

ariel

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STRATEGY REVIEW



WHERE YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS

The director general spent an hour last week answering staff questions about the details of the strategy review, as it became clear that much is still to be worked out. Here are a selection of the questions – and answers



Why close 6 Music when it serves an area the commercial sector currently has no interest in?

The issue with 6 is it doesn't reach a very big audience and it is quite expensive. If you built it up it would be competing more aggressively with mainstream commercial radio. Dropping any BBC service is a painful and difficult decision but in our view it is better to go ahead with two strong music stations [Radios 1 and 2].

How much pressure will it take to persuade you to keep 6 Music?

Public consultation means what it says. It's appropriate we listen. But we are here to serve 26m households and the business of how you balance licence fee spend inevitably might leave some people feeling hard done by. But if you don't have that potential the danger is of the BBC ossifying. We need the flexibility to invest in some parts and take money for others. I ask those who are passionate about 6 to step back and look at the totality of services.

Does the closure of the Asian Network not reinforce the view in inner cities that the BBC is a white, middle class organisation?

I don't accept that. Over recent years we've put more money into

journalism on the Asian Network and that has come to benefit the entire BBC. We've struggled to use a single radio network to reach what is an incredibly diverse audience. There is no other audience we would attempt to serve with a single radio station. We will work hard to ensure that the money and talent from the Asian Network is used elsewhere. We look to local radio, network radio and tv to ensure we reflect our very diverse Asian audiences.

What is the timetable and process to establish clarity over the 25 percent cuts to online?

This is the biggest single change, the biggest movement of money and strategy in the proposals. We want to do it carefully and properly, over time, involving content divisions with FM&T in the decisions. We want to focus our website. It's enormous, with hundreds of top level domains... When we come to web original content we will focus it round our five categories, so when you look at the web you know you are going to get great journalism, great content for children and so on. We are going to work our way – with the teams – through what that means on the ground and how we can ensure what we spend on the web goes to those priority areas.

What about jobs?

I know the strategic change of direction around the web and radio, in particular, mean uncertainty for staff, but this is about investing in new content and programmes and it will mean new opportunities and jobs being created. The 600 figure is reasonable to use for the areas of the BBC which might be affected but the net effect will be much smaller. It's going to happen over years, and I believe our chances of dealing with all of the job issues largely through redeployment and vacancies and people deciding to leave are very good indeed.

Why close Switch? Justify your reasons for closing Blast

We are fundamentally a broadcaster, rather than an educational outreach. We have to ask, to what extent is it part of our mission to be involved in that and can we ever put enough money into Blast or Switch to reach enough young people? We don't have the money to build Switch into a really credible resource, and even if we were to have it we would be bumping into Channel 4.

Broadcast services to the public must come first. We'll still do outreach but, in future, more of it will be done through partners.

Where will any cuts be applied to local radio; are they planning more shared output and when will the changes start?

This is planned as a re-distribution within local radio. We want to shift money to spend more on local newsgathering and a little more on getting the key journalistic 'shoulders' of the schedule, ie breakfast, drivetime and midday, as good and as strong as we possibly can... We know that really local relevance is critical to the local radio audience in those key day parts; elsewhere we think slightly more shared content will still be relevant and we can do it with the resources we've got to a higher standard. The hope is by moving the money around we'll improve the quality, stem some of the audience losses, and do it within the resources we have available.

Is Radio Times going to be sold off? Are BBC Magazines going to be sold, and when?

Magazines have an incredible heritage in the BBC; we have a very successful magazine business. It's absolutely not about a fire sale, or even that there is going to be a straight-forward sell-off of the magazine division – that would not be a good idea.

ERIK HUGGERS INSISTS THAT TOO MANY SITES JUST DON'T CUT IT

THE DAYS OF DOING EVERYTHING ARE OVER

by Cathy Loughran

'There used to be a saying about the BBC – that where there was a vacuum, we'd fill it. Well, those days are over,' says Erik Huggers.

That mentality, coupled with the limitless shelf space of the web – compared with broadcast media, reined in by spectrum – is how bbc.co.uk 'grew like Topsy'. Despite 'pruning, deleting and archiving' over the last two years, to get the website's top line directories (TLDs) down to 400, that's still 200 too many, reasons the director of FM&T.

'To make a site attractive, interesting and of clear public value it needs to be refreshed, updated, editorially relevant and of high quality. The truth is there are a large number of sites that don't meet those criteria.'

Huggers doesn't accept that halving and consolidating the number

of sections could be misleading. 'It means what it says on the tin – 200 fewer TLDs,' he says.

So why ask the trust to slash the BBC Online service licence budget (£133.8m last year) by 25 percent, alongside 'a corresponding reduction in staffing levels', as Mark Thompson talks about the web becoming the only platform and delivery system the BBC will eventually need?

Huggers agrees that the top line of the review is quality, not efficiency, but within a refocusing on Thompson's five new criteria (the world's best journalism; inspiring knowledge, music and culture; ambitious UK drama and comedy; outstanding children's content; events that bring communities and the nation together), he sees opportunities to drive better value for money.

'This won't be a 25 percent saving across the board. But alongside doing more to help the industry by

linking to external sites, we think that advances in technology will let us automate more, and investment in new platforms will allow us to deliver in more efficient ways.'

Unlike with the plans to close 6 Music and the Asian Network, where savings would be reinvested in digital radio, the 25 percent would go outside online activity, he confirms.

On the detail of what will close and whether it will actually mean a quarter less staff working on-line content – a figure the unions fear could be around 400 – Huggers insists: 'It's way too early to tell,' although he says the work already begun by the online direction group he chairs would be looking across FM&T and all the content divisions.

The new group, a sub-committee of the executive board, also includes online controller Seetha Kumar; director of archive content Roly Keating; Radio 1 controller Andy Par-



fitt; Richard Deverell, COO of BBC North; and BBC Scotland controller Ken MacQuarrie.

Its remit is to set a strategy for online for the next three years.

'I understand why what's proposed looks like a U-turn, but it's exactly the opposite,' Huggers says.

'There is fantastic work going on in the online business, including in mobile, around applications, updated search and a refresh for both

ONLINE: REACTION

TEAMS ARE LEFT TO WONDER WHERE THE AXE MIGHT FALL

by Cathy Loughran

Across FM&T and the content divisions there is clearly frustration that there is no real indication yet where the online axe might fall and which jobs might be under threat.

'When Creative Future was announced we knew that day which teams would be affected,' says Nayeema Chowdhury, interactive producer in A&M. 'Cuts of 25 percent is a big announcement yet we'll be waiting months for any clarity.'

She also questions how a public consultation can be held when the public can't be told exactly what is being cut. She and others query the fixing of the 25 percent budget cut, how the savings will be found and what a cut of 50 percent in top level directories will look like.

'While the 25 percent cash cut is real enough, what a halving of sections actually means is clear

as mud,' said one of the website's senior content producers.

Chowdhury adds: 'A lot of the websites singled out to go (including celebdaq, /sportdaq, /naturestop40, /jamielane and /bbcpartners) have been taken down already and aren't the kind of sites that have teams behind them so removing them has no impact on costs or staffing. It's hard to see where the savings will be made.'

Another online manager told Ariel he thought the proposal to halve the numbers of TLDs was 'a red herring' – more a rearrangement than a paring back. He welcomed an emphasis on quality, if it brought everything up to the standard of iPlayer and News Online, pointing to defunct or 'legacy' sites – including some old local pages and sites like bbc.co.uk/otr, built for the former political tv programme *On The Record* – which no longer link to any current BBC



Pinball site: fun but baffling

content, as damaging to the website's reputation. His estimate is that a third of existing web pages are never visited and the BBC's own monitoring suggests that news, sport, weather, iPlayer and the homepage account for around 80 percent of usage.

'I think the message [from the review] for the website is to be less casually innovative,' he said. 'For instance, where does a fun but baffling site like bbc.co.uk/pinball fit with anything?'

However, he thought that the whole commissioning system was in need of an overhaul. 'Maybe this will be the start of that process.'

OUTREACH: WORRIES

NOBODY ELSE IS DOING THIS

by Claire Barrett

HIP HOP DUO RIZZLE KICKS attended a song writing session on the BBC Blast tour and are now recording their first album. AJ Odunau came through Blast's creative traineeship to become a presenter for BBC Switch. And Bristol woman Fliss, who was living in a car, moved from three months on a Blast radio production scheme into a job in Boots and a permanent address.

The legacy benefits of the BBC's youth creativity service are multi-faceted and deep rooted, says Myles Runham, head of interactive learning. 'What Blast is trying to do is have a meaningful impact on people's lives. Whether we can do that through broadcasting is a tougher argument.'

But it's an argument that underpins Mark Thompson's proposal to axe the service. The dg believes that more of the target 13-19 year-old audience can be reached through programmes.

Runham argues, though, that 'to reach the hard to reach you have to go out and find them – both in physical and virtual communities'.

It's what BBC Blast has been doing for



the last six years. An online team of 12 runs the Blast website which provides interactive tips and tools for young creatives, portfolio space for them to upload content, messageboards and advice on media opportunities. The 'safe, creative learning space' has 40,000 to 120,000 unique users each week.

A 12-strong outreach team oversees all face-to-face activity, engaging around 250,000 young people each year – 40 percent of them from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. At its heart is the 27 week Blast tour that travels the UK with its mobile media village, working alongside around 600 partners.

Blast also offers around 400 work-related learning placements – from creating a fashion label to taking over at 1Xtra. 'BBC Blast is firmly about skills development with the ability to cross over into broadcasting,' says Sian Lord-Baptiste, BBC Blast outreach editor. 'Nobody else is delivering this.'

Her team, who see their work as a vocational choice, are 'surprised, angry, disappointed, demotivated... and wondering where else they are going to do this'.

If the door does close says Runcorn, it may cut off an important talent source. 'For the BBC Blast is an opportunity to bring in talent outside the normal mould. For young people it is about seeing the BBC as a relevant employer. For both sides it is a realisation of potential.'

RADIO SERVICES

GROWING ANGER AT PLANS TO MAKE ASIAN OUTPUT MORE LOCAL

Asian Network staff hope that a newly-launched campaign will help to save their station

by Candida Watson

THE STORM THAT GREETED the proposal to close 6 Music – which began blowing weeks before the strategy review was published – initially overshadowed the news that the Asian Network was also to lose its single station identity.

