

ariel

BBC IN THE EYE OF THE STORM AT THE EDINBURGH TV FESTIVAL Pages 2-3



Our sights set on the future

◆ **BLUE PETER'S** Lucie Harvey gives media student Sachelle Connor a helping hand with the practical side of programme making while sharing her insights into a BBC that is looking to broaden its recruitment pool. The pair are taking part in the BBC Academy's new Step Up mentoring scheme **Page 5**

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TORIN DOUGLAS, media correspondent looks at the legacy of Channel 4's Big Brother. P11

RORY CELLAN-JONES, technology correspondent, wonders whether piracy is a real threat to British tv. P6

PETER BOWES, LA correspondent on life in the Golden State. P15

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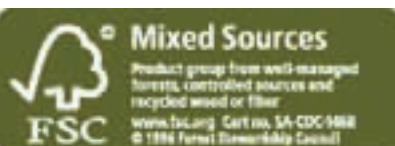
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BBC's a crowd in online news, rails Murdoch

by Cathy Loughran

◆ James Murdoch wasn't done when he accused the BBC of state-sponsored journalism, of making a land grab in online news – so threatening its independence – and having 'chilling ambition' to go further.

The chairman of News Corp followed up his scathing attack in his MacTaggart lecture with a call for a cut in the licence fee. He wanted to see a BBC that was 'flooding' the online market – where his company plans to be the first to charge for news – 'much, much smaller'.

Speaking 20 years after his father Rupert Murdoch attacked the British broadcasting establishment from the same platform, he claimed:

'Rather than concentrating on areas where the market is not delivering, the BBC seeks to compete head-on for audiences with commercial providers to try to shore up support – or more accurately dampen opposition to a compulsory licence fee.'

More critical still, Murdoch said, was the 'expansion of state sponsored journalism' which was 'a threat to the plurality and independence of news provision, which are so important to our democracy'.

In particular he attacked Radio 2 for targeting 25-40s, served well by the commercial sector, and the BBC's acquisition of the Lonely Planet travel guide business.

Few were surprised at the Murdoch stance. Speaking from another Edinburgh plat-

form the BBC's chief operating officer Caroline Thomson accused him of 'tilting at windmills, blaming everyone else': 'He had no solutions – the usual Murdoch diatribe.'

Were there areas from which the BBC should now retreat, Thomson was asked: 'Not Lonely Planet, nor Radio 2 which is classic BBC delivery of public service broadcasting – very popular but very distinctive.'

Her ITV counterpart John Creswell said it was a given that 'the BBC distorts every market it goes into. It's not its fault, it just does.'

'Look at BBC Three and Four...investments of around £145m for a four to five percent share. That's just too big.' And Dawn Airey, chief executive of five, thought it was definitely time for the BBC to start closing something down. 'Tough love' was what the corporation needed.

The BBC's business editor Robert Peston, in his Richard Dunn memorial lecture, could see both sides of the BBC v Murdoch argument over online news: 'Much of the private sector sees the BBC as crowding out legitimate commercial players. I feel the private sector's

PESTON V MURDOCH

AS FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS go, a loud, angry and public bust-up between two of the industry's most influential figures is about as good as it gets.

The heated, expletive-filled row between Robert Peston and James Murdoch

at the MacTaggart dinner – reportedly about the behaviour of the BBC – had Edinburgh buzzing.

'Of course we parted on good terms. And I didn't explode. We had a boisterous conversation,' was all Peston was prepared to tell Ariel.

Revealing star pay may destroy market

◆ In Jana Bennett's books, it would be a form of 'Soviet-style' oppression, but one way or another, it is looking increasingly likely that the BBC will be pressured into revealing more about the salaries it pays its biggest stars.

At Edinburgh, Ofcom chief executive Ed Richards said that public expectation might force the BBC's hand and Ed Vaizey, shadow culture minister, made it clear that a Conservative government would look for ways to put presenter pay in the public domain.

Earlier the director of BBC Vision had crossed swords with Vaizey over the public's right to know, debate and understand what the BBC pays its top talent, with Bennett arguing that salaries in the entertain-

ment marketplace could not be compared with other publicly funded pay.

'The BBC is in entertainment...it's a fundamentally different role that performers play to teachers and policemen. It's like me talking about Tom Cruise's movie deals. It's a different sector.'

Vaizey described that as 'an extraordinary argument to put forward': 'If you pay Jonathan Ross £6m, you have to argue the case.' In a climate of greater transparency, where MPs' salaries were made public, the BBC had to follow suit, he believed.

Did she really think the public would not understand why the BBC had to pay at the levels it does? Bennett said she appreciated that licence payers 'rightly want more information about how

their money is spent'.

'The point I was making was that setting talent fees is an inexact process and because we all operate in a market place, disclosure of individuals would very likely drive up costs. This would not be in the interests of licence payers,' she said.

What the BBC would do was look at publishing the 'block spend' on talent, which could be meaningful to people, Bennett said: 'But I think that [revealing presenter pay] would destroy the market. We don't want a Soviet-style terror regime.'

Kevin Lygo, director of television at Channel 4, believed the BBC didn't understand how 'disproportionately rich they are' but admitted that he would be prepared to pay a select few

TALENT GOES MISSING AS ARIEL

Man on a mission: James Murdoch



Feeling the pain: Robert Peston



Bit smutty: Jeremy Clarkson



pay,' he said. 'But it's not obvious that if you closed down BBC news online, the commercial sector would fill the gap with depth and quality, and it might exclude millions of people who will never pay for an online news

service.' Responding to Murdoch's MacTaggart, BBC Trust chairman Michael Lyons said: 'The BBC has no choice but to serve all audiences, but that doesn't mean that it can or should seek to squeeze out other providers.'

top stars double what they already get.

ITV director of tv Peter Fincham argued that perceptions had changed on what fees were acceptable. He reminded the audience that ITV, Channel 4 and the BBC had bid for Jonathan Ross: 'It was a time when commercial broadcasters were strong and ITV saw Ross at the top of his game but he went to the under-bidder, so it seemed like a good deal done [by the BBC]. It now looks like a piece of profligacy.'

The former BBC One controller also sounded a warning that if transparency was taken too far, and the BBC was forced to stop running the race, it would become just a marginalised educational broadcaster and that would be no good for the country.

Ed Vaizey was asked if a Tory government would force the BBC by law to reveal what it pays its stars. He said that might be a sledgehammer to crack a nut: 'but we want to make it happen', whether through the BBC Trust or charter negotiations.

Interviewed by Fincham in another session, Ed Richards thought Vaizey might get his way: 'It looks that way to me,' he admitted. 'We are in a period now that when the public pay for something they expect to know what it is being used for and where it is going.'

In a new YouGov poll 80 per cent of people thought tv presenters were overpaid, 83 per cent thought stars pay should be made public and only 9 per cent thought Jonathan Ross's pay was justified.

ANT AND DEC HOST SPOOF CONTEST



'My Boss (Baby) Just Wrote Me a Letter,' rocks out Jana Bennett and Dragons Den series producer Sam Lewins to bag a disappointing 7th place out of eight in the TV's Got Talent: Edinburgh Special contest, presented by Ant and Dec. Audience favourite was indie producer Carolyn Philpott, a woman who knows how to keep her mouth shut – even when she's singing Thank You For the Music. BBC competitors fared better in the channel of the year awards – voted for live by delegates – with BBC One taking the terrestrial title for the third year running and the terrestrial programme award going to The Apprentice.

PHOTOGRAPH: ROB MCDONOUGH/2009

Older women welcome on One

◆ With Jay Hunt on the agenda, it was always going to be 'Arlene', those expenses and whether it was a bright idea to be company secretary of her husband's tv training company Bright Spark.

Well she won't be for much longer, the BBC One controller revealed in Edinburgh. But there had been no conflict of interest, despite some lurid headlines, as she had declared her involvement to the BBC before and after leaving to join five.

'The irony is that I will no longer be company secretary because new regulations mean that small companies don't need company secretaries.'

Had her treatment by the press been because she was a woman, interviewer Martha Kearney wanted to know. That had played a part, Hunt believed: 'What's worrying is how many other women have been put off by this,' she said.

On the silver bangles and cashmere socks that appeared on her expenses as gifts, she was 'relaxed'. In daytime tv, where presenters are not highly paid,



Jay Hunt with her Channel of the Year award

those goodwill gestures with 'small sums of money' were 'economically sensible'. The replacement of Arlene Phillips on *Strictly* had 'nothing to do with age,' Hunt insisted: 'What people perceive as the reason [for substituting Alesha Dixon] and the reason are fundamentally different.' Gloria Hunniford, Anne Robinson, Sue Johnston and indeed Phillips all had places on BBC One, she added.

'If I didn't want Arlene on the channel she would not be a regular figure on *The One Show*,' she said, adding that talks were under way about how the government's dance champion might feature on Saturday nights in the future.

SOUNDBITES

THERE IS now over £1bn difference between the BBC and the other psbs. If you value the system there has to be some access to resources. That makes the BBC incredibly vulnerable. Top-slicing or reduction of the licence fee – it's going to happen. **Dawn Airey**, chief executive, five

IT'S SPECULATION, a distraction. The more the rumours, the more the pressure. **Andy Duncan** on reports that he is to leave Channel 4

THE DIGITAL Britain report has got four months to get through – there's a real danger it will run out of time. The Tory party are probably sympathetic to quite a lot of it, but it might not be a priority. **John Whittingdale**, culture select committee chairman

I THINK the industry has about two to three years to adapt or face its iTunes moment. And it will take at least that long for media brands to build credible, truly digital brands. **Ashley Highfield**, Microsoft UK's md of consumer and online, on his estimate of how long tv has to build successful digital business and avoid the experience of the music industry

EVERYONE IN the UK should feel that they have access legally, across platforms, to any piece of content that is client legal and accessible. **Roly Keating**, BBC director of archive content, on his 'mission statement', for release of the BBC archive

I ACCEPT this award with gratitude and in contempt of the Murdoch doctrine. **Actor Dominic West**, accepting the non-terrestrial programme of the year award for *The Wire*.

THE DIGITAL switchover scheme – you might as well use the licence fee to pay electric bills. You've crossed the Rubicon. One BBC Trust member told me that the switchover scheme was a 'strategic error of epic proportions'. **Steve Hewlett**, writer and presenter of *Radio 4's Media Show*, arguing that top-slicing of the licence fee has already happened

WE'RE CERTAINLY interested in being in the UK but we've nothing to announce. **Johannes Larcher**, senior vice president of international, Hulu.

