

ariel

THE BBC NEWSPAPER

OPERA UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT IN
AMBITIOUS NEW SEASON
Pages 8-9

WORD ON THE STREET



PHOTOGRAPH: JEFF OVERS/BBC

◆ **NICK ROBINSON** and Laura Kuenssberg were among those who worked round the clock on the most complex and gruelling general election ever covered by the BBC **Pages 2-3**

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KEVIN PASHBY, radio producer, BBC West Midlands, on his first week at work. **Page 6**

SUZANNE LORD, news producer, who can't get enough of the Scotland bureau, if not the Scottish weather. **Page 14**

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An election like no other

by Candida Watson

◆ **THE CULMINATION** of the most gripping election campaign for decades – and the most challenging in BBC history, according to Mark Thompson – produced strong tv viewing and a weekend of record traffic to BBC News Online.

The audience for *Election 2010*, anchored by David Dimbleby, peaked at 6.6m, with an average of 4.7m, a 36.1 percent share and a 16.1m reach. The programme was broadcast on BBC One, the News Channel, BBC HD and BBC Two in the nations.

Programme editor Craig Oliver said: 'It was an extraordinary privilege to work with such a talented team on one of the most exciting and intriguing stories. The journalism was extremely sharp, the production had real impact and the technical staff performed miracles. What more could you want?'

Across all channels the BBC's

tv election night programming had a total reach of 17.7m between 9.55pm and 2am.

There was a live results service on Radio 4, 5 live, BBC Scotland, BBC Wales, BBC Northern Ireland and all local radio stations. Cov-

One, and attracted healthy audiences, with Northern Ireland taking a 31 percent share, Wales 24 percent and Scotland 26 percent.

In Northern Ireland the story of the night was First Minister and DUP leader Pe-

stacking up, and she looked absolutely in shock, then Robinson came in and he was ashen. It was a fascinating night.'

The strong audience figures were not limited to election night. An independent survey for the BBC showed more than 40m adults claimed to have accessed election news and information from the BBC each week of the campaign.

Helen Boaden, director of News, told Ariel: 'I find it genuinely inspiring to see the way BBC news teams work so hard and so creatively to deliver the very best for our audiences...on every level, locally, regionally, nationally and on our global services, we did serious, useful journalism and analysis. But there was also plenty of wit and a real richness about the way we covered the UK.'

She added: 'It will be interesting now to see if we have to turn round and do it all again in six months.'

A veteran of six general

11.4m

The number of unique users who visited the BBC News website on Friday, breaking the previous record of 9.2m on the day of the Obama election victory. There were more than 100m page views in total and, at peak, 1200 searched for a constituency result every second.

erage was also on the Red Button and the BBC's Facebook and Twitter sites and Ceefax. The mobile election results pages had more than 1m views.

The nations ran their own programmes on BBC

ter Robinson losing his Westminster seat in East Belfast. Sbj Andy Martin, who doorstepped Robinson as he walked into the count, said: 'It was extraordinary. We noticed the bundles of votes for Naomi Long were really



In for the long haul:
Nick Robinson

Adrenalin-fuelled marathon to cap

by Sally Hillier

◆ **EXHAUSTED** but exhilarated. That's how many BBC people feel this week after covering the big story. If you sign up for general election duties, you have to accept you're in it for the long haul, and what a haul it was.

Results programmes that began around 10pm on Thursday were just the start of marathon tv shifts for David Dimbleby (reportedly kept going by honey), Nick Robinson, Jeremy Paxman and Laura Kuenssberg, among others.

It was a similar story at radio where presenters such as James Naughtie, Carolyn Quinn, Victoria Derbyshire and John Pienaar kept listeners up-to-date through the small hours and beyond.

Behind the scenes, too, extraordinarily long shifts were clocked up with some key staff working, with only the odd mini-break, through Thursday and Thursday night and well into Friday – the culmination of an operation that started more than a month ago when the election was called.

For Lindsay McCoy and Thea Rogers, Nick Robinson's producers, the graft started around Easter, building up to regular 14-hour days as the campaign gained pace.

'We were following the party leaders and it was pretty manic,' says Rogers.

One of their greatest challenges, she adds, was producing a package for the top of the *Ten O'Clock News* after each of the prime ministerial debates, which themselves



Hard slog: Nick Robinson's producers Thea Rogers and Lindsay McCoy

didn't finish until 10pm.

In the last two days of the campaign, the two producers rushed with Robinson from one end of the country to the other as the wan-

nabe PMs made their final pitches. On election day itself, though, they were off duty. 'The idea was to rest on Thursday then get in really early on Friday to start



The ties have it: David Dimbleby chooses a fresh one to go back on air late Friday morning



Marathon man: even Jeremy Paxman, snapped during a break with election night editor Craig Oliver, was showing the strain during his 18 hour shift

elections at the BBC, Mark Thompson said he couldn't remember another one as complex or demanding as this one.

And the output was 'first class', he said: 'Brilliant campaign coverage was followed by an election night (and its fascinating aftermath) which showed the BBC at its very best – clear, authoritative, fair but also unbelievably gripping.'

On the big night it wasn't just news staff who worked flat out; May 6 was a very busy evening and night for studio and post production staff in TVC, who had five different programmes to cover. As well as the news programme in studio one, there was Channel Four's Alternative Election Night and RTE's election coverage in separate studios, plus *Watchdog* and the *Armstrong and Miller Show*.

■ Did you spot any faces you recognised in the virtual reality House of Commons on *Election 2010*? The 'MPs' were actually staff members who sat in for the graphic.

■ 40 satellite trucks were brought in from across Europe, to ensure the BBC was live at more counts than any other broadcaster.

■ A news producer was locked in with the psephologists all day on May 6, ensuring nothing leaked as they crunched the numbers for the exit poll, which was very accurate.

■ BBC Parliament had 'a good campaign', doubling its audience during the last four weeks, and achieving its highest ever weekly reach of 942,000. The channel broadcast the morning press conferences, plus highlights of the day's campaigning, and all debates.

■ For the first time, reporters broadcast live and on the move using Live U, essentially a computer fitted with sim cards from various networks. When connected to a camera, LiveU compresses video and uses 3G mobile signal to stream footage back to a server at TV Centre. The technology allowed North of England correspondent Chris Buckler to broadcast live from the Conservatives' battlebus during David Cameron's 36-hour marathon and political correspondent Mike Sergeant from the Lib Dem campaign trail.

■ In another first, the Audiences team helped editorial teams to plan their general election coverage, using their own research to provide insights into the prevailing mood in the UK.

■ Two months into their placements, members of the Journalism Trainee Scheme had an election night baptism of fire, whether working on graphics tickers in Scotland, updating results in Norwich or producing an online piece for Global News on what African election observers made of the process.

■ Political correspondent Laura Kuenssberg has been judged one of the winners of the campaign by press commentators, who have praised her Twitter feeds.

... The election was the perfect subject for a photographic project to capture 24 hours in the life of BBC News. Pictures like these, from Fred Scott, Kieran McCarron and Angela Catlin will go on public display

apture the story that ran and ran



BJs Eunan McConville, Martin Mawhinney and an indie colleague (left) watch the story unfold in BBC Northern Ireland



Excitement mounts: Adrian Masters, BBC Wales



And it's a wrap: end of show celebrations in TC1

cutting pieces for that day's news,' says McCoy. 'But we got totally caught up in the excitement of the results, kept texting each other, and barely got any sleep.'

After returning to duty on Friday, they hardly stopped – working all over the weekend and into the start of this week. They can see no let-up in the coming days.