The strategy review suggests the diverse British Asian community could be better served by locally based output, radio, online and possibly tv. But it's all up for debate. Tim Davie, director of Audio and Music, told Ariel: 'I think it's important to stress that this is one option and we need to ensure that as we develop it we are creating very strong audience propositions. We must learn from the history of what has and hasn't worked with this audience.'

He said Asian Network staff would be closely involved in the discussion, describing them as 'the experts'.

The overriding concern of staff who have spoken to Ariel is that the voices of Asian Britain will vanish



Reaching the parts that other parts of the media don't reach: Asian Network presenter Bobby Friction

from national output.

'There are few outlets which have access to the people, or indeed the appetite, to unearth the stories we do. Through us the BBC gets an idea of what's going on in what is now the largest ethnic minority in Britain,' says newsreader Sona Patel.

Her colleague Kalpana Patel says: 'Asians have no real voice in the mainstream other than a token glance. I will find another job, but what a waste for my community, whose real life struggles will never really be heard over the noise of the non-stop music of commercial Asian radio.'

Husain Husaini, Asian Network

head of programmes, agrees with some points but says the picture is more complex than a simple shut-down of the station. 'We reach an audience other parts of the BBC and other mainstream media don't. A lot of what we do could be even better under a franchise system, but we're not there yet.'

He repeated a point others have made: 'My staff feel we are struggling for attention because Asian Network hasn't got a Sting or a David Bowie speaking out. The artists we support are not in the mainstream and our audience doesn't Twitter.'

But the campaign to save the Asian

Network is now gathering pace, with more than 100 British Asians signing a letter to the Guardian, calling for the plan to be dropped. Tim Davie argues that as a national station Asian Network has been less successful at building a sense of community for its audience than the local services it grew from. Listening figures have declined, and its relevance is being tested by the diversity of British Asians.

He says the need to drive digital radio take-up is, paradoxically, one of the reasons for closing two digital radio stations. BBC management believes the money and output can be better targeted at the corporation's

existing, hugely successful national channels, offering extras which entice listeners to digital services.

So the charge that 6 Music must remain a stand-alone station is one he doesn't accept. 'There's a distinction between 6 Music as a network and as programming. Where programmes fit with Radio 2 there may be opportunities, but we also have this digital spectrum, plus we have Online and we have opportunities to explore where the most valuable parts of 6 Music go so they don't get lost.'

The campaign to save 6 is high profile, with online petitions and campaign groups, musicians, the BPI and AIM, the Glastonbury festival organisers, and music journalists all calling for the proposal to be dropped. A blog by Davie explaining the thinking behind the change did nothing to assuage the critics. 'You can't expect to placate the licence fee payers who love a radio station with a few radio programmes,' wrote one, while another said: 'No one to date has directly addressed any of the main points of our arguments regarding the closure of 6 Music.'

The BBC Trust, which recently gave 6 Music a good review while suggesting it needed to grow to be worthwhile, will be the arbiter.

Davie accepts that the public outcry could save 6 Music. 'We've said we can refocus this money and deliver more value. If the trust recommends we focus it on the current construction then of course we'll do that to the best of our abilities.'

REFOCUS FOR BBC TWO AND BBC FOUR

BENNETT LOOKS TO 'STATE OF THE NATION' PIECES AS BAR IS RAISED ON ORIGINALITY

by Sally Hillier

BBC TWO IS A NOTABLE WINNER of the strategy review, which proposes that it gets an extra £25m a year from 2013 – a hefty boost, but then the network is earmarked for some pretty big ideas, the realisation of which won't come cheap.

The plan is to re-establish it as 'the home of intelligent and ambitious drama, comedy and factual' – programming with large price tags attached.

On the drama front the intention is to have more 'signature' work along the lines of *House of Saddam*, which charted the rise and fall of Saddam Hussein. Forthcoming productions which, it is hoped, will follow in that programme's footsteps include the six-

part thriller *The Shadow Line*, written by Hugo Blick, and – as part of a special season on the 1980s – *The Royal Wedding* and *Worried About the Boy* (a biopic of Boy George).

'What we're talking about here are state of the nation pieces,' says Jana Bennett, director of BBC Vision, who wants viewers to get a sense that they can 'expect drama more often on BBC Two'.

In factual, strong, authored works, such as *Andrew Marr's History of Modern Britain*, are also seen as the way to go.

As to whether the pledge to raise quality and originality isn't simply a restatement of the obvious, Bennett says: 'Of course we always try to be original but we have to strive hard and encourage producers to keep raising their game. Sometimes it's good to

restate things.'

Comedy wise, the aim is to use BBC Two as a launch pad for 'new mainstream' content.

'The network is a great starting point [for comedy],' says Bennett. 'Think of its heritage with programmes such as *The Royle Family*, *Absolutely Fabulous* and *The Office*.'

On BBC Four, however, a reduction in entertainment and comedy is proposed as the network is 'refocused' to complement BBC Two, with a greater concentration on arts, music, knowledge and culture. 'I define culture in quite a wide way,' asserts Bennett. 'Science, for example, is part of culture.'

And so too, she says, is Skippy, the fictional bush kangaroo, who is 'part of our culture but by no means represent-



House of Saddam: an example of strong 'signature' work

ative of the channel'.

As it happens, BBC Four broadcast a programme about Skippy on the day the strategy review was published, along with a documentary called *Paws, Claws and Videotape*, providing ready ammunition for Jeremy Paxman in his *Newsnight* interview with Mark Thompson.

Skippy ('cast and crew discuss working with their marsupial co-stars') and *Paws, Claws and Videotape* (a look at how the likes of Flipper, Lassie and Clarence the cross-eyed lion 'rose to fame and coped with stardom') were part of a season exploring the use of animals in film. Eyebrows might have been raised at this programme line-up but it should be pointed out that BBC Four's March 2 schedule also included *Rise Up Reggae Star*, about reggae musicians, and *Lives of Others*, an Oscar-winning German film set in East Berlin in the 1980s.

Where Bennett envisages a really strong role for BBC Four in the future is building a relationship with the BBC archive. The digital channel 'could be a doorway through the archive', she believes.

CHAIRMAN EXPLAINS WHAT TRUST WILL DO NOW

REVIEWING THE REVIEW

'The Director General's proposals have generated huge debate both inside and outside the BBC,' writes **Michael Lyons** 'Many parts of the BBC will potentially be touched by the outcome of this process, so I thought it would be helpful to say a bit about the thinking behind the review and where we go from here

AS THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE BBC, the trust's role is to set the overall strategy for the corporation. In essence that means deciding what it should do more of and what it should do less of.

To this end, back in July last year, the trust challenged the director general to come up with proposals for the future direction of the BBC. We felt it was the right time to do this in part because of the changed economic picture and in part because of the huge explosion in digital media.

But we also instigated the review because, after three years of working closely with audiences, our conclusion was that, in addition to considering specific services, we needed to take a comprehensive look at the overall direction of the BBC.

So eight months later we now have the director general's proposals, which the trust has been engaging with him on over recent weeks. The trust welcomes the general direction they set out. There are some specific areas we



agree with and some we wish to explore further.

We will be testing the proposals over the coming weeks to make sure that the detail matches the promise. To help us do this, and in line with our role as the representatives of licence fee payers, we have now launched a 12 week pub-

lic consultation that will run until May 25.

We are inviting the public to send their views on the strategy review proposals into us via our website. We are already seeing a strong response. That says much about the importance of the BBC to the public.

We will also carry out further

in-depth research. This will include consultation events with industry and audiences, discussion with the trust's Audience Councils in the four nations of the UK and analysis of existing audience research.

We aim to publish final conclusions on the shape of the overall strategy by the autumn, but hope to have clarity on some areas by the summer. The key thing is that these conclusions will be guided by the public.

As I have said there are areas we already agree with, such as the greater emphasis on quality, clearer boundaries for the BBC's website and the five priorities that underpin the report. But there will be tough decisions to be made.

I am clear that now is the right time to make those decisions about the future direction of the BBC.

As the Trust takes this review forward, we will work painstakingly to ensure we arrive at final conclusions that serve the best interests of the BBC's shareholders - licence fee payers.'

Director of strategy **John Tate** says UK production needs more investment than ever

WHY WE MUST FOCUS ON QUALITY CONTENT

FOR DECADES THE UNITED KINGDOM has enjoyed higher levels of domestic media production and content spending per head than almost any other country in the world. UK audiences have grown up expecting and receiving a constant diet of extremely high-quality domestic content, whether two-hour episodes of *Inspector Morse* or seminal natural history like *Life on Earth* - all without a subscription and, on the BBC, without advertising.

While this standard and quantity of output is considered normal in the UK, one glance at schedules abroad shows it to be anything but. In the two longest-developed broadcasting markets, the United States and continental Europe, very different traditions dominate. Much of European broadcasting has gone down the 'cheap and cheerful' route, with content spend focused increasingly efficiently on what drives audiences to adverts, while in the US a higher level of programme investment is maintained but only through highly selective subscriber packages.

Can British exceptionalism survive? Or will we inevitably end up going down the European or US routes? There has been a great deal of attention focused on the troubles facing public service broadcasting in the UK. But a fact often lost in the debate is that billions of pounds of new money are flowing into the sector. It's just that this extra money isn't flowing back into content production at anything like the rate that it has in the past.

This is primarily because commercial funding for tv is increasingly coming from subscription. Pay operators do not invest in original content at anything like the levels that advertising-funded broadcasters do. Well under 40 percent of Sky's revenues go towards its programme spend, while the main free channel operators plough half of their rev-

enues straight back into content. Further, pay platforms allocate very little to tv originations: around two-thirds of Sky's programming budget is spent on sports rights and films, which doesn't benefit the indie sector much and which isn't available to all of Sky's own subscribers.

Were absolute levels of spend stable across free-to-air channels, this may be nothing to worry about. But revenues of all advertising-funded companies have come under strain, with the emergence of the internet as a competitor for traditional media spend; the relentless expansion of digital advertising inventory driving prices down; and the recession. Consequently, budgets for original UK content are under constant pressure and money is coming out of less profitable genres like children's and regional news.

The convergence of broadcast and internet technologies is further changing the structure of the traditional media value chain. Platform operators, device manufacturers and other new competitors are coming between content providers and their audiences in an intermediary or 'gatekeeper' role. This allows new players to take a cut of revenues, and reduce the amount left to reinvest in content creation. And this is not just a risk to the total volume of original content, but

also to its UK focus. Many of the new players are not based in the UK, and feel no obligation to contribute to or make prominent our culture.