I KNOW what most talent get and the press always overstate – sometimes by double. **Jonathan Shallit**, agent

PAUL MCCARTNEY would be turning in his grave, if the Beatles had died in the right order. **TV's Got Talent judge Jimmy Carr**, on the performance of *Live and Let Die* by *The Overnights*, starring Peter Fincham and Krishnan Guru-Murthy

STATE-RUN BROADCASTING? If that means Gordon Brown is coming up with programme ideas, that explains *Totally Saturday...* **Michael McIntyre**, warming up the audience for the channel of the year awards

Be bold... but be careful

◆ 'You can't not wear a seat-belt on *Spooks* but can shoot people in the face...it makes me want to explode with fury!'

That was Stephen Fry, ranting in frustration at what he sees as compliance gone crazy at the BBC. In a video played to a packed room full of programme makers he lamented a situation where excess caution about what could now be broadcast meant that producers were slapped down if they allowed criminals to be seen using mobile phones while driving in the cult BBC One spy series.

For Jimmy Mulville, md of Hat Trick Productions and the

man behind *Have I Got News For You*, the atmosphere – post Ross/Brand – was one of 'retrenchment' and he worried that a tabloid agenda was the driver.

'There is not systemic failure – planes crash – it's a wonder Ross/Brand doesn't happen more often,' he said.

'I'm not blaming anyone at the BBC except Mark Thompson. The fish rots from the head down... Stand up to the Daily Mail. The tabloid press are the media watchdog, not Ofcom. The BBC should resist.'

Chairing the session, presenter of *The One Show* Adrian Chiles detected 'lots of problem finders at the BBC' as well as fear among the ranks.

And panellist Ray Snoddy claimed that use of 'Meet the Fockers', 'Inglourious Basterds' and even 'bullshit' all had to be referred up by BBC programme makers: 'It's not Jana's fault – everyone's afraid for their jobs.'

Fellow panellist Jana Bennett described herself as on the liberal wing of decision making. She wanted people to be confident: 'There is no substitute for thought, forms are not a substitute for discussion.'

On strong language, she said there ought not to be an abrupt change after the watershed but otherwise, the yardstick was: 'Is it going to annoy a lot of people – is it funny, or real?'

'Language is a bit of a distraction,' she added. 'The audience is more worried about the treatment of individuals,' hence the Ross/Brand reaction.

She cited *The Mighty Boosh* and *Psychoville* and 'tricky' shows like *Louis Theroux* on paedophilia and the adult season on BBC Three as evidence that the BBC could still be 'bold'.

From the floor, Trevor Barnes of Ofcom agreed that there was 'an element of self-censorship by some broadcasters' and said that Ofcom had never upheld a breach of the broadcasting code after the watershed.

Top Gear toes line

◆ Talking of playing by the rules, the man who was filmed drinking at the wheel in the Arctic, joking about lorry drivers murdering prostitutes and promoting a German car ad with the line 'Berlin to Warsaw in one tank' says with confidence: 'I don't think we overstep the mark – don't even come close.' But Jeremy Clarkson does think he 'overdid the smut' in the last series of *Top Gear*: 'If I'd had to explain it to my ten year old son I'd have been em-

barrassed,' said the presenter at a *Top Gear* masterclass. With a 48 percent female audience, wasn't it time for a woman presenter, asked former *Top Gear* guest driver Kate Silverton. 'Seeing how the chemistry works [between us], that would be a disaster,' Clarkson concluded. It was still fine to pan in on a pretty girl in the studio audience, though (cue clip of one): 'About 500 come to my show every week and most are oafs... wouldn't you rather look at her?'

Hands off our share

◆ The BBC came under another attack over 'market distortion', this time on partnerships, with a broadside from ITV chief executive David Mannion, over its video sharing tie up with newspaper groups.

Its deal to share content with the Daily Mail, Guardian Telegraph and Independent made the BBC look like 'part of the problem, not the solution' for commercial content providers like ITN.

In response, Helen Boaden,

director of BBC news, admitted that the corporation found itself 'between a rock and a hard place', with the government urging the BBC to partner other organisations, like newspapers, hit by the recession. Shared content must carry BBC branding and only cover UK politics, business, health and science and technology. Nor can it be commercialised: 'That fact... says to me that we won't take away your market,' she told Mannion.



Furious: Stephen Fry

Comedy controller to be based in north

Cheryl Taylor has been named as the first controller of comedy commissioning to be based outside London.

In her new role Taylor, currently executive editor for out of London comedy commissioning, will remain in Manchester but will have responsibility for BBC comedy across the UK.

Taylor, who takes up her new post in the autumn, has backed original comedy from the nations and regions including *Gavin and Stacey*, *Sunshine*, *The Old Guys* and *Life of Riley*.

Previously head of comedy at Hat Trick Productions, she also co-created *Drop Dead Gorgeous* and exec produced *Worst Week of My Life*.

End of the dinosaurs

The final performance of the Walking with Dinosaurs UK tour, which began on July 1, took place on Monday. Over half a million tickets were sold for 47 performances which were spread across the country from Glasgow, Newcastle, Nottingham, Sheffield, Manchester to Birmingham, Liverpool and London. The show now moves to the continent for an extended European tour which kicks off in Antwerp on September 8.

After starting in Australia in 2007 Walking with Dinosaurs has been seen by almost 3 million people worldwide. Based on the numbers of tickets sold it is officially the biggest 'live' event that BBC Worldwide has ever done.

Festival firsts

A record number of BBC films have been selected for the two key international film festivals this autumn – nine for Toronto and three for Venice.

The world premiere of *Creation*, the story of Charles Darwin's struggle to write *On the Origin of Species*, opens the Canadian festival – the first foreign film to do for years. Stephen Poliakoff's *Glorious 39* and comedy *The Boys are Back* also make world premieres.

The Men Who Stare at Goats, about the war on terror, Alex Cox's *Repo Chick* and sword-and-sorcery epic *Valhalla Rising* – will be premiered in Venice.

Banker and beekeeper among 'brightest and best'

by Sue Llewellyn

The Production Trainee Scheme gets under way this week as the elite class of 2009 begin their 18 month training. The 12 recruits were selected as 'the brightest and the best' of the 2331 hopefuls who applied.

'We need to encourage a broad range of talent for the future' says Julie Dark, head of operations, partnerships, schemes and communications, BBC Academy. 'Aside from guts and confidence, the trainees must have a passion for the media and be capable of inspiring others. Our new trainees certainly do that. We've been

incredibly impressed by them, not just how they performed in the selection process but also the vast variety of things they've done with their lives so far.'

This batch of trainees include a neuroscientist, a banker, a dj who has released an album and one who is taking a bee-keeping course in her spare time.

The scheme was advertised for just two weeks in March. Applicants were whittled down to 600 and a rigorous selection process began. Sixty were selected to attend gruelling assessment days where they were put through a series of tests from which 22 were invited for inter-

view and just 12 were taken on.

The Production Trainee Scheme involves face-to-face training, online learning and four placements on multiplatform programmes and projects across the BBC. Each trainee is given a mentor who will see them through the 18 month process.

There is no guarantee of a job at the end although many former trainees – including Mark Thompson, Nick Robinson, Anne Morrison and Stephen Merchant – did secure contracts and go on to greater things. The 2008 intake of 19 trainees are about to start their final placements.

Science presenters get animated

WHILE THEIR OWN WACKY INVENTIONS are currently on exhibition at the Science Museum in London, Wallace and Gromit have been lined up to present a new BBC One series that will showcase the machines and gadgetry created by real life inventors.

The plasticine frontman and his dog – property of Aardman, which will produce the series – will bring their brand of Lancashire charm and slapstick to science – with the aim of reaching the broadest possible audience.

Jay Hunt, the BBC One controller who revealed her new signings at the weekend's Edinburgh Festival, said she

was 'thrilled that those masters of invention, Wallace and Gromit, will be bringing science alive for viewers'.

Aardman's Miles Bullough will executive produce *Wallace and Gromit World of Inventions* alongside the BBC's Alison Kirkham.

■ Jay Hunt also used the Edinburgh platform to announce a three-part drama serial for BBC One based around the Ips-

wich prostitute murders, which shocked the nation in 2006.

In-house commission *Five Daughters* (working title) will be factually-based, but told from the perspectives of the victims' families and friends. Made with the co-operation of Suffolk police, it will also follow the police investigations.

Poignant, human and unflinching, *Five Daughters* sensitively tells the tragic story of the impact of five terrible murders on a small community, but most of all on five families,' said Kate Harwood, controller BBC drama series and serials.



Bigger choice in latest benefits window

The latest package of myChoices optional benefits goes online this week and qualifying staff have until September 30 to apply. Options include a revised cycle to work scheme with new provider Cyclescheme, health assessments and childcare vouchers.

Cyclescheme use an extended network of over 1400 independent bike shops which should give staff more choice to find the right

bike for them. Four different types of health assessment are on offer from Nuffield Health and Kiddi-Vouchers are catering for parents who wish to take advantage of childcare vouchers.

BBC People will also be running a range of myChoice roadshows throughout September where you can find out more and meet the benefit providers.

Roadshows will run from

11am-2.30pm at the following locations: Belfast BH canteen (3/9), White City canteen (7/9), Bristol BH canteen (8/9), Cardiff BH canteen (9/9), TVC canteen (10/9), BH Heritage Lobby (14/9), Bush House canteen (15/9), Pacific Quay third floor, 'The Street' (16/9)

Full details are how to enrol are available on the myChoices site <http://sites.gateway.bbc.co.uk/myreward/myChoices.shtml>.

NEWS BITES

NO CRIMINAL proceedings will be brought against Arifa Farooq, the BBC journalist arrested earlier this month for allegedly using false documentation to secure a job at a Scottish care home during an undercover investigation for *Panorama*.

SIMON DEE, the sixties BBC tv star, has died from bone cancer. Dee, who started his career on pirate radio and was the first voice to be heard on Radio Caroline, presented the hugely popular *Dee Time* chat show on BBC One from 1967-69.

THE SWITCHOVER Help Scheme has now helped more than 100,000 older and disabled people with digital equipment, installation and aftercare. Help Scheme installations are predicted to be over 15,000 per week this autumn as the Granada region begins digital switchover on November 4.

