

Television



Whither 4?



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From the CEO



breadth of the country.

I was thrilled to attend the inaugural RTS East Awards last month and see the nominees and winners take to the stage at the University of the Arts. Don't believe Alan Partridge: Norwich is a great city and is home to some very impressive talent.

Thanks so much to RTS East Chair Nikki O'Donnell for rebuilding our activities in the region.

Earlier in May, RTS Scotland hosted its awards at Òran Mòr in the heart of Glasgow's West End. This was a

wonderful evening. Congratulations to all the winners in East Anglia and north of the border – it was fantastic to see Robbie Coltrane and Gok Wan in a star-studded event.

In London, we had a capacity crowd for "Is targeted advertising the future of TV?" This hugely informative session addressed a topic that is of increasing importance to broadcasters, advertisers and media agencies.

The five panellists gave the audience a genuine insight into what is an evolving environment. Thanks to them, the evening's chair, *M&M Global's* Anna Dobbie, and the producer, Vicky Fairclough, director of communications at GroupM. There is a full report in this issue of *Television*.

Don't miss Mark Lawson's fascinating interview with one of our most

distinguished and successful screenwriters, Chris Chibnall.

Andrew Billen is back this month. His subject is the upwardly mobile Sky News presenter, Sophy Ridge, whose Sunday show provides a regular fix for those addicted to weekend political television.

Looking to the future, the RTS Student Television Awards are on 16 June at BFI Southbank, and we have what promises to be a fascinating event on 4 July with Peter Salmon, chief creative officer at Endemol Shine.

I hope you can join us at one, if not both, of these events.

Theresa Wise

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National events

RTS AWARDS

Friday 16 June

RTS Student Television Awards 2017

1:00pm registration and buffet lunch; 2:00pm-3:30pm awards ceremony; 3:30pm-5:00pm drinks reception

Venue: BFI Southbank, London SE1 8XT

■ Book online at www.rts.org.uk

RTS FUTURES

Monday 19 June

From YouTube to TV

Panellists: Georgia Moseley, creative lead, BBC Digital Storytelling project; Matt Champion, founder and creative director, Spirit; Janine Smith, head of digital entertainment, ITV; more panellists TBA. 6:45pm for 7:00pm
Venue: Curzon Soho, 99 Shaftesbury Avenue, London W1D 5DY
■ Book online at www.rts.org.uk

RTS EARLY EVENING EVENT

Tuesday 4 July

In conversation with Peter Salmon, chief creative officer, Endemol Shine Group

Venue: Central London, TBC

■ Book online at www.rts.org.uk

RTS CONFERENCE

13-15 September

RTS Cambridge Convention 2017: 'A world of opportunity'

Confirmed speakers include: Sir David Clementi, Chair, BBC; Michelle Guthrie, MD, Australian Broadcasting Corporation; Tony Hall, Director-General, BBC; Andy Harries, CEO, Left Bank Pictures; James Murdoch, CEO, 21st Century Fox; Sharon White, CEO, Ofcom; and Andy Wilman, Executive Producer, *The Grand Tour*.

The principal sponsor is Sky and the convention is co-chaired by Andrew Griffith, Group Chief Operating Officer, Sky, and Gary Davey, Managing Director, Content, Sky.

Venue: West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge CB3 9DP and King's College, Cambridge CB2 1ST

■ Book online at www.rts.org.uk

JOINT EVENT

Thursday 28 September

First annual Steve Hewlett Memorial Lecture 2017

Jointly organised by the RTS and Media Society. 6:30pm for 7:00pm

Venue: University of Westminster, 4-12 Little Titchfield Street, London W1W 7BY

■ Book online at www.rts.org.uk

JOINT EVENT

Tuesday 10 October

The great history debate

Panellists: Suzannah Lipscomb, historian and presenter; Leanne Klein, CEO, Wall to Wall; Tom McDonald, head of specialist factual commissioning, BBC TV; and David Olusoga, historian and presenter. Chair: Tony Robinson
Venue: Central London, TBC

■ Book online at www.rts.org.uk

RTS MASTERCLASSES

Tuesday 14 November

RTS Student Programme Masterclasses

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

■ Book online at www.rts.org.uk

Wednesday 15 November

RTS Student Craft Skills Masterclasses

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

■ Book online at www.rts.org.uk

Local events

BRISTOL

■ Belinda Biggam

■ belindabiggam@hotmail.com

DEVON & CORNWALL

■ Jane Hudson

■ RTSDevonandCornwall@rts.org.uk

EAST

■ Nikki O'Donnell

■ nikki.odonnell@bbc.co.uk

LONDON

■ Daniel Cherowbrier

■ daniel@cherowbrier.co.uk

MIDLANDS

Thursday 30 November

Midlands Centre Awards 2017 Gala Dinner

Venue: National Motorcycle Museum, Solihull B92 0ED

■ Jayne Greene 07792 776585

■ jayne@ijmmedia.co.uk

NORTH EAST & THE BORDER

■ Jill Graham

■ jill.graham@blueyonder.co.uk

NORTH WEST

Saturday 11 November

RTS North West Awards

Venue: Hilton Deansgate, 303 Deansgate, Manchester M3 4LQ

■ Rachel Pinkney 07966 230639

■ rachelpinkney@yahoo.co.uk

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ John Mitchell

■ mitch.mvbroadcast@btinternet.net

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

■ Charles Byrne (353) 87251 3092

■ byrnecc@iol.ie

SCOTLAND

■ Jane Muirhead 07718 087108

■ scotlandchair@rts.org.uk

SOUTHERN

■ Stephanie Farmer

■ SFarmer@bournemouth.ac.uk

THAMES VALLEY

Wednesday 14 June

Summer barbecue and mobile broadcasting

6:30pm for 7:00pm

Venue: Pincents Manor Hotel, Calcot, Reading RG31 4UQ

■ Tony Orme

■ RTSThamesValley@rts.org.uk

WALES

7-8 August

RTS Cymru Wales at the National Eisteddfod

The festival runs from 4-12 August at Bodedern, Anglesey, LL65 3SS. The RTS is holding three events, two in Sine-maes (the cinema tent on the Eisteddfod Field). A Field entry ticket is required.

7 August

A look back at the iconic S4C agricultural series Ffermio

3:00pm

8 August

Visit to the set of S4C's youth drama series Rownd a Rownd

At Menai Bridge, Anglesey. No ticket required, but numbers are limited. Time TBC

8 August

Profile of Rownd a Rownd

2:30pm

Venue: National Eisteddfod, Bodedern, Anglesey LL65 3SS

■ Hywel Wiliam 07980 007841

■ hywel@aim.uk.com

YORKSHIRE

Friday 7 July

Programme Awards 2017

Hosted by Lorraine Heggessy. Sponsored by: York St John University; Northern Film School; Leeds Beckett University; Channel 4 Nations and Regions; Daisybeck Studios; Leeds College of Art; Prime Studios. 7:00pm for 7:30pm

Venue: New Dock Hall, Royal Armouries, Leeds LS10 1LT

■ Lisa Holdsworth 07790 145280

■ lisa@allonewordproductions.co.uk

For booking and updates to all RTS events:

www.rts.org.uk

TV diary

Amol Rajan receives a surprise gift from Boris Johnson and worries if journalism can survive the threat from the digital economy



The general election coincides with my completing six months at the BBC. There is so much about my old job, as editor of the *Independent*, that I miss. But, on the whole, I am glad to have made the move, not least because my belief in public broadcasting has grown exponentially.

And for one reason above all. Part – though far from all – of my job is doing news about News.

News – the real stuff, made up of facts, and selected through wise judgement – is in big trouble.

Here are seven threats, many inter-related: the collapse of newspapers; Facebook and Google's control over advertising; echo chambers on social media; fake news; the rise of conspiracy-mongers such as *InfoWars* (and their promotion by the White House); state propaganda from rising powers; and the explosive growth of PR.

■ **Even in concert, it seems to me, they need not sound the death knell of journalism. But they could, unless things change. One solution is to make news pay.**

That means restoring the connection between quality news and paying for it. A licence fee is one way of doing that. I did a package for the *Ten O'Clock News* about how, compared with the US, British voters are seeing a better quality of news on their social-media feeds.

One reason for that is the continuing dominance of the BBC over our news agenda. That influence has many critics, of course; but the fact is that the rise of fake news and echo chambers strengthens, rather than weakens, the case for a broadcaster that serves the public rather than the state or commerce.

■ In his seminal work of 2004, *Decline of the Public*, David Marquand wrote of a public domain that was being hollowed out. That was long before social media filled it with sound and fury signifying nothing.

Today, control of the public domain has been, to a large extent, ceded by governments and people to technology giants. Did you know that the five biggest companies in the world are now tech companies? This is, of course, the little-noticed, and still less lamented, revolution of our time.

■ **Talking about the reinvention of the public domain, during the leaders' debate on Sky News and Channel 4, Tory MPs were using social media to pump out their lines to take. All the political parties do it, of course; but, at one point, Sajid Javid, Jeremy Hunt, Matt Hancock and Boris Johnson were all tweeting to the effect that only the Prime Minister could make a success of Brexit.**

Goodness knows whether it was them or their advisers hitting send, but I often wonder what Boris, especially, must make of this alleged need

for message discipline. I was reading his book on Churchill when my son, Winston, was born. There was a comment in it that people don't call their sons Winston any more.

I wrote to Boris to say that some do. He promptly sent me a copy of the book with a charming inscription. Call me a romantic, but it seems a shame that our new public domain requires a highly capable writer to pump out the party line when his boss is up in front of the public.

■ Have you seen the Netflix documentary *Get Me Roger Stone*? It's superb. Some years ago, my boss, James Harding, wrote a book called *Alpha Dogs* about how the culture of political advice and lobbying in the US became a lucrative, global industry.

This documentary, featuring many of the same characters, gives that argument a sinister twist. Stone, an ultra-conservative, muscular dandy with bizarre hair and a tattoo of Nixon, is cast as an American Iago, whispering evilness into the ears of anyone who will listen.

He was pushing for Donald Trump to run for president decades ago. Now, he's got his guy in power. Just as you can't understand the direction of television without understanding Netflix, so you can't understand modern America without seeing what happened when some people said, "Get me Roger Stone".

Amol Rajan is the BBC's media editor.



Location, location, location

At a conference in Salford at the end of March, addressed by the then-culture secretary, Karen Bradley, the cities, nations and regions of the UK were presented with a tantalising opportunity – to bid to become the future home of a relocated Channel 4.

Two weeks later, Bradley swiftly launched a formal consultation on the issue – the week before the general election was called. Answers were requested by 5 July.

When the Conservative Party's general election manifesto was published last month, it included a pledge to move Channel 4 out of London.

This has made the competition between cities vying for the prize of Channel 4 more intense still.

In the run-up to the recent mayoral elections, Bradley paid a visit to Birmingham, where the West Midlands Conservative candidate Andy Street won a narrow but historic victory on 5 May. "I have been impressed with how quickly Birmingham has been off the blocks on this. Andy was on the phone to me almost immediately with suggestions of what Birmingham could do," she said.

This included identifying two potential sites for the relocated channel, one close to the proposed new high-speed train station, promised for 2026.

Andy Burnham, former culture secretary and the new Labour mayor of Manchester, also wrote to Bradley. He staked a claim for Salford's buzzing Media City as the only viable alternative outside London. To Birmingham campaigners, this looked downright greedy.

But even before Street achieved his victory, Bristol mayor Marvin Rees

Channel 4

Should Channel 4 move its HQ outside London? If so, where?

**Maggie Brown
investigates**

included Channel 4 relocation in his cabinet meeting agenda for 2 May. He tweeted that he wanted "to ensure we are in the running for any relocation".

Rees then held a Channel 4 relocation event on 24 May. On the guest list were such leading West Country independent producers as Wendy Darke, the former head of the BBC's Natural History Unit.

Sheffield is another city cannily preparing a bid for Channel 4 to move there. It is organised by Sheffield's director of city growth, Edward Highfield. He says: "We feel our values and ethos are incredibly strongly aligned with Channel 4's. There is a real gap in media production east of the Pennines. Lots of people are talking about Manchester and Birmingham. We don't think that they are the obvious front-runners."

He points to Sheffield's proximity to Leeds, Hull and Derby, and the annual Sheffield Doc/Fest, at which Sheffield is expected to reveal its Channel 4 relocation hand. The city has a site earmarked, next to the station.

In the North East, in Newcastle/Gateshead, it is not clear whether a bid will emerge from the ashes of what was once a television production hotbed that provided Channel 4 with an early hit, *The Tube*.

Graeme Thompson, pro vice-chancellor of Sunderland University and chair of the RTS's Education Committee, spells out why the broadcaster should come to the North East: "You get a very different picture of life and tastes. London is like visiting another country. Channel 4 could kick-start a clustering effect here. It would also provide a national broadcaster with a slightly different take."

It seems unlikely that Glasgow will mount a full bid, as Scotland is set to benefit from a new Scottish BBC television service – and because it is a potential Brexit rebel.

Cardiff is expected to lay a claim, but has the bonus of S4C, and the BBC's expansive drama studios.

The manifesto pledge and consultation on moving Channel 4 out of London represents a sting in the tail for Channel 4. The move sours its victory in defeating the threat of privatisation, following two years of lobbying.

This allowed CEO David Abraham to confirm in mid-March that he would be leaving. Bradley remarked in her Salford speech that "we are still far apart" over the future of Channel 4, which hands the question of how to settle the relocation debate to his successor.

The idea of relocating Channel 4 was first raised by Bradley last September.

To Channel 4's shock, the issue gained widespread, cross-party interest – in contrast to privatisation. The rumour mill then produced Birmingham as the front-runner. Which just happens to be where Theresa May's joint chief adviser, Nick Timothy, representative of urban, working-class "Erdington" Conservatism, was brought up.

Bradley pointedly said in her Salford speech that it was inadequate that only



3% of Channel 4 jobs were based outside London.

A key part of the last Government's interest lay in using Channel 4 as part of its policy, announced in 2015's autumn financial statement, to rebalance the UK's economy away from London. This aimed to stimulate business through 12 local enterprise partnerships offering business incentives. The strategy built on support for the "Northern Powerhouse" and the "Midlands Engine".

To counter this open season on relocating Channel 4 outside London, the broadcaster has been busily organising 12 consultations around the UK. Its tone has shifted from hostility towards the idea to a professed willingness to explore the potential ramifications. At a meeting held in Gateshead last month, Channel 4 admitted that it had not been good at engaging with the North East.

It also needs to find allies if it is to remain in the metropolis. The purpose-built and adaptable headquarters in

London's Horseferry Road is much loved by its occupants.

The network's outgoing chief creative officer, Jay Hunt, her deputy, Ralph Lee, and marketing chief Dan Brooke have led these discussions. Hunt has gone out of her way to meet independents around the UK since taking up her job in 2011. More recently, Channel 4 commissioners have also been making a lot of visits beyond London.

The message is that, while the broadcaster wants to work with government on growing the creative economy, a relocation could be expensive and disruptive. It also plays on the real fear among some smaller regional independents that relocation could cost them time and money.

They reason that, if the station moves, they would have to make an inconvenient special trip to Channel 4, wherever it is located. Currently, one journey to London allows them to tour all the broadcasters in a day.

The largest independent producers,

including TwoFour, All3Media and Endemol Shine, are all backing London and are happy with the status quo because they think relocation could damage Channel 4.

Last month, Channel 4 held a private event in London to discuss relocation. It included representatives from Creative England, the Creative Industries Federation, Equity, Pact, Enders Analysis and Sheffield University professor Sylvia Harvey.