Finally, increased competition across the value chain drives up supply costs. Broadcasters are now bidding directly against device manufacturers and platform operators for rights and talent. Rising prices further threaten the ability of broadcasters to deliver high quality content.

The BBC's strategy review published last week, Putting Quality First, was linked squarely to the context I have set out here - boosting investment in high-quality content when it is needed more than ever.

To support a more external focus for the BBC beyond the strategy review, my team - Policy & Strategy (P&S) - has been expanding its internal communications around significant market trends. P&S now puts together a brief weekly update; the monthly Media Market Insider newsletter highlighting important market issues affecting the BBC; and an industry dashboard summarising

the health of various media sub-sectors. All are discussed at the BBC Direction Group but also available to staff who want to access them. Visit our intranet site to learn more and please don't hesitate to get in touch with us if there's specific information you're looking for.



'Budgets for original UK content are under pressure'

Audio and Music festival is bitter sweet

by Kate Arkless Gray

'If they ever do anything to Radio 4 I'll leave the country,' quipped actor Bill Nighy as he gave a drama masterclass at the Audio and Music Festival. 'I love the radio. I started out on the radio. I was apprenticed to the radio.'

The festival was held on the same day as the strategy review was published, but 'the mood was pretty good, considering', said senior producer Hugh Garry, who hosted a session on creativity on a budget.

James Stirling, who produces the Adam and Joe show on 6 Music, talked about involving the audience in creating content, which then could be used online via the blog.

Radio futurologist and former BBC man James Cridland discussed lessons that could be learned from stations around the world. Providing transcripts of programmes and bulletins to create more searchable content, allowing developers access to application programming interfaces – to build apps using BBC content, and using images alongside radio broadcasts to create a more powerful experience were among his ideas.

The day ended with the A&M Awards, which saw Terry Wogan's producer Alan Boyd honoured for his work ensuring the smooth transition to the Chris Evans breakfast show.

Now over to our young reporters

Interviews with the three main political party leaders, a world record attempt for the largest interactive weather report, and a link-up between children in London and Haiti will be among the highlights of School Report News Day, on March 11.

Thousands of young reporters will be involved. There will be contributions to the BBC's national, regional, local and international outlets and schools will publish items on their own websites, to which the School Report website will link.

Two live channels will run between 9am and 4pm on both the School Report site and the red button. FM&T will pilot a new type of radio visualisation that allows audiences to see interactive content as they listen.

Helen Shreeve, overall editor, says: 'School Report isn't a competition when a few lucky children get to present the news. Every school gets to broadcast for real by publishing their news on their school website.'

Marie Helly, radio team leader, agrees the project gives young people the chance to speak for themselves rather than be spoken about. 'We've already got so many stories.'

Reham Khan, Southampton broadcast journalist and mentor, describes School Report as BBC public service.

He's on the ball – and so are they

by Rumeana Jahangir

'Do you find it hard not to swear during match commentary?' 'What's the biggest load of rubbish you've ever read about yourself?' and 'What are my chances of getting into radio broadcasting?'

These were just some of the questions lobbed at football commentator Guy Mowbray, former Arsenal player Martin Keown and other people connected to BBC Sport at a World Cup day for students last week.

More than 200 students from 15 universities in the north of England packed into a BBC Manchester studio where sports broadcaster Jacqui Oatley hosted Q&A sessions with Mowbray and Keown.

The young visitors tried their hand at match commentary, learned about the skills needed to be a football reporter and how to direct live football coverage. A week's placement in the run-up to the World Cup was also up for grabs.

Shelley Alexander, outreach manager and former assistant editor at *Football Focus*, said: 'It [BBC Sport] is a magical place to work. I think it's essential that we reach out to our au-



Football focus: Martin Keown demonstrates his skills

PHOTOGRAPH: ED SWINDEN

dience and reveal some of the mysteries of sport production as well as entertaining them with some of our stories.'

Oatley, who did a journalism diploma in Sheffield before joining the BBC, said: 'I would have loved to have attended an open day like this.'

Sport will be moving to the new Salford site next year, and the day proved useful for showing the BBC that there is no shortage of talent and enthusiasm in the region.

Liza Booth, who works for BBC North and came up with the idea of World Cup Day, said: 'It's really positive [for

Sport staff] to come here and see that.'

Joe Mariner, who won the chance to interview Mowbray in front of his fellow students, said: 'It's inspiring. I think Manchester is the place to be now rather than London in terms of sports but I'm not picky. I just want a job.'

Film and media student Taran Jefferson, who attended a sports reporting workshop held by Radio Manchester's United reporter Steve Wyeth, said: 'The day was really productive. I'd love to work in BBC Sport journalism. I'd love to do what he [Wyeth] is doing.'

Fresh effort launched to reunite missing people with loved ones

by Candida Watson

A third series of BBC One Daytime's *Missing Live* gets under way on March 15.

Presenter Louise Minchin will anchor, while Rav Wilding gets out and about talking to people who have been found, and telling their stories.

In the first week the programme will feature a daily report from actress Pauline Quirke, filmed with the Metropolitan Police Missing Persons' Unit on the streets of Hackney, which happens to be where she grew up. She says: 'What really struck me is the passion the officers have for the job – it matters to them. This is not the sexy side of policing. I couldn't do it for a living.'

Quirke also stars in the associated drama, *Missing*, broadcast every afternoon of the run. It follows the cases of a fictional missing persons' unit, run by Quirke's character.

In the second week *Missing Live* will retrace the steps of an individual who went missing at one point in their life, and who discusses the experience with a celebrity. So Dominic Littlewood talks to 18 year old Zac, who started running away from home when he was just six; Gail Porter talks to Jess, who went missing as a teenager and has now set up a runaways' project in



Trail: Rav Wilding with Sussex search and rescue team

Derbyshire. Nor is it just children fleeing unhappy homes who go missing; adults can find the pressure of their lives too much to bear and walk away. Fiona Phillips meets Mayah, whose family disapproved so strongly of her choice of husband she felt she had no option but to disappear.

Throughout the fortnight Louise Minchin will be joined in the studio by the family and friends of people who are currently missing. They hope that an extra bit of publicity might lead to their loved ones being found. During last year's series 11 of the missing people featured were traced, and this year some of them will be reunited with the people who helped find them.

NEWS BITES

KATIE TAYLOR, executive editor, comedy entertainment, has been appointed head of entertainment and events, succeeding Jon Beazley, who is leaving the BBC. She will be the first woman to run the in-house department and will be responsible for shows such as *Strictly Come Dancing*, *Top Gear* and *Dragons' Den*.

BBC WORLDWIDE has concluded a deal to buy the remaining 40 percent stake in 2 entertain, the publisher of video and music, for £17m. 2 entertain was created as a 60:40 joint venture with Woolworths Group.

FOUR SOLO SINGERS, a female trio and a five-piece group will compete in *Your Country Needs You!*, on March 12 on BBC One, to decide who represents the UK in this year's Eurovision Song Contest. The song is being produced by Pete Waterman and long-time collaborator Mike Stock.

A PLANET EARTH Live show, featuring the best moments from the tv series in high definition on a big screen with live orchestra, will go on tour in the US this summer. *Planet Earth* composer George Fenton will conduct the orchestra at the shows – to be held in Dallas, Atlanta, Chicago and LA.

TIM WESTWOOD is to front a Radio 1 and 1Xtra campaign to encourage listeners to become 'local heroes' by volunteering in their own areas. Starting on April 18, the week long drive will run across radio and online with information on how to get involved and links to local organisations.

INSIDE OUT (North East & Cumbria) won the current affairs production category of the RTS North East Awards. Picture editor Robin Brown won a craft post-production and special effects award, and *My Strike*, produced by the North East team for BBC Four, was named best factual programme in the broadcast category.

KRISHAN ARORA, BBC independents executive, has been appointed Out of London Indies' champion, as part of the Network Supply Review. He will continue to work alongside the genre commissioning teams, heads of programmes and network commissioning execs in the nations, and also with the senior team in BBC North to deliver the Out of London plans.

LINDA SMITH has been voted favourite female comedian by Radio 7 listeners. Smith died of cancer in 2006, since when a memorial fund has been set up in her name in tandem with the charity Target Ovarian Cancer.

MARK THOMPSON will attend the BBC Black and Asian Forum's AGM on March 18 in the 3rd Floor Board Room, Media Centre, from 6-8pm.

TOM EDWARDS, transport correspondent for BBC London News, was named best journalist in the London Transport Awards organised by Transport Times.

YOU CAN NOW SEARCH Gateway from your web browser toolbar – tinyurl.com/gatewaysearch

CHANGING PLACES

Radio 1's recent signing **MATT EDMONDSON** will be stepping in for **SARA COX** while she goes on maternity leave...
ADAM HEYHURST (pictured) leaves Children in Need after three years to become visualisation producer at Radio 1/1Xtra...
ANN FARRAGHER rejoins the BBC as head of marketing for Radio 5 live, on a six month contract, while **CAREN DAVIES** has been appointed to the role of head of communications, Radio 1, 1Xtra, Asian Network, Switch and BBC Introducing.
NOREEN ADAMS, head of media management, will be joining Information and Archives as the new head of metadata for the BBC...
PETER O'KANE joins the BBC as director of supplier management and service assurance in FM&T...
PAUL MYLREA has been appointed as the new head of press and media relations, replacing **DONALD STEEL**...



