn’t happen any more; you have to wait maybe 10 years before there’s enough interest to get you on TV.

“In the late 1980s and 1990s, Channel 4 would send its entire entertainment division to Edinburgh for a

whole month,” he added. “They go for maybe two days to the Edinburgh International TV Festival now, yet the Edinburgh Festival is 10 times the size and driven by the public.”

“Talent is everything,” said Sony Pictures Television creative chief Wayne Garvie. However, the former BBC (where he developed *Strictly Come Dancing*) and All3Media exec claimed that “the nursery slopes do not exist any more”.

Garvie pointed out that many of the country’s biggest entertainment stars came up through now-retired shows such as Channel 4’s *The Big Breakfast*.

“The industry has changed completely,” he continued. “There is a danger of us wallowing in nostalgia about talent. We’re not going to have [the late] Bruce Forsyth any more, because if Bruce the ‘Mighty Atom’ was around now, he would be on *Britain’s Got Talent* and his career would have a completely different trajectory.”

“Talent is key,” agreed Channel 4’s Ed Havar. “The best shows are always extensions of the talent involved.”

Routes into the big UK broadcasters were still navigable, he said, claiming that his channel had made “massive ▶

[TALENT] NEEDS... A STRONGER DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM, SOMEWHERE BETWEEN DISCOVERY AND HUGE SUCCESS



Channel 4

YouTube vs TV for new talent

‘When I started out, it was really sexy to be on TV. I was a working-class boy from Ipswich and I couldn’t believe how glamorous telly was,’ said Sony’s Wayne Garvie. ‘Now you can go on YouTube and make your own stuff and you don’t really want to be on TV.’

‘I don’t agree that talent doesn’t want to be on TV,’ argued Jon Thoday. ‘I regularly meet YouTubers who come to us for management, and they do want to be on television. They want to make high-end product.’

But, he added: ‘They need to learn how to do that. It is a long way from making a YouTube video in your bedroom about a subject that you’re interested in, to doing [TV] drama or a scripted comedy.’

› interventions in this space”. He highlighted Channel 4’s investment in disabled talent to front its Paralympics coverage, adding that this talent has since found other outlets on the broadcaster’s schedules.

The Last Leg originally ran alongside coverage of the 2012 London Paralympics, said Havard, as “a sweaty, late-night” show, but has “grown over three or four years to be an award-winning, huge entertainment show with new, diverse talent at the heart of it”.

Comedy Central’s Jill Offman offered a different industry perspective. “It’s no secret that established talent doesn’t necessarily come to a smaller broadcaster. We go out and seek the newest, the youngest, the hottest and the least exposed.”

Offman said there was a “disproportionate amount of attention on public service broadcasters because they are larger. But every time the PSBs fail to develop somebody new, that’s another opportunity for us.”

Comedy Central has been on air in the UK, under various names, for more than two decades. Latterly, it has

looked to develop original content to supplement the US shows that fill much of its schedules.

“There has never been a better time to be talented – there are so many different windows for [talent],” said Offman. “There’s a scramble for anyone with a modicum of ability.”

She argued that, while “the discovery process isn’t broken”, developing talent was becoming more problematic. “There is only new talent and big hits and there isn’t very much in the middle.”

Session chair, A+E Networks’ Heather Jones, asked whether mainstream broadcasters could offer talent sufficient creative freedom. Or did they go elsewhere when they made it big?

Havard maintained that much of the talent developed through Channel 4’s short-form *Comedy Blaps* had stayed with the broadcaster because of the free rein it gives.

“We have to look really hard at positives to bring to the table,” added Offman. “What we can do, because we’re not a PSB and because we’re not subject to the same kind of scrutiny, [is] look for a very strong point of view or political show. That’s an opportunity for us.”

Comedy Central, she argued, could also give freedom to established performers such as Russell Howard: “We put him [on *Stand Up Central*] in the Electric [Ballroom, Camden] with 200 people. He gets to choose who’s on the show [from] up-and-coming comedians he likes, and he gets to make the filthiest jokes and make fun of whoever he wants. However, we wouldn’t have him if the BBC hadn’t developed him first. So, I think this mixed economy is really fruitful for the talent.”

The UK’s terrestrial broadcasters lacked the space in the prime-time schedules to showcase the country’s big-name performers, argued Thoday.

“If you take mainstream broadcasting, and look at ITV and BBC One, prime-time is soaps and there is almost no money to spend on developing prime-time shows in the UK, apart from Saturday nights,” he said. “The soaps are in decline and everyone is in denial

about it. It's [said] that, maybe, people don't want [to watch] mainstream broadcasting any more but, maybe, it's the fact that very, very old programmes are getting half the airplay and no money is being spent on developing the next big show for primetime. When was the last big returning show, pre-9:00pm, on BBC One or ITV, other than on a Saturday night?"

The panel agreed that TV relied on a steady flow of new talent, but also that this talent needed to be nurtured. Offman argued that, above all else, television "needs to build a stronger development system, somewhere between discovery and huge success".

Havard stressed the importance of building a good relationship between the talent and the broadcaster or platform, while Garvie said that his motto had always been: "Trust in the talent."

"We need to rethink the role of the commissioner," added the Sony exec. He claimed that many more people were now involved in the programme-making process. "Our business is all about failure – most of the shows we launch don't work. There are a lot more [commissioners] that you have to go through and it hasn't changed the success/failure ratio in any way at all – so, trust in the talent, they might just get it right."

"The key thing is to remember that talent is a benefit not a problem," concluded Thoday, who called on the industry to invest in "diverse, new and young talent. It is something that has made us great in the world and, if we pull back from that, the future will not be rosy." ■

'Session Thirteen: Talent – how to find it, nurture it, pay for it and keep it' featured: Wayne Garvie, chief creative officer, international production, Sony Pictures Television; Ed Havard, head of entertainment, TV events and sport, Channel 4; Jill Offman, EVP, Comedy Central and Paramount Networks International, and MD, MTV UK; and Jon Thoday, joint founder and MD, Avalon. The session was chaired by Heather Jones, general manager UK/senior VP of content and creative, A+E Networks, and produced by Helen Scott.



Whatever happened to satire?

The panel lamented the lack of satire on British TV, repeating a point made by Alastair Campbell in his after-dinner speech the night before. Where were the US-style talk shows such as *Last Week Tonight*, hosted by Brit John Oliver on HBO, or classic Brit programmes such as the much-missed *Spitting Image*?

Jon Thoday pinpointed two reasons for their absence on UK screens: 'We don't tend to want to build a show around a host. If you take [BBC Two's] *The Mash Report*, Nish Kumar is cast into it. He's talented, the guys around Nish are talented, but they didn't build the show around Nish Kumar.'

'The other thing is British broadcasters cannot allow a political show to have a political bias,' he continued. In the US, he said, Oliver and his co-hosts, such as Stephen Colbert, can take their own political positions.

'People are so bothered about being fair – satire should be dangerous. It's very hard to be dangerous in British broadcasting.

'People say they want it but, when it comes to it, the BBC's too scared to do something satirical. It couldn't do *That Was the Week That Was* now. They think they could, but they can't.'

'It's incredibly difficult for the BBC – I worked there for a long time – to find talent who are allowed to have a strong tone of voice, particularly in satire and politics, because the scrutiny

on the [BBC] is extraordinary,' claimed Ed Havard. 'Satire and topical programming is an area where we all need to work out how we can do it.'

Jill Offman argued that channels needed to 'create a head of steam' and show would-be satirists that they could build a career in telly.

'We've seen it in the US with [*The Daily Show* host] Trevor Noah and the five or six late-night shows [broadcast]. Now, everyone thinks they can be a late-night host because so many people are. We just need to get three or four out the door.'