KYLIE MINOGUE will make her only live UK performance this year singing two songs at Radio 2's Abba tribute concert in Hyde Park on Sunday September 13. Other artists featuring at Thank You For The Music... A Celebration Of The Music of Abba include The Feeling, Chaka Khan and Sharleen Spiteri.

JUSTIN WEBB has begun his new role as a presenter on *Today*. The former North America editor joins the team from Washington where he has been based since 2007.

THE FINAL two familiarisation visits to Manchester are now full. The trips have been running over the past year for staff whose jobs are in-scope to move to Salford and who wished to take the opportunity to visit Manchester and BBC North. Check the BBC North website for cancellations during September.

ARQIVA, WHICH owns most of the UK's tv and radio transmission masts, has completed its acquisition of the technology behind Project Kangaroo.

WILL GOMPERTZ, currently director of Tate Media at the Tate, has been appointed arts editor of BBC News. He will start the newly-created role in the next few months.

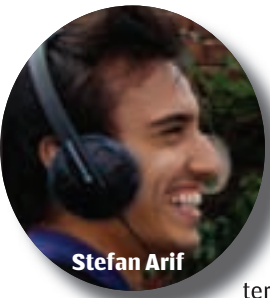
RADIO 3'S new autumn drama season will include the first ever dramatisation for radio of Kurt Vonnegut's classic anti-war novel *Slaughterhouse 5*, 40 years after its original publication.

BBC MAGAZINES has licensed specialist factual title BBC Knowledge to Singapore publisher Regent Media who will publish the magazine across Asia from September 2009.

TWENTY-FIVE HOURS per week of audio described programmes are now available on iPlayer, including *EastEnders* and *Tracy Beaker*. Audio description relates what is happening on screen during the gaps between dialogue to aid understanding for the visually impaired.

The BBC Academy's new Step Up scheme is helping west Londoners from less privileged backgrounds to begin careers in broadcasting. Nicki Defago met some of those involved

LIFT AS YOU CLIMB



Stefan Arif

ETH ROBERTS, ASST EDITOR, BBC LONDON 94.9

STEFAN IS AMBITIOUS and determined to be a Radio 1 dj. At our first meeting he told me he felt it was best not to work his way up, but to try to get his own show straight away.

If a producer's role is half master half butler, a mentor's role is half coach half counsellor. I didn't want to pour cold water on all that enthusiasm, but it was clear we'd need to tackle expectation management.

I helped Stefan make a demo tape and seeing the effort that went into it was humbling. In future I will consider the person behind the tape and try to give feedback rather than just sending a rejection letter.

Stefan took on everything I suggested and found his own answers. If he gets his show on Radio 1 it'll be great, but he knows he needs a Plan B.

STEFAN ARIF, 21, PLANETARY SCIENCE GRADUATE, UCL

GARETH GAVE TALKS to the whole Step Up group and it was like being in the class when the teacher is your dad – I pretended I didn't know him but secretly I was proud he was my mentor.

I want to be a Radio 1 dj and I want to get there as quickly as possible, so I have this career dilemma: if I get offered my own show on an obscure commercial radio station and at the same time a job making tea at the BBC – which should I take?

Gareth wouldn't give me the answer, but he helped me to see how valuable it is to learn about all aspects of radio. If my career dilemma comes up I'll take the job of making tea!

DIXI STEWART, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, RADIO 4

I'VE WORKED AT RADIO 4 for years. When I began I called up *Woman's Hour*, said 'you don't know me but I've got an idea for a feature...' and got put through to the editor. I'm not sure you'd get past the switchboard now. I had a lot of helping hands and took part in the mentoring scheme because I believe the BBC should be constantly refreshing its programme-making intake and reaching beyond the areas where we usually recruit.

As I got to know Chinwe, who's passionate about music, I learned about grime, dubstep and garage, though she giggled at my pronunciation (say 'garidge' to avoid my mistakes).

To her the BBC is an impenetrable fortress on top of a high mountain that she's only just begun to scale. Her confidence was low at first. She wouldn't have considered applying for an ap job before she did Step Up, but she is the type of candidate we should be looking at.



Music lover Chinwe Ojielo

I listened to her work (as one half of DJ DeeKay and Chinnors on Roundhouse Radio) and helped her look at jobs she might try for. I felt a real pride and pleasure at seeing her progress. 'Lift as you climb' is how I think of my part in the scheme.

CHINWE OJIELO, 24, INTERN AT UNIVERSAL MUSIC

DIXI SURPRISED ME. She could talk about Professor Green and Skepta and Grime. She knows about 1Xtra and helped me apply for a job there – I've been trying to get work experience for more than two years and have always been rejected.

Being on Step Up was brilliant – and hard. I was excited walking into Broadcasting House and I told the security man why I was there. I thought I knew a lot, but Dixi had so much help and advice to offer I realised how much I had to learn. On the way out, when I talked to the same security man I was quite depressed, but he said, 'hey, you in the BBC now, it's BBC standards!' After the second week I felt I was getting somewhere.

Dixi taught me how to spot a story and pitch an idea, and also how, as a radio presenter, I must imagine the audience is in the room with me – it's not like them and us. I do that now on my radio show and can really hear the difference.

Filling in the gaps: Lucie Harvey (right) gives student Sachelle Connor the lowdown on television work



PHOTOGRAPHS: MARK BASSETT

LUCIE HARVEY, DEVELOPMENT PRODUCER, BLUE PETER

I WAS DAUNTED AT FIRST by the prospect of being a mentor. I knew I'd be expected to take control of the discussion and the first time I met Sachelle I wasn't sure we'd have enough to talk about, but it was fine. Being inside TVC was a unique experience for her and even the things I consider routine had a wow factor. It made me realise how lucky I am to have this job.

The culture of celebrity is having its impact and, like a lot of young people, Sachelle wants to be a presenter. I was able to give her a practical insight into the skills she'd need. When you've been in the job for a long time you forget how little you know when you start out. It hadn't occurred to Sachelle, for example, that presenters have to fill sometimes if things go wrong.

Sachelle made a programme for BBC London about homelessness and was chosen to be interviewed by Riz Latif about Step Up. When she texted me to say she was going to be on tv I was on my way to the theatre and couldn't watch until I got into work the next day. When I played the interview back everyone in my team gathered round and watched with me. I felt really proud of her.

SACHELLE CONNOR, 19, MEDIA AND CRIMINOLOGY STUDENT

I NEVER THOUGHT I'd be chosen for Step Up. When I got the email saying my application was successful I read it ten times to make sure it was for me.

I wanted a friendly mentor who works with

presenters and when I met Lucie I knew she was perfect, and really cheerful. I always had loads to tell her about what I was doing. My team made a film about homelessness in the recession which we called 'Sofa Surfers'. One time we went out filming and the camera broke down – I never thought that could happen.

To work as part of the company for three months was amazing. I had no idea about anything at first but now I can phone bash and I know that Final Cut Pro is a type of editing software. Lucy got me to watch the News Channel for homework and I saw that sometimes the presenters have to keep talking when they haven't got any notes.

When I was going on BBC London I wanted to tell Lucie first because she's pregnant and was feeling sick, and I wanted to cheer her up. The interview was so embarrassing. I kept saying 'actually' over and over because I was so nervous. But Lucie said I did really well.

Could you be a mentor?

Can you spare an hour a fortnight to take part in community projects in west London? BBC Outreach is helping Hammer-smith and Fulham Council recruit mentors who can spare an hour every one or two weeks for community projects. Email Steve Comber if you'd like to take part.

cutting edge



RORY
CELLAN-JONES

Nightmares about piracy

LET ME TAKE YOU INTO the mind of any senior figure in the television industry, and show you their recurring nightmare. It features a man with a black eye patch, and maybe a hook instead of a hand, and he's running off with the industry's few remaining profits.

Having heard tales from friends in the music industry about what the pirates have done to profits there, nervous tv execs fear the same is about to happen in their back yard

The threat illegal file-sharing poses to any kind of online business model has raced to the top of the movie and television industries' agendas. Faster broadband speeds have made it possible for those who used to swap music online to download the latest Hollywood blockbuster or that missing episode of *Lost*.

The government has been lobbied for firmer action against illegal file-sharing – with some success. Last week it beefed up its Digital Britain proposals to include measures to cut off the web connections of persistent file-sharers.

But here's a question – is the tv industry's fear of file-sharing grounded in reality? Figures from an outfit called Big Champagne, which measures file-sharing activity, show that plenty of people are downloading movies – in the first half of 2009, *Watchmen* was top of the illegal download list with over 17m people viewing it. Big US series *Heroes* was downloaded by 54m internet users, closely followed by *Lost* with 51 million downloads.

But relatively few people go online to grab popular British programmes like *Coronation Street* or *Strictly*. Even football, jealously guarded by rightsholders, isn't getting quite as big an illicit online audience as you might think. Very few bothered to download unauthorised copies