What sustains them? 'Each other,' says McCoy. That, along with huge doses of adrenalin and the 'fantastic' camaraderie within the BBC election team, she adds.

Despite the tiredness and madness of it all, she doesn't hesitate when asked to sum up the experience of covering the 2010 election. 'Bloody brilliant.'

Surprises among prizes at the Sony Awards

by Candida Watson

THE RADIO INDUSTRY turned out in force on Monday night for this year's Sony Awards, which saw success for a wide range of BBC programmes, from news on the World Service to sport on Radio Scotland and the tragedy of Alzheimers on Radio Ulster.

The first prize of the evening went to 6 Music presenter and musician **Jarvis Cocker**, who issued a passionate defence of the station in his acceptance speech for the DAB Rising Star Award. He said: 'I will take this opportunity to rant – the show I do could not exist on any other station – this award is a vindication of the 6 Music way of working.'

A second gold for the digital station, which is slated for closure in the strategy review, went to **Adam & Joe**, in the Comedy category.

Radio Nottingham presenter **Frances Finn** beat off strong competition from broadcasters including Eddie Mair and Nick Ferrari to take Speech Radio Personality of the Year – accepting the award Finn said she had not prepared a speech because she never expected to win.

News Journalist of the Year was **Lyse Doucet**, who said: 'I think this is my most exciting day in Britain since I got indefinite leave to re-

main.' She said she was pleased to be a part of the BBC Radio family, and thanked colleagues across the service, but particularly in Afghanistan.

Sir David Attenborough, perhaps better known to television than radio audiences, was named Speech Broadcaster of the Year. Accepting the prize Sir David said: 'Television is a doddle. If you have birds of paradise and gorillas, it's a doddle. Radio terrifies me, I think it is extraordinarily difficult, congratulations to you all who work in it, I didn't think I would be able to....I thank you very much indeed for this magnificent award.'

The **Dermot O'Leary** show on Radio 2 was best music programme; best speech programme was **Nihal**, on the Asian Network. The judges said the programme; 'engages its audience so powerfully you have to stop everything and listen.'

Woman's Hour presenter **Jenni Murray** took best interview for her conversation with former head of Haringey children's services, Sharon Shoesmith, who was dismissed after the death of Baby P. Accepting the award Murray thanked her production team, but said she was sad the award came about because of the death of a child.

Local radio station BBC Berkshire had four nominations, three

Frances Finn, Speech Radio Personality of the Year.



of them for Andrew Peach and his Breakfast show. The station took the community programming award for 'New Ballads of Reading Gaol', which featured poems written by prisoners.

The judges commended Radio Ulster's gold winning breaking news story 'Alzheimers Tragedy', describing it as: 'a gripping and emotional story....which led to a national debate.'

The BBC dominated the nominations in the journalism categories, and Newshour on the World Service

was named best current affairs programme; Archive on 4 was best feature, for 'Working with Margaret' a programme about being on Margaret Thatcher's staff, made for Radio 4 by Brook Lapping; best news special was Crossing Continents – Chechnya, again on Radio 4. The station also took gold for the music special Elvis by Bono, which was made for Radio 4 by Ten Alps. The awards ceremony was continuing as Ariel went to press, so for a full list of winners go to www.radioawards.org/

Big hitters to battle it out at Bafta ceremony

BBC SHOWS DOMINATE this year's Bafta tv nominations especially in the drama, comedy and factual categories. Political satire *The Thick of It* and period drama *Small Island* earned three nominations each.

In-house productions *That Mitchell and Webb Look*, *Getting On* and *Miranda* also received two nods each in the comedy categories.

In the BBC's year of science, *Chemistry: A Volatile History*

has been selected for best specialist factual along with its fellow BBC Four production *Art of Russia*. BBC Three's *Blood, Sweat and Takeaways* joins *Who Do you Think You Are?* in hoping to win the best factual series award.

Generation Jihad and *Gypsy Child Thieves*, which both aired on BBC Two, have been nominated in the current affairs section while the News Channel's reporting from the Hai-

ti earthquake has been picked for the news category. In sport, coverage of F1's Brazilian Grand Prix has been pitted against the World Athletics Championship.

The June 6 ceremony will be hosted by Graham Norton who has also been nominated and joins Stephen Fry, Charlie Brooker and Michael McIntyre to battle it out with ITV big-hitters Harry Hill and Ant & Dec in the entertainment categories.



Three nominations: Michael (Ashley Walters) and Queenie (Ruth Wilson) in Small Island

Take a fresh step

THE BBC ACADEMY'S Stepping Stones placement scheme is again open for applications, offering dozens more staff the chance to experience other BBC departments or work for external companies.

Last year there were 180 applications and of these 40 placements were funded.

In a new development this year the Academy will run special lunchtime 'conference call surgeries', where people can find out more about the scheme and how to apply. These will run on May 13, 20, and 27 and June 8.

For further information go to the website tinyurl.com/sstones

Plea to Pakistan over Urdu

TWO DOZEN PAKISTANI radio stations have been asked to stop broadcasting the BBC's Urdu Service news bulletins by the country's media watchdog.

The World Service partners 34 FM stations in Pakistan but 24 have been told they should cease using BBC's programmes by the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA).

It is understood the targeted stations completed all the required pa-

perwork for PEMRA last October and the World Service has called on the Pakistan authorities to allow the stations to resume Urdu news updates. The corporation argues that millions who listen to radio in Pakistan are missing out on impartial and editorially independent news.

It adds that it will monitor the situation closely and continue to support its partners in getting BBC programmes back on air.

NEWS BITES

A NEW online booking system for the Proms saw a 900 percent increase in the number of tickets sold on the first day of availability this year over last. More than 80,000 tickets were snapped up, 65,000 of them online. Seven concerts were sold out by the end of the day, including the First Night and a performance by Plácido Domingo of Simon Boccanegra on July 18.

RADIO 4'S *The Food Programme* was top radio programme of 2009 in the Voice of the Listener and Viewer Awards, with the station's 1989 *Day by Day* named best new radio programme. BBC Two's *The Choir* was best tv programme, with *The Making of Modern Britain* topping the new tv programme poll. *Doctor Who* was best children's tv show and the special children's tv award went to *Horrible Histories*. Newsreader Charlotte Green took the Roberts Radio special award.

MARK THOMPSON will give this year's MacTaggart Lecture at the MediaGuardian Edinburgh International Television Festival in August. 'In what is a big year for the BBC, as well as the rest of the broadcasting industry, it's a great privilege to be asked to give the MacTaggart lecture,' he said.

TWO BBC websites have won People's Choice awards in the 2010 Webby's. The awards, which are a US event, have 70 categories covering all types of websites, from blogs to specialist advertising. The BBC News website took the prize in the News section, behind overall winner the New York Times; BBC Blast was People's Choice in the NetArt category.