One message that emerged, which commands broad agreement, is that what really matters is where Channel 4's commissioning money is spent.

This is relevant to the second consultation issue: should the present Channel 4 regional quota of 35% of programme spend be increased to 50%? This has the support of Pact.

There is also a nascent plan to set up regional commissioning editors outside of London in the nations and regions that would mirror production hubs such as Manchester. Setting up an English or regional office is also being considered.

Cat Lewis, CEO at Salford-based Nine Lives and a former chair of Pact's nations and regions committee, thinks that a workable solution would be to relocate All 4 and the technology team to Birmingham. That would enhance its role as a technology centre.

This would involve around 200 jobs and dovetail with the move of half of BBC Three's team to the city, and with Birmingham's role as a training academy and centre for local BBC journalism.

Under this scenario, Channel 4 would keep its advertising sales and programme commissioning together under one roof. The argument is that they depend on one another.

Pact CEO John McVay thinks that the key issue is Channel 4's capability to maintain its programme spend. "My members are interested in work," he states. He is, by contrast, highly critical of an offer by Channel 4's board to invest half of its cash reserves in content ventures.

This still leaves the question of how far Channel 4 is justified in resisting a total relocation on the grounds of defending the institution from damage. And that will be overshadowed by the outcome of the general election. Only then will it be clear how much change will follow from the current consultations and whether Birmingham will win the battle royale. ■



The man who reinvented the cliffhanger

Most people, asked to identify the show that changed the career of Chris Chibnall, would point to his ITV crime trilogy *Broadchurch*. But, for Chibnall, the show that altered everything was, unusually, a flop: *Camelot*, his king-and-wizard drama for the US cable network Starz, which struggled to the end of one season in 2011.

“Very early in my career,” says Chibnall, “someone told me that you learn more from a failure than you do from a success. And then I lived out that phrase for a year in Los Angeles. I learned that I would not work that way

Screenwriting

Chris Chibnall, feted for *Broadchurch* and the new showrunner on *Doctor Who*, shares insights into his working life with **Mark Lawson**

again or be put in that situation again.” The essential lesson was: “You either have to be in total control of a show or working with people who share your vision and will work with you to achieve it. Also, never work with 13 executive producers.

“*Camelot* was the classic case of too many cooks. It wasn’t a harmonious set-up and I think that does manifest itself on screen.

“I had a fantastic cast but you have to be free to tell the story you want to tell in the way that you want to tell it. What ended up on screen was not what I wanted and so it is a blemish on my CV.”

Chibnall is speaking from Cardiff,

where he is doing early work (“some meetings, and measuring the curtains and so on”) for his next project, as showrunner of *Doctor Who* from 2018.

Although Chibnall has form with the franchise (having written five *Doctor Who* episodes and seven of the spin-off *Torchwood*), he was picked as successor to Steven Moffat after showing an ability to deliver big ratings and major tension between 2013 and 2017 on *Broadchurch*.

And that landmark series would never have happened without the catastrophe of *Camelot*.

The director James Strong visited Chibnall on the Arthurian lot, when they were working on *United*, a 2011 BBC Two drama (written by Chibnall and directed by Strong), a bio-drama about the Manchester United team destroyed in the Munich air crash. “*Camelot* was obviously agonising and difficult for him,” recalls Strong. “He was suffering all of the American producing clichés of interference. And I think that he desperately wanted to do something that was just his.”

That was *Broadchurch*, which was directed by Strong. In an intriguing insight into Chibnall’s working methods, he says: “We sat in a pub after finishing *United* and I said, ‘What are we going to do next?’ And Chris said: ‘We’re going to do another film. But this one will be eight hours long.’”

“Chris wrote a draft. I went to Dorset and walked the cliffs with him, trying to get the identity of the place into the scripts. We worked on it for a few months. Then, he sent it to ITV and they replied within 24 hours, saying, ‘This is amazing!’”

Although *Broadchurch* is now fixed in the history of television, Chibnall says that it is important to him that “each of the three series was a different kind of risk”.

In the opening season, the jeopardy was spreading a single murder story over eight weeks: “This was a time when episodic, story-of-the-week drama was seen as the way to go.

“So the notion that you would have one story over eight weeks was high-risk. *The Killing* had done it as a critical and industry hit for a loyal and discerning audience.

“But we were doing it in ITV peak time, with the risk that there would be no one watching by week 2 if it didn’t catch on, and we’d end up being shunted to 11:30pm on Saturday night.”

The gamble in the second series (which many reviewers and viewers

considered lost) was whether the original narrative could be revisited from the fresh perspective of a trial.

In this year’s run, the more successful creative bet was whether a closed-community crime drama could tell the story of a rape investigation. Chibnall further raised the stakes by making the bulk of the first episode a three-hander drama-doc-style depiction of best practice in the investigation of sex crime.

Along with Jed Mercurio’s *Line of Duty* (a rival Chibnall much admires), *Broadchurch* has pushed back hard against the assumption that TV fiction is moving inevitably towards self-scheduled binge-watching.

Chibnall and Mercurio have proved that viewers will willingly be left on a cliff edge for seven days, with the frustrated anticipation and speculation becoming part of the fun.

“I think people still want appointment television,” says Chibnall. “Especially at certain points in the week. Sunday night is one of them, so moving *Line of Duty* to Sunday night was a master stroke. And Monday night on ITV is another one: I was thrilled to get that slot because that was the night that *Cracker* and *Prime Suspect* were on.

“For all that we binge-watch and catch-up, communal viewing has survived on those two nights in particular.”

But, for such a show to work, do future plot twists have to be ruthlessly protected from viewers and newspapers? “Yes. It is quite difficult. The only way to do it is not to tell anyone, which isn’t possible because lots of people need to know how to do their jobs.

“You have to have security measures in place. Scripts are electronically distributed; everyone has individual passwords. You have to foster a team mentality and hope that people will want to protect the endeavour.

“I’m interested that *Twin Peaks* has taken it to the absolute zenith by not even having trailers. But the definition of a good story is being told things that you don’t know yet.”

Strong, who first worked with Chibnall on *Torchwood*, remembers how, “by the second series of that, Chris became a sort of showrunner.

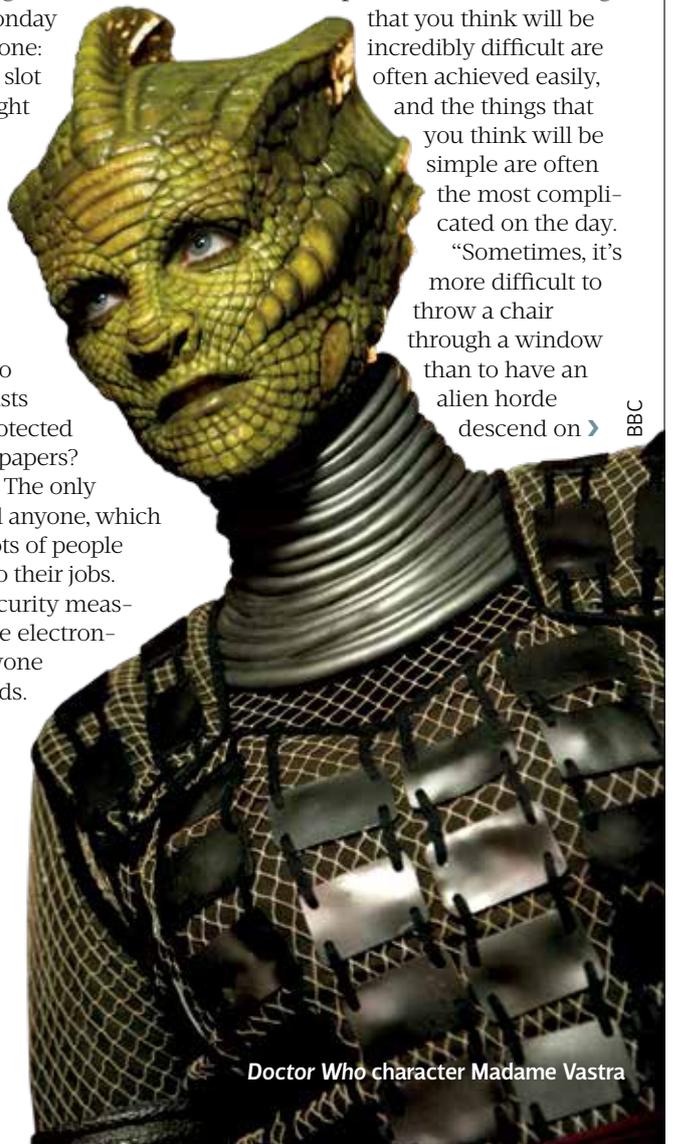
So he always had a producing hat on.”

Subsequently, Chibnall has taken on ever more responsibilities, so that he now operates as a writing executive producer, with Jane Featherstone as a non-writing executive producer. “I feel my job is to set the creative vision,” he says. “I think of it as curating a team of geniuses.”

Does Chibnall, though, feel free to write, “a fleet of B-52 bombers lands on the aircraft carrier”, or is his producing brain already raising logistical or economic objections?

“That’s a key question. I think, in the first draft, the writer should always win over the producer. Your job is to dream and tell the story in the best way that story wants to be told,” he says. “It’s very dangerous, as a writer, to police yourself too much in the early drafts. Because the thing I’ve learned as a producer is that the things

that you think will be incredibly difficult are often achieved easily, and the things that you think will be simple are often the most complicated on the day. “Sometimes, it’s more difficult to throw a chair through a window than to have an alien horde descend on >



Doctor Who character Madame Vastra

BBC



› a planet.” That chimes with Woody Allen’s comment that the main creative influences on movie-making are weather and parking permits.

Chibnall laughs: “Yes. You would be surprised at how many locations on TV are decided by the question: ‘But where are we going to park the trucks?’”

Strong, as one of Chibnall’s most frequent collaborators, says: “Chris makes it look so easy. You meet him and sit with him and he’s so relaxed. And very collaborative and open.”

Does he have a stern and shouty side? “I’ve never heard Chris shout. He has a very gentle and considered style. But he knows what he wants and, if he doesn’t like something as a producer, he’ll say it.

“He has a very clear vision of what the show should be. But that’s a good thing. He’s a very good creative leader. He makes sure that everyone in every department is making the same show.”

Strong says that he is “a mixture of surprised and not surprised” that Chibnall accepted the *Doctor Who* job: “I know what a big fan of the show he is and I know how much he feels he has a vision for it.

“Any reticence would be about the scale and length of the commitment. It’s a five-year project. That was a huge decision. He’s in his absolute prime and could have done whatever he wanted, writing-wise. It’s an

absolutely wonderful result for *Doctor Who*. I think Chris, essentially, writes emotional thrillers, and that’s perfect for that show.”

Chibnall admits that he took a long time to commit: “I finally said yes because I love the show to my bones. I resisted it for a very long time, and [the BBC] really had to woo me.

“But, in the end, I had ideas about what I wanted to do with it. When I went to them and said, ‘This is what I would do’, I actually expected them to say, ‘Ooh, let’s talk about that’, but they said: ‘Great!’”

Chibnall can’t reveal yet what his daring conceit for the series is but would he, for example, be allowed to do a whole-series storyline, like *Broadchurch*, rather than individual episodes? “Yes. What the BBC was after was risk and boldness.” But he couldn’t kill the Doctor off in episode 1? “Ha! Then the title would really make sense.”

There is a torrent of media and social-media advice about who the new Doctor (replacing Peter Capaldi) should be, and what he or (as many are keen) she should do. But Chibnall says: “I don’t read any of that. One of your jobs as a writer is to cut out the noise. All you have is your instincts and your process. The BBC came to me because they wanted those, and so reading coverage about the show is fundamentally useless and bordering on counterproductive.

“A TV show isn’t a focus group. It is great that people are speculating about who the Doctor will be... but it won’t affect in any way what we do with the show.”

Chibnall’s general tone suggests that there may be a radical revamp of *Doctor Who*, which will please those who have suggested the show needs a kick up the Tardis.

Strong says: “Well, my own completely personal view is that it does. It used to be – and I stress this is my personal opinion – at the heart of the schedule, an unmissable family show and, for some reason, it’s slipped a bit from the national consciousness.

“For me, when it goes towards storylines that are a little bit more for the fans, I think you can lose that general appeal. I think Chris is going to offer a slightly different take on what the show should be.”

Whatever vision Chibnall has was enough to persuade him to change the course of his career: “Jane Featherstone and I had a new idea and were close to pitching that. So the hardest thing was going to Jane and saying, ‘Look, I may be going to Cardiff for a few years.’

“I have plans for more theatre, more TV. But the amazing thing about *Doctor Who* is that you can go anywhere and do anything.”

His producer brain quickly kicks in: “Within budget.” ■

Sophy's choice

The Billen profile

How did **Sophy Ridge**, the only female co-anchor on election night, breach that glass ceiling, inquires **Andrew Billen**



Sky

On election night in October 1974, the BBC's anchorman, Alastair Burnet, announced a "welcome new addition" to the presenting team, Sue Lawley. At least part of the reason for her welcome was that she was the first woman to play an on-screen role in a British election results studio.

Things have moved on, if not at breakneck speed. Emily Maitlis was again booked to be on the BBC's set on 8 June. And, for the first time, a woman, Mishal Husain, was to play the Robin Day/Jeremy Paxman inquisitor role. On ITV, Julie Etchingham was due to anchor – but only on day two.

Sky News alone billed a woman as an anchor on the night itself. Enter Sophy Ridge, two-heading it with Adam Boulton (he in Osterley, she in a studio on Abingdon Green by Parliament). She followed Etchingham who, in 2005, when she was at Sky,

also co-hosted with Boulton. I would not belabour the point were the role of women in politics not Ridge's special interest and the subject of her new book, *The Women Who Shaped Politics*.

In its foreword, she writes of being misidentified by male MPs, once for a fashion journalist and once for a weather "girl" (Ridge's terminology). There will be no mistaking her seniority on election night.

"When you are younger and watching the election, it is like it is these giants doing it, so I feel quite excited," admits Ridge, sitting with me in the café below the media centre in Millbank.

She is 32 and has crept to the forefront of political coverage rather as Theresa May did to the top job in politics, through quiet tenacity and something indefinable that goes beyond mere competence, strays into character territory but never quite enters the treacherous charisma zone.

After reporting from the lobby for

Sky, she took over the Friday edition of *Sky News Tonight* and then, in January, the Sunday-morning political slot, refashioned in her image, made less metropolitan and rechristened *Sophy Ridge on Sunday*.

Her first interviewee was May, who said it was good to have a woman presenting one of these shows. It was a triumphant interview.

May had not announced her Brexit strategy, but, by dogged persistence and ruthless, Brian Walden-style paraphrasing of May's answers – plus, she says, game-planning with her "whizz-kid" producer Tom Larkin – Ridge got the exclusive. This was going to be a hard Brexit that put immigration control above membership of the single market.

"I think, when you're doing the interview, it's worth just sticking on something and not moving to the next question. The people that I look up to in the way they interview, are those who just listen very carefully >

› to the answers and then home in on something that they know is a story.”

She seemed completely nerve-less on that first programme. Was she? “I’d be lying if I said I was completely without nerves, but, at the same time, I think the best advice is: just try not to look down. If you have too much of a realisation of where you are, it all becomes a bit too much.”

It was not the first time she had had a one-to-one with May. She had requested an interview with her for her book when May was still home secretary, and was eventually summoned for an hour’s conversation at No 10.

The resulting interview was notable for May’s insistence that she was a feminist, and that, growing up, there had never been any suggestion that her sex placed boundaries on what she could do.