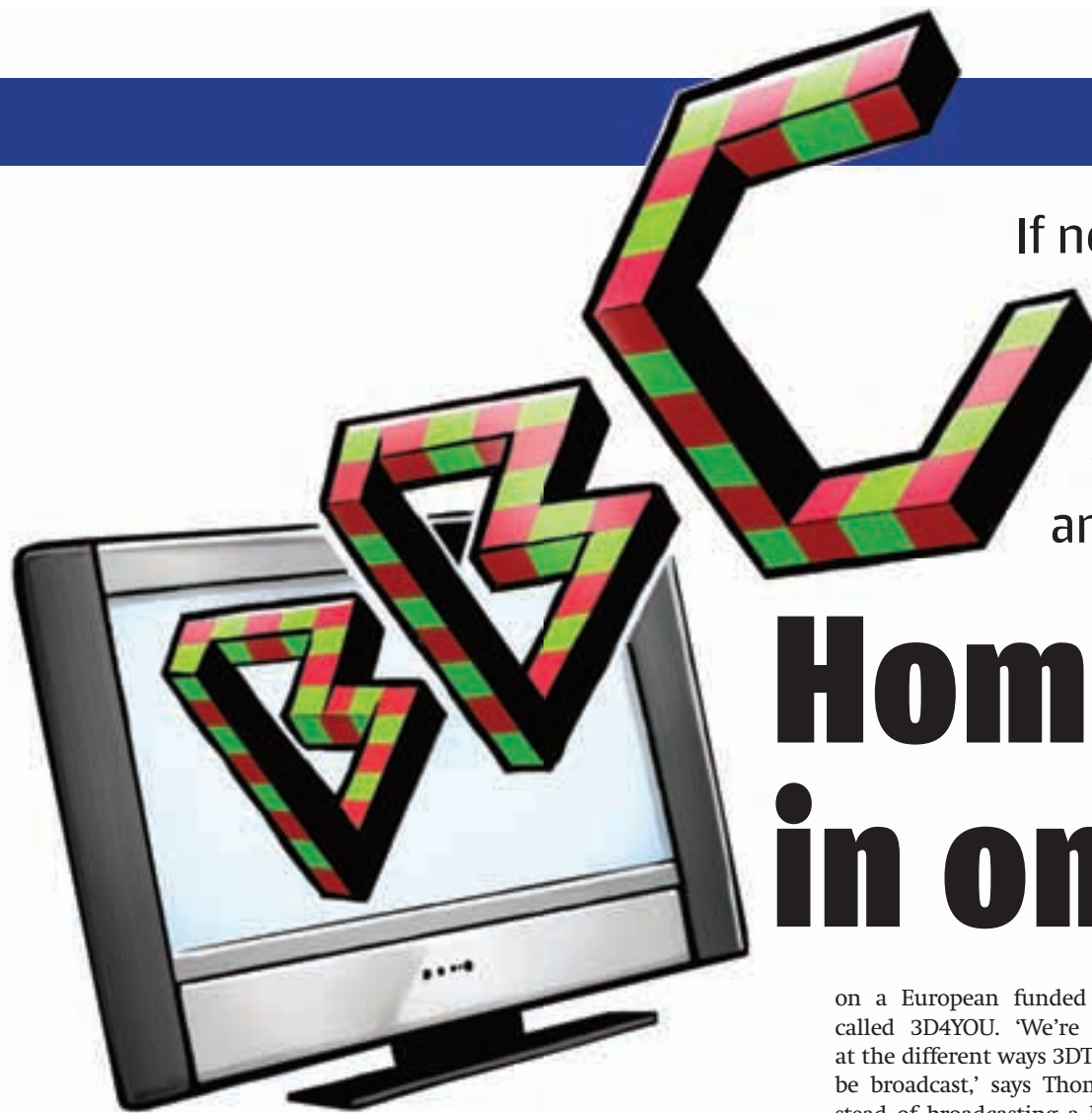
Relatively few people go online to download popular British shows

of May's Champions League Final. It seems live programmes are still social occasions, shared around the tv rather than at the computer – and they have a pretty limited shelf-life.

One British programme did however stick out. The latest series of *Top Gear* has been getting good broadcast ratings – and it's a popular illegal download too. In the couple of days after the July 19 edition was broadcast, around 300,000 people found it on the internet and downloaded it. But just 4 percent were to UK computers, and nearly half were in the US – where the programme had not yet been broadcast.

The lesson? Popular tv will be popular on many platforms – legal and illegal. And when people want your product badly enough, they will use whatever means they can to get hold of it. So maybe television execs need not worry so much about those chaps with the skull and crossbones flag after all.

Rory Cellan-Jones is technology correspondent



If new film *Avatar* is the 'future of 3D cinema', television is keen to give its viewers an extra dimension

Homing in on 3D

by Reece De Ville

APRIL 1953, and audiences are screaming in their seats as Vincent Price brings the dead back to life in *House of Wax*. Fifty six years later, and on August 21 2009, thousands of people are queuing all over the world to get a glimpse of what is being referred to in the industry as a 'game-changer' – James Cameron's *Avatar*.

Two separate screenings, but both as important as each other. Warner Bros' *House of Wax* introduced audiences to the 'golden era' of 3D cinema. The next three years saw characters previously confined to the screen come leaping out, resulting in an increase in violent popcorn spillages. And in the years that followed, slashers and stalkers would poke their instruments of terror out of the screen, Alfred Hitchcock would shoot *Dial M for Murder* in 3D and Disney would also screen productions in the new dimension (Disney Pixar recently announced that all future productions would be created exclusively in digital 3D).

It's fair to say that 3D cinema may have taken off in the 1950s as an industry reaction to the rise of television, and its peaks have tended to coincide with advancements in home entertainment. As vhs and Betamax revolutionised home entertainment, the 1980s saw the

IMAX chain begin to screen films in polarised 3D, at the same time horror made a comeback with everyone from a hockey masked Jason Voorhees to *Jaws* proving that you could stay out of the water, but it certainly wasn't safe to go back into the cinema. And now, in the 2000s with surround sound and High Definition proving more affordable, James Cameron's *Avatar* film enters the fray as 'the future of 3D cinema'.

But with excitement levels building for many years, could a film like this ever live up to its hype? R&D principal technologist Graham Thomas says: 'Compare the evolution of black and white to colour and standard definition to High Definition in terms of what gets added to the experience.'

The next few years will offer up an interesting dilemma to the film industry. 3D is coming home, with several major broadcasters involved in producing and screening 3D content – some using traditional Anaglyph methods to screen previously unseen archive footage and others looking to use existing HD technology to broadcast 3D images. BBC Films are producing *Street Dance*, their first 3D feature, and R&D are working

on a European funded project called 3D4YOU. 'We're looking at the different ways 3DTV could be broadcast,' says Thomas. 'Instead of broadcasting a left and right image, the project is looking at using one image and a depth map (closer parts of the image appearing darker than those further away).'

'This allows a receiver to generate a pair of stereo images, tailored to a given screen

size, and thus avoids the issue of knowing which screen size you're filming for.'

It could be an expensive fad, or it could revolutionise our home viewing. What matters most though is the quality of content.

'I'd be thrilled to see the early moon landing shots in 3D,' says Thomas, 'to get a feel for how space looked like. Something out of this world, giving you the feeling of actually being there!'

QUICK GUIDE TO 3D

by Graham Thomas, R&D principal technologist

Stereoscopic 3D is all about sending two pictures rather than one – one to the left eye and one to the right eye. There are three stages: the capture, how you transmit it and how you display it.

The best known 3D display systems in use are:

Anaglyph: These use coloured glasses to pick up a single colour for each eye, so separating the colour-coded left and right images. But you end up with a picture that has impaired colour definition.

Shutters: These glasses have an LCD sheet and an optical receiver that picks up a signal from an infra-red LED transmitter somewhere in the theatre. This synchronises the switching of the glasses with the digital projection output, so when the left eye is transparent, the right eye is opaque, and a 50th of a second later they switch over. The glasses need batteries, are expensive and can break.

Polarised: This uses two projectors rather than one, with a polarising sheet on each (more commonly seen in IMAX and digital cinema screenings). A single high-frame-rate projector with a switched polariser can achieve the same effect and some flat screen displays have polarising parts built in. They can give clear images with negligible cross talk (where the wrong image goes to the wrong eye). But they cost many thousands for a good sized screen.

A click from the couch gets iPlayer to gamers

AN UPDATED VERSION of the iPlayer designed for use on the PS3 games console goes live on Thursday, September 3.

PS3 users will be offered one-click access to the iPlayer to launch video directly into full-screen mode from the console's cross-media menu bar.

The update also offers BigScreen iPlayer – a user interface that better scales to fill the PS3 screen when set to 720p or 1080p output mode.

Enhanced bitrate technology also means PS3 users can take advantage of near-tv quality 1500Kbps H.264 streams or opt to drop

back to 800Kbps or even 480Kbps if they have insufficient bandwidth.

Anthony Rose, future media controller, vision and online media group, promises it will 'dramatically improve the iPlayer experience on PS3'.

'Take this opportunity to connect your computer's video out to your tv set and use our BigScreen interface to play your favourite programmes on demand from the comfort of your couch,' he says.

PC users can experience the BigScreen iPlayer at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/big-screen>.

blogbites

Monday

Monday's quote of the day

'Hedgehogs. Why can't they just share the hedge?' – this, folks, has been judged the funniest joke of this year's Edinburgh Fringe. The winning joke was a one-liner from London comedian Dan Antopolski.

Magazine Monitor

bbc.co.uk/blogs/magazinemonitor/

Tuesday

Victory or heist at the Oval?

Fast gaining traction in certain corners of the Australian media is the theory that England has just staged the 'Great Ashes Heist': that Andrew Strauss and his team were a pretty average outfit who won the series through time-wasting, dodgy umpiring, the assistance of foreign-born players and a doctored pitch at the Oval. Just as the CIA tried to see off Fidel Castro with exploding cigars, the ECB tried to kill off Australia's hopes of regaining the Ashes by ordering up an exploding pitch. So for the more populist wing of the Australian press, Bill Gordon, the groundsman at the Oval, has become public enemy number one; the central figure in a carefully planned conspiracy.

Nick Bryant, sponsored reporter, Sydney

bbc.co.uk/blogs/thereporters/nickbryant/

Wednesday

Reporting Afghanistan

If you're a nervous flyer, the descent into Kandahar Airfield is probably not for you. Minutes before we're due to land – in the dead of night – the lights on our RAF plane go off and our helmets and flak jackets go on. Just a precaution, we're told. Welcome to Afghanistan. The number of British deaths in Afghanistan since the war began in 2001 had now passed the 200 mark. With that toll rising at an alarming rate, and with Afghans voting to elect a new president, BBC Radio 5 live wanted to see for itself what was happening – how the war against the Taliban was being fought and what life was like for some of those at the sharp end.

Liam Hanley, assistant editor

bbc.co.uk/blogs/theeditors/

Thursday

Jay-Z ft. Rihanna and Kanye West – 'Run This Town'

If I had to give five stars to a song this year without actually hearing it, this would be the one, hands down. I haven't been this excited about an artist line-up, since Elton John teamed up with Blue. When the royal family of Hip-hop and R'n'B get together, you'd think there'd be no point in writing a review, just label it with 'Guaranteed Number 1', give it five stars and send it on its way. But for the sake of objectivity and the possibility that Fraser would never let me near the Chart Blog again, I'll carry on. All I'll say is, it's going to take something serious to convince me otherwise.

Grant

bbc.co.uk/blogs/chartblog/

Friday

Is cheating a central part of sport?

On Breakfast today the Rugby Football Union told us about their plans for cleaning up their game. The recent Bloodgate scandal exposed the darker side of rugby, and showed us the extent to which a team could go to gain an unfair advantage. Diving in football; match fixing in cricket; performance-enhancing drugs in all sports – are sports fans used to all this now? Should people be more realistic and adjust their expectations? Or should we continue to get indignant every time it happens?