BBC IN ACTION



When Olympic gold medallist Amy Williams returned home to Bath she got a bigger reception than she'd been expecting, thanks to Points West. Judith Hollingsworth, planner for the regional programme, had spent the previous ten days organising an open-top bus tour of the city for the first British woman to win an individual winter Olympics gold in 58 years. Roads were closed as people turned out to cheer their local star. Stephanie Marshall, Points West editor, said: 'It was an amazing sight. As the bus turned in towards the Guildhall the crowd was 15 deep on the pavement and, even though Amy is a tough woman, I'm sure I saw a tear in her eye.' The event was live on the One O'Clock News, 5 live, Radio Bristol, Online and, of course, Points West. Pictured: Amy Williams with her medal, cameraman Andy Alcroft

PHOTOGRAPH: JEFF OVERS

SHAMELESS PLUG

LAITH SHEWAYISH, SENIOR STUDIO MANAGER, WORLD SERVICE OPERATIONS

◆ **I STARTED CUTTING HAIR** about 20 years ago when a friend of mine refused to go to the hairdresser but for some reason

trusted me to have a go instead! It went well and so she recommended me to friends and family and it developed from there... I've worked at Bush House for almost 15 years and I started cutting hair at work as a favour for someone who was going out after work one evening and was suffering from a severely bad hair day. This snowballed until many of my lunchtimes and after work time was spent cutting or

styling hair. Subsequently, with my work in video operations, I've been asked to do hair for numerous presenters before they go in front of the camera. It's always great fun and we invariably have a laugh about our unique hair and make-up facilities at Bush House. People always offered to pay me for the haircuts but I really didn't want any money for it. I ask them to donate to charity instead - either Cancer Research

UK or the NSPCC. As an ex-cancer patient, Cancer Research UK is very close to my heart. The NSPCC is just a favourite charity of mine and I wanted people to have a choice. I really enjoy cutting and styling hair and it certainly brings a little light relief to the office. If it manages to raise a bit of money for charity at the same time, that's great.



diddle diddle diddle
diddle diddle diddle

...diddle diddle dee

You'll tend to hear quite a lot of this sort of music at this time of year, so you could be forgiven for thinking this is what Celtic music sounds like. Well, Kathryn Tickell is living proof that it doesn't.

Sometimes haunting, sometime joyous, always beautiful, Kathryn's music is inspired by wild, untamed landscapes and has that uncanny knack of unlocking your emotions.

Have a listen at www.audionetwork.com/playlists/celtic and you'll be absolutely delighted.

As opposed to diddleyighted.

To find out more, contact Elliott on 020 7 242 2311 or email e.tucker@audionetwork.com

audio network
www.audionetwork.com

HOW MUCH AM I BID?

Bargain Hunt is one of the most popular daytime programmes. As it prepares to celebrate its tenth anniversary, **Sally Hillier** watches the contestants and production team in action at a busy auction

YOU WOULD NEVER THINK that a paper clip would generate so much excitement. But here we are at an auction house in Market Harborough, Leicestershire, and tension is mounting as bid number 16 approaches.

Okay, it's not any old paper clip but a wolf-faced silver plated version, dating from the late 19th century.

It belongs to Bill and Paul Mee, a father and son team competing in BBC One's popular *Bargain Hunt*. With a guide price of £50-£70, the clip actually sells for £170 – making a tidy profit for the Mees, who bought it for £100 at a car boot fair a few weeks ago.

Unusually for *Bargain Hunt*, their opponents on the programme are Paul's sons, Joe and Ed.

'It's all Mee, Mee, Mee!' exclaims presenter Tim Wonnacott.

The senior Mees' moment of triumph with the wolf clip is captured by the BBC cameras, whose presence at the auction is almost as big an attraction as the lots themselves.

And there are lots of lots – 700 in

all, embracing ceramics, glassware, books, jewellery, objects d'art, paintings, chandeliers, carpets, rugs, furniture and even a baby grand piano.

The room is packed with goods, sellers, bidders, and local people who are simply enjoying a day out. The *Bargain Hunt* crew squeezes into a corner to film the action – and reaction as items go under the hammer.

Four shows are being filmed at once, involving a total of 16 contestants, who revolve in and out of the room to watch as 'their' items are sold.

The format of the programme is that a red team of two takes on a blue team. Each team is given £300, the help of an expert, and an hour at a fair to buy collectables, which they then sell at auction, with the aim of making a profit.

And occasionally it is a very healthy profit indeed – £600 or £700. More often though people are lucky to make a couple of hundred quid, and are just as likely to break even or make a loss.

Wonnacott, former director of Sotheby's, presides over it all with enthusiasm, wit and insight. He has been doing the job since 2003, succeeding the equally colourful (so colourful that the joke was he had been 'Tango-ed') David Dickinson, who made his name on the show when it launched in 2000.

Yes, *Bargain Hunt* – produced by BBC Bristol – is ten years old and next week will celebrate with five, hour-long specials in which the teams will comprise regular *BH* antiques experts, who will revive some of their favourite

memories of the decade. Whether this will include the edition featuring a team of transvestites, who horrified a straight-laced auctioneer by turning up at his sale-room in 'full regalia' of wigs, dresses and make-up, remains to be seen. With an audience of 2.5m, *Bargain Hunt*, which is filmed at fairs and auction houses across the UK, is a mainstay of the BBC One daytime schedule, delivering the largest audience share to the channel after *EastEnders* and the news.

It has a cult following among students, and is also popular with overseas audiences – particularly in Scandinavia and Australia.

So why has it enjoyed such longevity? 'I think one of the reasons it is so successful is because it is fun and entertaining, and the audience always learns something,' says series editor Peter Smith. 'There are a lot of people who know about Moorcroft pottery, Whitefriars glass and Georg Jensen jewellery because they've seen it on *Bargain Hunt*.'

It has encouraged many amateurs to start collecting, and opened a window on sales and auction rooms, he adds. Wonnacott, already familiar to viewers as an expert on *The Antiques Roadshow* before he joined *Bargain Hunt*, is a key part of the programme's appeal, Smith



Under the hammer: antiques expert Catherine Southon, contestants Bill and Paul Mee and presenter Tim Wonnacott at Market Harborough sale

believes. 'Tim is fantastic with the contestants. They come in and he says 'You must be Fred and Alice; how are the horses?' He does his homework and is genuinely interested in people. He is also immensely knowledgeable about antiques.'

The affable Wonnacott points out that the show attracts all kinds of competitors – from airline pilots and teachers to lorry drivers and hairdressers.

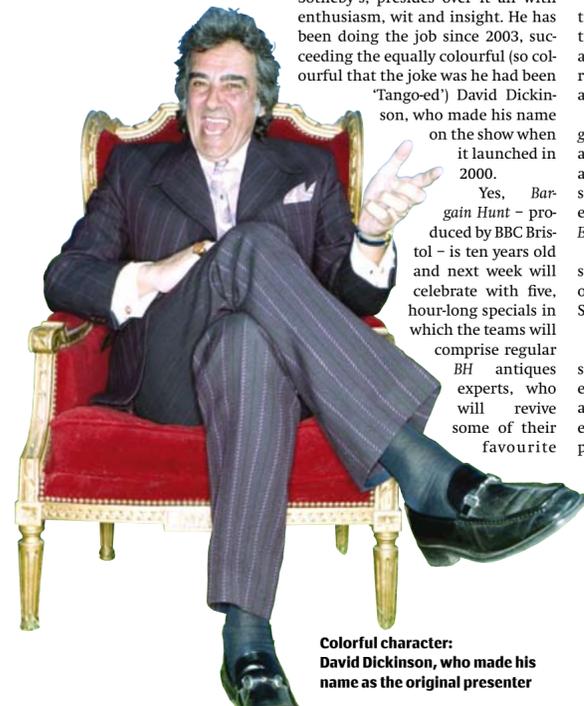
'Some people are cocky, and think they know it all, while others are incredibly nervous,' he says. 'My job is to make everyone feel comfortable.'

After making more than 600 episodes he says he never tires of the format. 'Every edition is different and every contestant is different.'

And so far every one has lived until the end of recording, for which he is grateful after an unfortunate incident some years ago when an elderly man dropped dead during the making of *The Antiques Roadshow* – all captured on camera.

Later, his family asked the BBC for the tape so they would have a 'souvenir' of the occasion.

There have been many memorable moments during ten years of *Bargain Hunt*, says Wonnacott, but thankfully no deaths in front of the camera. Not yet, anyway.



Colorful character: David Dickinson, who made his name as the original presenter

COMPANY THAT FOUGHT TO KEEP UP WARTIME SPIRITS

WHEN REBECCA WILMSHURST says the Radio Drama Company is like family, she means it. The portraits outside her office of successive generations of BBC repertory actors are regarded like those of children who have made good in the world.

'He played Puck at the Globe... she's just had a baby... he's in *The Archers*... they married last year... that one at the back was in *Star Wars*...' she muses with commensurate pride and affection.

Then there are the ten still at home. A mix of established actors and new talent, they remain on the books of the ready casting resource for three to five months at a time, on daily call to play parts in the many plays, comedies and series that Radio Drama records for Radios 3, 4 and 7 and World Service. As well as turning their hand to anything from the *Raj Quartet* to *Book at Bedtime*, they also answer those last minute requests from News to provide the voice of a rape victim, to deliver a poem for Factual or do a readthrough of a troublesome script for a struggling producer.

'They have to be versatile,' concedes Rebecca, the Radio Drama exec who acts as general manager of the RDC which turns 70 this year. 'We need people who can double up – even play a scene with themselves. If their voices are too distinctive; if they can't blend or disguise them, then they aren't useful to us.'

The demands were different in the early days of the 'Rep', which first took form in 1925 when the actors replicated for the nation what was taking place on the West End stage. It was disbanded in 1930, but revived in 1940, on the brink

The Radio Drama Company has been playing its part for 70 years, writes **Claire Barrett**, providing voices for anything from contemporary comedy to classic drama – and even sleeping on the job during WW2

of World War Two, as radio drama emerged as a genre in its own right.

A company of around 50 actors was whisked off to Evesham for intensive training in this new art of acting for radio. 'Everything was live – even the repeats,' says Rebecca. 'On contract, and paid a weekly salary, the BBC could cast its live performers with experienced radio performers and no hoo-hah.'

Even enemy action couldn't

'They have to be versatile. We need people who can double up – even play a scene with themselves'

thwart their desire to entertain, with the company camping out in the Concert Hall stronghold at Broadcasting House so they could keep to schedule during air raids.

Most productions went out without a hitch. 'One memorable wartime performance of *Peer Gynt* was three hours long and had just one small fluff,' marvels Rebecca. But

the closing scene of *Hamlet* was famously a victim of the 'pips'. The titular character's fatal duel was cut short by an apologetic announcer admitting that 'there we must leave Elsinore'.

Post-war, the Rep's popularity grew and, with television drama still some way off, it created new stars. Some benefited from radio's forgiving nature – like Marjorie Westbury who was cast against type to play Paul Temple's wife Steve. 'The voice created an image of a tall, slim, stylish sophisticate,' explains Rebecca. 'If the audience only knew then that she looked like Mrs Tiggywinkle.'

Another distinguished performer was Carleton Hobbs whose 1950s/60s role as Sherlock Holmes made him a household name. 'He was prolific,' says Rebecca. 'He had about 4000 roles in radio and was known for his generosity towards young actors.'