ROADSHOWS BY HR Direct this month will visit 11 locations. For further details email Lindsey.symes@capita.co.uk

THE BBC Academy has launched an online booklet to guide individuals and managers through the hundreds of training courses available in the BBC. Go to learn.gateway.bbc.co.uk

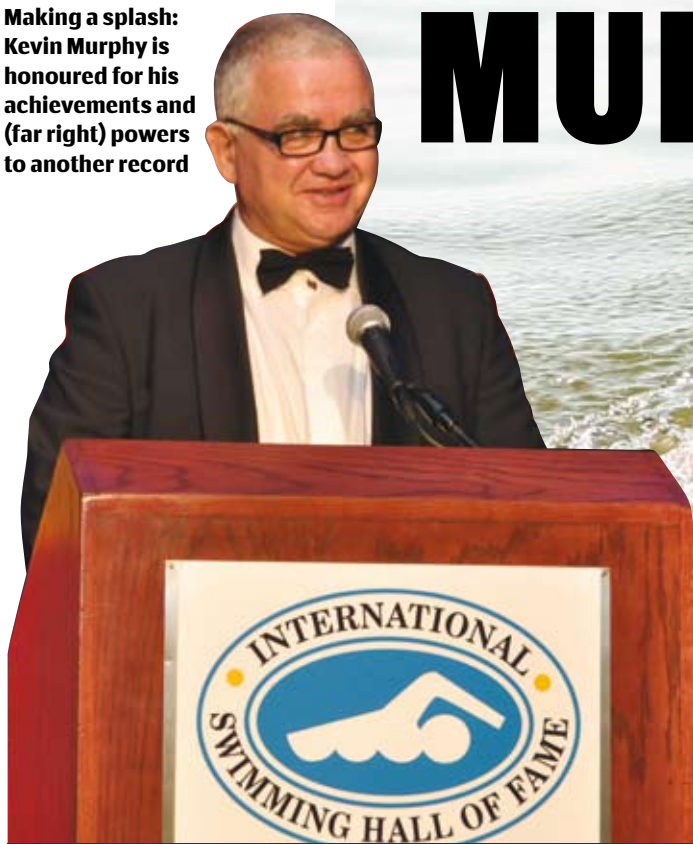
BAKHURST'S NEW DUTIES

■ Head of the BBC Newsroom Mary Hockaday has closed the post of deputy head and asked News Channel controller Kevin Bakhurst to add the role to his existing responsibilities. Bakhurst, who also oversees the *One O'Clock News*, will now deputise for Hockaday in her absence and line manage On Demand. He takes up the duties on May 17.

In further changes Hockaday will take on line management of radio news, and Sam Taylor, editor of Newswire, becomes head of editorial development. He will oversee business change, the move to W1 and the further development of multimedia. The Newswire post will be advertised.

The re-shuffle follows the departures of former deputy Craig Oliver for Global News and Simon Andrewes, who was head of development.

Making a splash: Kevin Murphy is honoured for his achievements and (far right) powers to another record



MURPHY IN THE SWIM



PHOTOGRAPH: ISHOF

by Lisette Johnston

HE IS DUBBED King of the Channel, having swum the straight between Britain and France 34 times, more than any other man in history. And last weekend broadcast journalist Kevin Murphy was inducted into the International Swimming Hall of Fame in Florida for his efforts.

Now aged 61, Murphy, who works in the

radio newsroom, discovered his ability to swim long distances as a teenager and has a swimming career spanning seven decades. He is the only man to have completed three double Channel crossings and his longest swim was 52 hours when he attempted a third leg.

Despite suffering a heart attack last year and needing major shoulder surgery in both 2003 and 2004, he has no plans to

give up the hobby he is passionate about and would like to do another channel crossing this summer if he can.

'Swimming has been my escape from journalism,' he explains, 'but really I am substituting one pressure for another. When it comes to swimming the competitive streak takes over and I just want to be the best in the world, so that is why I have kept going. I joke I

will hobble down in a zimmer and jump into the sea, and I've definitely got a few years left.

'Obviously I am pleased and honoured to be included in the Hall of Fame, especially because it is my peers who are voting. I would like to think that over the last 40 years I have moved the course of swimming forward, because when I started, one Channel crossing was seen as the ultimate achievement.'

'Every hive is a local drama'

by Candida Watson

Imagine a world without bees. It would be a hungry place – 87 of the 115 staple food crops of the planet require bee pollination. Without them, millions of agricultural workers would be needed to do the job by hand, using tiny brushes. There would be fewer flowers; no drowsy buzzing on summer afternoons; and the answer to Rupert Brooke's poetic question 'Is there honey still for tea?' would be a resounding 'No'.

Apocalyptic? Around the world bee colonies are dying and no one really knows why. The government is backing a £10m research project into the problem. Now BBC local radio is lending its weight, with its 'Bee Part of It' campaign.

Teaming up with the National Trust, British Beekeepers Association and the National Pollen and Aerobiology Research Unit, each station will follow the life of a hive over a season.

Jeremy Pollock, editor, special features unit, brought the project together. He says: 'There will be 42 truly local stories, starting with an empty hive and watching it develop into one buzzing with up to 40,000 bees, producing around 50lbs of honey.'

Every station has a 'bee buddy', either a staff member at the NT property or a local member of the BBA. Pollock hopes that by telling the



Stung into action: Beekeeper Sally Morris with BBC Coventry & Warwickshire's Siobhan Harrison and Vanessa Pearce

story of its hive, each local radio station will raise awareness of the issue of declining bee populations, and also investigate it. The National Pol-

len and Aerobiology Research Unit will regularly take pollen samples and dead bees from every hive and analyse them, to see what can be

learnt.

◆ Genevieve Tudor, who'll be covering the campaign for BBC Shropshire, has just started a bee-keep-

ing course herself. She says: 'This campaign suits me perfectly. I had to fight off several colleagues to get the assignment.'

Tudor will be reporting on the BBC Shropshire website, on air, blogging, tweeting and posting on facebook about the hive at the grand NT property of Attingham Park.

◆ The most southerly hive in the project is on Jersey, where local apiarists are concerned that a predator, the Asian Hornet, might soon reach the island from France, where it has decimated bee colonies.

◆ The head National Trust gardener at Thomas Hardy's cottage is a novice bee keeper, so she'll learn about apiculture along with the BBC Dorset and Radio Solent audience. Online reporter Sue Paz is putting together a page of bee facts and figures for the Dorset site, and will do regular updates both online and into Radio Solent's morning show with Jon Cuthill.

◆ Stuart Banks, warden at the National Trust's Grange Barn in Coggeshall will appear regularly on BBC Essex's mid-morning show as he works with his new hive. Assistant editor Lynne Wilson says she's already learnt one thing about bees: 'Apparently, when they are full of pollen they are so fat they can't bend their bodies to sting you.'

'Bee Part of It' begins on May 17 and marks the start of the Springwatch Wild Season for English regions

CHANGING PLACES

◆ **SARAH WARD-LILLEY** [below] is the new deputy head of newsgathering, replacing **JONATHAN BAKER** who is now head of the College of Journalism.



Presenter **GINNY BUCKLEY** will join former detective **RAV WILDING** to co-present *Crime-watch* when it goes on the road this summer. **DIEDERICK SANTER**, former executive producer of *EastEnders*, has left the BBC to set up his own production company. Staff moves at BBC Oxford see **SERENA ANDREWS** come to the station from the East Midlands team. She will be taking over the reins of *Drivetime* in the next few weeks. And **PETER COOKE** is joining the station to cover **ANDY GORDON**'s attachment to the College of Journalism. Cooke has been working in radio, tv and online at BBC Southampton for the past 18 months as well as doing work for 5 live and the News Channel. New comms executive **ERIN MCINTOSH** joins the BBC to work on the Digital Media Initiative. **MYLES RUNHAM** has begun his role as the head of online for the Academy, after being head of interactive learning at Vision.

FACT OF LIFE

We truly are a nation of telly addicts. A study by the Broadcasters' Audience Research Board claims that people in the UK watch more than four hours of tv every day. But watching the box so much is not necessarily a good thing, as research by Michigan and Montreal Universities reveals. Their survey found the more tv a toddler watches the higher the likelihood they will do badly at school and have poor health at the age of ten. The research teams monitored 1300 children and also report that the negative effects for older children rose with every hour of toddler tv they had watched.