Ditto, Ridge, brought up in a teachers’ house in south-west London, rather than an Oxfordshire vicarage; she says she cannot remember a time when she did not consider herself a feminist.

The interview was sufficiently intimate for a couple of answers to be ripped off by *The One Show* presenters in their interview with May at the start of the campaign: that Mr May took out the bins; that a researcher told Mrs May in a lift that it was her shoes that got her into politics. Both non-exclusives made headlines the next day.

“Alex Jones [*The One Show* co-host] posted a picture of my book on

Instagram, so I think she looked at it for research but, I guess, if you’re being interviewed all the time, you’re going to have a few of the same sort of stories cropping up,” she says good-humouredly.

Did she approve of *The One Show*’s soft approach? “I’m with the view that not every interview has to be the same. I don’t think every single interview has got to be a hard-hitting fight on policy.

“I’ve got no problem with her and Philip May doing a slightly softer interview. Basically, I think that the more access we get to a politician, the better, as long as it’s not been used as an excuse to not do the other interviews as well.”

She describes the lack of a proper leaders’ debate as personally disappointing, but says the besetting problem of political interviews – their predictability and caution – is exacerbated in an election.

In a *Sophy Ridge on Sunday* early in the campaign, she interviewed the normally robust-on-Corbyn Alan Johnson and Anna Soubry, a former TV presenter whom May sacked. Both were tediously on-message, and the usually fun Soubry told Ridge off for criticising her quick resort to the Conservatives’ “strong and stable” slogan (prompting from Ridge a strong defence of her colleagues’ mockery of it).

“I feel that we, as journalists and as politicians, have a responsibility to make politics accessible, because otherwise people will just switch off. I think

part of that is politicians actually being prepared to just be a bit more direct with what they’re saying. And also, perhaps, journalists feeling that they can give people a hard time when they deserve it – but, also, sometimes trying to have a conversation with them as well.”

We agree that the one time politicians do relax into candour is when the results start to come in. This should be Ridge’s night to shine, and it would not be the first time. In 2015, she reported at about 3am that Ed Miliband was going to resign. Contacts, she explains.

She is clearly a journalistic natural, although she says that, growing up in Richmond upon Thames, her family – two teacher parents and a younger brother – was no more than averagely interested in politics.

She went to The Tiffin Girls’ School, a state grammar in nearby Kingston, where she says she enjoyed working hard. At 16, she took work experience at the *Richmond and Twickenham Times*.

“That gave me the bug. I did some court reporting, little stories like interviewing the firemen at the local fire station and vox-popping people at Gunnersbury station. I thought, ‘This is great. This is what I want to do.’ I think it was that moment really that turned me into a journalist.”

At St Edmund Hall, Oxford, she studied English, became passionate about long Victorian novels, and ended up with a second-class degree but bylines in *The Oxford Student*. Paul Nicholas, the deputy managing editor of *News of the World*, gave a talk.

She asked him for work experience, which she did in her final year. From there, she was accepted into the paper’s graduate training scheme. Her parents, she claims, were delighted.

At the time of the crash, she was made consumer correspondent. Readers’ letters brought insight. “There’s actually a lot of people who are choosing between heating their homes adequately and buying a meal for the family.” She tries to remember that in her journalism.

“I sometimes wonder whether the amount of scrutiny that’s given to a particular story over others is because some things are viewed through the lens of a middle-class London bias – house prices, top rate of tax, stamp duty on homes over £1m, or whatever, as opposed to things such as tax credits.”

She applied for a job advertised by Sky News for a political correspondent in 2010. At her second interview, she

Sophy’s saga

Sophy Ridge, 32, political presenter, Sky News

Married to a newspaper journalist ‘called Ben’

Born 17 October 1984, Richmond upon Thames

Parents School teachers

Education The Tiffin Girls’ School, Kingston upon Thames; St Edmund Hall, Oxford (BA English)

2007 Trainee, *News of the World*

2009 Consumer affairs correspondent, *News of the World*

2011 Political correspondent, Sky News

2015 Senior correspondent, Sky

2016 Presenter, *Sky News Tonight* on Fridays

2017 *Sophy Ridge on Sunday* launched

Awards: Words by Women (2016); Nominee for RTS Young Journalist of the Year (2013)

Exclusives Ed Miliband’s resignation (2015); Jeremy Corbyn’s victory in 2015 leadership contest

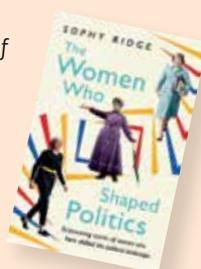
On her election-night co-host Adam

Boulton ‘I’m sort of in awe of his huge brain but I think he is actually very kind, as well’

Reading Hilary Mantel’s *A Place of Greater Safety*

Watching *The Island with Bear Grylls*; *Gomorra*

Wrote *The Women Who Shaped Politics* (2017)





Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon (left) being interviewed on Sophy Ridge on Sunday

Sky

was interviewed by the then-political editor (and her future election-night co-anchor) Boulton, of whom, she wisely attests, she is a great fan.

What really marks her out as an interviewer is her doggedness and unflappability, never looking remotely hurt by a put-down. Her confidence as an interviewer comes, she says, from what Sky's Kay Burley calls "flying hours" and from preparation.

She is a formidably stubborn interviewee, too, I can promise you. She will not tell me her parents' names, nor that of her husband (beyond that he is called Ben and works for a national newspaper). She says this is because she just regards herself as a "hack at heart". Anyway, it does not take me long to work out who he is. He gets the occasional Sophy Ridge exclusive.

Social media abuse (which might be a good reason to keep her life private) does not, she says, keep her awake at night.

And those MPs who mistook her for a fashion journalist? "It's water off a duck's back to me. I think it's more funny than anything else.

"I remember, when I first started at Sky, a couple of people thought that I was there to do their make-up, but I don't feel that being a woman has in any way held me back in my career.

THE PEOPLE THAT I LOOK UP TO IN THE WAY THEY INTERVIEW, ARE THOSE WHO JUST LISTEN VERY CAREFULLY... THEN HOME IN ON SOMETHING THAT THEY KNOW IS A STORY

I think it's probably the reverse." Why the reverse? "I think that because, if you are a woman doing political journalism, then you're a rarer breed, so people remember you more."

It is hard to ask this delicately, but I wonder if her career itself might not reflect a certain sexism, or at least lookism, in her chosen medium.

Sky News is not Fox News, nor Sky Sports News, but it does have its share of presentable blondes. The election-night partnership of ageing man sans matinee-idol looks and an attractive woman nearly half his age is as old as

Reggie Bosanquet and Anna Ford.

"Well, I don't think I look that similar to other Sky newsreaders. I think we all look quite different. I mean, Anna Botting, Kay Burley, you know, Gillian Joseph, Anna Jones, I feel we're all quite different."

But when Boulton did Sunday mornings, I don't remember his face all over the screen in the title sequence.

"I guess that the thought process behind that was that it's a kind of personality-driven show, like just trying to differentiate it from the rest of our output – feel a bit younger, fresher, more irreverent, perhaps, than some of the traditional Sunday-morning political shows."

Rather than flaunting her? "Well, I don't see it like that, definitely."

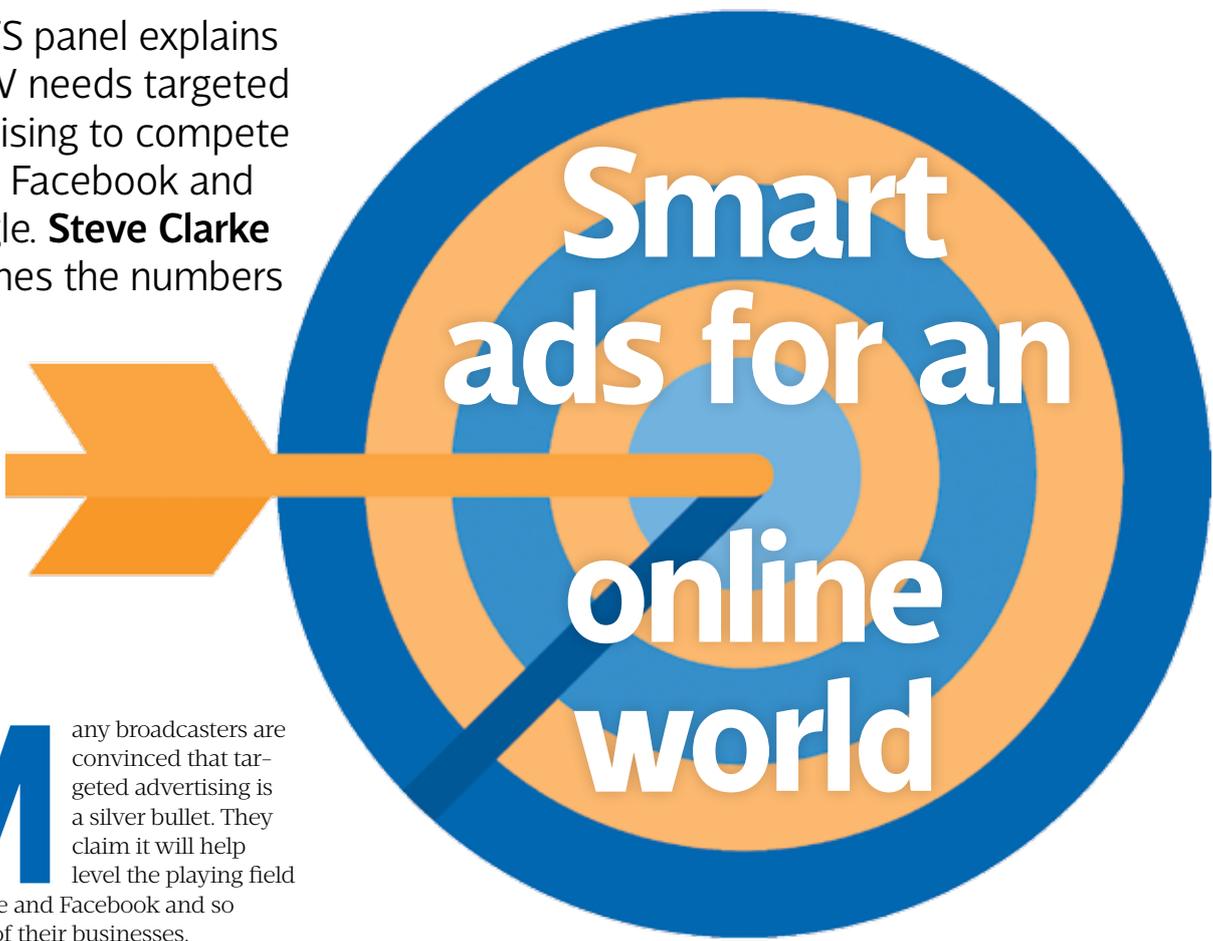
As viewers will have noticed, Ridge is pregnant: her baby is due in August. She is not sure how much time she will take off but the Sky News PR who is sitting close by says the channel has a good record of employing working mothers, some part time.

"Look, I don't really know what to expect, I'll be completely honest, because it's my first."

The presenter who always does her homework, is learning that it is not just snap elections that are hard to prepare for. ■

Advertising

An RTS panel explains why TV needs targeted advertising to compete with Facebook and Google. **Steve Clarke** crunches the numbers



Smart ads for an online world

Many broadcasters are convinced that targeted advertising is a silver bullet. They claim it will help level the playing field with Google and Facebook and so future-proof their businesses.

But at a packed RTS early-evening event, “Is targeted advertising the future of TV?”, it became clear that the debate over smart advertising’s role in commercial TV is more nuanced than that. It is conceivable that internet-delivered, personalised ads aimed at individuals will one day be as commonplace as driverless vehicles are expected to be.

In the UK, Sky and Channel 4 are pioneers in targeted advertising. Sky’s AdSmart was launched in early 2014. Recently, Channel 5 signed up for the service; the terrestrial station’s advertising is sold by Sky.

Channel 4 debuted its targeted-advertising offer in 2013 on 4oD, the catch-up service subsequently rebranded as All 4; the move into addressable advertising was driven by CEO David Abraham’s conviction that “data is the new oil”.

In spite of the growth in online viewing and the threat to traditional TV’s business model posed by the tech

behemoths, the RTS audience learnt that targeted advertising remains in a nascent state.

Sky, mindful of the competition from the likes of Netflix, reportedly believes that it can use AdSmart to boost advertising sales to £1bn by 2020, from under £800m last year.

Jamie West, deputy managing director, Sky Media UK, and group director of advanced advertising, outlined how targeted advertising had brought new advertisers to Sky, but declined to give any specific figures.

AdSmart’s ability to target local viewers and take money from local newspapers, radio and direct mail was a key selling point.

“Instead of being the domain of the big, the broad and the rich brands, it gives us the opportunity to talk to highly targeted advertisers and to local and regional audiences,” West explained. “The breadth of advertisers on TV has never been greater. With

two-thirds of advertisers being new to TV or new to Sky, we’re really growing.”

From Channel 4’s perspective, Jonathan Lewis, the station’s head of digital and partnership innovation, said that All 4 represented about 10% of the broadcaster’s revenues but only 3% to 4% of Channel 4’s total viewing.

And three-quarters of this 10% comes from targeted advertising based on data obtained from Channel 4’s registered user base of around 15 million people.

According to Chris Ladd, senior manager, advertising, media and campaign management at Nationwide, smart advertising was still worth less than 5% of total UK TV ad sales.

But YouView’s product and business development director, Simon Cook, suggested that – provided personalised TV advertising was sold properly – it could eventually account for around a fifth of British TV’s total advertising revenue.

The panellists needed no reminding



Water-cooler TV: *Bake Off*, which is moving to Channel 4

BBC

of the power of the Silicon Valley giants in relation to the UK TV sector.

Ladd summed it up when he said: “The amount of money those guys are sitting on is phenomenal. At any point, they could come in and completely disrupt the UK market.

“In the blink of an eye, they could buy ITV with their small change. That would fundamentally change the content – and, potentially, the advertising – that is produced in this country.”

He claimed that, in the US, half of all households have subscriptions to Amazon Prime. “At some time, that could pose a threat to the UK,” added Ladd. “But, for now, it’s the main broadcasters that most advertisers are looking at because they provide huge audiences and those water-cooler moments.

“That’s the magic of television and it’s those brands that still produce the best content.”

Highlighting the growth of online TV, Lewis said that, collectively, the number of UK subscribers to Netflix, Amazon and Now TV – owned by Sky – was approximately as big as the total number of Sky subscribers.

“Netflix now has a greater weekly reach among 16- to 24-year-olds than BBC iPlayer,” he explained. “Our job as broadcasters and platform operators is to meet that challenge and to compete.”

THE BREADTH OF ADVERTISERS ON TV HAS NEVER BEEN GREATER

It was imperative for broadcasters to innovate in their advertising offers – Channel 4 recently gave All 4 viewers an opportunity to buy a bottle of Burberry fragrance monogrammed with an individual’s initials. Either that, or global online operators could end up eating TV’s lunch.

“You can’t ignore the revenue growth of Google and Facebook,” he warned. “I genuinely worry about what business we can have relative to those giants in the next three to five years.”

One way forward was for broadcasters and platforms to collaborate, he suggested. “If we all carry on doing our own thing, very quickly we become subsumed,” Lewis argued.

There have been reports that Sky is planning to get into bed with arch rival Virgin Media. The latter would join AdSmart and, in doing so, add around 3.7 million people to the service.

Targeted advertising gives broadcasters a level of detail concerning the

habits and characteristics of individual viewers and their households (for example, pet ownership or having a south-facing garden) that companies such as Goggle possess routinely. But it can be expensive.