Fitting then that Radio Drama's bursary scheme bears his name. Since 1953, it has been giving the pick of accredited drama school graduates their first professional roles via the Rep. Past winners include Stephen Tompkinson, Richard Griffiths and Nerys Hughes.

'The selection process is rigorous, but in their five month run with the RDC they will never work with as many different writers and directors

as many different genres alongside as many different stars.'

Currently, the top four gain spots on the Rep, where they are joined by two winners of the Norman Beaton Fellowship, established in 2003 and named after the Guyanese born classical actor who went on to star in Channel Four's *Desmond's*. With the Hobbs prize seen as something of a closed shop, the Fellowship casts a wider net, with contenders put forward by 14 regional theatres.

Final auditions for the latest round of both schemes – known together as Soundstart – take place later this month in London. The winners will join the professional actors on the Rep, which has shrunk from its 96-strong peak to just ten. 'They've got to be actors producers want to work with,' reasons Rebecca. 'Some we've spotted on tv, others from radio – *Silver Street's* Vineeta Rishi is about to join us – we get unsolicited cds, calls from agents and we run workshops for groups of actors to see how they respond to the rhythm of radio.'

Crucially, they need the voice. 'It's not about reading but inhabiting the characters. It's not about the voice beautiful, but connecting with listeners.'

Once part of the RDC, they never really leave. Some return for further stints, others join Radio Drama's freelance pool, some move on to bigger things – but all keep in touch. 'They're family – they pop in, email, we see them in their productions...'

Pushed to pick a favourite, Rebecca singles out 1987 student winner Stephen Tompkinson. 'Everyone spotted something special in him,' she twinkles, 'and he's remained a great champion of radio drama.'

Bristol does the business

BBC BRISTOL FACTUAL has been the home of antiques programming for more than 30 years. As well as *Bargain Hunt* (96 episodes a year for BBC One), it makes *Flog It!* for BBC Two (75 episodes plus 20 'best of' shows).

This is another lynchpin of the daytime schedule, in which members of the public try to make money out of their antiques and family heirlooms.

Since starting in 2002 *Flog It!* has made people realise that things hidden away in a cupboard or loft might be worth something. Many of the items that turn up on the show are obvious – grandma's china, for example – but there have been plenty of surprises, such as an 18th century microscope found in a skip which sold for £1300 and a collection of 32 railway posters, given to the owner by a friend but kept in a drawer, which sold for £8000.

'There seems to be no limit on what's out there,' says presenter Paul Martin. 'At every valuation day there is always something that catches the eye – a painting, pieces of memorabilia or the tools of an old trade. They all have stories to tell about our heritage.'

Filming is currently taking place on series nine of *Flog It!*, which celebrates its 500th episode this year. Peter Smith is series editor of both *Bargain Hunt* and *Flog It!*

Bristol is also responsible for the grand dame of antiques programmes, *The Antiques*

Roadshow, and *Priceless Antiques Roadshow*.

The daytime spin-off brings together the best *Antiques Roadshow* finds and the experts who first spotted them. The programme reflects the passions of the experts and their enjoyment of meeting the thousands of people who attend *Roadshow* events. Thirty five editions of *Priceless Antiques Roadshow* are made each year, under series editor Simon Shaw.



Here's to heirlooms: *Flog It!* presenter Paul Martin



RDC actor John Biggins with former members Ewan Bailey and Stephen Tompkinson performing current Radio 4 play *Say What You Want To Hear*

Company members Phillip Cunningham, Gerik Schjelderup, Olga Edwards and Allan Jayes pore over a script in 1942

Richard Sambrook, director of Global News, leaves the BBC this month, but before going he talked to Ariel about his career, and its highs and lows

by Candida Watson

WHAT DOES A MAN look back on after 30 years in the BBC, scaling the management heights and being involved in some of the biggest events of the time?

Richard Sambrook is off to the greener grass of corporate PR, and he reminisces with fondness on his career at the BBC – the hard times and the highlights.

A news man all his working life Sambrook says: 'There were three or four things which were moments of history, like being in Berlin when the Wall came down. You are so aware it is a turning point in history, and you are so privileged to be there telling the story to the world.'

Sambrook was outputting the *Nine O'Clock News* on November 9 1989 when the Reuters wire agency flashed the story that the East German government was opening the wall. 'I knew it was either the biggest story ever, or the biggest cock up.' The next day he flew to Berlin to cover the extraordinary scenes unfolding in the city.

He was also editing the *Nine* the night of Lockerbie. He describes the story as one that 'grew through the evening', from first reports of an explosion at a petrol station, to the story that a light aircraft had crash landed on the petrol station, to the awful news that a transatlantic passenger plane had exploded over the village.

'We were scrabbling for information and pictures, and all the time it was getting nearer to nine

'It's time to go, it's been great, on with whatever's next'



Richard Sambrook on his way to give evidence to the Hutton Inquiry in 2003

'I am sure there will be a smaller BBC, a clearly defined purpose'

o'clock, then we were on air and I was trying to drive the story during the bulletin.'

Sambrook moved from output to news management in 1992, becoming

Newsgathering news editor, and head of the department in 1996. He has fond memories of being there as huge changes took place. When he started only four BBC News bureaux in the world were equipped for live tv broadcasts, and none of those were in Europe. He says: 'Within a few years we were doing 24 hour news and had live capability everywhere. That transformation in the 90s was amazing, and it was great to be a part of it'

Hutton report

But no one's career can be all highlights – and Richard Sambrook was part of one of the most traumatic events in the history of the BBC – the row over Andrew Gilligan's report on

the *Today* programme which led to the Hutton inquiry, the censuring of the BBC and the departure of the chairman of the Governors and the then-dg Greg Dyke.

David Kelly, Gilligan's source for the story, committed suicide.

Sambrook, who was director of news at the time, says now: 'Although there were a lot of difficult moments around Hutton, and there is no question that the BBC got some things wrong, at its core it was about defending the independence of the BBC and that was very important. Gilligan undoubtedly made mistakes, but the story he broadcast was broadly right.'

Sambrook insists he doesn't dwell on the past.

'I am not someone who looks back and has great regrets. You keep moving forward.'

And indeed he did. Within months of the Hutton report he became head of global news. He says, despite rumours to the contrary, that the two events were not related.

He has enjoyed being global. 'In the last few years we have had significant audience growth; we have got Arabic TV, Persian TV, more output on the web; yes we closed some services, but we've had the freedom to build a really good service – it has been really satisfying.'

Strategy review is 'crucial'

As Richard Sambrook tidies his desk, and empties his diary, the ramifications of the strategy review are reverberating round the BBC.

From his vantage point at the exit, Sambrook believes this is a crucial

moment for the BBC, and a crucial statement of intent. He sees it as a real opportunity to underline the national importance of the corporation in the digital future of Britain.

'If we show we have thought hard, retracted a little and really defined ourselves, the strengths of the BBC, its link to its audiences, will be recognised,' he says.

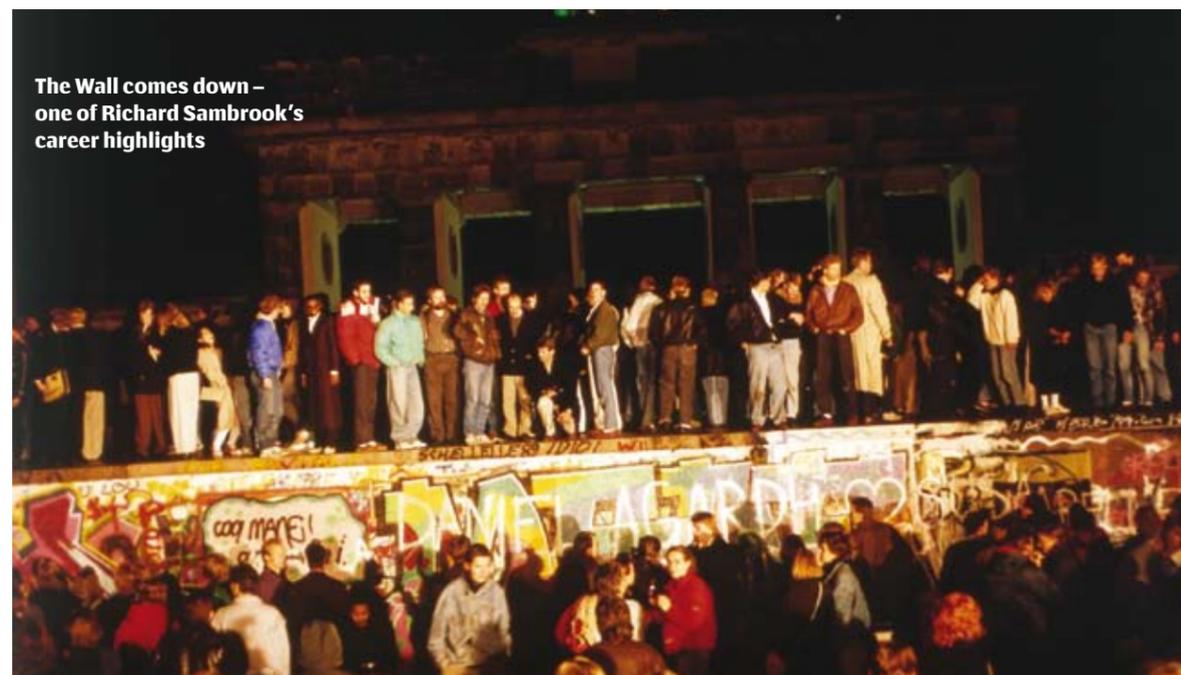
New career

He also believes the licence fee is safe because, he says, there is no better model. He doesn't think the proliferation of ways in which viewers can access content without having a tv alters the fundamental 'rightness' of the principle, and thinks systems can be found to monetise those different access points.

And he expresses no regret for leaving as the BBC prepares for change all around. 'It's time to go, it's been great, on with whatever's next.'

What's next is a couple of months off, a visiting professorship at Oxford, and then a whole new career in PR, working for Edelman, the world's biggest independent public relations company. He'll be global vice chairman and chief content officer, helping clients produce video and online content.

As he bids farewell to the organisation in which he has spent the greater part of his life, what will Richard Sambrook miss? Not much, according to this forward looking man, but he does find one thing strange. 'After years of going in and out of BBC buildings, I won't have that free access any more. It's a bit like being locked out of your house.'