BBC IN ACTION



AMID QUESTIONS ABOUT VOTERS being locked out and speculation on the hung Parliament, one woman on the election trail made sure her voice was heard – **Barbara Hughes** let rip on the megaphone. For the final two days of campaigning, BBC West Midlands sent mid-morning present-

er **Joanne Malin** out on the road to ask voters what they would do if they were Prime Minister – giving them a megaphone and a soapbox. Mrs Hughes was in Dudley where she told the people of the town: 'If I was Prime Minister I would help every family with disabled children. They need all the help they can get.'

Joanne and vj **Patricia Hoskins** toured the region, reporting from Birmingham, Erdington, Kings Heath, Longbridge, Northfield and Walsall and Dudley. At the end of the day they talked to candidates in two areas about the issues raised by voters.

FIRST WEEK AT WORK

KEVIN PASHBY, PRODUCER, PHIL UPTON AT BREAKFAST, BBC WEST MIDLANDS

◆ For 15 years I worked in the world of commercial radio. It was my life. I was institutionalised. The thought of ever leaving my comfort zone brought me out into a cold sweat. But then the inevitable happened, and as the world of commercial radio began to shrink, so did the work opportunities. Last August it happened and I was made redundant. Thrown out of my familiar surroundings I contemplated working for the BBC – a thought which both scared me and conjured up images of journalists who took life and themselves too seriously. But how wrong I was. My first week at the BBC was the best week I'd had in radio for a long time.



The realisation that we didn't need to squeeze in the news between Britney Spears and Cheryl Cole was a luxury. I was like a kid in a sweet shop. Within a couple of days I realised that almost everyone who works at the BBC is human too. They laugh, joke and giggle. Everyone kept saying to me 'you'll notice a massive cultural difference' or 'you'll face so many obstacles' but, to be honest, I've not come across any major issue which I haven't previously encountered in my career. I have just focused on what has always been my main concern – what is coming out of the speakers for the listeners to hear. I couldn't have asked for a better start to my career with the BBC. Let's hope that commercial radio's loss is the Beeb's gain!

RESOURCE OF THE WEEK

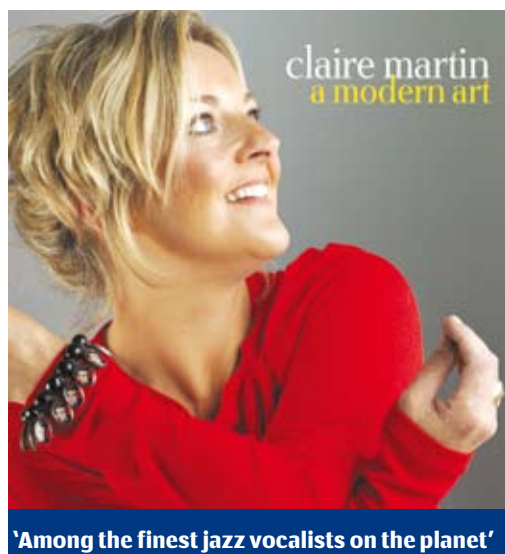
You may not have heard of Quickfire, but it's been declared one of the behind the scenes successes of last week's election. The system allows correspondents and producers to file copy back to their newsroom via text or email. This has proved key for breaking news with much of the content quickly being put across to the website. So far 300 BBC staff are registered to file via Quickfire.

SHAMELESS PLUG

PHIL JACKSON, PRESENTER, SOUTH LIVE

◆ While I'm not prone to blowing my own trumpet, I'll happily shout the proverbial walls down about my wife – Mrs Jackson (AKA Claire Martin). Within the BBC, she's the smoky voice of *Jazz Line Up* on Radio 3, but when she puts down her headphones and takes off her pass she's also a mighty fine singer.

Claire's no stranger to the microphone as she's been at the forefront of the British jazz scene since she landed her first record deal in 1992. Despite a back-catalogue that now stretches into double digits and more awards than there is room for, America has been a little slow to wake up to the 'First Lady of British Jazz' until now. Following her most recent release, A



'Among the finest jazz vocalists on the planet'

Modern Art, the respected American magazine *Jazz Times* had this to say about my missus:

'She ranks among the four or five finest female jazz vocalists on the planet (it wouldn't be overstatement to recognize her as Anita O'Day's rightful heiress), and on the rare occasion she performs stateside, the crowds are invariably SRO. So it's hard to fathom why Claire Martin, a household name in her native UK and a perennial British poll winner, remains so underappreciated on this side of the Atlantic. Maybe it's because those visits are so rare, or perhaps because her albums aren't always easy to find. Well, with the advent of iTunes, almost her entire output is just a click away. As a starting point, you'll be hard pressed to do better than her latest release.'

Although America will have to wait a while longer to hear her sing live – her next gigs over

the pond aren't due to take place until 2011 – she'll be playing to a home town crowd in Brighton on Wednesday June 2 at The Basement. For this particular performance, Claire's band features pioneering jazz/fusion guitarist Jim Mullen, virtuoso bassist Laurence Cottle, who has played with Sting, Eric Clapton and even Black Sabbath, and Ian Thomas who is one of the most in demand session drummers in the UK.

I could go on, but being her husband my normally iron-clad impartiality could be called into question. Best see for yourself then – I promise that Claire won't disappoint.

Claire Martin performs at the Basement in Brighton on June 2. Doors open at 8pm, tickets are £15.

Links: www.clairemartinjazz.com www.thebasement.uk.com

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THE GRIT BEHIND THE GLAMOUR

The BBC is opening the door as never before on opera, with appearances by some of its most acclaimed stars and behind-the-scenes documentaries that provide an insight into what it takes to succeed in their world. **Sally Hillier** reports

MOVE OVER, BRITAIN'S GOT TALENT. The BBC has got... well, talent. It has signed up some of the biggest names in classical music for a series of programmes devoted to opera, or, if you prefer, 'the most thrilling art form of all'.

At least that is how Antonio Pappano, music director of the Royal Opera House, describes it. Watch out for Pappano, presenter of BBC Four's colourful three-parter *Opera Italia*, the centrepiece of the *Opera on the BBC* season, which starts this month.

Engaging, enthusiastic, down to earth – a bit of a geezer, even, the charismatic Pappano, who was born in east London to Italian parents and made his name as a pianist and conductor, is sure to strike the right chord as he explores the role played by opera in Italian history and culture.

He's a tv natural, just like Gareth Malone of BBC Two's *The Choir* fame, who is also part of the opera line-up, taking on a new chorus master role in *Gareth Goes to Glyndebourne*.

Other contributors to the ambitious pan-BBC collection include singers, musicians, directors, critics, and, er, tv chef Rick Stein, who looks at the food that has fuelled some of opera's most creative minds.

And no special season would be complete without Stephen Fry, who explores why he loves the music of Wagner while loathing the composer's anti-Semitic political views.

Opera on the BBC encompasses more than 20 programmes across television and radio – principally Radio 3 but Radio 2 is also involved, with Kiri Te Kanawa launching a search for a new opera star – complemented by extensive online content at bbc.co.uk/opera.

How has it all come about? The project started many months ago when Janice Hadlow, then controller of BBC Four, and Peter Maniura, head of classical music, television and performance, discussed how they might engage tv audiences in performance art, particularly opera, traditionally seen as a 'posh' people's pursuit.

'Initially we talked about doing something just on BBC Four,' Maniura explains. 'That changed when Janice became controller of BBC Two and made clear she was still keen to be involved, then Radio 3 joined in as well.'