Lewis said: “We can offer some great targeting on All 4 for specific audiences, interest groups and individuals, but that cost-per-thousand might come at a price that most advertisers won’t want to pay.”

All agreed that the growth of smart advertising depended on the availability of a bullet-proof, gold-standard measurement system similar to Barb, the bedrock of UK audience measurement since 1981 (see box on page 18).

Barb’s Project Dovetail, launched in 2015, to integrate digital consumption data with standard viewing figures, had started the ball rolling.

However, the growth of VoD services and social-media platforms was proving challenging for all those involved in media number crunching. Advertisers saw the benefits of addressable advertising – but buying it was still too complex due to the lack of consistent data across media.

“We’re coming from a world where everyone knows the currency for Barb linear advertising yet, in the VoD world, everyone has got their own, separate >

Why TV ads have a bright future

Jamie West, Sky: ‘In five to 10 years, Virgin, YouView, TalkTalk – all of the major platforms in the UK – will have an addressable TV proposition.

‘There will be consistent measurement currencies, all making it easy for broadcasters, and for agencies and advertisers to buy..

‘The future of TV has never been brighter. It is probably the most exciting period we’ve been in, and change is only going to accelerate.’

Chris Ladd, Nationwide: ‘The percentages of revenues from addressable will increase from today’s 3%-4% to around 20%, but the amount of revenue that will be going into TV will be significantly bigger.’

‘This will be driven by new brands using TV and switching from other media such as direct mail.

‘Potentially, there is a rosy future for TV advertising... Audiences will still want those communal moments. Whoever pitched *Gogglebox* to Channel 4 must have thought, ‘This is never going to work’. But, in my view, it’s the greatest marketing tool for TV ever invented.

‘People will still want to watch *Bake Off*, *Sherlock* – and hear what others think about them the next day..

‘If it becomes addressable adverts and content is pre-selected by algorithm, rather than by a human scheduler, I think the magic of television will start to disappear. We need to remember that.’

Is Barb still fit for purpose?

Q Given how much information is available, how long will it be before Barb’s fairly restricted database is not of a high-enough quality for advertisers?

A **Chris Ladd, Nationwide:** If Barb fails to keep up with technology, advertisers will have less confidence in TV and we’ll move our money somewhere else. But, at the moment, the online world doesn’t really have that....

To be fair, if you’re talking about TV viewing 15 years ago to now, Barb has kept up. There have been a few bumps in the road but it is still doing a pretty good job.

A **Jamie West, Sky:** Barb is recognised globally as the leading TV panel. But, probably more importantly, we’re quite fortunate in that, at Sky, we have a number of different viewing panels.

Barb is 5,100 households. We have a panel of 500,000 households and another one we use, which, by the autumn, will be about 6 million. They all tell us that Barb is

accurate. If you are looking at overall aggregated viewing, covering a broad demographic across the country, Barb is spot on....

It is about to award a new contract, so I think you will see another step change in capability. We need to recognise there is some constraint on what they can do but, as a planning and measurement tool for broad audiences and cross-platform consumption when we have Dove-tail fully deployed, it’s spot on.

A **Rich Astley, GroupM:** Clearly, in the world of AdSmart and All 4, we’re talking about fundamentally different data sets. Barb hasn’t been set up, say, to measure the number of hairdressers in Kent.

So, for some of the data sets we’re using, we all need to figure out how to collaborate to find out what is the standard data set we can agree on. It might be Virgin data, Sky data or Channel 4 data or agency data, but we need something that looks like a hybrid solution.



› approach,” said Cook. Advertising effectiveness would remain hard to assess until there was “a standardisation of approach around measurement”.

More work needed to be done on how, for instance, people consumed advertising on mobile devices compared with, say, a Sky box. “You’ve got to make it simple for the advertisers,” stressed Cook.

Lewis acknowledged that, for a lot of people, addressable advertising was confusing. The targeted advertising available on linear TV was restricted to Sky, but targeted advertising on VoD platforms was more widely available. Therefore, “agencies and advertisers are buying segmented audiences across a number of different video publishers”.

Media agency GroupM’s chief product officer for addressable TV, Rich Astley, said that the challenges tended to be more commercial than technical. Nevertheless, set-top boxes were not always sophisticated enough to insert targeted online ads in real time.

Until this changed, big advertisers would remain reluctant to use targeted advertising across multiple platforms and broadcasters. “Yes, linear viewing



Panellists (from left): Rich Astley, GroupM; Simon Cook, YouView; Chris Ladd, Nationwide; Jonathan Lewis, Channel 4; and Jamie West, Sky

QUESTION & ANSWER

Q One of the attractions of watching All 4 is that there are fewer ads than on linear TV. Will that last?

A Jonathan Lewis, Channel 4: We have a restricted ad load, compared with the average of nine minutes you see on linear TV.

Consumer behaviour is changing fundamentally. We are seeing a huge reduction in viewing on browser-based platforms. Tablet-based viewing has flatlined.

All the growth is coming from “TeleVoD”, big-screen VoD on Samsung-connected TVs, on the Sky and Virgin platforms, etc. There will come a point where the advertising experience needs to mirror the linear advertising experience.

If you are a Sky customer you will recognise when you are in a VoD catch-up environment... It’s a very good question and is something that we wrestle with all the time.

Conversely, we do get challenged, both internally and externally, about the relative amount of adverts because people don’t like watching advertising [audience laughter]. It’s the trade-off for being able to access great content.

A Chris Ladd, Nationwide: By downloading that great content on All 4 and on other providers, the audience is more engaged.

And, because you think the ad break is going to be shorter, you’re even more engaged. It pains me to say it but, for an advertiser, we might, at some point, be prepared to pay a bit more.

Paul Hampartsoumian

is declining in certain demographics but that is being compensated by on-demand viewing,” said Astley. “The problem is that on-demand viewing isn’t accurately measured and, in some instances, even measured at all. It’s up to all of us on this panel to fix it and find a solution.”

West said: “The feedback I get from agencies and brands is, ‘How can you make this bigger across more platforms and make it easier for me to buy?’”

One of the issues for media buyers was the different definitions for viewing an ad online and watching one on TV. Lewis claimed that, on TV, a 30-second ad looked at for “95%–98% completion” counted as a single view. Online “an impression” could be as little as “three seconds”, the time it takes to scroll down a Facebook feed on a mobile phone. Ladd thought that the tech companies needed to join Barb and “play by the same rules”.

He said: “Google is trying a bit. I understand that Facebook isn’t really trying at all. Therefore, it becomes difficult to have one standard currency.”

Ladd was surprised that many advertisers appeared to “turn a blind eye” not only to the measurement

issues but also to “the brand-safety issues on YouTube and Facebook”.

The Nationwide executive continued: “It’s difficult for marketing directors to go to their CEOs and say: ‘You know what, I don’t think we should be on YouTube.’ They’ll be at home with their families spending more and more time on YouTube and wondering why my marketing director is not reckoning this.”

Ladd was scathing about YouTube’s failure to ensure that adverts were positioned at a safe distance away from “inappropriate content”, be it of a violent or sexual nature.

“If YouTube was a British video platform... I think that Ofcom would have shut it down immediately.

“Because it is a global company, it seems to operate above the laws of each individual country it operates in.

“It needs to be policed in those individual countries.” ■

‘Is targeted advertising the future of TV?’ was an RTS early-evening event, held at The Hospital Club in London on 24 May. The chair was Anna Dobbie, reporter at M&M Global. The producer was Vicky Fairclough, communications director at GroupM.

Fast food sport

In the world of sport, everything from football to Formula One has had to adapt to stay relevant and attract new fans. But the current trend for alternative, more-condensed versions of traditional sports is taking this strategy to new heights. Tennis now has its Tie Break Tens, golf has Golf-Sixes, netball has Fast5 – the list of cut-down versions of the original games keeps getting longer.

Not surprisingly, television's continual thirst for more content is one of the main drivers of alternative formats. The gold standard is Twenty20 cricket. It began 14 years ago and has revolutionised both the sport and its TV audiences.

Prior to T20 cricket, five-day test matches were the most treasured version of the sport. Nowadays, this limited-overs format reigns supreme. There is even a plan to take it to the Olympic Games in 2024. T20 matches are so popular and so common in the UK that they have been broadcast on channels ranging from those run by the BBC to UKTV's Dave.

The Indian Premier League was given the title "world's hottest sports league" by *Forbes* following its first season in 2008. It features top cricketers playing high-quality, serious sport with an entertaining flavour.

"That's the key, really," says Andrew Preece, executive director of leading sports production company Sun-set+Vine. His company provided the host broadcasting services at last year's T20 World Cup, held in India. "There are some of the best sportsmen and women in the world playing for their livelihoods. These aren't exhibition matches."

However, the fans in the stadium and those watching on TV still enjoy the entertainment, from the fireworks and flags to the commentators chatting with players mid-game.

The alternative format is an obvious fit for a male-skewed channel such as Dave. The UKTV station screened the West Indian T20 league last year and, this spring, showed Tie Break Tens, the first-to-10-points tennis tournament.

For the first time, the Madrid event

TV sport

From tennis to cricket, content-hungry TV channels are increasingly screening cut-down versions of traditional sports, says **Ross Biddiscombe**

featured both a men's and women's competition on the same night. The line-up of stars was headed by Maria Sharapova.

Richard Watsham, director of commissioning for UKTV, says: "This won't be the last short-form sport that we'll carry. TBT was a four-hour show that provided a strong block across prime-time and had some weight to it." The tennis managed a reach of just over 800,000 individuals. This figure compares well with previous sports broadcasts on Dave, such as boxing and darts.

Watsham says that UKTV has had many conversations about new versions of various sports, but TBT could not be ignored: "The risk of taking on a traditional sport and then doing it differently feels nicely aligned with what we're doing on Dave.

"These new formats are trying to appeal to different audiences. There's an entertainment about them that we like."

Sports channels are also talking to rights holders and sports bodies about new formats. Sky Sports has championed "fast-food" versions of golf, boxing and netball.

The recent GolfSixes tournament on Sky Sports was a response to golf's age-old problem of tournaments being both long – a normal professional golf tournament lasts four days – and slow.

A single 18-hole round of golf involving two players can last up to five hours, but the GolfSixes format showcased two-person teams playing knockout matches over six holes. Each contest took little over an hour.

The European Tour Chief Executive Keith Pelley created the event with the help of the promoter's TV partner. He says there is a willingness on both sides to innovate and attract new, younger audiences: "If you don't look to adapt and try different things, then you run the risk of falling behind."

The fixture involved around 16 hours of Sky Sports live coverage over two days, plus a one-hour evening high-lights show on each day. Innovations included a 30-second shot clock on one hole. This gave fans on the course the opportunity to shout along with the countdown. Significantly, some GolfSixes matches were screened for free on Facebook and YouTube.

The European Tour has added three new formats to its tournament schedule in the past six months. Pelley says that the sport and its broadcast partner will study market research from the events and make improvements for next year. He adds: "The good news is that our players bought into things such as the walk-on music and the flag waving, but it was also a new, meaningful competition."

Pelley believes that social-media audiences are crucial. One of the earlier new golf formats, a one-hole, floodlit shoot-out, entitled the Hero Challenge, generated more web traffic than the entire four days of the tournament play that preceded it.

The GolfSixes has been the second-most-popular European Tour event so far this year on social-media platforms.

It is now hard to name a sport that doesn't have an alternative format, and netball's development of Fast5 comes with new rules. There are two fewer players than normal, six-minute (rather than 15-minute) quarters and two-point and three-point shots (normally, each goal is worth one point).

Georgina Faulkner, head of multi-sport at Sky Sports, says that the key for TV coverage is to change things such as on-screen graphics or the tone of the commentary, but still maintain the link to the traditional sport.

"I don't think Fast5, for example, would ever stray too far from the traditional sport," she says.



THESE NEW
FORMATS ARE
TRYING TO APPEAL
TO DIFFERENT
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AN ENTERTAINMENT
ABOUT THEM THAT
WE LIKE

Australian Fast5 netball

It is part of the broadcaster's job to make the new version prosper, she adds: "If a TV channel likes a sport's new format this will, ultimately, be reflected in it wanting to broadcast it and promote it on and off screen. Both the sport's governing body and the broadcaster have a vested interest" [in its success].

But sporting fashions, even for alternative sports, come and go. Sky Sports worked for eight years with the boxing promoter Matchroom to develop the Prizefighter format.

This was a one-night knock-out tournament in which eight boxers fought a maximum of three three-round, three-minute fights.

"Prizefighter came along at a good time for Matchroom and a good time for British boxing," says Adam Smith, executive producer of Sky Sports boxing. "UFC [the US mixed martial arts-focused company Ultimate Fighting Championship] was considered a threat to boxing and we needed something different. It was a real positive for British boxing."

However, although the TV show helped the careers of British boxers – including former Olympic gold medallist Audley Harrison – Matchroom found that the tournament was taking up dates that it needed for championship fights. The televised format ended its run in 2015, but a revival has not been ruled out.

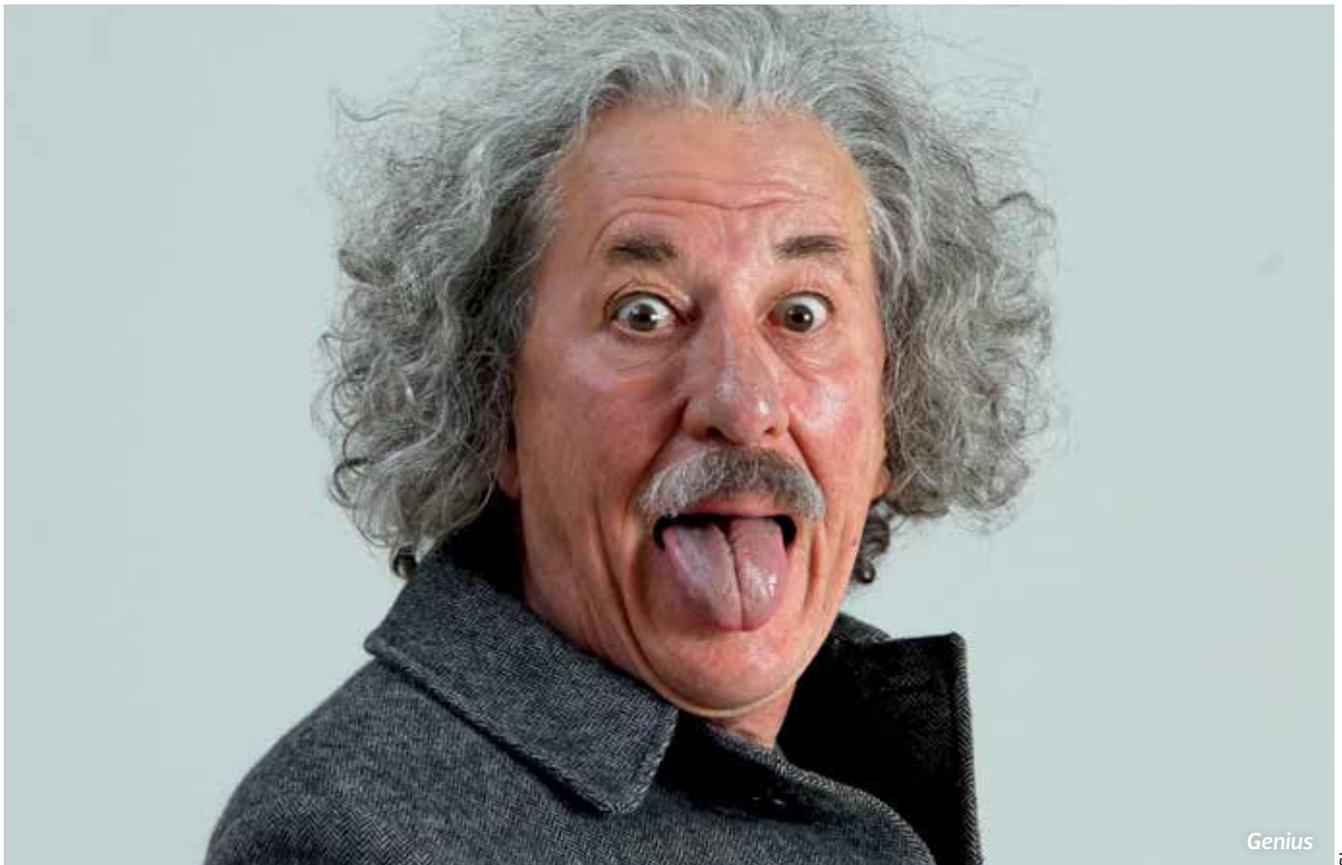
The online popularity of cut-down sports was proved when former Formula One champion Fernando Alonso was test driving on the Indy 500 course in the US over two days last month. This was turned into a televised event on the official IndyCar Facebook and YouTube pages. It registered more than 2 million views.