The Wall comes down – one of Richard Sambrook's career highlights

This is the page that everybody reads. Please email claire.barrett@bbc.co.uk
You can also contribute to the mail page directly from the Ariel Online home page

Good enough to know

Of all the proposals in the Strategy Review, the closure of 6 Music must be the most perverse. With its mix of knowledgeable, passionate and witty presenters and eclectic content, 6 Music represents everything that is good about the BBC, and is unlike any other UK radio station, commercial or otherwise.

Surely the main criterion for assessing any programme, channel or station should simply be: Is it any good? If there is a reason why senior management get paid so much it should be for the ability to answer this question, and if they can't see past listening figures (comparatively small for 6 Music but up 12 percent year on year) and specious arguments from Murdoch and his thugish clan, then there is something seriously wrong. Empty-headed, shameful and depressing.

Barnaby Perkins
stills library

Advice from a friend

We are concerned that Mark Thompson's proposal to close the Asian Network is fraught with real danger. While we acknowledge the BBC is committed to diversity, we know at the same time it is struggling to retain black minority ethnic staff.

One of the reasons for the BBAF is to try to help the BBC, as a critical friend would. And so we feel it right to question whether this decision may make the problem of retention, progression and even recruitment far worse than it currently is.

The message that closing the Asian Network sends, however unintended, is that the BBC no longer cares for a growing section of its licence fee payers. Even though the dg intends to reinvest the money into other parts of the BBC and put Asian programmes on medium wave, we are worried that this is a backward step and will do more harm than good. After all, aren't we going digital in 2012? So what happens to the Asian Network two years from now?

We would urge Mark to rethink his plans and implore the BBC Trust to listen to the public clamour to keep the Asian Network and 6 Music open.

BBC Black and Asian Forum

■ The reasons given for the proposed closure of the Asian Network are

Don't blame the service, shoot the messenger

I won't repeat the many valid calls that 6 Music provides unique, valued content to a distinct demographic (the BBC Trust acknowledged as much); what does need bringing to attention is that the performance of the station is distorted by the slow uptake of DAB technology.

The date of the tv signal switchover put a pressure on the public that has resulted in the new format becoming ubiquitous. Radio listeners have had no such consumer pressure, and so DAB sales have only been slightly above the rate of replacement (jumping slightly each Christmas). So when the trust says 'only one percent of the population listens to 6 Music' that is hugely skewed by the fact that the vast majority of listening is still through analogue.

For years the great hope of DAB was the switch of car radios. However, this is a false dawn as DABs are relatively high in electrical consumption (affecting overall performance). So new cars are advertised with connectivity to MP3 players instead. This has many large implications for all radio habits (not just the digital services). While I agree in principle to the re-focusing of the corporation's breadth/cost effectiveness, this proposal smacks of a superficial concession. We need to look at how our digital reality shapes up against what we expected, then assess its performance. But above all, why can't we have quality AND quantity?

Ben Spoor
services co-ordinator, World Service

weak and the alternatives for the future un-workable.

Poor management was behind the Asian Network not performing well in recent times, with previous 'interventions' ruining this network.

Commercial radio simply cannot provide the British Asian audience with the quality of content we produce. If quality, world class journalism is what Mark Thompson wants, then we are providing it.

We cover sport in a way that nobody else in the Western world would even dream of. We talk about British Asians in sport, we give them a platform and we cover sport which is of huge interest to our audience – which other outlet gives a detailed report of an Indian cricket match?

And we're the only radio station in the world that gives a platform to UK Asian artists. Even Jay Sean has said that, without us, he would never have made it in music.

Seriously, how can the BBC even think about getting rid of us?

Nikesh Rughani
broadcaster/presenter, BBC Sport, Asian Network

■ The proposal to close the Asian Network is a devastatingly backwards step. It would deprive the communities of a national platform on which to air their views and one which helps to define their national identity. By providing a few hours of programming a day on AM frequencies, we would never be able to com-

pete with the 24 hour commercial stations, no matter how great our news programmes.

We should be looking to strengthen the national network, return to the format that was popular with audiences a few years ago, when we were pulling in almost half a million listeners, rather than shut it down.

And what will that mean for many of its talented staff? Well, a few will return to regional programmes and some may be taken on by editors who are looking to truly reflect the real Britain of today. For the others it may mean leaving the industry altogether.

Please Mr Thompson, if you care about the growing Asian audiences, reconsider your decision because I fear the damage it will do in the long term is incalculable.

Rahila Bano
NW reporter, Asian Network

■ I seem to remember the BBC Trust telling the BBC a couple of years ago (December 2007) that it had to stop chasing ratings and focus on 'distinctive' output. Now the BBC has decided that the radio stations 6 Music, a unique incubator of new music, and Asian Network, Britain's only national Asian radio network, are to be shut down because they don't have enough listeners – two clearly distinctive and unique products which do not chase ratings, and which, paradoxically, are to be killed off because they are not 'distinctive'

and don't have enough listeners.

Am I missing something here?
Robin McMorran
OLP web producer

Stretchmarks will show

I was taken aback to hear that Mark Thompson urges us to 'put quality first' in his latest strategy review. I'm not sure if it's been noticed in the top echelons of the BBC, but the cutbacks of recent years are forcing us day-in, day-out to compromise on quality.

The only reason that the quality of our output hasn't hit rock bottom is that staff are stretching themselves further and further, often well beyond the call of duty. We are office-bound instead of being able to go out on stories and hear about new ones, the majority of our interviews are now telephone calls, broadcast equipment keeps breaking down, the roof of our radio car lets in the rain...

Where exactly do we reach the point when we, that is staff AND managers up to and including the dg, say that enough is enough, we are doing a disservice to our listeners and this has to stop?

Jenny Witt
sbj, Radio Foyle

Dire Straits

What's the best oxymoron connected to the BBC? BBC leadership? BBC Trust? With every new, ironically

named programme of job and service destruction the dg and his crew come up with – Value for Money, Creative Futures, Putting Quality First – and with every pro-market, anti-PSB decision the trust makes, the nearer disaster we sail.

We're in the Straits of Messina now, a narrow waterway between which lurk Scylla and Charybdis. You might be mistaken for thinking that they are a vengeful outgoing Labour government or a vindictive incoming Tory one. More and more it appears they are actually Mark Thompson and Michael Lyons.

Who needs political hatchet men when the BBC will provide its own to slash it to ribbons?

Mark Scrimshaw
chair, Bectu BBC division

Six Nations in sin bin

If the BBC is looking to cut costs and streamline budgets, surely one of the most obvious ways would be to cut down on the level of overstaffing for our Six Nations rugby coverage.

The weekend before last we had one presenter and two pundits in Rome, another presenter and three pundits at Twickenham, a commentator and co-commentator for each match, a pitch side reporter at both and Austin Healey providing statistical analysis from the stands.

That's ten on air people for two games getting paid heaven knows how much for doing something that a staff of less than half could manage. When Sky cover two football matches on a Sunday they have a presenter and two pundits at the later ground who provide analysis on the first match from afar and then get into the second game from pitch side.

Austin Healey's analysis is really good and helps non rugby fans understand the game better, but couldn't he do that as one of the three paid for pundits?

Or could we not have two pundits in the studio then him in the stand? Or more pertinently, couldn't he provide that analysis as the co-commentator?

In a time when we're being scrutinised from all quarters for how we spend our money, I can't believe we are displaying such blatant overstaffing live on tv every weekend.

Andrew Swanson
bj, Radio Stoke

OBITUARY

KRISTIAN DIGBY

Passionate, energetic, creative and hugely talented, Kristian Digby was a presenter who was always a force to be reckoned with. In six years at the helm of BBC One's *To Buy or Not to Buy*, one of the BBC's longest running property series, his warmth and comic timing could always be guaranteed to brighten the face of even the most demanding contributor.

Bristling with ideas and with



Kristian Digby at work recently on new BBC daytime show *To Build or Not to Build*

enormous personal drive, you could always rely on Kristian to use his instinctive qualities to propel a script to new heights and make it sparkle on screen.

If you were look-

ing for a presenter who was always on time, then Kristian was definitely not your man, but what was absolutely certain was, when he did turn up, his performance would be well worth the wait.

Although Kristian made many, many episodes of our series, he approached each one with the same level of verve and enthusiasm as if it were his very first.

This week we watched his final shows and, although tinged with great sadness, we couldn't help but smile, as it was clear to all, that his

playful humour and boundless love of television was as irreplaceable as ever.

Kristian, who was 32, presented a number of other BBC property shows including *Double Agents*, *Living in the Sun*, *House Swap* and *Buy It, Sell It, Bank It?* He also fronted *That Gay Show* which went out on former BBC digital channel BBC Choice in 2001.

Kristian Digby was a gifted individual whose unique qualities will live long in the hearts and minds of all those who knew him.

Adrian Padmore

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Acton. Warm, sunny, 2-3 bedroom flat, furnished W/M+GCH. £1,170pcm Studio loft, self contained W/M+GCH. £750pcm. East Acton zone 2 Central line. Email sophie@sophienville.co.uk. Telephone 07821 908664

Acton W3. Great room in lovely family home close to BBC White City. Available Monday to Friday, £100pw all inclusive. Contact rozina.checkland@mb.org.uk Telephone 07747 133034

A lovely large studio flat in Ealing Common. £750pcm. Please contact Mira on 07710 040581

B&B London/Bucks homes. Inexpensive, flexible. Telephone 020 8840 1071. Email home_rentals@btinternet.com

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BBC house share Perivale tube nearby, 12 minutes White City. BBC housemates. Small bedroom £295pcm. Telephone 01895 634610

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Chiswick. Lovely, light double room in friendly flatshare by Stamford Brook tube. 2 professional flatmates (one BBC). £620pw plus bills. Available immediately. Emily ejekerr@gmail.com. Telephone 07808 268202

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Chiswick single room to let in shared house with garden. £400pcm inclusive call 07774 692864

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Double bed, Holland Park. 10 minute walk to TVC Centre or Notting Hill. 3 month rental £700 (inc), Email lllsaab@yahoo.com or call 07890 326274. Louise

Double bedroom, Chiswick. Sharing with 2 female journalists. £650pcm including all bills. Contact 07766 818640

Double room in lovely flat, White City. £650pcm including bills. Telephone 07950 263285

Ealing flat single room available. £354pcm plus shared bills. Sharing with two other BBC employees. Clean and quiet. Off street parking. Email clive.collins@bbc.co.uk

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Lovely 1 bedroom furnished flat with an extra mezzanine area. Mod cons inc washing machine. Ladbroke Grove/Notting Hill. 2 minutes from Portabello Market. Close to TVC. £250pw. Karina 07919 006361/ktabet@yahoo.com.