'We've always had a strong relationship with the Royal Opera House, and I suppose you could say that various currents came together at the same time.'

Plans were well under way when Jan Younghusband, the former head of arts at Channel 4, arrived at the corporation as commissioning editor, music and events.

She is thrilled by the 'unprecedented' range

of programming that has ultimately emerged from those tentative early discussions between Hadlow and Maniura. 'The BBC is opening the door on opera as never before,' says Younghusband, promising that this is just 'the first instalment' of a continuing exploration, while Radio 3 controller Roger Wright describes the project as 'the BBC's largest ever celebration' of the genre.

There have been opera seasons before, of course, but restricted to either BBC Two or Radio 3, presented by a classical heavyweight and very much performance-based. This time it's different. Yes, there are still plenty of big performance pieces from opera houses in the UK and abroad (*The Marriage of Figaro*, *La Boheme*, *Don Giovanni*, *Aida* on BBC Four; *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Peter Grimes*, *Tristan und Isolde* among a host of others on Radio 3), but there is 'added value' with a range of accompanying documentaries

It's an art form traditionally seen as the preserve of 'posh' people

Engaging: Antonio Pappano, who presents Opera Italia



and behind-the-scenes glimpses.

'This is opera from the engine room if you like,' says Maniura. 'It's practitioner-led, which gives it an authenticity.'

By practitioners, he means people such as soprano Danielle de Niese who provides an insight into the hectic life of an international star in BBC Four's *Diva Diaries*. Proving she's not such a diva after all, the singer, who shot to fame with her portrayal of Cleopatra at Glyndebourne in 2005, agreed to use a video camera to record her preparations as she makes her debut at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York.

Then there is Rolando Villazon who explores the technical, physical and artistic demands of his craft in *What makes a Great Tenor*, also on BBC Four; Plácido Domingo, who talks to Alan Yentob in a repeat of an *Imagine* profile (BBC Two); Graham Vick, who features in *Verdi – The Director's Cut*, a 60-minute BBC Two film tracing Vick's productions of *Aida* and *Othello*.

Separately, BBC Two will show Vick's innovative *Othello* production in its entirety. It was not the easiest of outside broadcasts as the performance took place inside a giant warehouse-style space in Birmingham with a company of 250 actors, singers and dancers drawn from the community, led by Ronald Sams – opera's first ever black *Othello*.

'It was a 360 degree production so there was no front or back of stage,' Maniura explains. 'The action happened around us and, to make things even more complicated, the

audience took part as well; all of a sudden they would get up from their seats and dance. The challenge was to take tv viewers into all of that.'

'Verdi's *Othello* is an established masterpiece but this was done in a radically different way.'

Asked if the BBC wasn't just trying to be cool and trendy and down with the kids, Maniura is adamant that Vick's interpretation of *Othello*, which earned rave reviews, deserves its place in the opera season.

'We want the programmes to be accessible and fun, but aficionados who are after traditional gold standard opera will find plenty for them, too. We made our choices [for the season] very carefully.'

The fact that so many professionals of international standing agreed to take part, gives *Opera on the BBC* credibility and authority, Maniura believes.

Pointing to the 'huge breadth of content' promised in the collection, he says: 'A number of journeys are available to the audience.'

Enjoy the ride.

The two of us: Rolando Villazon and Anna Netrebko in La Boheme



Sitting pretty: Danielle de Niese in Diva Diaries



Lost the plot? This might help

THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO

One of the wittiest yet most moving of operas. At times it's like a bedroom farce, with people hiding in cupboards, dressing up, jumping out of windows, but the characterisation is so skilful that it's much more than just pantomime. In fact, it's a serious commentary on the relationship between master and servant with the protagonists expressing themselves through some of the most beautiful music

Working out what is going on in the masterpieces can be tricky. **Tony Cheevers**, editor, opera, Radio 3, provides a quick guide to three of the works featured in the season

Count out and embarrass him to the whole household.

Famous bits include the Countess's aria at the opening of Act 2 (Porgi amor), and the duet in Act 3 between Susanna and the Countess.

AIDA

The first word that comes to mind is 'spectacular'. Set against the backdrop of ancient Egypt, it has been performed in grand arenas with towering scenery, large choruses, ballet and lavish costumes and is often described as 'the grandest of grand operas'. But Aida is also a psychological drama with the familiar operatic theme of jealousy – Aida, an Ethiopian slave to the Egyptian Princess Amneris, loves the soldier Radames but so too does Amneris. Add to this the complication that Aida is really the daughter of the Ethiopian king, Egypt's enemy, and it can only end in tragedy. Perhaps it's the combination of scale and spectacle, with a touching, intimate, human

drama that has made Aida one of the most popular operas in the repertoire.

SIMON BOCCANEGRA

It's not the most well known Verdi opera, but it's hugely revered by Verdi fans, not least for its central baritone role and for its beautiful and dramatic music. Set in 14th-century Genoa, former corsair (a kind of semi-pirate) Simon Boccanegra is reluctantly elected to the post of Doge (chief magistrate) and spends the opera trying to make peace among political forces that threaten the republic.

Two warring factions, a passionate love affair, a murderous plot, and an illegitimate child give plenty of material for Verdi to show off his considerable dramatic skills.



It's a clinch: Erwin Schrott and Miah Parsson in the Royal Opera House's production of *The Marriage of Figaro*

Mozart ever wrote. Figaro, Count Almaviva's valet, is due to marry the Countess's maid Susanna, but the Count puts a spanner in the works by trying every trick he knows to thwart the wedding and have Susanna for himself. His neglected wife helps Susanna to catch the

Down the wire – 19th century style

RADIO 3 LISTENERS will be able to enjoy special features including *Operas in the Afternoon* (operas from around Europe) and *The A-Z of Opera on In Tune*, which will offer an approachable and demystifying guide to the art form.

On May 16 *The Pleasure Telephone* (pictured) will tell the remarkable story of the use of the early telephone in the late 19th century to relay live opera direct to subscribers' homes, while in *Why do Women Die in Opera* Martin Kettle considers the phenomenon of the perishing prima donnas. Be it through suicide, murder, asphyxiation, drowning, execution, consumption, leaping off a balcony or dying in an avalanche, a significant proportion of female characters meet a miserable and often gruesome end.

bbc.co.uk/opera



It's all about the beauty of the voice

THE TELEVISION TRAILS

for the season feature close-up images of singers Ronald Samm and Stephanie Corley. The performers were accompanied by the BBC Symphony Orchestra in their renditions of *Esultate* from Verdi's *Othello* and *Vissi D'Arte* from Puccini's *Tosca*.

In the one minute version of the trail, the camera navigates its way around Corley's jawbone. 'It's showing the intricate muscle-play involved in performing,' says Emma Simon, head of Radio 3 marketing. 'The emphasis is on the beauty of the voice.'



Close up and personal: Ronald Samm features in the television trails promoting the season

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Pushing the boat out

I suppose it would be rather churlish to ask just how much the 'starship enterprise' set cost, but perhaps I might pose three little questions?

If the party on the boat was organised by the BBC and we didn't just gatecrash it... Whose idea was it? What was the point? How much did it cost?

Eric Smith

breakfast presenter, Radio Shropshire

BBC News replied: As part of our election night coverage, we produced live interviews and broadcasts throughout the night from a boat moored outside the London Eye, discussing the election results with views of the House. Andrew Neill was talking to politicians, commentators and well known personalities and opinion formers – including Michael Portillo, Simon Schama, Dan and Peter Snow, Ian Hislop, Alistair Campbell, Michael Ashcroft, Richard Lambert, Charles Moore and Lionel Barber.