But, for the majority of the alternative sporting formats, the strategy involves establishing them for the long term. It is, therefore, important to match the innovations to the gravitas of the traditional version.

"At the Tie Break Tens live broadcasts," says Preece at Sunset+Vine, "it is serious sport, not a McEnroe-Nastase exhibition match. We're not making *The X Factor* here."

"We have the DJ on site in the background and other things to keep the crowds entertained."

"But we also have to reflect the ebb and flow of each match, the jeopardy, if you like, because, at the end of the day, there's a big-money prize at stake." ■



Imagination will take you anywhere

Racy, raunchy and risky are three words not usually associated with National Geographic. But the brand's first foray into high-end scripted television, the 10-part *Genius* about the life and times of Albert Einstein, gives viewers an eyeful in its very first episode.

"Monogamy is not natural, it is a construct of religious authority," theorises Geoffrey Rush playing the married physicist, as he pleases a lover, pants around his ankles, pressed up against a blackboard covered in equations.

The series encapsulates the new-look content strategy of National Geographic Partners, a joint venture between the National Geographic Society and 21st Century Fox. Fox has a 73% stake in

Drama

Nat Geo is augmenting the great outdoors with high-end, scripted shows such as *Genius*. Is the move batty or brilliant, wonders **Stuart Kemp**

the partnership, with the board of directors split 50:50 between executives from the two organisations. The Chair is Peter Rice, CEO of Fox Networks Group.

The new venture brings together National Geographic's bouquet of global television channels and its media and consumer-oriented brands, such as National Geographic Magazines and National Geographic Studios, under one umbrella.

Enders Analysis director of TV research Toby Syfret says that times are tough for factual broadcast channels. "They're doing it to sex up their schedule," he says. "The amount of scripted drama made in the past few years has more than doubled, with Netflix and Amazon holding a terrific advantage in the marketplace."

Genius has a whiff of Fox daring mixed

with the scent of expensive, slick television from experienced programme-makers, and offers a taste of the channel's ambitions.

The partners agreed that National Geographic should move away from a schedule heavy on reality shows, such as *Swamp People*, *Rocket City Rednecks* and *Doomsday Preppers*, to programmes for a more upmarket demographic.

Left Bank Pictures CEO Andy Harries says that the move comes at a time when drama is a driving force for established broadcasters and powerful, online, subscription-based operators alike. "Drama remains empowering, but it is challenging to come up with programmes that are going to make some noise in a busy marketplace," he says.

"Look what *Vikings* did for History channel," adds Harries, whose own company produces the Golden Globe-winning show *The Crown* with Sony Pictures Television for Netflix. "The show helped redefine that channel."

National Geographic Global Networks CEO Courtney Monroe says that the switch in strategy is motivated by the desire to build on the National Geographic brand while not attempting to chase audiences from competitors such as History or Discovery. "It is about pursuing a programming strategy that is built, first and foremost, on quality and distinctiveness and not on quantity and a ton of hours," she says. "We're spending a lot more money against fewer overall hours."

Monroe knows a thing or two about high-end, event television, having arrived at the US network six years ago fresh from 13 years in marketing at HBO.

Harries notes that the move into scripted drama should broaden the appeal of National Geographic's television channels. "Fox is a savvy business operator and it will have worked on the numbers and projections and strategy for a while," he says.

Monroe declines to reveal an exact figure for her scripted drama war chest. But she says that reported sums of \$400m to make 150 hours are "a little on the high side".

What cannot be played down is the risk on betting big on fewer shows for the bouquet of channels.

"They need to consider the move carefully," suggests Syfret. "It is a good thing to try but it is by no means certain that it will be a success."

Genius was positioned as an event series when it premiered globally on

25 April. It aims to deliver an insight into both the great scientist's work and his tumultuous private life.

The series is the first in what will be a triptych of dramatic portraits, with two further 10-part seasons on yet-to-be-revealed subjects already green-lit.

From now on, the network will put original programming front and centre, says Monroe. This will run alongside "a ton of amazing library content", plus shows picked from National Geographic's "treasure trove of quality international content".

"Our aim is to become the world's leading destination for premium con-

GENIUS ALSO SHOUTS OUT TO HOLLYWOOD AND BEYOND THAT THERE'S ANOTHER DRAMA PLAYER IN TOWN LOOKING FOR PARTNERS

tent around science, adventure, exploration and the exploration of ideas," says Monroe. "Scripted is a premium way to attract audiences and advertisers." Some 60% of US viewers for the first episode of *Genius* were new to the National Geographic channel, she says.

Harries comments that it is a "narrow channel and they're trying to supersize it with drama". The move is certainly ballsy in a global market place awash with quality television and well-healed backers all vying for eyeballs and advertising revenue.

Glossy and expensive, *Genius* also shouts out to Hollywood and beyond that there's another drama player in town looking for partners. One that is ready to vie with rival networks, the established online giants Netflix and Amazon, and with the upstart subscription streaming service YouTube Red.

Genius marks Oscar-winning filmmaker Ron Howard's debut in scripted drama series, boasts movie production values and has a glittering cast led by Rush.

Among its heavyweight backers are Hollywood's very own brains trust,

Imagine Entertainment, run by Howard and Brian Grazer, and Fox 21 Television Studios.

"[Howard and Grazer] are intimately familiar with our ambitious new strategy and were really the first big Hollywood creative talent to come on board with us," says Monroe.

National Geographic had already worked with Imagine on a scripted documentary hybrid show, *Mars*, which aired globally last autumn. A second visit to *Mars* is due next year.

Such hybrid shows are not everyone's cup of tea. One US critic described *Mars* as "a weird attempt to blend documentary and sci-fi" that resulted in "an exquisite botch of both".

Monroe says that scripted commissions will not necessarily be period pieces. *The Long Road Home* – based on former ABC journalist Martha Radatz's best-selling book about a US army unit in Sadr City, Iraq, in 2004 – is now in production.

The new strategy is providing opportunities for British programme-makers. With sterling weak and generous tax breaks for big-budget television, the UK is well placed to benefit.

Nat Geo is also partnering with Nutopia, the company founded and run by former BBC Two controller and Discovery Networks chief Jane Root, to make *One Strange Rock* with film-maker Darren Aronofsky. Billed as *Planet Earth* meets *Cosmos* meets *Gravity*, the 10-part scripted documentary hybrid draws on natural history and earth science, and promises to shoot some of its material in space.

The primary home for the scripted content is National Geographic's international channels. Monroe works closely with the Fox Networks Group in Europe, Africa, Latin America and Asia: Fox looks after the multi-territory network, which reaches over 730 million people across 171 countries and broadcasts in 45 languages. The business model rests on a mix of advertising revenue and subscription fees.

In the UK, *Genius* debuted on Sky Atlantic and the National Geographic channel simultaneously.

"It makes sense for a network majority owned by Fox to put it on Sky Atlantic in the UK to promote it and help drive people back to National Geographic's channels," observes Syfret.

It is also the first empirical test of whether Nat Geo's theory about Einstein turns out to be a relatively successful one. ■



Content

Mental health was once taboo for much of the TV schedule. Now even CBeebies is tackling the subject, discovers
Sanya Burgess

Breaking the silence

Bipolar disorder and coping with death are two topics not usually associated with children's television. Broadcasters, however, have woken up to their responsibility to tackle mental-health issues, and even kids' television is rising to the challenge.

Cheryl Taylor, controller of CBBC, which caters for children aged 6-12, believes that social media has reinforced the need for mental-health lessons because many children lie about their age to create social-media profiles long before they turn 13.

"We take [mental health] very seriously and we are always looking for ways to reflect the world that kids are in," she says.

CBBC shows such as *My Life*, *Newsround* and *The Dumping Ground* have

tackled issues ranging from living with autism to having anger problems and being bullied. They have also looked at children coping with parents suffering from bipolar disorder or grandparents who have Alzheimer's.

One indication of children's pressing need for information and support is the dramatic rise in self-harming over the past decade: the number of girls treated as inpatients after cutting themselves has risen by 285% since 2005, according to NHS figures.

CBeebies, CBBC's preschool sister channel, has also engaged in improving mental-health awareness. "At CBeebies, we're all about creating happy, confident and resilient children – the adults of the future – and our hope is that every child will see something of their lives reflected in our content," says the channel's controller, Kay Benbow.

CBeebies has moved into drama and observational documentary in recent years. One of its shows, the Bafta-winning *Topsy and Tim*, confronted the topic of death when the family's pet dog passed away.

Another, the upcoming series *Apple Tree House*, set on an urban estate, deals with moving house and other potentially stressful childhood situations.

"It's very empowering for children," argues Benbow. "It may not be something they experience, but they can relate to it because it's in a family situation. They can see how it was dealt with and that's incredibly helpful." She adds that a series focusing on feelings is in the pipeline.

Mental health is a sensitive and difficult subject: Netflix's *13 Reasons Why* attracted headlines around the world earlier this year for its controversial



13 Reasons Why

Netflix

very vulnerable audience when you're dealing with the topic of suicide.

"Their behaviour is much more spontaneous and they don't yet have that full emotional maturity to understand that you can actually work through your problems and come out the other end. Also – believe it or not – young people don't actually appreciate the permanency of suicide.

"Significant research has been carried out across the world over the past five decades that links a certain type of depiction of suicide and an increase in suicide rates.... They are suicides that wouldn't otherwise happen."

Earlier this month, Channel 4's *Hollyoaks* began a storyline following Scott, a gregarious and camp character who had been hiding increasing feelings of depression following a number of difficult events in his life.

He attempts suicide but survives. The storyline follows Scott's long journey of trying to improve his mental health, as well as exploring the impact of the suicide attempt on family members. Keenly aware of the risks of broadcasting a suicide narrative, every line of these episodes was approved by Mind and Samaritans for viewer safety.

Later this year, *Hollyoaks* will also introduce the story of a schoolgirl beginning to self-harm. "If we can talk about it and normalise it and give people the words and language to start discussing it with their friends and family, I think that's a really good and positive thing," says Kevin Rundle, the story consultant. He has been contacted by viewers in the past who have gained the courage to seek help after connecting with a *Hollyoaks* storyline.

A survey by Mind last year found that 25% of respondents who already had mental-health problems were prompted to seek help by TV storylines involving a character with a mental-health problem.

TV content with these themes is not restricted to younger viewers. ITV's *Broadchurch* attracted an audience of 8.4 million for the apparent suicide of the character Mark Latimer, at the end of a long storyline of grief and depression following the loss of his son. And more than 5.9 million people watched the first episode of *The A Word*, a BBC drama that followed a family who learnt how to adapt when the son was diagnosed with autism. In April, 1 million people watched Rory Bremner speak openly about his experience of having ADHD for BBC's *Horizon*.

Upcoming programmes include Netflix's film *To the Bone* (about an anorexic woman), Channel 4 and Netflix's series *Kiss Me First* (which deals with suicide and internet addiction) and the BBC and ITV documentaries on Diana, Princess of Wales this summer. The last two will feature princes William and Harry opening up about their grief over their mother's sudden death.

The BBC commissioned a season on mental health this year, including a comedic documentary *Happy Man*, which explored male identity, mental health and body image. "I guess I was just really bored by the mainstream mental-health conversation so far on TV," says Jack Rooke, 23, the comedian and campaigner who presented the programme.

He adds: "As a long-term ambassador for mental-health charity CALM, and as someone who has lost a friend to depression, I just felt that everything I watched about mental health was saturated with calls for people to open up and talk and that was as far as the conversation went.

"Sadly, in some areas of this country there isn't the infrastructure for people to easily access talking therapies and counsellors without having to wait months for help.

"I wanted to make something that was inspired by other solutions, outside of talking and outside of the NHS, that young men, in particular, can start doing to improve their well-being – and not increase the number of suicides. It is the single biggest killer of young men."

One in four people in the UK experience a mental-health problem at some point in their lives. Ana Brenikov, 25, a Londoner who has lived with anxiety throughout her twenties, says that broadcasters have made an impact on her life by tackling these difficult issues.

"I wept and wept and wept watching *13 Reasons Why*," she says. "I didn't cry just because it moved me, but watching someone hurting when you're hurting inside yourself can help.

"My friends were all speaking about the show, and that discussion gave me a platform to share my experiences."

Her history is not an isolated one and it is important that broadcasters maintain this momentum if they are to contribute to tackling this crisis. ■

Anyone can contact Samaritans. Whatever you are going through, call for free at any time from any phone on 116 123, email jo@samaritans.org or visit www.samaritans.org.

portrayal of teenage depression, including a graphic suicide scene.

Applauded by Generation Z and Millennials for dealing frankly with the crisis in youth mental health, it was criticised by some health experts and schools as an irresponsible glorification of suicide.

A Netflix spokesman defended the show, arguing that *13 Reasons Why* opened up a dialogue and that Netflix "worked with mental-health experts to show how these issues impact teens in real and dramatic ways".

The streaming service gave the show an 18 rating, added explicit warnings and made information resources available to viewers.

However, Lorna Fraser, a media advisor for the mental-health charity Samaritans, counters that "young people are far more at risk.... They are a



The people behind the

When California-based HBO drama *Big Little Lies* hit screens earlier this year, it wasn't the A-list cast or the aspirational architecture that got people talking. The standout star of the series was its soundtrack, developed by director Jean-Marc Vallée and music supervisor Sue Jacobs.

The soul-inflected soundtrack is central to the series. It begins with Michael Kiwanuka's *Cold Little Heart* playing over views of the Pacific Coast Highway and climaxes in the series finale, where Elvis's back catalogue is weaponised in the power struggle between parents.

Vallée, who told *Variety* that he was "a frustrated DJ who's making films", uses music as a vehicle for building characters. He supplies playlists to his actors to help them to explore their character's psyche.

Content

A standout soundtrack can define a TV show, hears **Pippa Shawley**

In *Big Little Lies*, the partnership with music seeps into the series, reflecting the moods of the protagonists. The anthem for rape victim Jane (Shailene Woodley) is Martha Wainwright's vitriolic *Bloody Mother Fucking Asshole*.

Internet memes have taken flight about the scene where uptight Madeline (Reese Witherspoon) asks her ex-husband's free-spirited partner Bonnie (Zoë Kravitz) whether the song she's playing is by Adele. In fact, it's Sade's *Cherish the Day* and serves to emphasise the difference between the two women.