George Edmonds, assistant editor

bbc.co.uk/blogs/fivelivebreakfast/

week@work



CAMERAMAN JOE COOPER, presenter Joe Crowley and producer Jane Goddard made sure they packed their wide-brimmed hats and factor 50 sun cream before leaving BBC Southampton for the salt flats of California. The team flew to LA Edwards Air Force Base to watch local man Charles Burnett attempt to break the world land speed record for a steam

powered car. After nursing the story since the beginning of the year Burnett broke the record last week, reaching an average speed of 139.84mph. Because of strict security at the site, which is used by the US military and by Nasa to land space shuttles in emergencies, they had to be cleared to film there by the Pentagon. The four-man team, which also

included director Jonathan Bigwood, completed live links and provided material for programmes including Blue Peter, South Today and Breakfast. They're now back in Southampton editing footage for a half-hour documentary for BBC Two that was commissioned off the back of their coverage. It is expected to tx in the autumn.

FACT OF LIFE

◆ **UP TO 54 MILLION** people worldwide are expected to watch tv on their mobile phone this year with this figure expected to reach 300 million by 2013. Research found that 20 percent of people questioned watched tv on their phone every day and more than half watched at least three times a week.

News and sport content proved particularly popular with people tuning in during their lunch breaks and when travelling.

CHANGING PLACES

◆ **NICK WALLIS** (pictured) joins Southern Counties as Surrey's new breakfast show presenter. He joins the station from Radio 5 live.... Radio Berkshire's drivetime producer **ANDY STEVENSON** takes a break from the station for four months to work on *Sports Personality of the Year*. Mid-morning producer **ANTHONY WOOTON** covers his leave... PA to head of audience services and operations, **JAYNE DE VILLE**, becomes PA to the head of legal and business affairs. She is replaced by **CAT BARNES**... **EMMA SCHOLES** has been appointed Northern Ireland's multiplatform brand executive...



COMING UP

◆ Controller of BBC One Jay Hunt and former controller of CBBC Anne Gilchrist have commissioned **THE LOST CHRISTMASSES** for tx in 2011/2012. The family drama follows character Anthony, played by Eddie Izzard, who transforms five people's lives on Christmas Eve. Made by Impact Film and Television the 90-minute programme will be exec produced by Sue Nott.

◆ **JUNIOR MASTERCHEF** is set to give young cooks the chance to show off their culinary skills on CBBC next year. The show will see nine-12 year olds compete for the title of Junior MasterChef 2010. The 13-part series will be made by Shine Television and exec produced by Bridget Banton. It was commissioned by former channel controller Anne Gilchrist.

◆ A third series of **THE ARMSTRONG AND MILLER SHOW** has been commissioned for BBC One by channel controller Jay Hunt. The sketch show, which moved to the BBC from Channel 4 in 2007, is expected to tx in autumn 2010. The exec producer is Simon Wilson and the series will be made by Toff Media.

LEARNING CURVE



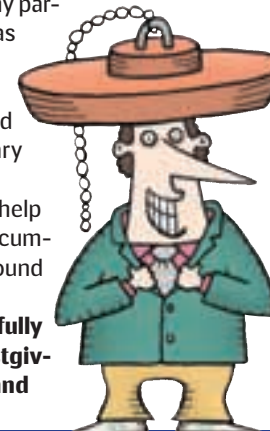
◆ **IF YOU'RE A PROGRAMME MAKER** and want to find out how MC&A will help you to reach your audience, Never Stop Learning has lined up department director, Sharon Baylay, to answer your questions.

Baylay, who joined the BBC earlier this year, will provide an insight into the challenges of her new role and discuss how the BBC successfully communicates with its audiences. The event will be held on September 15 in the Media Centre Boardroom between 1-2pm.

To sign up visit tinyurl.com/nslevents

SHAMELESS PLUG

◆ **NICK HAYLAND, INTERIM ASSISTANT TREASURER, WORLDWIDE**
I will be running the Nottingham half marathon on September 13 and the Berlin marathon on September 20. I've been running on and off for a number of years but the Berlin marathon will be my first as well as the first time I've returned to the city since serving there as part of the British Army in the mid 1980s. It was the opportunity to run for Shelter that triggered my marathon entry. Shelter is a housing and homelessness charity which is close to my heart because for six months, when my parents lost their jobs as publicans, my family were effectively homeless and ended up living in temporary accommodation. I'm raising funds to help people in similar circumstances to those I found myself in as a child. **All donations gratefully received** www.justgiving.com/nick-hyland



Story retold:
Robert Seatter
wants to present
the BBC's past
in a new way



OUT WITH THE OLD

BBC History gets a makeover

'It was terribly brown,' confides Robert Seatter. 'I told the designer of the new site, 'I don't want any brown.' But although the revamp of BBC Heritage also demanded a name change as well as a new lick of paint, the head of BBC History has plans for his department to be much more than style over substance.

As well as upcoming educational initiatives and collaborations with the National Media Museum, the BBC History website has been remade with a host of new features. An anniversary of the week section – painstakingly planned for the year ahead – contains short clips and memories, while the animated timeline lists ten innovation moments for each decade. It's all part of Seatter's plan to recast the BBC's history as one of innovation: 'I've deliberately and provocatively said that, rather than having a cosy Aunty history. But it's not just about technology, it's also about creative formats and relationships with audiences.'

On September 1 BBC History is holding a seminar exploring the day that WW2 broke out – from the unique perspective of the BBC. It is the latest anniversary to be given special treatment by Seatter, who is in the process of 'reinventing' History, broadening its exposure and, in his words, 'inspiring audiences with the story of their BBC': 'I've been looking at a few key anniversaries and saying okay, what do they tell us about our

story, and what do they tell us about our future as well as the past,' says Seatter. 'I'm interested in the impact of the BBC on people's lives and how it's made a difference.'

The focus on innovation has been carried over to future key anniversaries. October's 40 years since the beginning of *Monty Python* will be reframed in terms of the BBC as the home of anarchic comedy, while next year's 25 years of *EastEnders* and 60 years of *The Archers* anniversaries will be looked at in the context of groundbreaking soaps – each time the historic programmes are examined in terms of their legacy, neatly linking them to the present day.

And every week an item from the BBC collection is displayed in the online gallery, in an effort to make the 3500 item collection more coherent and accessible. 'The vision is to tell our story in terms of key objects that represented innovation, had significance for audiences or tell a pertinent story,' says Seatter. He is looking to grow the collection and is asking for suggestions as to what should be saved – anything from John Sergeant's costume from *Strictly* to something sober from *News*. The object itself can be mundane, it's the story behind it that counts. Email Robert if you have any suggestions for the collection, or if you have an anniversary that you'd like to see covered.

bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc
Adam Bambury

LIVES UNII



Wood Norton found accomodation for relocated staff

Heroes at home are celebrated in BBC One's World War Two series, as Adam Bambury reports

Ehe week of September 7, BBC One is going to be dedicated to one thing – World War Two. But viewers bracing themselves for a stern-faced black and white onslaught of tanks, charts and politics can relax. As the time slot suggests, this is going to be war with a human face.

Rather than taking on the likes of seminal documentary series *The World at War*, the five episodes of *The Week We Went to War* instead focus on what life was like on the home front, using the oral histories of the remaining survivors to paint a picture of life in the face of adversity.

'We've got people who lived through the Blitz and were bombed out of their homes, as well as lighter stuff,' says Liam Keelan, controller of daytime. 'For example, toys just didn't exist in the way you imagine. Pre-war they were made with tin and rubber, but then that all had to go to the war effort, so it was about what you could do to make your own toys for your children. It's interesting going back into that world – it's not a part of the history that I feel I've really seen.'

'It's about everyday heroes,' he continues. 'We don't hear that much about the people who were left at home. What they went through, the spirit of coming together, and the amazing acts of heroism are just as relevant for today's generation as any.'

The Week We Went to War started life when Finestripe, a small indie from Scotland, got in touch with an idea for a programme on the anniversary of the outbreak of WWII. 'It went

from that small idea, just one programme reminiscing about what it was like, on to something much bigger: a series across a whole week at 9.15am coupled with the drama *Land Girls* at 5.15pm as well,' says Keelan.

The series will be presented by Welsh mezzo-soprano Katherine Jenkins. Not an obvious choice you may think, until you hear about her extensive charitable work flying into war zones to entertain British troops, earning her the title of the new 'forces sweetheart' – originally held by Vera Lynn. Jenkins will be joined by television veteran Michael Aspell, himself an evacuee during the conflict.

Though other celebrities will be brought in to relive their wartime childhoods – acting as a potential point of entry for today's young people who can wonder 'what if it was me?' – the bulk of the programming shirks fame and fortune to find compelling stories from everyday existence in a time of utter uncertainty.

The Week We Went to War,
BBC One, September 7-12



MAGINED IN WAR



Bomb site: aftermath of the BH explosion



BBC Monitoring which kept tracks on broadcasts from around the world



Sleeping on the job: radio drama beds down at Broadcasting House

BOMBS, BEDS AND BULLDOG SPIRIT

The war couldn't stop the BBC making its programmes

Ptime documents and photographs have been published online by the BBC Archive in its World War Two collection, which also features rare recordings of historic radio broadcasts. Ariel has been doing its own digging through the archive and we've unearthed some fascinating facts about life at the BBC during the conflict.

The London Blitz started on September 7, 1940, and weeks later Broadcasting House took its first hit. A delayed action bomb crashed through a window on the seventh floor, and came to rest two floors down in the music library. Moments later, as firemen rushed to the scene, it exploded, killing seven people. Bruce Belfrage was reading the news at the time, and his microphone picked

up the sound of the blast. But Belfrage, covered in dust and soot, read on regardless.

Whole departments were evacuated out of London. Music went to Bedford, and Drama and Variety were based in Bristol until that city too came under fire, and Variety was transferred to Bangor in North Wales. This made programme making and scheduling more difficult, and was often unsettling for the individuals concerned. Variety staff in Bangor were made to feel unwelcome by the locals – possibly on account of their quirky personalities and dress sense.