Although we don't comment on production costs, the interviews were used across the BBC's output.

Crying fowl

The pigeon poo situation at TV Centre is somewhat out of hand now, with one safe walkway in particular being completely deluged on a daily basis. Indeed, BBC Workplace has helpfully installed a 'Slippery Surface' sign – which is now itself spattered with droppings.

Indeed, BBC Workplace's approach to the pigeon problem at TVC borders on cruelty with countless birds caught in netting – well known to be defective – now hanging dead, having been either starved, strangled

Why should our drinks be on the public?

How can the BBC justify spending licence payers' money on alcohol when a member of staff leaves? With staff quitting before the move to Salford, the frequency of these leaving drinks is increasing – and every time somebody goes, a few crates of beer and wine are claimed for on a BBC charge code.

It is shameful that alcoholic drinks can be ordered in this way. If a colleague is popular enough to warrant 'leaving drinks', I'm sure staff would gladly chip in a few quid for a pint

down the pub. The public is footing the bill for our luxuries. How long until the next expenses scandal, I wonder?

Chris Bailey,
interactive

The BBC policy states that the corporation will make a 'modest' – up to £5 per head – contribution to leaving drinks only if the person has served at least five years and only with the approval of the divisional finance director – ed.

or exhausted trying to escape.

The daily sight of panicking and distressed birds desperately trying to free themselves, walking underneath rotting and soon-to-be maggot-infested bird carcasses and sliding around on bird excrement is not pleasant, nor is it ideal in terms of health and safety.

David Lerner
BBC Information

BBC Workplace was invited to respond, but chose not to comment – ed

Credit squeeze

A propos the general anger following the inappropriate trailer superimposed over the crucial ending of *Doctor Who* on April 27, what can be done to stop Presentation/Red Bee, or whoever now plays out our programmes, from crushing closing screen credits and putting up superfluous split-screen in-vision caption trails while a perfectly adequate voiceover tells us exactly the same thing?

At the end of almost every programme I brace myself and am quite unable to see the credits I most want to read. They only recover in time to show me quite unnecessary ones like accountants or location caterers.

When the practice first began a few years ago it was raised on *Points of View*. A BBC person promised it would be stopped, but we've waited in vain.

Virginia Stowell
Retired staff

■ Not only are adverts appearing during BBC programmes, but ending captions are also being squashed into red boxes with text as small as 10 pitch. Captions then become illegible unless you have a 50" plasma tv or a special prescription for Specsavers.

This practice is even more annoying if you are looking for an actor's name that is not listed in the Radio Times – and remember, this feature promotes their names and qualities as professionals.

Even the adverts for programmes

on the right of the screen are so small that a voiceover has to read them out to us.

Russell Felton
Radio Merseyside's 'A' Team

Cover up with words

Those who were annoyed by Graham Norton's unscheduled invasion of the *Doctor Who* universe might not have been quite so much had they activated the subtitles. They largely covered up the graphic.

David Smith
subtitled, Red Bee Media

Past key to the future

I just wanted to write a few words to mark the BBC's considerable achievement in securing an impressive haul in the Focal International Awards for the use of archive footage and to congratulate all those involved.

This is a clear recognition of achievements in an area which will be of increasing importance to the

BBC's offer in the future. It is also testament to the durability and historical importance of the footage the BBC holds within its vaults.

Sir Michael Lyons
chairman, BBC Trust

New life for TVC

I responded to the news in 2007 of the possible sale of TV Centre by suggesting it was developed into a National Museum of Performing Arts.

The RTS and the National Media Museum have since convinced me that a national centre for the performing arts would make better use of the complex. Instead of museum style exhibits there could be galleries with historical displays drawn from existing museum collections – a V&A Theatre Gallery or BFI moving image gallery. The National Gallery has stated interest as has the British Library which has 12000 titles relating to the performing arts.

The BBC and other production companies could still use studios for live audience recordings and one studio could be allocated to the Royal Opera House for live relays.

It could include a music and dance academy and facilities for education and training. BBC training could be relocated to the centre.

Reaction from most of the organisations, as well as from the London mayor and the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, has been favourable. And if the BBC would take the lead and progress the idea into a plan, it would demonstrate its commitment to be the major cultural and performance arts supporter in the UK and begin to put into practice the second of the five priorities.

Ty Davies
London

OBITUARY

TOM FLEMING

Tom Fleming, the BBC's voice of the nation on great occasions, has died aged 82. He was a man of extraordinary talent; an actor, stage, television and film, a theatre director who founded both the Lyceum Theatre Company of Edinburgh and the Scottish Theatre Company. He was a writer and poet but was best known and loved by the public as a broadcaster – the voice of the BBC on state occasions for more than 50 years.

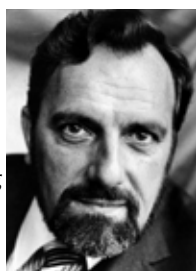
His rich voice, unique style and poetic way with words brought as much to our national occasions as did the live pictures over which he spoke.

Tom's first major commentary was on the Queen's Coronation in 1953 and the final one on the Edinburgh Military Tattoo of 2008. In 55 years, among others, he covered the Queen's Silver Jubilee, the Royal Weddings of Princess Anne and Prince Charles, the Enthronements of Popes and Archbishops, Trooping the Colour, the Bafta and RTS award winning VE and VJ Day com-

memorations in 1995, the funerals of the Duke of Windsor, Viscount Montgomery, Lord Mountbatten, King Olav V of Norway, Diana Princess of Wales and Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother.

Tom's words, which were particularly poignant on solemn occasions, set the mood and tone of the event for the viewer. He cared deeply about Remembrance Sunday at the Cenotaph. He particularly liked to bring out stories of individual people to contrast with the anonymity of Whitehall. In 1965, I was with him, as a young producer, when for the first time we had an additional live location, a small Surrey village. Tom painstakingly researched the lives of the 12 named on the war memorial and told how each had met their end for their country.

He was a man of great professionalism and integrity, meticulous in all his preparation for a commentary, determined to be accurate, doing his own research. He would arrive at the commentary box with sheaves of



beautifully hand written notes, short and eloquent phrases which were the core of his live commentary, while adding well chosen words off the cuff as the event unfolded.

Paradoxically, Tom was a very private person. He believed passionately that the commentator should be heard as an anonymous voice and should not be seen. It was a privilege to know such a remarkable broadcaster, a warm and funny man, who was held in great affection by all of us who worked with him. We will be forever grateful for all that he brought to us and to the BBC's coverage of great national events.

Philip Gilbert

STEPHEN HEARST

To aspiring tv film-makers in the late 1960s, the newly formed arts department of the BBC was the place to be. In the middle of that decade, Stephen Hearst was appointed deputy to Humphrey Burton, the founding head of music and arts, and becoming head of the department in 1967 when he was put in charge, not only of tv arts output, but also of a new intake of trainees, including

Tony Palmer, Alan Yentob and Nigel Williams.

Stephen seemed to us, his young producers, a formidably moral man. He questioned motives and aspirations as if we were his own family, suspecting some of us, rightly, of aspiring to be the Jean-Luc Godards and Ingmar Bergmans of public service broadcasting.

Nevertheless, he had a gruff affection for the most exasperating of his young Turks, dispensing praise and disapproval with equal vigour.