It is no surprise that the carefully curated soundtrack, featuring everyone from Frank Ocean and Alabama Shakes

to Jefferson Airplane and The Temptations, has made an impact in the charts and on streaming services.

The official soundtrack album, which is limited to 14 tracks, peaked at number 7 and 4 in the UK and US soundtrack charts, respectively. One unofficial Spotify playlist featuring all the songs used in the show has more than 200,000 followers.

With dozens of dramas vying for attention, this is another way for a series to find viewers, but we shouldn't expect every show to deliver a killer soundtrack.

"People look at [*Big Little Lies*] as a benchmark," says music supervisor Matt Biffa, who has worked across television and film productions, including *Fresh Meat*, *Lovesick* and *Harry Potter*. "We're expected to pull that kind of thing off but with a quarter of the budget [in the UK]," he sighs.

Trying to obtain clearance for one song by an up-and-coming US artist can easily wipe out half of the total

Big Little Lies



Sky

playlists

budget for music. Music supervisors have to be creative about the music they source, while managing the expectations of directors and production teams.

Ideally, a music supervisor should come on board when scripts are being developed. "You've got lots of time to think about the characters, go through the scripts, and gently tell everybody that it is not going to be possible to clear the Led Zeppelin song that's written in," explains Biffa.

Until recently, music supervisors tended to use music covered by a blanket licence agreement, paid for by a broadcaster or a large independent. This meant that licences didn't need to be negotiated every time someone wanted to use a song.

That is changing now, says Biffa, as co-productions have become TV drama's default position. Consequently, songs must be cleared directly with artists and publishers. That can add a lot of pressure and force music departments to be more resourceful.

"Necessity is the mother of invention," says Biffa. When budgets won't allow for chart toppers or old standards, music supervisors look to less-established artists with lower fees.

This approach has led to several shows gaining a reputation for breaking new talent, as digital technologies such as Shazam allow viewers to identify and buy tracks during transmission.

"Music is playing an increasingly important role within TV, in particular drama, but across [all] the genres," says music supervisor and president of the UK & European Guild of Music Supervisors Iain Cooke.

"Broadcasters and production companies are also acknowledging how important a role it can play, particularly when it comes to creating a buzz around a series," he adds. Social-media interest in a show's soundtrack can drive more people to tune in.

Cooke's guild was set up earlier this year to promote the role of music supervisors, and to promote best practice in the field. The job involves what Cooke calls a "unique skillset", requiring creative and talented people who can source the right music, but also be "hyper-organised and have almost paralegal skills" when it comes to negotiating licences.

This symbiotic relationship between the television and music industries means that music supervisors can find themselves wearing several hats.

"We're a little bit like A+R people in that we're coming across these new artists and then deciding that some of them are good enough to go up on this particular platform. From there, their careers can sometimes flourish if they're lucky," says Biffa.

Teen drama *The OC* was a pioneer in this area. It brought underexposed indie bands to a more mainstream audience. Early scripts, featuring music from creator Josh Schwartz's iPod, used the relative obscurity of bands such as Death Cab for Cutie and The Killers to stress protagonist Seth Cohen's geeky otherness. More established acts got in on the publicity later, with The Beastie Boys and Beck debuting new music on *The OC*.

In total, six "mixes" from the show were released, with many of them peaking in the Billboard 200 charts.

On this side of the pond, *Made in Chelsea* has become a source of must-stream playlists. Its title music brought French electronic group M83 to popular attention. Since then, it's gone on to

showcase other under-the-radar musicians, including Peace and Wolf Alice.

To celebrate the show's relationship with upcoming bands, in 2013, E4 held a series of gigs, wittily called *Played in Chelsea*, featuring artists who had appeared on *Made in Chelsea* soundtracks.

While less-established artists fit well in youth-skewing productions, big US dramas have made adult audiences here more receptive to less familiar tracks. "Shows such as *Breaking Bad* have opened audiences up to unknown, or obscure, material," says Biffa. "That does make things more interesting for a music supervisor. We're not just fulfilling the same function as a *Now [That's What I Call Music]* album."

Cooke agrees: "The advent of HBO set the benchmark so high with its use of music, it has really made production companies over here re-examine their music policies and budgets."

Music supervisors carefully plan their budgets, prioritising tracks used in the credits, as well as featured moments and montages where the music is really noticed. Those on a tight budget, suggests Cooke, have to "box clever with more background moments". This can involve using music from self-produced artists or the output of music libraries, such as Audio Network, to make savings to support investment elsewhere.

Where songs covered by the blanket agreement would once have been replaced for international markets, licences are being agreed individually so that they can travel abroad.

"Production companies, in particular, don't want to deliver what would be deemed a substandard version, particularly to the US market," Cooke continues.

With the move away from blanket agreements, music supervisors are gaining greater responsibilities, something that the industry is keen to talk up. This year, the Emmy awards will recognise music supervisors for the first time. Meanwhile, the UK & European Guild of Music Supervisors is hoping to engage and nurture a new generation. It is working with directors, writers and producers to enhance their understanding of the challenges and possibilities that go with the role.

For audiences, the growing influence of the music department can only be a good thing. Shows such as *Breaking Bad* and *Big Little Lies* not only offer visual entertainment, but also serve up ready-made playlists for road trips through New Mexico or down Route 101. ■

OUR FRIEND IN KIEV

The daily commute from hotel to venue offered us tantalising glimpses of an ancient Slavic city far bigger than I had imagined it would be. Golden onion domes, flowering chestnut trees and bustling streets framed by classical, Soviet-era and modern buildings.

Our UK delegation coach often drove past the giant metal arch adorned with this year's Eurovision Song Contest slogan, "Celebrate diversity", where the job of painting it in the rainbow colours of the LGBT flag had been abandoned halfway through following some resistance.

If the Eurovision contest didn't exist, and someone tried pitching it to a commissioner today, the idea of a televised international song-writing competition involving 42 countries, featuring unknown artists and unknown hosts, made by an unknown production team, lasting three-and-a-half hours (or more) and set in a country at odds with its superpower neighbour... would never materialise. You can predict the objections: "We need A-list presenters"; "No one watches music performance shows"; "Wouldn't it work better as a 90?"

And, yet, this 62-year-old institution is now the most successful, live, non-sporting event in the world. The Eurovision Song Contest has a global TV reach of 200 million viewers.

In the UK, more than 7 million people watched live on BBC One until 11:30pm. Not only do journalists and fans love reacting to every twist and turn of the build-up, but as many as 70,000 tweets were sent every minute during the grand finale as

Guy Freeman
reports from deep
inside the Eurovision
bubble and hopes
for greater tolerance
in Ukraine



viewers were, in equal measure, amazed, amused and animated.

Well over 40% of the competition's audience was aged 16 to 34 and we know it is far more diverse than average. By every measure, Eurovision is a huge success.

You have to admire our televisionary predecessors who, back in the 1950s, against the backdrop of the Cold War, hit upon the idea. Only hindsight tells us that it was a risk worth taking. I have nothing but respect for those who believed in it at the time and were able to persuade the right decision-makers to take the plunge.

I also have huge respect for Lucie Jones, the brilliant performer of this year's UK entry, on whose shoulders

the hopes and dreams of UK Eurovision fans were resting. Having already survived a live UK selection show and having won public and jury votes, we knew that she was made of strong stuff.

Nothing, though, can quite prepare anyone for the intensity of the weird and wonderful Eurovision "bubble". Ten consecutive days of rehearsals, press activity, semi-final broadcasts and dress rehearsals can take their toll on the faint-hearted, but Lucie handled it flawlessly. Her three minutes in the Eurospotlight of the grand finale were a tour de force that gave us huge pride and our best result in six years.

Despite the mesmerising temptations of a yodelling rap act, a man singing a duet with himself and a saxophoned earworm, ultimately, it was the simplest of songs, in the simplest of settings, that charmed the juries and public voters alike.

The success of Salvador Sobral's *Amar Pelos Dois* brought an end to Portugal's 53-year wait for Eurovision victory. Celebrations in Lisbon were no doubt under way even as we and the other delegations headed back to our hotels one last time, crossing the bridge back to the centre of Kiev – and back to reality.

Judith Gough, the British ambassador to Ukraine, was very kindly waiting to greet us at the hotel and to thank Lucie for flying the flag so successfully.

Happily, she was also able to report that there had been no problematic issues for the hundreds of British fans who'd travelled to Kiev for the week. A good result all round.

Maybe, one day, someone will be able to finish painting that rainbow.

Guy Freeman is BBC Studios' editor, formats and special events.

UKTV Gold's egg-themed advertising campaign promoted its shows during Easter 2017



UKTV

Animate your CV

RTS Futures

The visual effects and animation sector offers many outlets for designers' creativity, says **Matthew Bell**

The latest visual effects and animation techniques were on show at the Curzon Soho when the central London cinema hosted an RTS Futures event at the end of May.

A panel of VFX and animation industry experts – quizzed by Luke Franks, the presenter of weekend CITV show *Scrambled!* – were on hand to screen and talk about their work. They also offered advice on how to break into and progress in the industry.

“As creatives, we’re all striving to come up with original, brilliant ideas and then realise them in animation,” explained UKTV head of design Peter Allinson.

The UK broadcaster, whose channels include Gold and Dave, launched its own agency nearly two years ago to handle the creative work of all UKTV shows.

“We are in an industry where creative teams are being brought in-house pretty much across the board,” added Allinson. Among others, the BBC, ITV and Channel 4 all now have their own in-house agencies.

“In terms of client work, things are good at the moment,” reckoned Alex

Donne-Johnson, creative director at Dazzle Ship. “We have some pretty cool projects, which you can really get into and get lost in the creative stuff.”

Donne-Johnson admitted, however, that VFX work is time-consuming: “It can lead to a lot of late nights.”

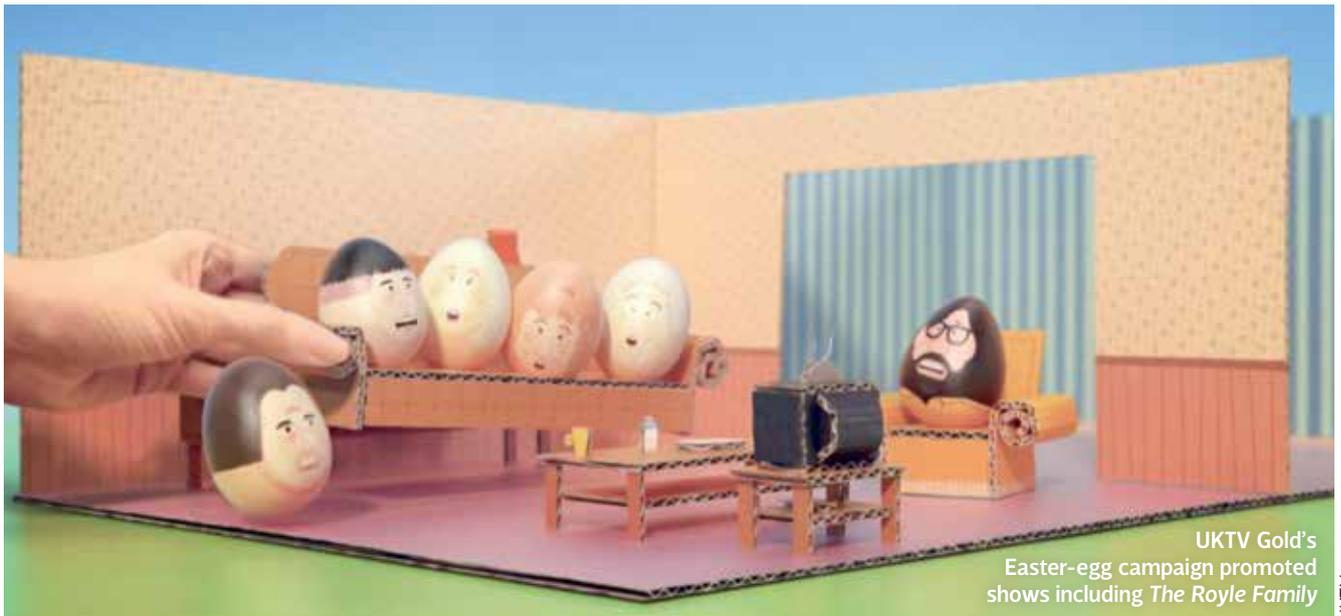
“I love what I do, the people I work with and the international community I’m part of,” said Lindsay Watson, the Canadian-born founder of Canuk Productions, a consultancy specialising in children’s animation. “It’s a fantastic career.”

She had, however, seen “a lot of sexism at first hand” in the industry. Just 30% of the UK’s animation and VFX community is female, she added, with “most women working in production or administration – not in technical or creative roles”.

Offering advice to an audience of mostly young people keen to build careers in animation and VFX, Allinson said: “A strong portfolio is a given.”

When interviewing job applicants, he said he always asked them how they generate and develop ideas: “In a way, I find the [process] more interesting than the final outcome.”

Allinson advised applicants to bring “something physical” with them >



UKTV Gold's Easter-egg campaign promoted shows including *The Royle Family*

UKTV

QUESTION & ANSWER

Q What should you know about a company before you go to an interview?

A Peter Allinson: I don't expect people to come into an interview and understand exactly what we do day to day... but my first question is, "What do you know about UKTV?" If they really want the job, they will have done their homework and come to the interview prepared.

A Alex Donne-Johnson: A company's Instagram or Facebook pages can give you an insight into its culture. It might show just the best bits, but it [will help].

Q What do you like to see in a portfolio?

A Allinson: One recent interviewee who stood out – and he got the job – produced a book with proper binding. It almost looked like something you could buy in a shop. Creating a book with your sketches and designs looks professional.

Q Are old-fashioned skills still needed in the industry?

A Allinson: You need to invest in [Adobe VFX software] After

Effects, [Maxon 3D animation software] and Cinema 4D and learn those, but never lose your raw, practical talents."

Q Do you approve of free creative pitches or should the client pay?

A Allinson: Free pitching is wrong in this industry – the amount of work you put into pitching is [huge]. If you don't get that job it's incredibly disheartening."

A Lindsay Watson: There's a ratio – about one in 10 pitches are successful in animation... As a freelancer, you could find out what the budget is, whether the company has any money behind it and how serious it is about the project. There's a lot you can do to assess [the worth of] projects."

A Allinson: Be careful about who you're pitching to – there are occasions when you pitch, don't get the job and then find that your idea has been ripped off... There are companies that use pitches as a way of building ideas for them to proceed with, which is awful.

A Donne-Johnson: It's become more of a problem in recent years... but there is a time and a place for free pitches... if a job comes along and you know the variables and think it's worth it, then sometimes you've got to pitch for free.

› such as a printed storyboard, rather than simply relying on screen-based work. "That will set you apart from everyone else."

Websites, too, can help to sell a young designer. "You need a shop window to show what you can do," said Allinson. "Cut a good showreel [but] be inventive with your choice of track. There are certain tracks that are used over and over again on showreels and it becomes incredibly repetitive. I stop looking at the work; I'm just hearing that same song again."

His other advice was to "stay in school" – work experience, although valuable, was not as important as gaining qualifications. "It's not just a line on a CV – those years of [studying] with your creative peers and learning the craft will really pay off in the future," he argued. "Although we're discussing visual effects and motion graphics tonight, having a graphic design background is really important. You need to be able to communicate through design."

Donne-Johnson agreed that "an understanding of design is really important – that really sets you apart". The creative director went on to rail against the modern trend of advertising for "rock-star designers" to work on "big brands". He said that VFX and motion graphics should be about "enjoying the work" and "not about adding a brand to your portfolio". ■

'VFX and animation: Meet the experts' was held at the Curzon Soho in central London on 23 May, and produced by Alex Wootten and Tara Magan.