Thoday, however, pointed out that the UK and US industries were very different beasts: 'The thing about the satire shows in the US is that they're sort of alternative news. Young people watch *The Daily Show* partly for news.' *The Daily Show* is on air four nights a week on Comedy Central in the US; British satire shows tend to air weekly, and for a limited run.

'It goes back to the number of episodes you make. If you do six or eight episodes of a satire show, you're never going to get a head of steam,' said Thoday. '[Take] *Spitting Image* – I don't think that ever would have stopped being commissioned in the US. *Saturday Night Live* started in 1975, it went through bad periods and now it's a massive hit again. The truth is that we had the vehicles but we got rid of them.'

Steve Clarke hears the industry's leading figures predict what lies ahead in a world where the tech giants loom ever larger

Cambridge's final debate is, traditionally, the time for the big beasts of broadcasting to strut their stuff. The 2017 convention duly delivered. Senior people from Channel 4, Sky, Virgin Media and Westminster weighed in on a range of hot topics.

They discussed some of the conference's headlines: the Government's determination that at least part of Channel 4 should relocate to somewhere outside London; the latest regulatory hitch in 21st Century Fox's protracted bid for Sky; and British TV's still patchy record on diversity, especially the ability to recruit and promote working-class applicants. It's an open secret that executives from the elite courts of Oxbridge still dominate many TV boardrooms.

But the elephant in the room was the Faang companies (that's Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Netflix, and Alphabet's Google in investorspeak) – the seriously big beasts.

Whenever TV types assemble to take the temperature of their businesses these days, the Faangs are high on the agenda.

Session chair Tim Hincks put it like this. He suggested that, for the past two days, everyone at Cambridge had been having a ball. "But there's this feeling that the really cool kids who were invited to the party haven't come – Netflix, Google, Amazon, Apple," said the erstwhile Endemol boss and co-founder of Expectation Entertainment.

"What makes it worse is that we're talking about them all the time, and they still don't come. I don't know if they're talking about us, but I suspect they're not."

How, for instance, would Sky react if it lost English Premier League rights to an online player?

Sky's chief strategy and commercial officer, Mai Fyfield, said: "We've lost



Seizing the

content before. We lost the Champions League [to BT]. You just adjust. You spend the money elsewhere and you spend it wisely."

She added: "We tend to forget just how much money BT actually makes. BT is a much scarier competitor than Netflix in many, many ways. It is a much more profitable company than Amazon, as well. BT is a Goliath."

In the UK, Virgin and Sky have different approaches to the Netflix challenge. Virgin includes the streaming service on its platform; Sky doesn't.

Virgin CEO Tom Mockridge was upbeat. He outlined how his company continued to grow despite the competitive headwinds blowing from the western seaboard of the US.

"Fundamentally, we see it as opportunity because, at core, we're a broadband/wi-fi supply company," said the Virgin chief. "Whichever way you look at it, the demand on our network is growing at 50%-plus a year... and that's compound growth.

"All the video is moving into an IP format for convenience, not only in

on-demand but also in linear." He added that this made it a much better environment for video producers. The number of opportunities would keep on growing.

"Netflix is now widening its portfolio [beyond drama]," explained Mockridge. "We've had a good relationship with it over four years. It is morphing much more into a big HBO.

"Whatever we think about it, it's happening at a spectacular pace and we have to adjust. That's inevitable. Sky will adjust, moving from satellite to broadband distribution.

"Linear TV will be fundamentally IP. Ultimately, it's about more reach and more opportunities to view, which means more opportunities for people making TV."

He added: "I work for a company called Liberty Global. We are consolidating cable systems across Europe and, increasingly, Latin America. John Malone [Liberty Global's leader] is very, very focused on the scale of the big operators we're talking about."

Fyfield agreed – up to a point. The

From left: Damian Collins MP, Tom Mockridge, Tim Hincks, Mai Fyfield, and David Abraham



opportunity

Paul Hampartsoumian

ubiquity of smartphones was good for her company's bottom line.

"All Sky customers have access to Sky Go, which only exists because we have smartphones," she said. "Video consumption is pretty much at an all-time high. The likes of Apple and Samsung have done a great thing for the TV industry."

Hincks asked if Fyfield was alarmed by how much money Netflix and Amazon were investing in content for their services.

She thought this needed to be put into context: "People are overreacting a little bit. Facebook and Apple are talking about spending globally."

The Sky executive continued: "Just because they look at content doesn't mean they're going to spend all that money on content. They're going to spend money where they can make money back."

She added: "Take, for example, Netflix. A massive company but relatively small in terms of its buying power in the UK. Sky's revenue is not far off £12bn across all the markets we

compete in. I would be surprised if Netflix's UK revenue is half a billion. It is not about to outspend every single broadcaster in the UK. There's room for all of us.

"I sometimes think we fall into a position of thinking it's them and us. I don't think it is. Netflix, Sky, Virgin and Channel 4 are all doing well."

So that was that then? Not quite. As Hincks probed and asked Fyfield what TV might look like in five or 10 years' time, she struck a more downbeat note. "The biggest issue is competition for the TV screen in the living room... They're all kind of thinking: 'Actually, where is video really being watched?' Ninety per cent of video is still watched on the main screen," she said.

"That is the next battleground and that is important for Sky and important for Virgin Media.

"But it's also important for every single broadcaster in this room, because those other screens are not regulated. There's no EPG regulation, no due-prominence regulation.

"Those platforms such as Apple TV, >

TV is struggling on social class

Sky's Mai Fyfield said: 'It's something I, personally, feel quite strongly about. I think about it a lot when I recruit for my own team.'

'I don't want a bunch of entitled people. I strive to hire people from a wide variety of backgrounds in terms of social class and education. People who've had to fight a little bit to get where they are tend to do very well at Sky.'

Tim Hincks asked if she had data and targets on social backgrounds? 'No,' replied Fyfield, '[because] how do you capture data on social diversity? I think that's quite hard. But it's a challenge that the whole industry has [to think] about.'

David Abraham said: 'Channel 4 is focusing on how to ensure millennials get to positions of influence and decision-making more quickly.'

'I think it is a fabulous thing that Channel 4 and ITV will now be led by women. It will have a big effect on inspiring the new generations coming up, because they can see people at the top not coming from the usual background.'

Tom Mockridge said: 'In the UK, class is a big issue for panel discussions, but I don't find it's much talked about in the workplace. The broader issue of economic class is something much deeper for society to deal with as a fundamental point of politics.'

'In terms of getting a wide range of people working in our industry... I'm a believer in quotas. I'd rather set a hard target. We have targets, but I am not allowed to reveal them.'

He added: 'In the UK, social class was much more evident 30 to 40 years ago. If it does [still] exist, it should be addressed. I think it's more about this question of elites. Clearly, you do have an Oxbridge elite. In business here, if someone has been to Oxbridge, they let you know within 20 minutes of the conversation starting.'



Fox hit *The Simpsons*

Sky

Should Fox's bid for Sky go ahead?

'I look at this argument about scale, and I see mergers happening right, left and centre but, when I see the scale of the digital giants, my strategic question is: "Is any amalgamation of existing legacy media companies ever going to match the scale we are now confronting?"' asked Channel 4's David Abraham.

Virgin's Tom Mockridge said he thought 'James [Murdoch] handled it very correctly yesterday, as did Karen Bradley. It is very clear she is proceeding cautiously. That is her right. There is a process, and you can be confident that the CMA will be very objective and thorough.' He said he thought the deal should be approved.

Session chair Tim Hincks wondered if, 'after certain amount of time, [would] Fox say: "This is costing us a lot of money, we can't wait for ever", and therefore abandon the bid.'

Sky's Mai Fyfield said that was not going to happen, adding: 'The uncertainty is clearly unwelcome but we've been here before. Everybody at Sky should keep focused and keep getting on with the day job.'