He had cut his teeth on documentaries, and went on to create a then new format, 'the televised essay', attracting large audiences for series such as Kenneth Clark's *Civilisation* (1969) and Alistair Cook's *America* (1972). He claimed he could tell within 30 seconds of the beginning of a documentary whether or not its director was 'a born film-maker'.

Voluble and combative, he was also courteous and without affectation: during meetings his swimming trunks hung on his office radiator after his daily visit to Lime Grove baths.



He came across primarily as a European intellectual of the old school, one of several talented emigres who found a home at the BBC.

I remember years after his retirement, we arranged to meet at a restaurant one day. I walked in a little late, and before I had sat down he launched into: 'My dear fellow, good to see you, have you read the new biography of Wittgenstein?'

To his puzzlement, I laughed, and had to explain it was at the unthinkable notion of any present-day executive starting up a lunchtime conversation on Wittgenstein.

There are several considerable figures from that pioneering era of tv, but few with Stephen's mix of critical judgement and personal warmth, and none in my view who commanded more affection.

Stephen Hearst (Hirshtritt), who was born in 1919, was also the BBC's head of tv arts features, controller of Radio 3 for six years in the 1970s, controller of future policy and special adviser to director general.

Leslie Megahey

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Production Executive, Classical Music TV
London
White City
10D/Ref: 307318
C 28-May-10

Production Manager, Blue Peter
London
8P/Ref: 287395
E C 19-May-10 A 12 months

Senior Producer, English Language teaching programme
London
Broadcasting House
8D/Ref: 305563
C 19-May-10 A 06 months

Programmes Executive CBBC Acquisitions & Animation
London / Salford Quays
7D/Ref: NNP279243
E C 14-May-10

Production Co-ordinator
Belfast Broadcasting House
5H/Ref: 305952
E C 17-May-10 A 07 months

Production Coordinators, Classical Music TV
London
White City
5D/Ref: 307316
C 28-May-10

Broadcast Assistant, BBC Radio 1Xtra
London
Yalding House
4D/Ref: 293581
E C 17-May-10 A 03 months

JOURNALISM

Assistant Editor, BBC Asian Network
London
TV Centre
10D/Ref: 307584
C 23-May-10 A 06 months

Business and Economics Correspondent, BBC North West Tonight
Manchester
9D/Ref: 304888
E C 18-May-10 A 08 months

Senior Broadcast Journalists
Hull
8D/Ref: 305049
C 17-May-10 A Various

Middle East Producer
Middle East
8/9D/Ref: 307807
C 24-May-10 A 12 months

Broadcast Journalist, Online & Planning, BBC Asian Network
London
TV Centre
7D/Ref: 307590
C 23-May-10 A 07 months

Broadcast Journalist, R1 Newsbeat and 1Xtra News
London
Yalding House
7D/Ref: 307058
C 20-May-10 A 06 months

Newyddiadurwr/wraig Fideo (Gohebydd) (De ddwyrain Cymru)
Cardiff
7D/Ref: 303090
C 18-May-10 A 12 months

Broadcast Journalist, Radio Suffolk
Ipswich
5/7D/Ref: 306406
E C 20-May-10 A 06 months

Broadcast Journalist
Hull
5/7D/Ref: 304891
E C 17-May-10

Broadcast Journalist (Multi-Media)
Grimsby
5/7D/Ref: 303813
E C 17-May-10

Broadcast Journalist, Nottingham
Nottingham
5/7D/Ref: 303741
C 12-May-10 A Various

Broadcast Journalist Researcher / Newyddiadurwr Ddarlledu Ymchwilydd
Cardiff
5/7D/Ref: 301273
C 12-May-10 A 05 months

Broadcast Journalist, BBC Radio Nottingham (part-time)
Nottingham
5/7D/Ref: 282117
C 18-May-10

BUSINESS SUPPORT AND MANAGEMENT

Finance Partner Sport & 5 Live
London
11D/Ref: 303619
E C 17-May-10

Executive Editor, Comedy Commissioning
Manchester
11D/Ref: 300131
C 21-May-10

Project Manager, Archive Content
London
TV Centre
10D/Ref: 307343
C 21-May-10 A 12 months

Communications Manager, Drama
London
TV Centre
9D/Ref: 306265
C 17-May-10

Commissioning Manager (Part Time)
London
White City
9D/Ref: 303185
C 11-May-10 A 09 months

Finance Analysts, Vision Productions
London
8D/Ref: 307759
C 23-May-10 A Various

Senior Research Executive, BBC Children's
London
TV Centre
7D/Ref: 306240
E C 18-May-10 A 12 months

Project Technician (Training)
London
TV Centre
7D/Ref: 303990
C 18-May-10 A 06 months

Scheduler UKTV
London
7D/Ref: 303898
E C 13-May-10

Technical Coordinator, DV Solutions
London
7D/Ref: 303443
C 17-May-10 A 06 months

Business Analyst, People Analysis
London
White City
7D/Ref: 297212
C 17-May-10 A 12 months

Partnership Executive, Business Development
London
White City
6D/Ref: 307515
E C 20-May-10 A 06 months

Commercial Executive, Fiction, Commercial Agency
London
White City
6D/Ref: 294827
E C 12-May-10 A 06 months

Previews Tapes/Promo Clips Manager
London
TV Centre
5D/Ref: 304420
C 17-May-10 A 12 months

Resources Organiser (Part-time, 0.8EFT)
London
TV Centre
5D/Ref: 304038
C 18-May-10 A 12 months

Scheduler
Plymouth
4D/Ref: 306405
E C 20-May-10 A 06 months

Customer Service Coordinator
Reading
4D/Ref: 297172
C 17-May-10

Team Assistant, Project TOO
London
White City
4D/Ref: 291081
E C 11-May-10 A 12 months

PA to Head of Programmes
Belfast Broadcasting House
3/4D/Ref: 307756
E C 17-May-10

Personal Assistant to HRLP
Birmingham
3D/Ref: 306404
C 20-May-10 A 12 months

Rights Business Manager, Sport
London
Under Review/Ref: 303483
C 17-May-10 A 12 months

NEW MEDIA

Web Researcher/Tagger, Navigation, BBC Learning
London
White City
5D/Ref: 302220
E C 23-May-10 A 11 months

TECHNOLOGY

Director, Digital Media Group
London
Broadcast Centre Media Village
SM1/Ref: 304365
E C 04-Jun-10

Lead Technologist
Salford Quays
10D/Ref: NNP307598
E C 01-Jun-10

Senior Technologist
Salford Quays
9D/Ref: NNP307677
E C 01-Jun-10

Senior Software Engineer, Ingex Solutions
London
9D/Ref: 304587
E C 19-May-10 A 06 months

Technology Lead Connectivity & Infrastructure
Cardiff
8D/Ref: 302567
C 12-May-10

Graphic Designer
Cardiff
8D/Ref: 299393
C 23-May-10 A 10 months

Software Engineer, Ingex Solutions
London
7D/Ref: 304588
E C 19-May-10 A 06 months

Broadcast Support Technician
London
TV Centre
6H/Ref: 303735
E C 16-May-10 A 06 months

BBC WORLDWIDE

Senior Research & Rights Coordinator, BBC Worldwide
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Media Centre
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E C 17-May-10

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See Attachment

Snow fun Scotland

Producer Suzanne Lord relishes another run with the Scotland News bureau

THIS IS MY SECOND stint in the Scotland bureau – I’m glad that this time I dedicated a lot of my packing space to thermals and a good selection of hats and scarves.

Even though I grew up in Scotland, nothing could have prepared me for how cold this winter would be. Snow has been one of our major stories of the last few months and one of my biggest challenges of this attachment so far.