Some of the on-screen branding that accompanied the 2016 relaunch of UKTV's Watch channel as W



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**SOPHIE ELLIS-BEXTOR
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CODE BLACK
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UKTV



Meet the experts

Alex Donne-Jonson



Philip Lewis

Alex Donne-Jonson began his working life in web design and making flyers for clubs. His first VFX work was on a Bhangra music video: 'It was terrible – I never show it to anyone.'

What he described as his first 'proper industry job' was working on the James Bond gaming franchise. He currently works for motion-design studio Dazzle Ship.

Lindsay Watson moved to the UK from Canada a decade ago and worked for children's distributor Cake Entertainment.

'I had graduated from art school and knew nothing about the business of animation,' she said. 'At Cake, I learned about buying and selling animated TV series, development, scripting and contracts.'

Watson moved to the musical theatre company Cameron Mackintosh as head of digital, and then to work for the International VFX Hub at Bournemouth University. She founded Canuk Productions in 2013.

Peter Allinson freelanced for the BBC after completing an MA in graphic design and communication, before moving to a design agency, Dunning Penney Jones, which specialised in TV channel branding.

He then worked in post-production at Steam Motion and Sound on TV commercials for Cameron Mackintosh's stage shows. 'It was stressful, incredibly challenging but very rewarding,' he recalled. Allinson joined UKTV's in-house creative team in 2015.

Acclaim for Wan and Big Yin

Comedy legend Billy Connolly has received the RTS Scotland Award for his outstanding contribution to television in Scotland.

Connolly, who was unable to attend the Glasgow ceremony in May, said in his acceptance speech from the US: "I owe everything to Bill Tennent from Scottish Television who put me on his show every time he couldn't find another guest."

The RTS Scotland Awards were held at Óran Mór in the city, and hosted by STV presenter Jennifer Reoch and stand-up comedian and radio presenter Des Clarke.

Gok Wan was named On-Screen Personality of the Year for Channel 4 series *Gok's Fill Your House for Free*. The series, which was produced by Raise the Roof Productions, also won the Daytime Award.

"Warm, knowledgeable and believable presenter, Gok Wan drove the team of experts to turn trash into treasure – a genuinely inspirational programme," said the RTS judges.

Louise Lockwood also took home two awards: Director of the Year and the Professional Excellence (Craft) Camera award for her work on *Fair Isle: Living on the Edge* (BBC Studios Pacific Quay Productions for BBC One Scotland/BBC Four).

It was described by the judges as "a searingly honest portrayal of island life".

In *Plain Sight*, a three-part series for ITV based on Lanarkshire detective William Muncie's quest to bring to justice Scottish killer Peter Manuel, took the Drama



Paul Reich Photography

award. The World Productions and Finlaggan Films production, said the judges, offered viewers a "powerful lead in Douglas Henshall's Muncie and a tour de force performance from Martin Compston as Manuel".

The Young Journalist of the Year, a new award in memory of former BBC Scotland head of news George Sinclair, went to Firecrest Films' Kevin Anderson for his work on Channel 4's *Dispatches*. He received a prize of £1,000 from the George Sinclair Charitable Trust.

In the News and Current

Affairs categories, *Reporting Scotland* (BBC Scotland) won the News Programme award, while *Scotland and the Battle for Britain* (STV Productions for BBC Two) took the Current Affairs prize.

My Baby, Psychosis and Me (Matchlight/Sprout Pictures for BBC One) received the Documentary and Specialist Factual award. Matchlight also won the Documentary and Specialist Factual – History award for *Scotland and the Klan* (BBC Scotland). This programme examined the links between racism in today's Deep South and the

Scottish settlers who first occupied the region.

The Documentary and Specialist Factual – Arts award went to *The Secret Life of Sue Townsend (Aged 68½)*, which was produced by BBC Studios Pacific Quay Productions for BBC Two, while *Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence* (IWC for A+E) picked up the Factual Entertainment and Features award.

BBC Studios Scotland's *Two Doors Down* won the Comedy award and BBC Scotland Children's took the Children's award for CBBC's *All Over the Workplace – Politics*.

In the Sport category, the judges made two awards: to BBC Scotland for the documentary *Scotland's Game*; and for Sky Sports' coverage of the 2016 Scottish Cup final.

Kahl Henderson from Savalas won Professional Excellence (Craft) – Sound for *The Secret Agent* (World Productions for BBC One); Jonathan Seal took Professional Excellence (Craft) Post Production – Editing for *The Marvellous World of Roald Dahl* (BBC Studios Pacific Quay Productions for BBC Two); and Eric Romero secured the Student Television award for his short film *Lethe*.

Glasgow animation and motion graphics studio Playdead won two awards: Post Production – Graphics and Titling for BBC Bitesize's *Elements of Art & Design*; and Short-Form Content, with *American Dream* for Wondros.

QTV Sports collected the Innovation award for *The Homeless World Cup*, while the Animation and VFX award went to *Dawn of War III* (Axis Animations for YouTube).

Matthew Bell

North West showcases McGovern drama



Broken

BBC

RTS North West previewed Jimmy McGovern's new BBC One drama in May. The writer and key members of the production team discussed the making of the programme after a screening of the first episode.

Broken stars Sean Bean as a troubled priest working in an impoverished community.

Like McGovern's previous work, including the RTS award-winning *Cracker* and *The Street*, the drama features memorable characters.

Colin McKeown – whose indie, LA Productions, made *Broken* – told the event at the Lowry, Salford, that the

writer had a gift for creating stories with truthful characters. "Jimmy walks in everybody's shoes," he said.

At the event, McGovern said that he aspires to "make even the smallest character a real person, with their own hopes and dreams".

"Be each character's ideal barrister," McGovern told *Television* after the event. "Argue their case, and don't be frightened to attack your case either. Because, if you're defending a truth or a cause – unless there's something wrong with it – you will win."

McGovern is known for his hard-hitting content, but he said that he doesn't try to be

political: "If there are inferences to be made [from my writing], the audience will make them."

The writer, who grew up in a Catholic family, explained that *Broken* does not take its name from the phrase "broken Britain", but "from the breaking of the Eucharist".

Parish priest Father Denis Blackledge, the show's religious adviser, discussed the thinking behind the drama: "Jesus's body was broken to save us. None of us can be forgiven unless we are broken.

"Father Michael [Bean's character] can help people in their brokenness only

because he is stronger by being broken himself."

Broken is not the first time that McGovern has tried to write about a priest in torment. Three decades ago, he pitched a 10-part TV series based on the commandments and then a seven-part series on the deadly sins. He also wrote the screenplay to Antonia Bird's 1994 film, *Priest*.

McGovern's persistence has been rewarded and *Broken* began its six-part run at the end of May. To get a passion piece on screen, he advised: "You don't have to be better than anybody else – you've just got to work harder."

Carole Solazzo

'Little buzz' at Vegas show

■ A panel of technology experts, headed by media scientist Bruce Devlin, cast their eyes over Las Vegas's annual trade show for broadcasters, NAB, at an RTS Thames Valley event in May.

With little to differentiate it from last year, April's NAB was reckoned to have generated little buzz. The IP revolution is

in full swing but old news, argued the panellists. They added that Ultra-HD seems to be driven by marketing whims rather than engineering principles.

IP distribution and workflow efficiencies dominated the discussion, with panel members suggesting that adaptability and progressive

attitudes were the most important qualities in TV engineering.

The panellists hotly debated monetisation and the threat to traditional broadcasting from newcomers such as Amazon and Netflix. Data analysis and viewer feedback through social media were identified

as key factors in targeting content and advertising, but it was argued that linear transmission is holding firm.

High-budget productions from the likes of Netflix were welcomed, but their longevity was questioned due to the short-term business models they employed.

The panel also applauded the IP Showcase at the Las Vegas show for its demonstrations of technical excellence and interoperability.

Tony Orme

Festival celebrates youth film

The film-making skills of nearly 100 young people were celebrated at the Young Peoples' Media Festival, which was held at the University of Sunderland's David Puttnam Media Centre in May.

At a ceremony hosted by Chris Jackson, presenter of BBC One's *Inside Out North East & Cumbria*, the winning teams received trophies and certificates from RTS North East and the Border.

The senior winners were Hartlepool Sixth Form College's Ely King, who took the Entertainment award for *Goner*, and Stratford-upon-Avon College's Alex Eves, whose film, *Bloom*, won the Drama prize.

In the Factual category, Stockton Sixth Form College students Chloe Rowe, Marty Murphy, Robert Jones, Maryam Murphy, Alana Whenary, Craig Buttery and Tyler Verrill received an RTS commendation certificate for *Up and Coming*.

The professionally supported category is open to entries from students on courses run for young people, who get support from professionals in the industry. This year there was a significant increase in the number

of entries submitted in this category.

Tyneside Cinema collected the Drama prize for *Friends Online* by Katie Hamilton, Abi Featherstone, Shervin Dibavar, Manny Prime, Samuel Bilcliffe and Amy Jobe. The cinema was also commended in the Factual category for *Out*, which was created by Lauren McCaughey, Issy De'Ath, Jack Abernethy and Kaia Allen. This category was won by Northern Stars with *Ashleigh*, which was made by Francesca Colpitts-Swaby, Lottie Riley, Sophie Paul, Aniyra Chan, Samuel Bilcliffe and Amy Jobe.

Callum Smith, Kieron Dawes, Eddy Watson and Brad Mattinson from Carlisle College were commended in the Entertainment category for *POLISH*.

"Film, television and digital content production are part of the fastest-growing sector of the UK economy and it is important that young people recognise the opportunities ahead for creative careers.

Bringing together the students of the future with the professionals of the present was a real privilege," said Graeme Thompson, Chair of the RTS Education Committee and pro vice-chancellor at the University of Sunderland.

The Young Peoples' Media Festival has been running for more than two decades and celebrates work from students, schools and colleges. At the event, festival

director Tony Edwards announced that he would be stepping down, with his deputy, Victoria Griffin, set to take over. "It has been a rewarding seven years, during which I have witnessed so much talent in young people," he said.

The University of Sunderland, Gateshead College, Teesside University, Northumbria University and the RTS sponsored the event. **Matthew Bell**



Hartlepool Sixth Form College students

2 Tone Creative Photography

ONLINE at the RTS

■ When Theresa May called the snap general election, broadcasters had just days to prepare – normally, it would take them weeks to organise coverage. Ed Gove and Kate Holman from the RTS digital team spent the weeks leading up to the election keeping tabs on the team behind Sky News's coverage, as it reported from around the country.

Those who followed Sky's coverage will be familiar with roving reporter Lewis Goodall, as he drove the Lewis Lorry (which was, in fact, a van) around the UK. He explains why it is important to get away from Westminster and breaks down some of the general trends from this year's polling (www.rts.org.uk/LewisGoodall).

■ Rich Evans, Sky News social media and digital partnerships chief, spoke to us about how his team shares and sources news via social media channels. While trending topics can highlight what's popular on social platforms, Evans warned that this doesn't necessarily reflect the popular mood (www.rts.org.uk/RichEvans).

■ As he prepares to direct the live show on 8 June, election night itself, Jon Bennett outlines how his team approaches a very long night of breaking news and political chat – and why he believes Sky News must offer comprehensive coverage of all aspects of the general election. (www.rts.org.uk/JonBennett). **Pippa Shawley**

The BBC's David Whiteley, Nikki Fox and Leigh Milner were among the winners honoured at the RTS East Centre Awards held at the end of May.

Some 130 guests attended the ceremony at Norwich University of the Arts, which was hosted by BBC One *Look East* presenter Stewart White and ITV *Anglia Tonight* presenter Becky Jago.

Whiteley, who works on the BBC One regional current affairs strand *Inside Out East*, was named Best On-Screen Personality, while the same channel's *Look East* – Norwich reporters Fox and Milner were the Television Journalist of the Year and Best New Talent, respectively.

"It was fantastic to see such a glamorous and diverse gathering of the region's brightest and best talent, celebrating the achievements of our winners and nominees. A huge thank you to Norwich University of the Arts, which provided the perfect setting," said RTS East Chair Nikki O'Donnell.

In another triumph for the regional BBC news and current affairs base, the Production Craft Skills award was made to BBC East's Martin Giles. The RTS East judges said the cameraman had achieved "a very high standard, with creative use of filters, spotless composition and high-quality pictures".

In the News and Current Affairs categories, Sarah Cooper from *ITV News Anglia* took home the Current Affairs Feature award.

"This was a very interesting and well-researched item. The personal touches in the story made it stand out from all the entries," said the judges.

The News Programme award went to *The Murder of*



Award winners (clockwise from top left): Television Journalist of the Year – Nikki Fox; On-Screen Personality – David Whiteley; News Programme – *The Murder of Arek Jozwik*



BBC

BBC triumphs at East's new awards

Arek Jozwik (*Look East* – Norwich), which the judges described as "a thoughtful and comprehensive follow-up to the random killing of a Polish immigrant in Harlow".

The Factual Programme award went to *The Search for the Lost Manuscript: Julian of Norwich*, which was made by Norwich-based independent producer Tin Can Island. "A well-produced, well-executed documentary, with rich and well-shot content and a strong, clear and

engaging narrative," said the judges.

Norwich production company Forward picked up two prizes at the ceremony – the Diversity and Short Film awards – for *Giles Duley: #MoreThanAnImage*, which explores the power of photography. "An elegant and beautifully shot film. It is personal and inspirational; well produced and entrancing to watch," said the judges.

Laurence Cawley won the Digital Content award for his

work on BBC East's *Treasure Capitals* and Leighton Park School (Eye Film) collected the award for Promotional Programme.

The RTS East Centre was launched in November last year. "We are all confident that our awards will continue to grow and become the showcase for the East's creative media industry and the brilliant new talent the region has to offer," said O'Donnell.

Matthew Bell

Bristol offers freelance advice

■ A panel of experienced industry execs talked through the highs and lows of being a freelancer at a Bristol Centre event in late May, hosted by BBC Bristol.

At “How to survive as a TV freelancer”, the panel cited toughness, persistence and resilience as some of the qualities needed to work in the television industry.

Transferable skills are also important. “You should be shooting, doing sound and showing your creativity,” said

RDF West head of production Angela Oakhill. One of Oakhill’s pet hates is interviewees who talk about RDF productions made in London: “Do your research – it’s easy to find out what shows are made here in Bristol.”

Anne Boyd, a drama producer who has worked on shows that include *Trollied*, talked about the long hours that scripted TV demands. She recommended having a good attitude and building a reputation in order to get hired.

Freelance editor Glenn Rainton (*Timeshift*) added: “Networking is everything – every job is word of mouth. It’s all about personal relationships.”

Money management was acknowledged as important. Inge Samuels, a freelance development producer (*The Hairy Bikers’ Northern Exposure*), advised: “Be resourceful and practical – keep three months’ pay to one side and get a good accountant.”

The panellists agreed that

negotiating a first freelance contract and pay could be daunting. They suggested using rate cards as a starting point and talking to colleagues. “Be prepared to compromise” was one tip.

Samuels added: “Be creative – if you haven’t got any work, think outside the box and diversify.”

There were audience contributions from Hugo Pettitt, an assistant producer at BBC Documentaries, who talked about moving from academia to TV, and composer Timo Baker, who discussed working as a “lone creative”.

Suzy Lambert

Could Amazon or Google win the rights to broadcast the Olympic Games? This was just one of the possibilities aired by media consultant Nigel Walley as he looked into the future of TV at a London Centre event in early May.