Manchester Salford Quays 3 bed, ensuite, bathroom, secured garage, lounge with balcony. £795pcm. Telephone 07800 984123 or www.jordansrentals.com REF: inst-4577

Marylebone W1 (near BBC). Two room study/bedroom suite for non-smoking professional. In warm Georgian house near shops, tubes and leisure centre (with swimming pool). No weekend stays. Highly recommended. £595pcm phone Robert on 020 7262 6308

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Monday to Friday accommodation, close BBC. Goldhawk Road tube, serviced room, ensuite, own entrance. £600pcm inclusive. millyburns@talktalk.net. Telephone 07770 843346

Monday-Friday. Lovely, furnished double room in Highbury and Islington. £30 per night incl bills. Female preferred. Available 1 March. Email alys@alystomlinson.co.uk

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Shepherd's Bush Tunis Road 1 bedroom S/C garden flat. Bath/shower. Eat-in kitchen, door to small patio garden. Gas C/H/W/D. £1000pcm. To include ct and water. Available now. Telephone 01435 830605

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PROPERTY

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BBC presenter invites you on wonderful tour of Nepal. Website www.angelholidays.co.uk

Beach house featured in Coast magazine. Beach 100 yards. Sleeps 6. Winchelsea Beach, East Sussex. Email ann.sinclair@hotmail.fr. Telephone 07880 702959

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PERSONAL

John Peter Bailey (TVC and Lime Grove 1956-1991, Editing and Recording Operations Manager) passed away in Spain after a long illness in January 2010. Memorial service to be held at Holy Trinity, North Farnbridge, Essex CM3 6LU at 2pm on Saturday 20 March. Reply to jpbmemorial@gmail.com

SERVICES

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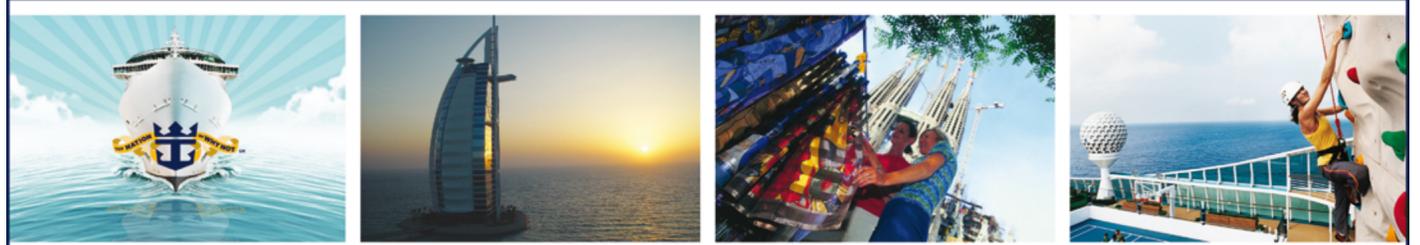
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C 15-Mar-10 A 03 months

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Cardiff
7D/Ref: 260933
E C 14-Mar-10 A 03 months

Learning Manager
London
7D/Ref: 260302
E C 15-Mar-10 A 06 months

Recording Operator
Glasgow
5H/Ref: 275685
C 14-Mar-10 A Various

SUB-PRINCIPAL (No. 3) & TUTTI Double Bass
Manchester
Orchestra/Ref: 272580
E C 22-Mar-10

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Head of Drama
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Assistant Producer, Revealed
London
Grafton House
7D/Ref: 274316
C 21-Mar-10 A 12 months

Newyddiadurwr Fideo (Canolbarth Cymru)
Aberystwyth
7D/Ref: 273234
E C 16-Mar-10

Broadcast Journalist, Persian Service
London
Bush House
7D/Ref: 255140
C 11-Mar-10

Broadcast Journalist, Sport Interactive, East
Cambridge
5/7D/Ref: 273593
E C 16-Mar-10

Broadcast Assistants - Casual Pool, BBC West
Multi Location - West
3/4H/Ref: 270623
E C 15-Mar-10 Casual
Various

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C 31-Mar-10

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E C 12-Mar-10

Business Manager and Acting Company Secretary
London
TV Centre
10S/Ref: 264549
E C 14-Mar-10

Charity Appeals Advisor
London
White City
10D/Ref: 275578
E C 22-Mar-10

Metadata Resources Manager
London
Broadcast Centre Media Village
9D/Ref: 273610
E C 15-Mar-10

Media Planner
London
White City
8D/Ref: 260011
E C 16-Mar-10 A 06 months

Interactive Stats Developer / Data Architect
London
TV Centre
7D/Ref: 273348
E C 15-Mar-10 Various

Project Manager, Health & Safety
London
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7D/Ref: 272272
C 15-Mar-10 A 12 months

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London
7D/Ref: 271338
C 18-Mar-10 A 06 months

Complaints Management & Editorial Standards Advisor
London
6D/Ref: 275777
C 15-Mar-10

Assistant Media Planner
London
160 Great Portland Street
5D/Ref: 275516
E C 14-Mar-10

Scheduler, Multimedia Newsroom
London
5D/Ref: 274748
C 18-Mar-10 Various

Team Assistant, Corporate Affairs
London
TV Centre
4D/Ref: 275783
C 16-Mar-10

Training Co-ordinator
London
White City
4D/Ref: 275704
E C 18-Mar-10 A Various

Commercial Assistant, Commercial Agency
London
White City
4D/Ref: 275534
C 15-Mar-10

PA to the Head of Audience Services
London
White City
4D/Ref: 274527
C 15-Mar-10 A Various

Scheduler, BBC Yorkshire
Leeds
4D/Ref: 274018
E C 18-Mar-10 A 08 months

PA - Senior BBC Academy Team
London
White City
4D/Ref: 271534
C 15-Mar-10 A 12 months

Personal Assistant to Commissioning Editors and Drama Team Assistant.
London
3D/Ref: 275531
C 15-Mar-10 A 12 months

Gweinyddwr Cronfa Ddata
Cardiff
3D/Ref: 273477
C 14-Mar-10 A 06 months

Database Administrator / Gweinyddwr Cronfa Ddata
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C 14-Mar-10 A 06 months

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E C 12-Mar-10

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Broadcast Centre Media Village
10D/Ref: 275544
E C 21-Mar-10

Head of Monitoring
London
Broadcast Centre Media Village
10D/Ref: 273323
C 15-Mar-10

Software Engineering Team Leader
London
Broadcasting House
9D/Ref: 270654
C 14-Mar-10 A 12 months

Technical Lead (Online Media Group)
London
Broadcast Centre Media Village
9D/Ref: 268678
E C 21-Mar-10

Technical Project Manager
Cardiff
8D/Ref: 263131
E C 15-Mar-10 A 12 months

BBC WORLDWIDE

VP, Programming, EMEA
London
Media Centre
SENEX 1/Ref: 266785
C 10-Mar-10

Sales Executive TV & Publishing
London
Media Centre
1W/Ref: 275448
E C 21-Mar-10 A 10 months

PA to Chief Technology Officer, BBC Worldwide
London
Media Centre
3W/Ref: 275768
C 14-Mar-10 A 06 months

See Attachment

A child's eye view

Georgie Bevan joined Newsgathering to bring children's stories to an adult audience

I'VE DONE SOME CHALLENGING THINGS in my time as a journalist, but producing a live-link between school kids in England and Haiti was one of the toughest – especially as the only way to communicate with the BBC's Haiti team was by text. To my amazement everything worked out and it has been one of the highlights of my three month attachment to Newsgathering.

As a producer on *Newsround* I'd often thought it a shame that so many stories involving children never get beyond CBBC. Like Georgie, the 12-year old recovering from anorexia, or the school in Bolton that's given every pupil an iPod to help with lessons. With this in mind, my attachment was all about getting more children's voices on adult



news, and sharing the best of *Newsround* with other outlets.

The first hurdle was finding out how newsgathering works and who commissions the stories. To an outsider the Television Centre newsroom is overwhelming – so to work out who does what, I went to every meeting I could find and toured the specialist offices introducing myself. The carpet bomb approach seemed to work. Once I'd survived death by planning meeting, I was armed with a list of programme editors and planning producers.

It wasn't long before *Newsround* stories started making an impact.

On Demand put two *Newsround* films on the front page of the News website: one about a campaign called Pink Stinks, to stop little girls from drowning in a sea of all things pink and fluffy. The other was about the iPod school in Bolton: both stories were the top hitting videos on the website for that day.

By the end of my attachment *Newsround* had well and truly made its mark in adult news. We'd provided fascinating case studies, like one on the young girl who was abused online through a social networking site. A questionnaire about kids' sleeping habits led to a long discussion on *Today*.

In all, I think the attachment was a success and although I am now back at *Newsround* I want to keep producing content which can be shared across news programmes. *Newsround* is a goldmine of great stories which can appeal to all audiences. I hope this attachment has proved that.

Been anywhere nice?
Send your attachment stories to Clare Bolt

FULL DETAILS AND HOW TO APPLY

Full details and how to apply are on Gateway at: https://jobs.bbc.co.uk/fe/tp1_bbc02.asp
For assistance contact BBC Recruitment's Response Team on: 0800 082 8080 or 0370 333 1330

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PHOTOGRAPH: MARK BASSETT

JANINE RATCLIFFE

FOOD EDITOR OLIVE MAGAZINE

When did you first become interested in food?

When I was a kid I was this complete food freak. I used to ask my Mam for Robert Carrier part-works when everybody else was asking for toys in the 70s. I had a set of Fanny Craddock cook-books and used to cook little canapés when I was about 11. I'd make three course meals for my Mam and her boyfriend. It was strange behaviour for a kid.

How did you go on to a career in food?

I really wanted to write about food because it is my passion. But I thought I'd need more experience of cooking if I was going to write about it.

So what did you do?

The biggest magazine at that time was Good Food and I was a big fan. So I went to see Leith's School of Food and Wine and at the interview I found out that every year two of Leith's students get to work at Good Food for six months and that was it. I thought that's what I'm going to do. I'm having that and that's my goal.

That's a big step and an expensive one, isn't it?

I spent £14,000 going to Leith's. My dad died so I was left some money so everything at that time was life changing. Basically it was a 14 grand risk on get-

ting a job with Good Food magazine.

What was it like?