Knowing where to send the trucks and correspondents so that they are in the best place to cover the weather before it happens is very tricky. Then there is the problem of getting everyone home safely at the end of the day, when they have to contend

‘Our team does everything - which I love’



with the havoc the snow has caused. All I can say is I am glad that summer is on the way and I’ll be the first to volunteer for heatwave stories.

They say variety is the spice of life, and it’s not just inclement conditions that get us out and about. Our team does everything, which is what I love about being here. One day we could be covering the Scottish Parliament and the next broadcasting from Bass Rock surrounded by 150,000 pairs of breeding gannets.

I can barely get my feet under my desk at PQ for the collection of wellies, waterproofs and walking boots needed to cover every eventuality.

Last year, when I was in Scotland for the first time, it was extremely busy. We had the first confirmed cases of swine flu in the UK, the release of the Lockerbie bomber and two helicopter crashes just six weeks apart. So far 2010 has also kept us on our toes. There is no such thing as a quiet day in the Scotland bureau, that is for sure, and being able to multi-task is a prerequisite for the job. Often you find yourself planning and setting up stories for the next day, week or month at the same time as producing channel lives and bulletin packages while standing up to your knees in snow.

The hours are long – very long indeed and often unsociable. There are only a few of us to cover a huge patch. While standing in the cold for hour after hour or getting a call in the wee small hours to deploy to a breaking story may not be everyone’s cup of tea, I love it. Although the first time around was hard work, being part of a fantastic team like the Scotland bureau meant coming back for round two was an opportunity too good to miss.

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/tpl_bbc02.asp
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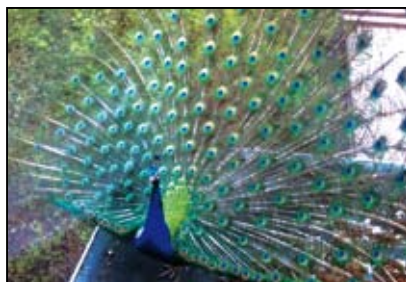
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THE ARIELATOR

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



UPSIDE BBC Oxford afternoon presenter **Jo Thoenes** is set to be the 'Next Big Voice of Equestrianism' after winning the chance to commentate at October's Horse of the Year. Jo's final challenge was an interview and live commentary at the recent British show jumping championships. Despite some curve-balls thrown in by the judges to keep her on her toes, she triumphed over the other two finalists thanks to her 'clarity of voice'. 'I was a little nervous heading up there on the train,' says Jo. 'But as for when I was commentating, I think I bypassed 'fear' and went straight on to 'survival' mode.' We're glad she wasn't too hoarse from all the excitement...



DOWNSIDE Staff at Wood Norton may have to be issued earplugs unless the **local peacock** – affectionately known as either Drew or Captain – finds himself a lady friend. The unmistakable squawking sounds of the randy fowl have been echoing across the site's leafy confines since last year and, with the arrival of spring, have reached fever pitch. 'He spends most of his time patrolling the area outside Bredon Wing or camped out above the building entrance,' says operations co-ordinator Chris Girling. Female peacocks – if you like what you see, you know where to go.

EARWIGGING

OVERHEARD AT THE BBC

...Don't bruise my tangerines...

...You voted Lib Dem to get back at your ex?...

...It's the kind of BBC job that gets advertised in the Guardian and mocked in the Daily Mail...

...They're my hung parliament shoes...

...I love the BBC when it works...

... 'Do you have ADHD?' 'I have a small pair of GHDs.' 'No – ADHD is different.' ...



SINGING FOR THEIR SUPPER

Photograph: Mark Bassett

THE WHITE CITY CANTEN, normally filled with the sound of clattering plates and cutlery, was instead bathed in the dulcet tones of more than 32 choir singers last Friday thanks to a flashmob made up of singing staff.

The impromptu choir had rehearsed for only an hour before surprising unsuspecting diners in their lunch hour with a stirring rendition of *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*. The event aimed to raise the profile of the BBC Performing Arts Fund, which ploughs money raised from phone votes on the reality show into initiatives to help artists and musicians get

ahead in their chosen careers.

'The teacher broke the ice very quickly and had us going around humming a tune. I never thought that you could have so many people holding the same note,' said Martin Asser of FM&T, one of the merry minstrels who all seemed to enjoy their time in the spotlight.

Alison Brennan from Radio News even came in on her day off to take part. 'I do sing, but I have never done anything like this before. I think it's great for staff morale, we should do it every week,' she said. Lunchtimes will never be the same again...

WIN BIG WEEKEND TICKETS

RADIO 1'S ANNUAL Big Weekend festival comes to Bangor in North Wales on the weekend of May 22. Billed as the UK's biggest free ticketed music festival, 40,000 fans will be taking in performances across four different stages at the Vaynor Estate in North Wales.

The event has a diverse range of acts on the bill, ranging from Rihanna to Crystal Castles, Vampire Weekend to Pendulum, and Florence and the Machine to Fabio and Grooverider. It will

go out on Radio 1, and online at bbc.co.uk/radio1, with highlights on BBC Three and extended performances on the Red Button. Radio 1 presenters will be on hand to introduce the bands on stage and broadcast from

the thick of the action.

Registration has now closed, but we have five pairs of weekend tickets to give away. To enter to win a pair, answer this question: **Which university did Vampire Weekend meet at? Email ariel competitions by May 14.**



WE HEAR THAT...

MUCH TWEETING predictably accompanied the more traditional election coverage on May 6. Two of the choicest snippets came from the cast of *The Thick of It*, proving that they don't need Armando Iannucci to try a spot of satire. 'This coverage is like the opposite of *Just A Minute*: speak for ten hours with deviation, hesitation and massive repetition,' said Chris Addison, while Rebecca Front had a novel solution for Broken Britain: 'I think all our lives would be improved by having David Dimbleby on tv all day, every day in perpetuity. That's the stability we're craving,' she said.

THE OTHER side of the election: News-gathering's Tony Dolce and Chris Buckler (right) grab a precious 40 winks on the Cameron all-night trail last week.



THE BBC'S celeb-filled election boat, ably helmed by Captain Andrew Neil, was such a hot ticket on election night that some people would do anything to get past the bouncers. After a cheeky glance at the guest-list, one blagger announced his name as 'David Hare'. He didn't get in – turns out pretending to be a critically acclaimed 63 year old playwright isn't the best idea when you're only 20...

ANOTHER WEEK, another new euphemism enters the corporate lexicon. A senior manager recently phoned Steria to enquire about his expenses, and was advised to contact book-keeping. He asked for their number but was told he couldn't be given one. Why? Because they are a 'non-voice team'.

Get 25 percent off festival tickets



GLOUCESTERSHIRE'S WYCHWOOD FESTIVAL has teamed up with BBC Introducing to provide a new platform for emerging artists at the family friendly event. Taking place from Friday June 4 to Sunday June 6 at Cheltenham Racecourse, the partnership will see the third stage rebranded the 'BBC Introducing... in Gloucestershire' stage. Introducing shows from the six counties that border Gloucestershire, plus the county itself, have all been asked to nominate ten bands to be on its bill. A judging panel including 6 Music's Tom Robinson will then pick the 28 bands who will take the stage over the weekend and play alongside main stage acts like the Happy Mondays, the Levellers and the Lightning Seeds.

From May 11 to May 17, BBC staff can get a 25 percent discount on day and weekend tickets to the festival. To get the discount, phone the festival box office on 01993 772580 and quote 'Ariel'. See Wychwoodfestival.com for more info.