In London the Criterion Theatre became the base for the BBC's Empire Entertainments Unit. Here the staff worked, ate and slept, sleeping in the dressing rooms and cloakrooms on makeshift beds, while broadcasts went

out from the theatre stage. Staff who remained at Broadcasting House often ate, slept and worked within the walls of the BBC. The Radio Theatre became a dormitory, in which a curtain separated the sleeping quarters of the men and women.

Preparations were made for Bristol to become the centre of operations if broadcasting from London became impossible, including plans to build an emergency base in a disused railway tunnel. Areas of the tunnel would serve as dressing rooms, studios, control rooms, and a canteen, storing three months' food supplies. The tunnel was declared structurally sound after being tested by the entire BBC symphony orchestra (100 instrumentalists) at full blast.

bbc.co.uk/archive



MADE IN THE UK

I HAVE LOOKED after many of the comedy shows that come from beyond the M25. As executive editor, out of London, comedy commissioning, the main areas I have been concerned with were the North and the three nations. In addition to liaising with regional in-house production teams, the brief also includes comedy proposals from any out-of-London indie, be they in Bristol, Brighton or Birmingham.

When I started the job in 2005 there seemed to be a huge mountain to climb – both in encouraging comedy production in areas where there was little or no activity and also in countering the perception that comedy from the nations and regions was the poor relation of the more sophisticated and glamorous London product.

Less than a year later I took over from Lucy Lumsden, the controller of comedy, who went on maternity leave. This helped to build my own strong and, hopefully, enduring relationships with channel controllers and other key personnel in London. I believe these relationships have been enormously helpful in countering the perception that commissioners resident in the nations and regions don't necessarily have influence when it's crunch time.

Reaping dividends

In the past the advantage sometimes lay with the bigger London-based companies, some of whom were criticised for winning regional commissions by opening temporary regional offices. Having a commissioner based outside London has helped to dispel these fears. Part of my job has been to work closely with untested independents and to steer them through the gritty process of development. Rather than leaving them to struggle with guidelines, I could talk to them face to face and customise the process to find the precise level of help they needed. It may make the development process slightly longer but it reaps dividends in the long term.

An example of two indies new to comedy production (but both recipients of BBC indie development funding) are Channel K and Freeform. Both sent in promising early drafts of projects and I have been able to meet them regularly rather than possibly just twice a year if I was based in London.

Both companies have had series commissioned in 2008 (*Gemma Factor* and *Lunch Monkeys*) and the general feeling is that these might not have happened without the dedicated support of a regional commissioner.

However, it is not just the new or the risktakers who work in the regions. Increased development has (thankfully!) heralded more

Only funny in London? Don't make me laugh

In the last of our out-of-London series, newly appointed controller of comedy commissioning Cheryl Taylor explains why comedy is ahead of the game in rooting production in nations and regions



regional shows on screen from more established sources. For example, the 2008 Christmas lineup saw *Wallace and Gromit* from Bristol, *The Royle Family* from Manchester, the return of Rab C Nesbitt on BBC Two from Glasgow and of course the triumph of *Gavin and Stacey* on BBC One from Baby Cow Manchester.

Perhaps most striking of all we have had not one but two mainstream shows from Scotland on BBC One (*Life of Riley* and *The Old Guys*) and this is a first for Scotland as their stalwart, *Still Game*, has always played on BBC Two. This wonderful slate

of shows felt like a real achievement, not least because all of them are perceived as genuinely funny first and regional second.

This situation also creates a virtuous circle. When I started, it was sometimes difficult to mount studio-based sitcoms outside London or Manchester as the required technical infrastructure didn't exist. Now, because of the increased activity and interest, there is a burgeoning of facilities as well as personnel and possibilities. It is now possible to find the facilities, crews and talent across the nations and regions to make

production a reality.

I've spoken a lot about encouraging new companies because we recognise that to increase national and regional production we must see a rise in the number of indies operating out of London. Of course the more established practitioners also play a vital role. We receive a stream of great ideas from veteran outfits such as Red (Manchester) The Comedy Unit (Glasgow) and Rollem (Leeds). We are also delighted that Craig Cash, one of the driving forces behind *The Royle Family* has just started Jellylegs in Manchester, and Ruth Jones of *Gavin and Stacey* has set up her own Welsh production company, Tidy, with producer David Peet.

In-house, there is plenty going on too. Comedy North, the BBC's Manchester-based comedy production unit, works in close partnership with the BBC writersroom to encourage new talent and, a few years ago, a writer-in-residence bursary scheme was set up with BBC Northern Exposure, offering £6000 a year to fund a writer to spend two days a week with Comedy North, developing ideas across the networks.

Unique potential

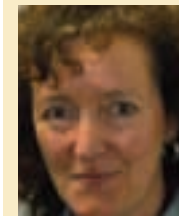
In only a few years the department has established a real northern presence in the BBC's comedy output and has become a beacon of encouragement for other regional departments. Why does that matter? Comedy is a key genre in representing and promoting cultural diversity, and some of the most memorable sitcoms have reflected that, from Carla Lane's *Bread* to Graham Linehan's *Father Ted*. More recently *Gavin and Stacey* has done wonders by promoting Wales and, in particular, Barry Island where I hear tourism has increased hugely as a result of the show.

The BBC, with its network of national and regional production centres, has the unique potential to reflect humour by tapping into tomorrow's generation of comedy performers, writers and producers across the UK. We recognise that tickling the nation's funny bone isn't something that can only be done from an office in London. Nor can comedy be straitjacketed by regional quotas or diversity targets.

As comedy commissioner my prime concern is to find shows that are funny. If they can be funny with an authentically northern, or Scottish, or Welsh accent, then so much the better. My job is simply to make it as easy as possible for comedic geniuses from every corner of the UK to beat a path to the BBC's door. Their side of the bargain is to make us laugh – wherever we live.

Cheryl Taylor takes up her new post this autumn. Read her full essay at bbc.co.uk/madeintheuk

arielview



CATHY LOUGHRAN

We all speak the same language

MAYBE IT WAS recessionary gloom, perhaps the uncertainty of what's coming next, or maybe it was just a community of fewer high grade luvvies than usual and more hard-pressed troops putting two fingers up to the world, the rules and everything, that made this year's Edinburgh tv festival such f***-ing good entertainment.

For anyone who was counting, over three days there must have been more F-words than a full series of *The Wire*. Kicking off with creator of *The Wire* David Simon's 'F*** the Casual Viewer' session, we moved to Roly Keating's re-named 'Who's F***ing Archive is it Anyway?' via a high-speed, expletive-spattered knock-about with f***ing life-long partners in crime, *Top Gear*'s Jeremy Clarkson and series producer Andy Wilman, to that f***ing spectacular spat between Robert Peston and James Murdoch.

Even when it came to the serious stuff, the C-word provided some of the most fun of all. Or as one mock-weary producer put it: 'Compliance is the new rock 'n roll.' He was queuing down a corridor in Edinburgh for the festival session

There must have been more F-words than a full series of The Wire

that promised to find out if creativity and originality was being stifled by overzealous policing of programme content, including for F-words.

Despite having compliance in the title, it was a standing room only event – granted, with the added draw of comedian Frank Skinner

and Hat Trick's Jimmy Mulville on the panel.

Beyond talk of regulations, there was unstifled creativity and originality aplenty in Edinburgh, starting with the TV's Got Talent special. Producer Carolynne Philpott's almost certainly bankable talent for singing Abba with her mouth closed made her a worthy winner. (Although as lead vocals/guitarist, Jana Bennett makes a great director of BBC Vision.)

And finishing with Michael McIntyre's award ceremony, in a change of format, which went down a storm. (His BBC One show *Live from the Apollo* is officially number one on iPlayer.)

By his own admission, not a great one for humour, BBC Four controller Richard Klein nevertheless brought his own brand of originality to a closing session. Interviewer Ray Snoddy introduced Klein as 'one unusual bunny' – and the BBC's 'only self-exposed Tory in the upper ranks'. Klein is a man with no guilty viewing secrets (he never watches *Big Brother* and only glimpses *Strictly* when his eight year old daughter insists) and is truly open to hearing different voices with views that don't get much of an airing on his channel.

'You don't hear voices that say Castro was a bad thing and capital punishment might be a good thing,' Snoddy reminded him he'd once said.

An entertaining prospect? Possibly not. A space to watch? Certainly.

Cathy Loughran is deputy editor of ArieL



Tv that turned the house upside down

Media correspondent **Torin Douglas** looks at *Big Brother's* legacy

Leaving home: Presenter **Davina McCall** welcomes **Noirin** after her eviction from the current series



TEN YEARS AGO, on the eve of the first *Big Brother* series, Peter Bazalgette showed me round the *Big Brother* house for the *Today* programme. We thought the programme would be significant. No one foresaw just how big it would become.

Recorder running, the man who brought the programme to the UK talked me through all the rooms, pointing out the dozens of cameras that would record the housemates' every move. 'Even in the bathroom?' I asked, thinking Radio 4 listeners might choke on their muesli.

How innocent it all seems now. In the first series, the big news story was Nasty Nick's cheating – making notes about his rivals, when pencils and paper were banned. The first nudity didn't occur till series two, when schoolteacher Penny managed to drop her towel in front of the camera, prompting the immortal comment from one of the teachers' unions, 'We wouldn't advise any of our members to appear naked on television'.

Ten years on, *Big Brother* has changed the landscape of television – and, arguably, society. Many blame it for dumbing the medium down. Others claim it has opened it up, to a wider range of voices and lifestyles. Either way, it changed the

way television was made... and watched. Millions of viewers tuned in night after night, week after week – and some all day too, on the internet.

Big Brother turned ordinary people into celebrities – most notably Jade Goody – thanks partly to the tabloid newspapers, which turned the housemates into soap opera characters, devoting pages every day to the latest goings-on.

The tabloids devoted pages to the goings-on

It turned tv's traditionally fallow summer months into ratings heaven for Channel 4 – and also hooked the elusive younger audience.

Channel 4 – and its sister channels – will look very different without it in 2011. The C4 head, Julian

Bellamy, has smartly positioned the move as a huge creative renewal – freeing up 200 peak-time hours and £50m a year to make other programmes, particularly new drama. With the independent sector currently in the doldrums, he says it could be a useful shot in the arm.

The Sun and the Daily Mirror abandoned *Big Brother* a couple of years ago, hastening its ratings decline. They now devote pages to Saturday night reality entertainment shows, *The X Factor* and *Strictly Come Dancing*, which run from Au-

gust until Christmas. This symbiotic relationship between tv and the tabloids, mutually dependent – the one feeding the other – is one more legacy of *Big Brother*.