It was really hard, like going back to school, and you have to keep in mind your goal and go for it. I got an interview for the Good Food placement with the then editor, the legendary Orlando Murrin, and it was really difficult. I must have seemed fanatical because at the end of the interview he said, 'Janine, I'm sure whatever you do in the future, you're going to be very successful at it.' I thought I'd over-egged it, but I got the job and went to work there for six months and it was brilliant.

And after that?

I became a freelance home economist which opens up the world of food. One day you could be working on a tv commercial or an editorial for olive or Good Food and next day writing recipes for a magazine.

What is a typical day like for you?

Juggling loads of balls in the air. Today, for example, we are working on three issues at once: editing the May issue, testing recipes for the June issue (so I'll be back and forth to the kitchen) and booking shoots for July and ringing up home economists and booking them.

What sort of skills do you think you need for your job?

You have to be super organised and able to switch from your writing head to your cooking head or looking at visuals and trying to work out what to put on the cover. It's a really creative job, but if you weren't organised it would be like a runaway train.

You have to do a lot of tasting. Does that mean eating things you don't like?

There's not much I don't like. I haven't really got a massively sweet tooth but I've found on a cake testing day you can really get into the sugar thing.

That might sound like heaven to some people...

Earlier in the week we were doing a meringues feature. We tested nine different recipes in one day, which was a bit much! Everyone in the office puts on a stone when they come here and you have to hold yourself

back or you'd be huge.

Do you teach or show people how to cook?

I do demonstrations at cookery shows and what people want to see are simple things. They want to know how to make dinner in 20 minutes. Things that make them think, 'I could buy that and make healthier, cheaper food for my kids.' Even though olive is a very stylish looking magazine we don't do complicated recipes.

What do you cook for friends?

I don't do four courses, dinner parties or puddings; my friends bring those. I never punch above my weight cooking wise and would never try to make some Michelin star type dish or a weird kind of souffle thing.

Do you have a favourite type of food?

I love to go out and eat something like Japanese because I love the preparation behind it and it's not something I'd cook at home. If I'm at home then it's curries. I'm obsessed with the perfect curry and also pies or massive big casseroles with dumplings, all those really homely things.

What's the best bit about your job as food editor?

People say you've got the best job in the world but it's still a job. It's lovely to have that buzz from developing and writing recipes and it's great to hear from someone who says they've made your recipe and it was brilliant. It is nice being able to make someone really happy. That's the bit I love.

Interview by Sue Llewellyn

foreign bureau



MICHAEL VOSS

HAVANA CORRESPONDENT

IT WAS EARLY EVENING and the San Francisco church in historic Old Havana was floodlit especially for the BBC, as a backdrop for our final live broadcast from Cuba.

While Matt Frei interviewed me about what might happen here once the generation who led the Cuban revolution – Fidel Castro and his brother Raul – were no longer around, both of us were trying hard not to shiver or show just how cold we felt.

Tropical Cuba was going through a bitter cold snap. None of the team had brought any warm clothes with them from England or Washington. Yet after two days of unprecedented live broadcasts from Havana for the News Channel's *Inside Cuba* special, this was almost the only thing that didn't go as planned.

It all started about a year ago when News Channel controller Kevin Bakhurst asked how the Cuban authorities might react to the BBC producing a special to be co-presented live from Havana.

It took almost a year of negotiations. It looked all set for December, but at the last minute the authorities called it off.

In the end, after countless meetings, they relented and in mid February senior world affairs producer Rachel Humphreys and picture correspondent Rob Magee flew in from London, teaming up with the BBC's Cuban producer, William Rakip, and cameraman/editor Alberto Moreno. What followed was a hectic week of shooting packages, sorting out the live positions and constant negotiations about access and interviews.

After their initial hesitation the Cuban press authorities pulled out all the stops. Matt Frei was able to interview a range of people including top politicians. He was also allowed to spend a day with a Cuban family looking at life through their eyes.

We ended up going live almost 20 times over two days, hitting the *One, Six and Ten* along with the News Channel, World News and World News America.

Day one came from the European Broadcast Union's fixed position on the 23rd floor of the Havana Libre Hotel. Day two was an OB from San Francisco Square. At one point, though, it looked as if we might be pulled off air. The day before the first live, an imprisoned dissident died after a hunger strike. The next day Matt included the death in his introduction. As soon as it was over, the authorities said it was not on the list we had given them of what we intended to cover. We explained that it was a breaking story and there was no way we could ignore it. In the end they relented. The show could go on.

CV

Degree: BA, fine art, University of South Wales. MA, film theory, University of Amsterdam

Career highlight: Getting the attachment at Good Food. It was the beginning of an amazing journey to where I am now

Favourite food: Cheese

green room

THE ARIELATOR

A weekly take on life at the BBC: who's up, who's down, who's off



UPSIDE A brush with greatness for Radio Cambridgeshire presenter **Andie Harper** when he seized the opportunity to have a quick word with American civil rights leader Reverend Jesse Jackson. Andie was in the office early when he got the message Jackson was going to use the station's NCA facility to speak on that morning's Today programme, ahead of his talk at the Cambridge Union. Having been familiar with his work since doing American studies as a student in the 60s, Andie quickly grabbed a mic and collared the obliging Rev to get an interview for his weekly 9am show. 'For me it was something very special – not sure what he thought – and he was brilliant,' said Andie. 'I don't think the people with him wanted him to do anything extra but he didn't give it a second thought. Clint Eastwood and then I retire!'



Sara Harrak, a 20 year-old runner with Post Production, has won the First Light Open Access award in association with Bafta for her film AWOL – an accolade voted for entirely by the public.

'I was extremely nervous, but also excited. My heart was in my throat,' says Sara of the glitzy awards ceremony, which was also attended by the likes of Nick Frost and Ian McKellan. Sara's film was featured on Ariel Online and she reckons the exposure 'definitely helped', so give yourself a pat on the back if you voted for her. Of course the film, about depression, is so good she certainly didn't need our assistance. See it at tinyurl.com/awolfilm

EARWIGGING

OVERHEARD AT THE BBC

...Is iced coffee ever hot?
'The clue is in the name'...

...Bill had his ears in his fingers...

...Please don't get Topol and Trotsky mixed up...

...I don't care if they can see my bum – as long as they let me on the plane...

...I want to stop shooting Panorama each week, when we're really only doing the magic roundabout...

...Did you get the anti-inflammatory cream for your bits?...



Going underground: content producer and singer **Silvia Costeloe**

SILVIA COSTELOE IS A WOMAN on a mission. Not content with training for the London marathon in April, the content producer has written a song about the particular form of gait that she will utilise in the race. Namely – running. It's even sung at an appropriately exhausting pace.

Though she is an accomplished songsmith and has played plenty of gigs, this is the first time Silvia has attempted to get into the charts. With an officially recognised iTunes release plus accompanying video and promotional activities, she says 'it is all proving pretty challenging'.



The song won't be released until April, but as all proceeds from the run and single are going to Leukaemia Care in memory of her father, Silvia's getting the hype machine in action early. The song and video went up on her Myspace page this week to encourage iTunes presales (which also count towards a song's first week chart position).

'Running the marathon at the speed of the song might not be advisable,' admits Silvia. 'But hopefully people will download it and feel like they've done a little exercise, even if they've only been on the London underground.'

myspace.com/costeloe

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

AS THE WINTER Olympics drew to an end, the team at Mark Carter's *Drive Show* on BBC Surrey wondered how best to cover the games, given that there were no local competitors. Then they had an idea...

'The show broadcasts each evening from Guildford in Surrey, and fortuitously we also discovered a Guildford in

Surrey in Vancouver,' explains Mark (pictured). 'One thing led to another and we did a half hour simulcast with Vancouver talk station CKNW'.

It may have been 4.30pm in Surrey, but it was 8.30am in Vancouver – time for the *Bill Good Breakfast Show*. Mark and Bill discussed the UK's take on the Winter Olympics, and how a county like Surrey could make the best of the 2012 Olympics.

They also found time to explore perceptions of each other's broadcast areas – with typically confused results. 'Listeners seemed to mostly think of maple syrup, mountains and Bryan Adams,' says Mark, 'while Canadian host Bill admitted to liking a pint of Guinness. Not particularly known as a tippie with Surrey links, but we went with it!'



WE HEAR THAT...

IS IT US, or did Lauren Laverne's 6 Music show on the morning of the strategy review contain a few messages in the playlist? It began on a positive note with the Chemical Brothers' Hey Boy Hey Girl ('superstar DJs, here we go!') sounding a note of defiance in the face of adversity. Then came Bleeding Heart by Jimi Hendrix, who asked, 'do you know what it means to be left alone' with 'not even a love to call your own?'. Nat King Cole then announced 'there may be trouble ahead... let's face the music and dance.' A defiant opening salvo perhaps, but the brave face slipped with the Pixies' apocalyptic Monkey Gone to Heaven (chorus: 'This monkey's gone to heaven'). Our analysis ends with the next track, Stevie Wonder's Higher Ground, which has a reborn Wonder singing 'I'm so darn glad he let me try it again... I'm so glad that I know more than I knew then'. A portent of the future or just wishful thinking? The trust only knows...



TO ADD to the dg's current travails, the socialist defenders of the hirsute at the Beard Liberation Front have announced a 'beardwah' is in effect against Thompson following the strategy review. According to group leader Keith Flett, a 'special BLF shaving squad is on the case', with a mission to part Mark Thompson from his manly growth. Wouldn't happen to Adrian Chiles...

Free Best of Britain and Ireland tickets

BBC MAGAZINES is joining over 350 exhibitors at the Best of Britain and Ireland 2010, where you can hear about thousands of potential destinations and experience talks, tastings and live entertainment. To claim a free pair of tickets (worth £15) for the show, which takes place at London Olympia on March 19-20, visit tinyurl.com/bestofbi and quote promo code **Bbc8210**

Win 3rd & Bird toys

CBEEBIES' ANIMATION *3rd & Bird* brings to life the adventures of a community of birds who live in a colourful tree and sing, dance and



whistle their way through the day. In each episode two young birds, Samuel and Muffin, explore their world. Now fans of the series can create their own adventures for the duo with a

new collection of toys from BBC Worldwide and Fisher-Price. We have two prizes consisting of a Do the Muffin Talking Friend – which hops, waddles, flaps and sings – and three mini Soft Friend plush toys to offer two readers. **To enter to win, tell us: who is Muffin's brother? Email ariel competitions by March 15.**