Hincks probed: 'How much is it to do with the baggage that any business

accumulates over time, and so, for the Secretary of State, it just doesn't feel right?'

Fyfield responded: 'There's always been baggage around the Murdoch family. Sometimes, that rubs off on Sky.'

'So, was the Conservative Government, which lacks a majority, playing politics by rejecting Ofcom's advice?' asked Hincks. 'Was there a feeling that, in the past, the Murdochs were far too close to the Tories?'

Damian Collins MP said: 'I think Karen [Bradley] is being extremely careful to do everything by the book.' He continued: 'Some people might wonder why these issues on broadcasting standards were not looked at initially... Ofcom should probably have looked at those issues more closely, earlier in the process.'

'That would have made the whole thing a lot smoother. We were expecting a referral to the CMA on plurality grounds, anyway.'

He stressed: 'Sky is a very successful company. It's not that we're looking at this deal and saying Sky is in desperate trouble and desperately needs a new buyer to keep it running, and time is of the essence.'



› for example, are VoD-centric platforms. There is no linear TV on those platforms.'

So would Sky, perhaps, like more regulation, asked Hincks, his eyes visibly twinkling. "The problem is the fact that [the regulation] is not even," said Fyfield. "Regulation is one-sided and has the potential to impact where the market goes."

"Markets should go in directions because of competition on merit, not because some are regulated and others aren't. That's dangerous."

It was somewhat unusual for Sky, of all companies, to be calling for regulation, ventured Hincks.

"We're calling for a level playing field. Some of it may be less regulation elsewhere," replied Fyfield. "There is a role for some regulation in some places.... Regulating the tech giants is difficult. Maybe some of that is not possible."

"I think, as an industry, we do need to think about platforms that have no linear channels and it's all VoD."

"What does that mean for commercially funded, advertising services such as ITV and Channel 4? That is a massive shift. And whether the kinds of revenues that ITV and Channel 4 have today, where the market is still



Amazon Prime

good as they have been in the last few years? At the moment, that is less clear.

“In the UK, we don’t know how to detach the Brexit effect from the structural effects of some of these platforms.”

Where did Damian Collins, Chair of the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, stand on all this? Unlike his three fellow panellists, he had no commercial axe to grind.

Hincks asked Collins whether politicians should be radically rethinking what constituted the media market in the wake of the tech behemoths’ rise?

“In the past, we’ve asked, ‘How do we manage the BBC’s dominance in the UK market landscape?’ It’s secured by the licence fee – this huge budget it has every year that just arrives in the form of a cheque.

“But in 10 years’ time,” he mused, “we might be saying the BBC is struggling. It cannot run the range of services it runs with the licence fee at the level it is. It is struggling to raise commercial revenues, it can’t transmit the high volume of high-quality programmes we expect because there’s massive inflation in the market caused by external players.

“What would be the consequences for Sky if Amazon bought the Premier League rights? Or for Virgin if ITV said: ‘We’re not going to be a public service broadcaster any more. We’ll sell the rights to *Coronation Street* to the highest bidder and do our own thing, because we live in a world where being number three on the EPG doesn’t matter?’

“We don’t yet know what the consequences of all this change [will be] but we’ve got companies with almost unlimited budgets that can take investment decisions in television where they might not see any money back for six or seven years.

“For us to believe that this won’t have a massively disruptive effect... I think this is bigger than the ability of any one national government to control.”

Few would disagree. ■

‘Session Fourteen: Seizing the opportunity’, featured: David Abraham, CEO, Channel 4; Damian Collins MP, Chair of the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee; Mai Fyfield, chief strategy and commercial officer, Sky; and Tom Mockridge, CEO, Virgin Media. The session was chaired by Tim Hincks, Co-CEO, Expectation Entertainment, and produced by Sue Robertson and Martin Stott.

anchored on linear, can that be sustained in a purely VoD world is a big, big question.”

David Abraham, Channel 4’s outgoing CEO, claimed that Sky’s business model was just as vulnerable to competition from Netflix and Amazon as the free-to-air broadcasters.

He said: “I will take issue with the fact that your model is any more sustainable against the digital giants than our ad model.

“Certainly, the numbers, in terms of the penetration of ‘big basic’ in the UK and the unbundling of basic in the US, suggest that the massive premiums that your business model has been based on are now seriously in question. But, be that as it may, if one is a niche player with a strong brand and great creative teams producing brilliant content, brilliantly marketed, there is always a way to survive.”

Yes, Abraham was talking about Channel 4, which he said of late had achieved a 10% portfolio share in spite of fierce competition.

He added: “I think that the issue right now is about growth. The ad market is down and we don’t know when it’s going to recover.

“It’s going to have an effect on the

AS AN INDUSTRY, WE DO NEED TO THINK ABOUT PLATFORMS THAT HAVE NO LINEAR CHANNELS AND IT’S ALL VOD

amount of money ITV and Channel 4 spend on content. But we’ve been through these cycles before. We’ve got a great pipeline of strong shows.”

He continued: “The question is, ‘Where will we be in five to 10 years’ time?’ Talk to anyone in San Francisco or LA and there’s a tremendous sense of change happening. The volume of money that Amazon, Apple and Netflix are spending is having a structural effect at just the time that ‘big basic’ is unbundling across the US.

“Will mainstream TV still be culturally dominant in five to 10 years’ time? Absolutely it will.

“Will the growth rates be quite as

“

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OUR FRIEND IN THE NORTH WEST

One great strength of the RTS is that it truly represents the whole country, with centres all across the UK. It is, therefore, an organisation that is very much in tune with the current Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Karen Bradley MP, who has repeatedly stated her commitment to making TV less London-focused, most recently at the RTS Cambridge Convention.

All too often in recent years, the lives of people in the nations and regions have been captured through a London lens, as series producers from the capital are shipped around the UK to head up “made out of London” productions.

To truly reflect our country, programme-makers at all levels should be from a wide range of backgrounds and they should live in various parts of the country.

A number of reports confirm that this isn't the case.

A recent survey of TV producers by Pact found that, of the £2bn budget for UK commissions in 2016, just 32% was spent out of London. According to the BBC Academy, just 35% of full-time jobs in TV are in the nations and regions.

Donna Taberer, who used to run the College of Production at the BBC Academy, interviewed more than 800 people who work in TV in the English regions for another report. She uncovered a shocking fact: 45% of freelance programme-makers in the English regions are employed in TV production only 50% of the time.

Why does this matter? In economic terms, a one-city industry really

Cat Lewis says
Ofcom can do a lot
more to encourage
TV production in the
nations and regions



Nine Lives

around the UK and put up in hotels during shoots.

More junior roles are filled locally – but this isn't enough to leave a legacy and make a long-term impact on the economy.

And, although these programmes are filmed in the nations and regions, they are often edited back in London, creating no work for post-production houses or editors who are based outside the M25. Up to 30% of the budget of a “made out of London” programme can be spent inside the M25.

All perfectly “legal” but hardly in the spirit of the Ofcom regulations.

I've heard it said more than once that there aren't enough experienced programme-makers in the nations and regions, particularly for more senior roles.

We all know TV commissioners can be very demanding when it comes to who makes their programmes. But what I've witnessed over 15 years of working as a northern-based exec producer is that this situation is self-perpetuating.

Senior freelance programme-makers in the nations and regions aren't given a chance to work on these shows. As a result, they don't have the right credits on their CVs.

Ofcom is currently reviewing the criteria as to what qualifies as a “made out of London” production.

I firmly believe that Ofcom needs to phase in a tightening of the criteria, leading towards the goal of having 80% of programme-makers working on a “made out of London” programme actually based in the nations and regions.