The Managing Director of media consultancy Decipher, who was talking at ITV London Studios, predicted a future when more and more households would be able to easily connect all their TVs, computers, tablets and phones into a single “whole home network”. Given that a family of four now has an average of 25 screens, this would be no mean feat.

Newish products, such as the Sky Q box, allow viewers to watch around the house. This and other developments, argued Walley, marked “yet another shift [in power] to the platforms” and away from the broadcasters.

Cloud services for TV, he argued, would also move rapidly into the consumer arena. Rather than recording programmes on the hard drives of their PVR, “within a couple of years” viewers will be recording programmes on a huge scale and storing



them in the cloud. Distinctions between platforms, broadcasters, social-media outfits and the giant telecommunications companies were becoming blurred, argued Walley. Social media had already arrived on TV in the UK, with the EE set-top

box now able to highlight which shows were trending on Twitter. He predicted that, because television still delivered good financial returns, “social-media companies with content ambitions will [move] on to the electronic programme guide”.

Walley claimed that, with huge outfits such as Amazon and Apple entering the market and delivering media services to the home, it was time to “redefine what we mean by a platform”.

He revealed that Amazon was developing a smart TV that would include a “linear, scheduling menu”, and predicted that Facebook and others would develop into “publisher broadcasters”.

He made two “crazy” forecasts, which, he worried, were probably not fanciful enough. First, that Facebook Live would appear as a linear TV service on the EPG. Second, that “Facebook would bid for World Cup and Olympic rights”.

These new platforms, Walley continued, could bid for sports rights. “For the first time, it feels viable,” he said. “The Olympics looks vulnerable – [it’s] one of the rights that could do with a bit of Amazon or Google treatment.”

■ The inaugural RTS London quiz, hosted by radio and TV presenter Greg Scott, was held at ITV Studios later that month. Teams from Studio Lambert and Directors UK made a great effort but were beaten by Rapid Pictures.

Matthew Bell

Helping people resume their careers in broadcasting was the focus of RTS London's Saturday conference at Richmond University, Kensington, in late April. Supported by the BBC Academy and Women in Film and Television UK, "Update TV skills" explained to people who had taken a career break how television had changed and what they needed to know to make a successful return.

Rowan de Pomerai, head of flex delivery at Ooyala, said: "The move to a digital workflow in broadcast has been very fast over the past few years." With a plethora of screens and devices to tailor content to, automating as much of that process as possible leaves time for the creative input that remains the basis of good television.

Two drama directors, Claire Winyard (BBC One's *Death in Paradise*) and Bill Anderson (ITV's *Mr Selfridge*), emphasised that the core skills of storytelling remained as important as ever in their work.

"If you were good at telling stories before you took a break, you'll be even better now, given all the experiences



Death in Paradise

BBC

Getting back to work

you've had since," said Winyard. While both agreed that there were things in the digital world that could help, it remained true that knowing the story better than anyone else on the production was the key to directing.

Deirdre Mulcahy, a senior trainer at the BBC Academy, explained how to avoid some of the common pitfalls when shooting video with a mobile

phone. She said the basic rules of film-making applied, but one had to be a lot more careful in applying them.

WebMobility Ventures Chair Ken Blakeslee discussed the devices coming on to the market that allow people to shoot 360° video, which, he said, was another example of how much technological change is now consumer driven.

RTS London's Kristin Mason gave a masterclass in how to write an effective CV, reminding participants to tailor their CVs for the job and company to which they were applying. A panel session on returning to work suggested organisations that could offer help, including mediaparents.co.uk and wftv.org.uk
Nick Radlo

Wales seeks the truth in false news

■ 'Fake news is an attempt to influence the political agenda or marketing designed to drive traffic to a website for a profit – or, of course, it could be both,' argued RTS Wales Centre administrator Hywel Wiliam at the Ffresh Student Media Festival in Cardiff in May.

At 'Seeing is believing: the challenge of fake news', Wiliam described the challenges facing broadcasters and producers. He quoted BBC

journalist Clive Myrie from an RTS Wales event in February, when he said: 'You have to be forthright and call out what might be a lie.'

Wiliam, a media consultant, showed clips from US TV coverage of 'Pizzagate', in which a man, believing a false story that Hillary Clinton and her aides were running a child-sex ring from a Washington DC pizzeria, entered the restaurant and fired a gun.

The incident showed how a fake story, supposedly based on emails found on the laptop of a Democrat politician and spread by social media, could, as Clinton suggested, have 'real-world consequences'.

In response to fake stories on social media, Facebook has launched its fact-checking and flagging systems, and Google is running a Digital News Initiative.

Quoting Richard Sambrook,

a former director of the BBC World Service who now heads Cardiff University's journalism school, Wiliam suggested that there was room for improvement: 'Facebook and Google reach billions around the world – but treat authoritative news the way they treat fake news or cat videos. Indeed, they favour the sensational, true or false, over the dull but accurate.'

Peter McHugh – one of the pioneers of breakfast television in the UK and a winner of the RTS Lifetime Achievement award – has died, aged 70.

Peter began his journalistic career in newspapers, working on the *Hartlepool Mail*, the *Northern Echo* and Newcastle's *Journal*. He became an industrial correspondent for both the *Sun* and the *Daily Mail*, before going into television with TV-am, the UK's first commercial breakfast station.

A former colleague on the *Journal*, Greg Dyke, hired him for TV-am. Dyke, poached from LWT, where he edited *The Six O'Clock Show*, had been called in to rescue TV-am. The station had endured a disastrous start, which led to an overhaul of the original management and presenting team.

With next to no advertising revenue and few viewers, Dyke, Clive Jones (later Managing Director of ITV) and Peter turned TV-am around. When they arrived, the station's peak ratings were just 200,000. Under the new team's guidance, audience figures rose to 1 million. After



Peter McHugh 1947-2017

a short spell on BBC One's *Breakfast Time*, Peter returned to his native North East as producer of *Friday Live*, a hugely successful 90-minute chat show made by Tyne-Tees TV. He worked briefly as head of current affairs at Tyne-Tees before taking

over *The Time, the Place*, the ITV daytime discussion programme, which, during his tenure, outstripped its rival.

In 1993, Peter was called again by Dyke – this time to turn around GMTV, which had started badly. Under Peter's stewardship as

director of programmes, the ratings rose to a peak of 1.8 million, often double those of the rival BBC show. The company also returned a handsome profit.

I worked with Peter for most of his 27 years in TV. He did not suffer fools gladly and his morning meetings could be, well, challenging. His lunches were equally so, but for different reasons.

He was unashamedly populist in his approach to news and current affairs, and – by a country mile – the best journalist I ever met.

Peter was equally at home analysing either the political landscape or the talking points from the previous night's *Coronation Street*.

He often worked seven days a week at GMTV and came to regard many of his staff as extended family. He was also a hugely supportive boss and generous to a fault.

Peter died in Hammer-smith Hospital, comforted to the end by his partner, Sam (Samantha) Mayaveram.

There are many people in television today – me included – who owe him a great deal.

John Stapleton

Jones brings *Delirium* to Welsh film festival

■ “I don't ever write a screenplay until I know the film is going to be made,” writer and director Gareth Jones told the Carmarthen Bay Film Festival, adding: “We were determined to make the *D-Trilogy* and we weren't going to wait for a decision by somebody else.”

Jones was describing his latest project – a trilogy of features – at an RTS Wales session at the May festival. Conceived as an exploration

of the creative psyche, they range from the domestic claustrophobia of *Desire* (2009) to the Welsh landscapes of *Delight* (2013), to a cloistered college in *Delirium* (2016), starring Jones, Clare Grogan and Timothy West.

Interviewed by former TV executive Euryn Ogwen Williams, Jones said the *D-Trilogy* “delves into the inner workings of the creative urge”. His films include *The Trial of Klaus Barbie* about the



Nazi war criminal. “We provided a faithful account, based on transcripts, which was screened just three days after the trial,” he recalled.

Jones worked in TV in the 1980s, initially at HTV Wales,

before joining Granada to direct *Coronation Street*.

Delirium is due to receive its world premiere at the Moscow International Film Festival at the end of June.

Hywel Wiliam



Sky

Vic Wakeling

1943-2017

No other TV executive has been as influential in transforming on-screen sport during the past 25 years as Vic Wakeling, who has died aged 73.

He masterminded satellite broadcaster BSkyB's revolutionary coverage of football following the formation of the Premier League in 1992.

Vic began his career in newspapers in the North East. The beginning of his working life is the stuff of *Boy's Own* legend. Out doing his paper round, he saw an advert in the *Blaydon Courier* for a junior reporter. After cycling the six miles to the paper's office, he was given the job on the spot

after waiting for the editor to open up the office.

Vic's obsession was sport, especially football. As a rookie reporter, he boosted his income by ringing in match reports from local football and cricket games to Newcastle's *Evening Chronicle*.

A spell on the sports desk at the *Birmingham Evening Mail* followed. In Fleet Street, he worked at the *Sun*, the *Observer* and the *Daily Express*, and was sports editor of the *London Evening News*.

When the *News* folded in 1980, Vic began working in TV at the suggestion of a friend, Mark Sharman, who later ran ITV Sport. Vic joined the prosperous ITV station

TVS, before moving to the doomed British Satellite Broadcasting (BSB).

It was Sky's effective takeover of BSB in 1990 that gave Vic his big break. As head of football at the struggling, Murdoch-backed challenger, rebooted as BSkyB, Vic used his contacts to help the broadcaster and its colourful CEO, Sam Chisholm, to turn the tables on ITV and the BBC.

BSkyB caused outrage in the TV establishment when, in May 1992, it secured exclusive live Premier League rights in a five-year deal. Vic never looked back. UK television sports coverage would never be the same again, as the old cartel operated by ITV and BBC was destroyed for good.

The following years showed that millions of people were prepared to pay significant sums to watch what became the most sought-after sports league in the world. Without the Premier League, it is unlikely that BSkyB's business would have grown to what it became.

Vic was a workaholic, who, as head of Sky Sports for more than 15 years, pushed through a number of innovations that football fans today take for granted. There was the interactive red button for extended coverage and the choice of camera angles. There was the move into digital, extra channels, live feeds, broadband, wide-screen and sports in high definition.

In 2007, Vic added Sky News to his managing director responsibilities. Two years later, he retired and was appointed a CBE.

He won lifetime achievement awards at the 2007 Sports Industry Awards and 2008 Broadcast Awards.

Vic is survived by his wife, Sue, three daughters, Sally, Caroline and Kate, and a son, Rob.

Steve Clarke

Belfast hosts film workshop

■ The Duncairn Centre for Culture & Arts in Belfast was the venue for the RTS Futures Northern Ireland short film workshop, the first in a series aimed at helping people find their feet in the genre.

At the early-May event, producer Brian Falconer and writer/director Jonathan Beer, from Belfast production company Out of Orbit, were joined by an enthusiastic group of aspiring film-makers.

During the 90-minute session, Falconer and Beer discussed how they got into film-making and showed a number of clips from films they had worked on, including their Bafta award-winning short, *Boogaloo and Graham*.

Falconer encouraged the audience to "get out there and make films – prove you can deliver". Beer added: "Passion and conviction are infectious – show people what you can do."

Out of Orbit (with Birmingham-based company Tinker Taylor) also won a Midlands RTS Award for Best Digital Innovation for *We Are You* last year.

■ One month earlier, Futures Northern Ireland welcomed Helen Thompson, who works as a talent manager at BBC Northern Ireland, to run a CV-writing workshop.

Thompson offered advice on the dos and don'ts of writing a CV, encouraging attendees to research the companies they were applying to work for, to put passion into their CVs and to be selective about what they include.

Laurence Doherty and Sarah McKnight

OFF MESSAGE

Huge congratulations to Alex Mahon, Channel 4's new Chief Executive and the first woman to run the network. Mahon defeated other, highly qualified candidates to take the job. She has considerable commercial acumen, having worked alongside Elisabeth Murdoch at Shine before running special-effects business Foundry.

This feels like the right appointment at the right time, but it is a challenging period for Channel 4.

Running a TV station may not be rocket science, but Mahon does possess the smarts: as a physicist, she studied space science.

She will have to lead negotiations on any move to a new HQ outside London and consider the best way for the broadcaster to respond to the online threat. An early task will be to find a successor to Jay Hunt, who snatched *Bake Off* from the Beeb.

Thanks to shows such as *Gogglebox*, *Educating Yorkshire* and *National Treasure*, Hunt sparked a creative renaissance at the network, post-*Big Brother*. Her ability to spot and nurture winning shows suggests that she won't be short of job offers.

Mahon is well connected and there will be no lack of capable candidates eager to shape the future direction of travel.

■ **By the time you read this, the result of the general election will be known. Broadcasters are likely to be assessing their performances and how they might ring the changes next time around.**

For all the hype concerning social media, TV continues to be the dominant thread in the election narrative.

And few could say that the closing stages of the campaign lacked drama. The BBC's bare-knuckle, live Cambridge debate generated headlines in volume –including the inevitable Daily Mail splash accusing Auntie of left-wing bias. The Corbynites may have shouted louder but the corporation would certainly have selected the audience to reflect a range of opinion.

The BBC is to be saluted for giving the job of chairing proceedings to the steely Mishal Husain, but even she found it difficult to keep the magnificent seven in order.

Election debates aside, election anchoring still tended to be dominated by ageing white males.

■ As Andrew Billen notes in his must-read interview with Sophy Ridge in this edition of *Television*, only Sky broke the mould by billing a woman as an anchor on the night.

And is it time for everybody's favourite small-screen attack dog, Jeremy Paxman, to be relieved of his election interviewing duties?

Or at least given another role. After observing the great man ambling around the countryside recently for his charming Channel 4 series on rivers, Paxo in nasty mode doesn't quite add up any more. Surely, it's not only Jon Snow who is comfortable revealing his sensitive side.

Incidentally, Snow's interviewing for *Channel 4 News* following the Manchester atrocity was a masterclass in journalistic empathy.

■ **Talking of which, some have accused Theresa May of not always being the most empathetic person in the room. It was, however, a nice touch when the first thing she did on entering the studio for the 29 May Sky/Channel 4 programme, was to wish Sky's political editor,**

Faisal Islam, a happy birthday. That Lynton Crosby doesn't miss a trick. A belated happy 40th, Faisal.

■ One of the highlights of the 2015 vote was Channel 4's *Power Monkeys*, a nicely judged satire on political spinners. This election, the equivalent show was BBC Two's late-night *Election Spy*, a résumé of the day's events seen through a comedic lens.

The Union flag-decorated phone used by the Ukip official was possibly inspired by a pair of shoes once worn by Nigel Farage. The fetching footwear was distinguished by a similar red, white and blue design. If Ukip really is dead and buried, satirists will mourn the party's demise.

Not for the first time, *Election Spy* proves that *Have I Got News For You* producer Hat Trick remains pre-eminent in TV satire.

■ **After all that electioneering, Off Message could use a drink. Maybe a glass of red, which is something that one Rupert Murdoch could provide.**

One of the mogul's less well-known ventures is a vineyard in the vastness of his Santa Monica Mountains retreat, just beyond Los Angeles.

The Moraga red that his estate produces is hardly for beginners: it retails at around \$175 a bottle. So don't expect to see it served at the next Sky press launch – or even a post-election gathering.

■ Readers of a certain age will remember the formidable Barbara Hosking, former head spin doctor at the IBA. Once employed as Harold Wilson's speechwriter, she had a contacts book to die for and knows where a lot of bodies are buried.

Hosking's memoirs are believed to be imminent. They should make riveting reading.



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