Will another broadcaster pick it up, say Sky, or Living or five? It still makes a profit for Channel 4, even on reduced ratings. Much depends on the price – and whether production company Endemol can form a win-win partnership as it did with Channel 4.

Or might the producer simply turn broadcaster and set up a *Big Brother* channel itself?

mail

Initial thoughts

I wonder if decisive *Land Girls* producer Erika Hossington's decision to use the script writer's initials on the Home Guard's sleeves, rather than their location, (Ariel, August 25) came after having decided to watch the Walmington-on-Sea Home Guard in action?

The armbands worn by the platoon in *Dad's Army* have similarly read 'CP' – in honour of David Croft and Jimmy Perry – for more than 40 years.

Tim Matthews
multimedia producer, news

Fast ride

With reference to Kevin Stanley's letter (August 25), the online booking tool provides a cost effective method for booking cabs and helps to reduce the cost to the BBC of a telephone service. The additional cost of £4 or £6.50 (depending on when the booking is made) for telephone bookings reflects the cost of providing a telephone service.

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Jamie Hindhaugh
head of sourcing, logistics



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JOBS



PROGRAMME MAKING

Leader, BBC Philharmonic Orchestra
Manchester
9D/Ref: 16939109
E 27-Sep-09

Assistant Producer, World Service Sport
London / Salford Quays
7D/Ref: 18035209
E 07-Sep-09

Broadcast Assistant, Radio 2
London
Henry Wood House
4D/Ref: 16584809
E 15-Sep-09 A 12 months

JOURNALISM

Regional Editor, Europe, WSNCA
London
Bush House
9D/Ref: 17896109
E 14-Sep-09 A 12 months

Pakistan/Afghanistan Producer
Islamabad
8/9S/Ref: 18061109
E 10-Sep-09 A 06 months

News Editor (Senior Broadcast Journalist)
Birmingham
8D/Ref: 17872509
E 08-Sep-09 A 06 months

Broadcast Journalist, Casual Talent Pool
Multi Location - Scotland
5/7D/Ref: 4109909
E 09-Sep-09 A Various

Broadcast Journalists, BBC Radio Leicester
Leicester
5/7D Ref: 18043709
E 11-Sep-09
A 06 months

Broadcast Journalist, Sport
Belfast - Broadcasting House
5/7D/Ref: 17353809
E 06-Sep-09

Broadcast Journalist, Barrow
Barrow in Furness
5/7D/Ref: 17187009
E 07-Sep-09
A 06 months

BUSINESS SUPPORT AND MANAGEMENT

Head of Distribution Technology
London
White City
SM2/Ref: 17658609
E 07-Sep-09 A 10 months

Senior Category Manager
London OR Wood Norton
10D/Ref: 17829609
E 13-Sep-09

Business Affairs Manager
London
TV Centre
10D/Ref: 16673409
E 01-Sep-09
A 04 months

Research Manager, Future Media & Technology
London
Broadcast Centre Media Village
9D/Ref: 18009009
E 10-Sep-09

Finance Analyst
London
TV Centre
8D/Ref: 18019709
E 02-Sep-09 A 12 months

Category Managers
London
White City
8D/Ref: 14714609
E 02-Sep-09

Projects Assistant, BBC Academy
London
White City
5D/Ref: 17795709
E 13-Sep-09

Operations Management Assistant
London
Brock House
4D/Ref: 18069609
E 15 Sep 2009 A 06 months

Senior Media Assistant - TVC Logistics team, I&A
London
TV Centre
3H/Ref: 18009209
E 10-Sep-09 A 07 months

Team Assistant BBC Sport
London
3D/Ref: 18061209
E 20-Sep-09 A 2 years

NEW MEDIA

Genre Head (Project Portfolio Manager)
London
Media Centre
10D/Ref: 17998909
E 09-Sep-09
A 18 months

Editor, TV Blog
London
9D/Ref: 17946209
E 15-Sep-09 A 12 months

Senior Web Developer
London
Broadcast Centre Media Village
8D/Ref: 16482409
E 09-Sep-09

Schedule & Data Manager
London
Bush House
7D/Ref: 17204109
E 07-Sep-09

Assistant Content Producer, Autumnwatch
Bristol
6D/Ref: 17821109
E 06-Sep-09 A 03 months

Content Researcher, Autumnwatch
Bristol
5D/Ref: 17820809
E 06-Sep-09 A 03 months

SPECIALIST TECHNICAL AND DESIGN SERVICES

Operator / Senior Operator - BBC South
Southampton
5/7H/Ref: 17324609
E 10-Sep-09 Various

TECHNOLOGY

Commercial Analyst Projects
London
Broadcasting House
9D/Ref: 18069009
E 03-Sep-09

Senior Software Engineer
London
White City
9D/Ref: 16263309
E 09-Sep-09

Technical Architect, FM&T
London
Media Centre
9D/Ref: 15517509
E 09-Sep-09

Senior Client Side Developer
London
Broadcast Centre Media Village
8D/Ref: 16696509
E 09-Sep-09

Software Engineer
London
Broadcast Centre Media Village
8D/Ref: 16381109
E 08-Sep-09

Software Engineer, FM&T - Vision
London
Media Centre
7D/Ref: 17140009
E 09-Sep-09
A 12 months

Test Engineer
London
Broadcast Centre Media Village
7D/Ref: 16980309
E 03-Sep-09

Client Side Developer
London
Broadcast Centre Media Village
7D/Ref: 16696709
E 02-Sep-09

Release Coordinator
London
Broadcast Centre Media Village
7D/Ref: 16381609
E 08-Sep-09 Continuing

Network Engineer
London
Media Centre
7D/Ref: 15852609
E 08-Sep-09

Web Developer, FM&T - Vision
London
TV Centre
7D/Ref: 15352209
E 09-Sep-09
A 06 months

Change & Configuration Analyst
London
Bush House
6D/Ref: 17468009
E 06-Sep-09
A 06 months

Media Manager
Multi Location
5D/Ref: 17926709
E 10-Sep-09 A 06 months

BBC WORLDWIDE

Financial Controller
London
SENEX/Ref: 17799309
E 03-Sep-09

Group Financial Accountant
London
SENEX/Ref: 17799309
E 03-Sep-09

Paralegal, Commercial Policy
London
Media Centre
SENEX/Ref: 17894709
E 07-Sep-09

Regional Manager Distribution: EMEA
London
Media Centre
1W/Ref: 17050109
E 01-Sep-09 Various

Media Coordinator
London
Media Centre
4W/Ref: 17852409
E 31-Aug-09
A 06 months

See Attachment

Three's company

Nicola Lawrence, Radio York news editor, takes on the tv beast

DOING THINGS IN THREES evidently suits me: swimming, cycling and running in my latest hobby, triathlon; online, radio and tv in my career so far.

The web is where I began, joining the BBC from the fledgling Channel 4 News website to work on the new local websites in England. Then I moved into radio - becoming the programmes sbj at Radio York. So when the offer of an attachment at *Look North* in Leeds appeared, I grabbed it.

I learnt such a lot working in the Leeds tv newsroom and thoroughly enjoyed it. Early on, I had to start thinking 'pictures' rather than words or sounds.

Plus I got to grips with what a big beast television can be. I was accustomed to the independence and agility you have working in local radio and



online. However, I learned how working in a bigger team - with everyone pulling together to get a programme or bulletin on air - has advantages. That post-programme sense of relief doesn't really happen in local radio when the next bulletin's no more than 55 minutes away.

A bigger newsroom and bigger patch meant the opportunity to work on bigger stories. My strengths lie in outputting and nothing topped the adrenaline of producing the 15 minute lunchtime programme.

I'm now news editor at Radio York, on another attachment. There's no doubt that my time in tv has influenced the way I do my current job. Sharing material and resources makes sense to me - by avoiding duplication we now use more of our reporting effort to originate more stories. Only this week we used the tvsat truck to provide a two-way into our lunchtime news bulletin. Technology's also making this easier with the development of Davina, which already allows us much more access to material gathered by network television - and will soon give Radio York journalists easier access to all the material by our television colleagues in Leeds.

I think my love of threes means I've got a rounded approach to what we do at BBC York. I appreciate the particular pressures that apply to working in each medium - and know that small acts of helpfulness to colleagues can go a long way.

And as for the triathlon - it's a case of enjoying all three disciplines, and executing them equally badly...

Been anywhere nice? Send your attachment stories to Clare Bolt

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BELINDA ARTINGSTOL

**SPECIAL
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CUMBRIA**

PHOTOGRAPH: MARK ROBERTSON



What does your job involve?

Doing things that daily and weekly programmes can't do. I look after all of the long term things like Children in Need, Sport Relief and projects that come up from special features in London. Locally, we also do our own special programming, outside broadcasts and documentaries. Basically I'm in charge of anything that takes a bit longer to put together. It was a trial but it was surprising how quickly the list of stuff for me to do built up. I've been doing it for five years.

What are you working on at the moment?

The Health, Wealth and Happiness Roadshow. Traditionally we do the county shows, and play to a very rural audience and often to the same people. Most of the population in Cumbria is urban so we wanted a way to get into those communities.

What happens on the roadshows?

There are a range of stalls, cookery demonstrations and dancing. People end up staying for hours. All our feedback has been positive. People want us to do more of these events. The NHS stands, which were offering blood tests and advice, were mobbed. We've already done two roadshows, and have another one in Barrow in September.

Have you always worked at Radio Cumbria?

All my BBC life, yes. I started as the Barrow reporter, then moved into production there, and then to producing in Whitehaven. Then I started standing in for one of the presenters. When she left I got her job presenting a magazine programme.

Did you like presenting?

I ended up going back to Barrow to co-present the breakfast show from there, while the other presenter, Richard Nankivell, was in Carlisle. We did that for four years. It was really successful because we had great chemistry. I still cover for presenters when they're off.

You've done a lot of jobs on the station then?

Well I came back to Carlisle to present the Drive show in 2001, then worked in management, and then went back to presenting. So apart from sport, I think I've done everything! That's why I've stayed here for so long. Every few years I do something different. I like to keep things fresh.

What's been your favourite?

Without a doubt, it's what I'm doing now. I love the variety. Sometimes I'll be out reporting, other times I'll be setting things up, or meeting the public. It's fantastic.

Do you miss presenting?