Cat Lewis is CEO, Nine Lives Media, and Chair, RTS North West.

limits our creativity and success, weakening the whole of UK plc.

There's also plenty of evidence that the London-centric media is increasingly out of touch with the way the rest of the UK is thinking: few in the media predicted the outcome of the Brexit vote or the last general election.

All this is happening in spite of regulations and quotas intended to create jobs outside of London, and overseen by Ofcom.

So, what's going wrong?

Unfortunately, any programme made under the “made out of London quota” is permitted to employ 50% of its staff from London. And some do so, often giving them senior roles.

These senior programme-makers – producer/directors, series producers and executive producers – are shipped

IBC review

Technical innovations are driving viewing options to new heights. **Kate Bulkey** explores the consequences

On the 50th anniversary of IBC, a record number of broadcasting and cinema professionals met for the annual technology jamboree in Amsterdam. The six-day event typically covers a wide range of topics. This year was no exception, with fake news, the rise of artificial intelligence and machine learning all prominent.

But, arguably, the real theme of IBC 2017 was the growing power of consumer choice. This is manifested most obviously in viewers' ability to pick and choose what, when and where they watch programmes. The big digital platforms, Facebook, Amazon, Netflix and Google, have been fundamental to this transformation in viewing habits. In Amsterdam, it was clear that their consumer-friendly products continue to disrupt traditional business models.

Kim Poder, CEO of the Danish unit of Scandinavia's Modern Times Group, put it bluntly. In an IBC Conference keynote address, he said that the only way forward for competitors of Netflix and YouTube was to tailor their offers to keep up with the changing patterns of video consumption.

He warned: "It's important to remember that there are a lot of competitors coming in, so don't be a fat cat and sit on your hands. Change your business model and adapt to new audiences."

Over the past five years, MTG has invested in three new businesses: e-sports, online gaming and online video content creation. The priority has been to grab the attention of viewers aged under 35.

One spur has been the size of the live crowds who gather to watch e-sports. In February of this year, 173,000 young fans attended a five-day e-sports gaming event in Katowice, Poland. "It was insane, and not just for the fans in the arena," said Poder. "We put this out on 70 broadcasters around the world, and it was on YouTube and Facebook. We had 40 million unique viewers for this



Power to the people

one event." For younger audiences, this is no different to watching a regular football match. Indeed, in many respects, it is more appealing because they often feel more connected to the gamers.

MTG forecasts its e-sports business will grow 40% in the course of this year. Poder said that other TV companies were following MTG, with similar online expansion plans.

Both Amazon and Facebook had big and busy stands at IBC. Facebook product director Daniel Danker presented the company's new "Watch" tab for long-form video. He told delegates that video on Facebook was "exploding" and represented 50% of mobile data traffic, a percentage that he expected to rise to 75% within five years.

Facebook is pushing the new video tab hard and will reportedly commission up to \$1bn of original content, including reality TV, comedy and even live sports, in 2018.

Danker showcased several shows on stage, including: *Humans of New York*, a weekly series based on a photo-blog by Brandon Stanton; *Hala Madrid*, which follows Spanish football team Real Madrid; and *Returning the Favor*, a series that features ordinary Americans

doing good works. Facebook Live is, clearly, a key part of the company's strategy, and Danker, who was involved in its launch, claimed that Live events attracted 10 times more comments than recorded video. With audiences demonstrably more engaged, Facebook can secure higher ad rates for live video.

Danker declined to say when Watch would launch outside the US. He emphasised that Facebook's secret sauce was that, unlike YouTube, its videos were based on the many and varied user communities that the social network attracted. "Any producer can find a loyal audience on Watch," he claimed.

Not everyone, however, was certain that Facebook would prove itself to be the right platform for audiences seeking long-form video. Brian Sullivan, President and COO of Fox Networks Digital Consumer Group, said that he was "highly sceptical that long-form video would migrate to social platforms". He suggested that the average video viewing time on social media was "about three seconds". And he doubted that all broadcasters would have direct-to-consumer offers over the next few years, even though



viewers were demanding Netflix-like, easy-to-use, binge-viewing-capable TV experiences.

Fox Networks' new Fox Now streaming service is available via pay-TV platforms. It aggregates content from all five Fox-owned networks – NatGeo, Fox Sports, FX, Fox and Fox News.

Sullivan said that the key difference between Fox Now and its rivals was that, as a hybrid of VoD and live TV, it offered a single navigation system for all content.

“The power has come back to the consumer and we are all having to find ways to deal with it,” he said. A big part of this shift had been the re-aggregation of TV services into “digital MVPDs [multichannel video programming distributions]” such as Sling and Hulu, the latter part-owned by Fox.

The VoD theme was also very evident on the exhibition floor, as well as at the conference. Hall 14's Content Everywhere Hub has developed over the past few years from a slightly peripheral zone, where edgier start-ups clustered, to a destination space for many IBC delegates.

Ben Keen, an independent media analyst, noted that “both Facebook and

Google choose to exhibit in Hall 14, rather than in the mainstream halls”.

This is despite fears in some quarters that the internet distribution bubble may be set to burst, given that there are so many competing VoD services.

“There are clearly far too many companies claiming to do pretty much the same thing, usually an ‘end-to-end OTT video solution’ or similar”, added Keen. OTT (over the top) video is the catch-all term for online distribution, and covers all streamed or downloaded live TV, VoD or “buy-to-own” products.

Keen predicted “a shake-out among the content players and service providers rushing to launch their own OTT subscription video propositions. Only the strongest will survive.”

Even so, OTT delivery is proving attractive to companies in the sports world. In August, Disney announced that it would launch an app for its premium ESPN brand (due in early 2018), and, in May, the English Football League launched its iFollow app. Both made presentations at IBC.

The EFL's marketing director, Drew Barrand, said clubs were hoping to gain substantial income from iFollow, which gives overseas fans live

streaming access to league games. It launched with Nottingham Forest vs Millwall, the Championship's opening game on 4 August. At IBC, Barrand admitted that there was a balance to be struck between TV rights and streaming rights: “It's not either/or.”

On the same conference panel, Alicia Klein, director of platforms and distribution at the IAAF, the organising body for track and field athletics, said that social media platforms were “bringing tension into the business”.

She believed that rights holders needed to develop a more “sophisticated” understanding and appreciation of fan data. “We can't have only a passive relationship with fans through television,” she insisted. “Fans, particularly younger fans, want a live conversation – and that platform isn't TV, it's Snapchat, it's Instagram.”

Meanwhile, fake news – sometimes aided and abetted by the big digital platforms, particularly Facebook – was discussed by William Lewis, CEO of Dow Jones. He argued that regulating the “digital giants” was as important as publishers discovering new business models. “The days are gone when I could say, ‘Come to my site or sod off;’ he said.

The fast-growing importance of artificial intelligence was dramatised by a session featuring Sophia, an AI-powered humanoid robot, and her inventor, David Hanson of Hanson Robotics, based in Hong Kong.

Sophia spoke directly to the audience in a convincingly lifelike manner and took random questions. Hanson explained that she even had her own stylist to make her look human. But, as she was only a year old, her AI still had a lot to learn.

The discussion between Hanson and Sophia underlined the speed of advances in AI in a way that the equally “intelligent”, but disembodied, voices of Amazon's Alexa or Apple's Siri don't.

Finally, conference attendees heard that a study by Walker, a customer intelligence group, forecast that, by 2020, customer experience would overtake both product and price as the differentiator that mattered most to consumers, including those of TV businesses.

For a convention concerned with the merits of competing technological advances in Ultra-HD, data compression algorithms, CGI and a host of other fields, this was a useful reminder of the fundamentals of business. ■

Dramatising a death cult



Peter Kosminsky on the set of *The State*

Channel 4

Over more than 30 years – initially in documentaries, then in dramas – Peter Kosminsky has built a reputation as a fearless film-maker, unafraid of asking awkward questions and taking on the Establishment.

His work has dealt with conflicts in Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Palestine, Iraq and Syria, the machinations of New Labour politicians, the lives of abused children, and the victims of war.

Occasionally, the writer-director changes tack (he directed the multi-award-winning period serial *Wolf Hall* for the BBC in 2015), but Kosminsky mostly sticks to what he knows best – producing meticulously researched, contemporary pieces of work.

It was, therefore, no surprise that he mounted a powerful defence of political drama at an enthralling RTS

Content

Peter Kosminsky is unflinching in his belief that TV has a duty to cross-examine society, says Matthew Bell

early-evening event at the end of August. He argued that TV drama, when he first entered the industry as a BBC trainee in 1980, “held a mirror up to society”.

Times have changed, Kosminsky hasn’t. “I’ve just carried on doing what was prevalent when I started,” he insisted. “It’s just everything else that has shifted. It’s like the tide has withdrawn and left me on this little island.”

Interviewed by *Channel 4 News*

reporter Fatima Manji, Kosminsky argued that television remained “an incredibly powerful medium”. But, “most of the time, we use it for escapist tosh. I believe that it should be used to ask awkward questions of society.”

Kosminsky’s commitment to political drama is unflinching, as his latest work, *The State*, which aired on Channel 4 in late August, demonstrated (see box). He explained that *The State* was the third part of a trilogy for Channel 4 that began with *The Government Inspector* in 2005, about the suicide of biological weapons expert Dr David Kelly and the existence, or otherwise, of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

The trilogy continued with *Britz* in 2007, which, through the starkly contrasting stories of a brother (an MI5 officer) and sister (who is recruited as a suicide bomber), examined the experiences of second-generation Muslims in Britain.

The Government Inspector and *Britz* doubled Kosminsky's tally of RTS awards; he had already been honoured for the 1990 ITV drama *Shoot to Kill* and the BBC's *Warriors* in 1999. He was made an RTS Fellow in 2006.

Kosminsky drew a "straight line" between *The Government Inspector*, *Britz* and *The State*. "The single most fatuous thing I've heard said in politics on this subject in recent memory is when Tony Blair said that Britain's involvement in the Iraq war would never have any impact on radicalisation on the streets of Britain," he claimed. "I thought, when he said it: 'Are you mad? Have you actually spoken to any young British Muslims recently? Have you any idea of the videos that they're watching and the conversations they're having?' They feel that the West is at war with Islam. They think it's a new crusade.

"These three films are a very small part of attempting to draw that line."

The trilogy, certainly for now, marks the end of Kosminsky's work exploring Britain's relationship with radical Islam: "I don't have any plans to return to this subject again but – who knows?"

The closing of this chapter of his work, however, does not indicate any optimism about the state of the world. Indeed, the writer-director's analysis was decidedly downbeat.

"We're in a very dark place at the moment, with Brexit, Trump in the White House and white supremacists being tacitly endorsed by this individual who has his finger on the nuclear [button]," he said. "I've got young kids and this is a hell of a time to try to talk to them about good and tolerant values and the dangers of racism.

"I don't believe violence is an answer to anything – I haven't always felt that way but I definitely feel that way now. But I can completely see why people are moving to the fringes, because there's a vacuum of charisma in the middle."

Kosminsky welcomed the emergence of Jeremy Corbyn and Bernie Sanders in the UK and US but, in general, he said, "People look at the centre ground and it seems so grey, boring and uninspiring.

"This fleeing to the margins is very dangerous. I fear for our society in a way that I have never done in my life before."

'Peter Kosminsky in conversation with Fatima Manji' was held at Channel 4 in central London on 30 August and produced by Sally Doganis.



Onyiah Uhiara
in *The State*

Characters rooted in real events

Channel 4

Peter Kosminsky's latest work, *The State*, follows a group of British jihadis who travel to Syria to join Islamic State but quickly lose their ardour for an organisation that the writer-director described as a "blood-drenched death cult".

The idea for the programme came from Kosminsky's interest in "the radicalisation of quite unlikely people". He continued: "[There were] stories of schoolgirls being radicalised in their bedrooms, on their laptops, without their parents' knowledge, but no information at all about what happened once they got to Syria."

Kosminsky explained that he had a twin objective for the four-part Channel 4 drama, which aired over four consecutive nights in August. "[It is] tempting when these atrocities occur, either in the Middle East or on the streets of some of our cities, [to think] that [terrorists] are clearly mad," he said. "Unfortunately, it isn't true in the main.

"It doesn't help us to understand what is a very challenging and difficult phenomenon facing our society at the moment.

"The first thing, and I knew this wasn't going to be popular, was to try to disabuse [viewers] of this simplistic interpretation that the only reason people do this is because they are insane."

Second, Kosminsky said, he wanted to write a "cautionary tale" about how quickly the newly radicalised are disabused of their "idealised vision" of an Islamic caliphate when they are confronted with the reality of life in Syria.

The State features composite characters based on Kosminsky's

trademark through research, which took 18 months to complete. "I wanted to take four people who were typical of the research and plunge them into this [Islamic State] experience," he said.

"The characters were composites but there were no incidents depicted that hadn't occurred," he added. "Everything that happens is in the research."

He argued that people were more willing to reveal their experiences to him than to a news programme in which they could be identified. "Nobody knows who spoke to us [apart from] me and the Channel 4 lawyers," he said, adding: "And I would never reveal my sources."

The State does not shield viewers from the brutality of Islamic State, but Kosminsky maintained that the reality of the violence was far worse. "The stuff I saw, you couldn't get on television," he said. "If we depicted it as it really was, it would be unwatchable; not only because it would breach broadcasting guidelines, but it would just be relentlessly bloody. There were decapitations and amputations happening in a square in Raqqa every day."

He had tried to find a balance between "making it unwatchable" and offering a "ridiculously anodyne treatment that didn't acknowledge the fact that we're dealing with an incredibly bloody organisation".

Kosminsky said that *The State* was the hardest thing he had ever attempted. "If you watch those [Islamic State] videos and also read some of the testimony," he said, "the images that were conjured in my head will never leave me."



A mission to engage

If traditional broadcasters are to thrive in an era of social media they need to emulate some of the best qualities of Steve Hewlett’s journalism. That was the essence of the first Steve Hewlett Memorial Lecture, given by BBC broadcaster Nick Robinson, a friend and colleague of Hewlett’s.

Robinson outlined the challenges facing BBC News and other traditional news broadcasters in a heartfelt talk delivered to a packed auditorium at London’s University of Westminster.

The *Today* presenter offered some remedies for regaining public trust – and, with luck, audiences – on what was an emotionally highly-charged evening. Hewlett died in February, at the age of 58, but his legacy continues to loom large wherever certain sorts of journalists gather together.

Robinson called for a new journalism of engagement – a “mission to engage” in an allusion to John Birt’s “mission to explain” – in order to win back public trust. This had been eroded by the kind of divisions that gave us Brexit.

Robinson recalled the Steve Hewlett he’d first met. In many ways, they couldn’t have been more different. Robinson was Oxbridge-educated. Hewlett was a communist who’d

News

Nick Robinson, inspired by the late Steve Hewlett, tells news networks how they can challenge the excesses of social media. Steve Clarke takes notes

organised a rent strike at the University of Manchester. “I was as Establishment as you could get, a BBC trainee straight out of university who’d been schooled at the Oxford Union debating society,” recalled the former BBC and ITN political editor. Hewlett, meanwhile, possessed “an aura of radical chic”. He came with the dangerous whiff of the edgy, early Channel 4.

It was said at Channel 4 that Hewlett had made a film giving a Marxist interpretation of cricket – two of his greatest passions, Robinson remembered as the audience chuckled.

Years later, Hewlett inherited

Robinson as his deputy when the former edited the flagship BBC current affairs show *Panorama*.

It was both men’s subsequent diagnoses of cancer that brought them closer. Robinson was successfully treated for lung cancer but Hewlett’s cancer of the oesophagus was to prove more stubborn.

“When he told me about his diagnosis, I wrote him a beginner’s guide on how to cope with chemotherapy,” said the BBC news man.

Robinson had other fond memories of Hewlett. How, for instance, he supported him during difficult *Panorama* editions. “When I edited a programme that the *Mail* dubbed, ‘The BBC’s astonishing Royal attack’, he backed me again. It is what great editors do.”

Today’s media landscape is very different to when Hewlett edited *Panorama*, more than two decades ago. Alternative news providers have proliferated.

One of the consequences of this growth in digital news, driven by social media, has been that millennials largely ignore the news output of the traditional UK TV networks, said the *Today* presenter. Unless broadcasters raised their game, said Robinson, there was a risk that future generations would be

Nick Robinson and (on screen) Steve Hewlett



Paul Hampartsoumian

lost to quality news organisations such as the BBC, ITN and Sky News.

Engagement was key and would “involve finding new ways to ensure on-air diversity – not just gender, ethnicity and age but, crucially, background, too: class, region, nation and education.

“And what should come with it – diversity of thinking.”

News was too important to be reduced to a three-letter abbreviation – OMG, LOL or WTF – as “powerful algorithms prioritise emotion over facts and analysis”, and Facebook prevented people accessing BBC news coverage.

Trust in UK news has fallen by 7%, according to the latest data from the Reuters Institute *Digital News Report*. And, according to a YouGov survey, Wikipedia entries were judged to be marginally more trusted than the BBC.

“Fewer and fewer young people are watching BBC News on the TV,” Robinson warned. “More of them are reading news on social media while sitting on the bog.”

Last year, however, the reach of BBC News among adults was 75% – higher than any other UK news provider. Audience figures for *Today* were at record levels.

Despite this, attacks on mainstream

media have mushroomed during the past three years. Robinson discovered this first-hand during his coverage of the Scottish independence vote – and, more recently, during this summer’s attack on a mosque in Finsbury Park, north London.

There, local Muslims were furious that the BBC failed to initially describe the incident as terrorism. They turned their anger on Robinson when he arrived on the scene.

He said that attacks on media such as the BBC were “part of a guerrilla war being fought on social media, day after day and hour after hour”. As a growing number of people were drawn to what Robinson described as “identity journalism”, the *Today* presenter called on traditional news broadcasters to take their lead from Hewlett and be more willing to challenge received opinions.

The rise of Jeremy Corbyn provided an example: “The ideas that made Corbyn popular – whether scrapping Trident or renationalisation – should be examined and interrogated in their own right and not simply as a cause of rows or splits.”

He added: “Too many interviews with Jeremy fail to take him and his ideas seriously enough.”

As regulators and broadcasting executives think hard about social class and their own employment practices, again, Hewlett provided a role model.

Hewlett’s BBC career was initially blocked because the corporation’s in-house M15 representative singled him out as a potential security risk because of his communist past.

Amplifying his call for “diversity of thinking”, Robinson said the approach involved “not just who we employ, but how we do our jobs”. He continued: “We should get out more, we should study the polls with more, not less intensity, and we should look for underlying trends.

“That does not mean extending still further the fatuous vox popper that is a substitute for a serious examination of voter attitudes. Filming on a high street until you have obtained clips of contradictory opinions tells the viewer next to nothing. Exploring the roots of people’s attitudes can do.”

Alongside his “mission to engage”, Robinson said that organisations such as the BBC needed to remake the case for impartiality.

Relaxing impartiality rules would risk UK news broadcasting becoming like that of the US. There, audiences

watch the news channel that most corresponds to their own world view.

Impartial news risked being undermined by state-owned news channels such as Al Jazeera and services run by the Chinese, French and Iranian governments.

Robinson disagreed with James Murdoch’s view that a regulated news system such as Britain’s amounted to “authoritarianism”. He claimed that, prior to the 2010 general election, Murdoch had lobbied the Conservatives hard to dismantle Ofcom.

Part of Murdoch’s aim, according to a senior Tory minister who had spoken to Robinson, was to secure full control of BSkyB and to turn Sky News into a channel to challenge what he saw as the BBC’s innate liberal bias.

In order to broadcast “the best obtainable version of the truth”, Robinson called on the BBC to introduce greater transparency into its journalism.

Part of this would involve “translating Producers’ Guidelines into fluent human”, being swifter at dealing with complaints and more assertive in nailing politicians’ lies. “I confess that I discussed having a sort of giant fridge magnet made to attach to the Vote Leave bus carrying the words of the many independent figures who pointed out the inaccuracy of their central claim,” Robinson noted wryly.

He said that there was something else which traditional news broadcasters could take from Hewlett’s modus operandi: what he had called the did-it-pass-my-mum? test.

“I hope I am not patronising Steve’s mum, Vera, or indeed mine, when I say that the test of our journalism is whether it would seem relevant, comprehensible and engaging to them... or anyone of any age or gender or background who is not a news junkie or political trainspotter,” explained Robinson.

“In a world in which there is ever more information but it gets ever harder to reach the people you want to reach, our challenge is to engage people whom we could once take for granted.

“It is that mission which – along with the Steve Hewlett Scholarship – would be a fitting testimony to Steve.” ■

The Steve Hewlett Memorial Lecture is a joint initiative between the RTS and the Media Society. Nick Robinson gave his talk at the University of Westminster in central London on 28 September. The producer was John Mair.



Three Girls

BBC

The making of BBC One's child sexual abuse drama

The creative team behind *Three Girls* – the powerful drama based on the Rochdale child sexual abuse scandal – explained how they brought this important story to the screen at an RTS Bristol event in September.

Filmed in Bristol and broadcast on BBC One over three consecutive nights in May, *Three Girls* tells the true stories of “Holly”, “Ruby” and “Amber”, victims of child grooming who helped to convict nine men of child abuse offences.

The series received more than 9.3 million requests on BBC iPlayer in May and averaged a consolidated audience of 8.1 million across its run.

Three Girls also won the praise of critics. “Beautifully

written, powerful drama,” said the *Guardian*; “An urgent, astonishingly moving piece,” wrote the *Independent*.

At the Bristol event, the creators of *Three Girls* were in conversation with RTS Centre Chair Lynn Barlow at the Watershed.

Three Girls was green-lit by the BBC as just an idea – unusual in drama commissioning, but “absolutely necessary” for this kind of project, explained Bafta-winning director Philippa Lowthorpe. “It would have been unthinkable to let down the girls, again.”

The drama took four years to research, write and produce, and involved hours of in-depth interviews with the victims and their families, as well as with professionals who

deal with child grooming. Maggie Oliver, a detective constable working on the investigation, was a key figure in brokering the relationships between the girls and the production team. Writer Nicole Taylor said: “We went up to see them again and again – and we listened.”

Lowthorpe, added: “The family trusted Maggie and then trusted us. It was a slow process, lots of gentle meetings, talking and listening.”

The script was constantly evolving as Taylor felt an “obligation to revise things, to constantly update.

“When I had done a draft, the real people would feed in or it would trigger new memories, so I would absorb new information.”

The team felt a huge

responsibility to the families and girls. Lowthorpe explained: “Simon Lewis, the producer, and Sue Hogg, the exec producer, were brilliant and there was lots of support from the BBC.”

The important contribution of sexual health worker Sara Rowbotham, who was often on set, was also mentioned at the event.

Director of photography Matt Gray discussed the style of his cinematography, which was designed to bring the viewer to the heart of the story: “We shot on an Alexa Amira – in some scenes, the camera would be very close to the actors, which puts huge pressure on young performers, but they embraced it and were amazing. There were lots of long, continuous shots, which is brilliant for actors – they could inhabit their characters.”

Lowthorpe revealed that she had looked for actors who had “already acted a little bit, but could also be utterly natural”. Established stars Maxine Peake (who played Rowbotham) and Lesley Sharp (Oliver) also came on board, and “they were both immersed in the material and so committed to it, which was exciting to witness”, said Lowthorpe.

Úna Ní Dhonghaile discussed the difficulty of editing the court scenes: “I couldn’t intercut the court testimonies [because] the veracity of the words spoken was so important to the story. Yet, I still had to keep the rhythm and the pace.”

But the editor’s greatest challenge was “to find a way of editing the material that kept the subjective point of view of the girls alive, so that the audience would understand street grooming and empathise fully with the girls”.

Suzy Lambert

Cambridge lessons for London



Karen Bradley

London Centre reviewed the RTS Cambridge Convention, with a high-level panel looking back at controversies over broadcast regulation and Channel 4, as well as praising James Murdoch's speech and the convention's strong focus on diversity.

Virgin Media senior public affairs manager Alex Stepney said Cambridge 2017 had been a far more political event than the previous convention, two years earlier. In particular, she noted the different positions taken by Ofcom chief Sharon White and culture secretary Karen Bradley in the area of broadcast regulation.

Ofcom had investigated the Murdoch companies' commitment to broadcasting standards and found there was no case to answer, but

Bradley had decided to refer 21st Century Fox's takeover of Sky to the Competition and Markets Authority on the ground of broadcasting standards as well as that of media plurality.

The convention speech by James Murdoch, CEO of 21st Century Fox, went down well with the panel, which also included Sky head of public affairs Lucy Aitkens and Toby Syfret, director of TV research at Enders Analysis.

"He's a very different personality to his father and I liked his visionary sense, pointing out that, with so many new technologies coming, we need to make them work [and] always seek to improve what we do as broadcasters," said Syfret.

Bradley came under fire for insisting that Channel 4 move some staff out of London. "I don't think the Government has the first idea of the destruction it could inflict on Channel 4," said Syfret. "The advertising department has to be in London, and it's important that Channel 4's programme commissioning groups work closely with them."

Syfret suggested that the Government was treating Channel 4 as if it were the BBC, with thousands of employees it could cast across the regions of the UK – but that wasn't the case. "Channel 4 is a much smaller broadcaster than the BBC, and it is the continuing intense and dedicated vision of [its] chief executives that has given Channel 4 a remarkable success. This kind of political interference shows no understanding at all of that," he said.



Sharon White

All pictures: Paul Hampartsoumian

The panellists praised the convention's focus on diversity and, in particular, class diversity in the recruitment process.

Stepney praised the RTS for making diversity such a mainstream subject at the convention.

"It did generate an ongoing discussion, with some interesting examples of how some companies tackle the issue," she said. "But there wasn't much focus on the independent production sector – shouldn't it be asked to respond, too?"

Tabitha Elwes, head of media at CIL Management Consultants, chaired the RTS London panel at the late-September event, which was held at The Hospital Club in central London.

Nick Radlo

RTS unveils awards

■ The Society has awarded nine new RTS Fellowships to mark its 90th anniversary. It has also announced the recipients of its 2017 undergraduate bursary scheme.

Doctor Who revival Russell T Davies, *Father Ted* writer Graham Linehan and *Line of Duty* creator Jed Mercurio all became Fellows, as did: Channel 4 marketing and comms head Dan Brooke; BBC Deputy Director-General Anne Bulford; Sunset+Vine live events chief Gary Franes; All3Media COO Sara Geater; BBC Natural History Unit's Mike Gunton; and ITN boss John Hardie.

The RTS funds 22 bursaries, with support from All3Media, which sponsors two places, for TV production and broadcast journalism students, plus seven for computing and engineering undergraduates. Students receive £1,000 a year to assist with their living costs.

The first Steve Hewlett scholarship has been awarded to Oliver Cummins Hylton at the University of Salford, where the broadcaster, who died this year, was a visiting professor. The student receives an extra £1,000 a year on top of his RTS bursary scheme award.

Channel 5's Frow sends out invitation to indies

Channel 5 director of programmes Ben Frow revealed at a sold-out Bristol Centre event in September that he is looking for a “game changer of a show” to pull in an audience of three million.

The channel's commissioning editor, Adrian Padmore, added: “We have lots of shows doing one million – [we want] to get three million and take the channel forward.”

At the RTS Bristol event – held at the Everyman Cinema and chaired by Plimsoll Productions founder Grant Mansfield – Frow said: “We are working with people now who we would never have worked with five years ago.”

Frow said the channel's tone was “populist but never ordinary. We are unashamedly mainstream, down to earth, honest and warm.”

Addressing indies, Padmore said: “Don't send your idea to all of us, as we sit together and we talk to each other all the time. Find out about each of us first and approach us individually.”

Frow continued: “We have nine [commissioners] and there are hundreds of hours to fill. It's all very collaborative and we have regular round table discussions.”

“I always say yes to a meeting – talk to me, use me for advice, don't show me clips.”



From left: Ben Frow, Adrian Padmore and Grant Mansfield

Jon Craig

Channel 5 is currently looking for another entertainment show to sit alongside *Blind Date*, which it revived this summer, after an absence from TV of 14 years.

Frow added: “We're after more returning shows, week after week, exciting reputation pieces, stripped programming at 10:00pm and three-part event pieces.”

Discussing the channel's history programming, Padmore said: “We need to be doing history that people have heard of.”

A significant proportion of the Channel 5 budget goes to indies with a turnover of less than £5m. “I like underdogs; I love giving people a chance and finding new talent,” said Frow, who has challenged his

team to work with a new regional indie this year.

Frow revealed that he writes only limited “viewing notes” when watching shows: “I only really have two notes – I'm bored or I'm confused and I don't know what's going on. It's the producer's job to produce the programme.”

Suzu Lambert

ONLINE at the RTS

■ What's wackier than Channel 4's *Naked Attraction*? A lot, according to our research. From bizarre Japanese game shows, with contestants nibbling table legs, to rapper Vanilla Ice in an Amish community, the mind boggles at what the commissioners were thinking. See the full list for yourself (www.rts.org.uk/7weirdTVshows).

■ Presenter Simon Reeve has seen his fair share of weird TV

on his travels. Watching a badly dubbed bootleg version of *Titanic* was the worst, he told us when we spoke to him about his new BBC Two series, *Russia with Simon Reeve*.

He travelled to Russia on the eve of the centenary of the 1917 revolutions to find out what life is like in the world's biggest country. Read about his run-ins with the Russian secret service (www.rts.org.uk/SimonReeveRussia).

■ Those who attended the Edinburgh TV Festival in August might recall ITV boss Kevin Lygo's frank answer to the question, ‘What's the future of comedy at ITV?’ – ‘Bleak’ was his response.

New ITV2 series *Timewasters* seems to bucking this trend. It follows a jazz band from south London who find themselves travelling back in time (via a urine-sodden lift) to the 1920s. We caught up with the show's creator, Daniel Lawrence Taylor,

to get the inside story on the series, which even features an appearance from TV inventor John Logie Baird (www.rts.org.uk/DanielLawrenceTaylor).

■ Don't forget that you can watch videos from this year's RTS Cambridge Convention on our website. You can find the highlights video and links to the full sessions at www.rts.org.uk/CambridgeHighlights17. **Pippa Shawley**

Mike Neville, who has died at the age of 80, was a nightly teatime TV fixture across five decades, from 1962 until 2006. He worked first as a continuity announcer on Tyne Tees Television, then as host of the BBC's *Look North* and *Nationwide*, then back at Tyne Tees for 10 years, where he anchored *North East Tonight*.

With his distinctive actor's voice and infectious chuckle, his was the most recognisable face in a region of more than two million viewers from Carlisle to Whitby.

Generations of locals grew up watching him, and he gathered a national following as a genial presence on BBC staples, including *Nationwide* and *Come Dancing*. It is the kind of longevity, fame and mass exposure that is now hard to imagine in a multi-platform, multichannel era.

Mike's funeral in his home village of Whickham, near Newcastle, was broadcast on speakers to admirers who gathered outside the packed church to listen to tributes and music such as Mark Knopfler's theme to the film *Local Hero* and folk singer Jez Lowe's anthem *Mike Neville Said It (So It Must Be True)*.

He was born on Tyneside in 1936 and worked at the *Daily Mail* and, after his National Service, as an actor in repertory alongside the likes of Glenda Jackson, until he successfully auditioned for a presenting job at Tyne Tees.

After starting in continuity, he became the host of the station's newly launched weekday programme *North-East Newsview*. Within months, he was poached to replace Frank Bough on the BBC rival programme, *Look North*, where he stayed for 32 years.

Mike famously turned down BBC offers to move from Newcastle to present network shows in London, preferring to broadcast to his family of regional viewers.

Tyne Tees lured Mike back



Steve Brock

Mike Neville

1936–2017

to the channel in 1996 by designing an hour-long nightly news show around him. *North East Tonight with Mike Neville* went on to win both a massive audience share of around 40% and awards.

He was also given his own 10:30pm chat show, where he demonstrated his easy charm with a live audience and relaxed interviewing style.

Mike was renowned for his ability to cheerfully ad lib through on-air technical glitches – a skill celebrated in a memorable “Gotcha” episode on *Noel's Saturday Roadshow* in 1989, where he was forced to “fill” from the studio for seven minutes in the mistaken belief that he was still on air after the news.

Mike presided over the move from Tyne Tees's historic City Road studios to a new, high-tech broadcast centre in Gateshead in 2005 but, within a year, he retired, aged 70, after undergoing emergency surgery for an aneurysm. He received a standing ovation at the RTS North East & Border Awards in February this year where he picked up a special award to mark his 80th birthday.

His death from cancer on 6 September was regarded by many as the end of an era for regional television.

Mike is survived by his wife, Pam, daughter, Carolyn, son-in-law, Geoff, and four grandchildren.

Graeme Thompson

Transgender TV debated by RTS Wales

■ Transgender representation in the media was put under the microscope at RTS Wales's September event.

The panel discussion followed a screening of *Sweet Sixteen: A Transgender Story*, made by Swansea-based indie Telegop, which aired in May on BBC One in Wales and a month later on television in England.

The documentary continues the story begun by *Swansea Sparkle: A Transgender Story* about the biggest transgender event in Wales. It followed the lives of three transgender people, including Llyr Jones.

Sweet Sixteen: A Transgender Story takes up Jones's story and explores how that formative experience at Swansea Sparkle – where Jones won the title of Miss Swansea Sparkle 2015 – continues to influence her.

The film captures key milestones, such as Jones travelling to London for medical advice, celebrating her 16th birthday and starting to take testosterone blockers.

Jones reflected on why she had agreed to take part in the two documentaries. “I'm not doing this hoping to be a trans spokesperson,” she said. “I'm [just] putting my story out there and hoping that it makes a difference.”

Other members of the panel included *Sweet Sixteen's* director, Molly-Anna Woods; Matthew Stevens, from *Trans*form Cymru*, a project to support young trans people; and Shon Faye, *Stone-wall Cymru's* trans engagement worker.

BBC Wales diversity lead Catrin Griffith chaired the RTS event at the University of South Wales in Cardiff.

Llinos Griffin-Williams

OFF MESSAGE

Over the years, there have been some utterly wonderful after-dinner speakers at the RTS Cambridge Convention. But, as far as Off Message can recall, none of these luminaries has followed their address by performing Beethoven's setting of *Ode to Joy...* on the bagpipes.

Step forward, spin doctor, serial diarist and remainder-in-chief, the incomparable Alastair Campbell.

The evening's host, Accenture's Bob Sell, group CEO for communications, media and technology, didn't bat an eyelid as, introducing the recital, he graciously unpacked the maestro's cumbersome instrument of choice.

All part of the job that is hosting an RTS King's College, Cambridge, dinner.

■ Another highlight of Cambridge was "The Two Andys", featuring those peerless producers Andy Harries and Andy Wilman, both of whom had landed mega deals with US companies.

In their session, delegates were treated to the inside track on how Harries successfully sold *The Crown* to Netflix.

The series continues to win acclaim and awards, but not everyone in medialand appreciates how Peter Morgan's magnum opus may have helped change TV for ever.

"The great thing about having a show on Netflix is that the reaction rolls on and on," Harries told the Cambridge audience. "I was in the Four Seasons restaurant in LA, late one night, and some guys were there

for a Fox convention. They got very excited, and said: 'You're the guy who does *The Crown*. Jesus Christ, you completely screwed us up.'

"One of the guys picked up his pint of beer and poured it over me. I'd hurt his business plans."

What was that about grown-ups being just silly children?

■ Also at Cambridge, it was good to see a film of Big Talk's Kenton Allen, Sky's Zai Bennett, A&E's Heather Jones and our very own Theresa Wise taking to the track at Silverstone to conduct their own thrilling, Formula One-style race.

The cameo was included in the session on entertainment, "A League of Our Own?" Allen finished in pole position, while Theresa was the last to complete the circuit. But it should be stressed that the RTS CEO was the only one of the four who avoided spinning their car.

One for the next *Grand Tour* series, perhaps, should Amazon need to trim the budget?

■ Two senior TV executives making their Channel 4 swansongs at Cambridge were David Abraham and Jay Hunt. Could they, perhaps, both end up working together again one day? For sure, the pair turned out to be a formidable team at Horseferry Road.

Off Message wishes them well and looks forward to whatever their next gigs are.

■ The Midas touch of Two Brothers Pictures, run by Jack and Harry Williams, continues.

The pair's latest hit, ITV's *Liar*, more than made up for the ratings disap-

pointment of *Rellik* – their other recent show and coincidentally shown in the same Monday 9:00pm slot as *Liar*, on BBC One.

Readers may remember that Two Brothers is the company behind *Fleabag* and *The Missing*, which the Williams brothers also wrote. Their parents, novelist and erstwhile BBC executive Nigel Williams and award-winning producer Suzan Harrison, have plenty to feel proud of.

■ Off Message was thrilled to attend the special 25th anniversary edition of *Later... with Jools Holland*, performed in the swanky surroundings of London's splendid Royal Albert Hall.

To say that the musical line-up was eclectic is something of an understatement. Paul Weller, Van Morrison, Dizzee Rascal, Camille and the Foo Fighters were all featured on the bill. Not forgetting the wondrous soul singer, Gregory Porter.

Good to see Damian Collins MP there. One wonders if he appreciated the sheer, raw noise of the Foo Fighters as much as John Whittingdale MP – noted for his dedication to heavy metal – would have done.

Here's to the next 25 years, Jools.

■ Huge congratulations to Simon Pitts, the new CEO of Scottish Television. Pitts, whose work in modernising ITV's digital presence is likely to be appreciated for years to come, takes over the reins at STV in the New Year. It's an exciting time for broadcasting north of the border and he is certain to make an impact.

He assures us that he won't be one of the despised WIGLIEs – works in Glasgow, lives in Edinburgh.



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25 October

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