I don't. People see presenting as the pinnacle, but I always saw myself as a journalist who happened to present sometimes. When I stopped presenting full time I was more than ready to try something else.

Where do you live?

Carlisle. I walk to work past the cathedral and the castle every morning. No traffic jams. I hate the gym so when I moved back here from Barrow I deliberately chose to live somewhere that was a good walk from the office. It's a friendly and buzzy city. People are often surprised by it.

Were you affected by the Carlisle floods in 2005?

I wasn't home at the time, but my house was flooded. I watched the footage on the News Channel but the helicopter shots stopped just before it got to my house. The following morning the street was dry but everyone's furniture and belongings were outside. You could hear Radio Cumbria all down the street from car radios. I took the radio car down there and did interviews with my neighbours. I was out of my house for 10 months. We got a gold Sony award for our coverage.

How do you think the MediaCityUK development in Salford will affect you?

I think it's a little far away, but we're interested in what's going on, and people are talking about it. I'm sure people from here will want to work there. In the same

way that I had a different view of London once I'd been there, I think people will have different opinions of the north in general when Salford opens.

Have you ever been on tv?

I was a contestant on *15-to-1* in the late 80s. We watched it at university when we should have been working. I was fourth, so just missed going into the second half of the programme.

Are you a quiz queen?

I'm good at general knowledge. Our Radio Cumbria team won the Rotary quiz recently. The trophy's in reception. People often come and ask me things in the office, especially about Cumbrian landmarks or its history.

Are you a Rotary Club member?

Yes. I was interviewing two people who had started a new club here and they asked me if I'd thought of joining. I said no because I thought Rotary members were all old men in suits. Most of them are, but they've been accepting women for quite a long time. It's just some clubs don't actively encourage women to join. I ended up going along to a meeting because I wasn't quick enough to come up with an excuse not to.

But you enjoy it now?

Oh yes. It's a mixture of social events and charity events. We raise money for eradicating polio, wheelchairs for Africa, and work in the local communities. It's a world wide organisation, with a British arm, and then we're just one part of the Cumbria Lancashire district. In 2011 I'll be the president of our club.

Interview by Peggy Walker

CV

Degree: History at the University of York. Postgraduate diploma in broadcast journalism from Preston.

First job: Presenting Nosh 'n' Slosh – a food and drink slot on the uni radio station, and painting industrial fuses in a factory.

Career highlight: Dressing up as Pudsey bear for the 2009 Radio Cumbria charity calendar.

foreign bureau



PETER BOWES

CORRESPONDENT
LOS ANGELES

VARIETY, they say, is the spice of life. I am just about to go to Las Vegas to film a story about the local economy and interview former Bros star Matt Goss about a new show he is opening at one of the casinos.

A few weeks back I awoke with a rock jabbing into my back and my right foot poking out of the flap of a tent in Yosemite National Park. I was there for *World News America, Today* and the news website to cover a story about California's giant trees.

In between times, the death of Michael Jackson resulted in a rollercoaster of events and 20-hour days.

Variety indeed. But that is the beauty of being based in LA – a beach town with Hollywood in its backyard and deserts, forests and mountains all within a two-hour drive.

The big stories, like Jackson, happen and we deal with them. But the features, like the tree story, are enriching and more rewarding. There is far more to working in here than showbiz scandals, red carpet glitz and Beverly Hills makeovers.

Grey skies and smog come as a surprise to tourists

Researchers believe the changing climate is slowly killing some of Yosemite's famous trees. They have tagged and mapped thousands of them and intend to hand over their project to the next generation of botanists.

As a one-time biologist, who switched careers early in life, it made for a fascinating story, in an idyllic setting.

The Golden State is the most populous in the US. If California were a country it would be the eighth largest economy in the world. It also has a governor, in Arnold Schwarzenegger, who is rarely out of the headlines. He appears to be most at home when dealing with natural disasters. Wildfires keep us busy on a regular basis and we are constantly on tenterhooks for the next big earthquake. Experts say there is a 99.7 percent probability that California will experience a magnitude 6.7 or larger earthquake in the next 30 years.

Thanks to the movies and television everyone thinks they know Los Angeles. But it often fails to live up to expectations. June Gloom, the local term for the grey skies and never-lifting smog that herald the start of summer, comes as a surprise to tourists. This year June was colder than I can ever remember in LA.

My partner and I came here for a change of scenery and an adventure. We thought we'd stay for a couple of years. Little did I know I would become a US citizen, live on a ranch in the canyons and have a llama as a pet. Actually, Arthur the llama protects my brush-eating goats from hungry coyotes. But that's another story.

green room

THE ARIELATOR

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

UPSIDE Simon

Waldman's career is obviously on the up judging by a cheerful email he received last week from the BBC Talent Bank. 'Further to your interest in a career with the BBC, your details have been identified as suitable for a talent bank of applicants for roles we anticipate we may be recruiting for in the future,' read the email, informing him that if any suitable roles became available they would get in touch. Good news, particularly in this difficult climate, except for one thing – Simon already has a role at the BBC, as morning editor for news, and has been here for 30 years. Perhaps his recent appearance in Ariel wearing a glamorous yellow sou'wester has convinced HR that Simon has front of camera talents he could be utilising as well...



DOWNSIDE Radio Solent producer Neil Sackley



got in the thick of the action by joining his nautically minded presenters Robin Knox-Johnston and Shelley Jory to compete in the Cowes-Torquay-Cowes race, or CTC, on August 29. Far from a leisurely cruise, the CTC is billed as 'The greatest offshore powerboat race in the world'. Though we're sure Neil had fun bouncing across the sea, he also had to undergo gruelling training to ensure he was up to the challenge, including the notorious 'dunk test'. According to Shelley, this involves 'being put into a simulator in a swimming pool, turned upside down, drowned, and taught how to survive'. Not much fun then? 'The dunk test was quite scary,' admits Neil with admirable reserve.

KEEPING UP WITH THE JONESES

Then: The Joneses relaxing at home



THE NEW RUGBY union season will have an extra edge for Radio Leeds sport bj Gareth Jones, as he goes head to head in the commentary box against his Dad – Radio Leicester's Tigers expert, Bleddyn Jones. Leeds Carnegie's promotion back to the Premiership means the two clubs, and so the two Joneses, will clash.

Jones Junior says it's his Dad who gave him the rugby bug in the first place: 'I remember as a child helping him carry his radio equipment into the Welford Road ground, standing next to him while he

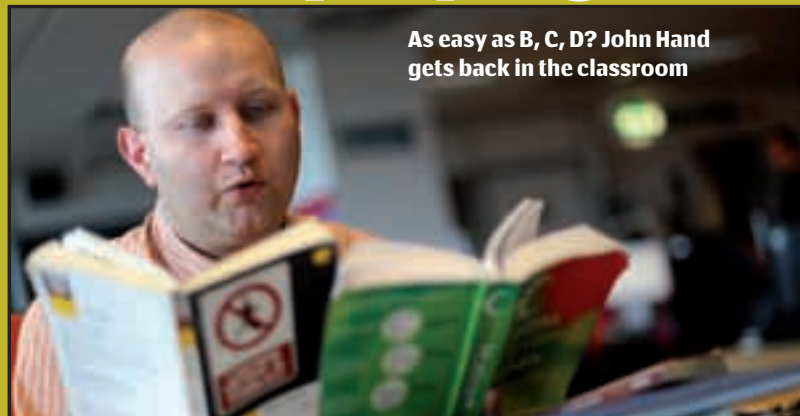
did post-match interviews and going back to the Radio Leicester studios to record his match report,' reminisces Gareth. It seems he's still grateful for this early work experience, as he even says he's hoping for a draw so they can both go home happy. Jones Senior isn't quite so easy going, but win or lose they will 'share a pint at the end of the day' – bringing an air of authority to the time-honoured tradition of



And now: Still squabbling over the sports section

A level playing field

As easy as B, C, D? John Hand gets back in the classroom



BBC NEWSROOM SBJ JOHN HAND decided the only way to find out for sure whether A-levels are getting easier was to sit one – 20 years after passing first time round. John chose a subject he knew nothing about, Italian, and enrolled in a weekly evening class. In 1989 John passed history, maths and English, with a B, C and a D. And 20 years later he has successfully maintained his average, adding C-

grade Italian A-level to his CV. Hurray! But what about the exam question everyone's asking – are 21st Century A-levels really easier than they were in the Eighties? John now feels fully qualified to give the definitive answer: 'Given that I was just doing a couple of hours in a night class each week, it looks like it's fair to say they are.' Pens down.

WE HEAR THAT...

THE BBC News Channel's rebrand has yet to penetrate the corridors of power at competitors Sky. Every Tuesday pressurised Sky News execs attend a meeting titled HTN24, which stands for How To Nail News 24. Perhaps HTNTBBCNC won't fit in their busy diaries...

RADIO 2 may have had a Beatles Bank Holiday, but Radio Merseyside decided to spurn their county's native sons by cheekily filling their Monday playlist with the fab four's arch rivals – The Rolling Stones. Old big-lips and co were wheeled out to bookend all hourly news bulletins with their particular brand of swaggering rock and roll. But why the Rolling Stones? 'Why not the Stones?' said unrepentant managing editor Mick

Ord. 'They're still hugely popular and their career has lasted four times as long as the Beatles. You never know, it might persuade Mick and the gang to play live in the city for the first time in more than 40 years. Well, maybe...'



THE EXQUISITE sense of desolation that arises when you go to open your carefully assembled packed lunch at work, only to realise that it is still sitting at home in the fridge, is enough to reduce even the most hardened optimist into paroxysms of bitter laughter at the cruel game that is life. Kudos then to the good samaritans at Manchester NBH who spared a home-luncher from such indignity last week when his lunchbox was discovered sitting abandoned on top of his car and handed into the security office. Security put out a call asking anyone with the particular registration number to get in touch to claim their box which, our mole informs us, was 'massive, and full of fruit and nuts'. Possibly the only time a car registration number featuring in a security announcement was a good thing for the car owner?

Win tickets to the European premiere of Creation

PAUL BETTANY and Jennifer Connelly star as Charles Darwin and his wife Emma in Creation, a new film about the naturalist. Directed by John Amiel, Creation charts Darwin's formulation of his seminal work on the Origin of Species and the ensuing conflict between faith and reason that threatens to tear his marriage apart. BBC Films in association with Icon Film Distribution are offering readers the chance to win tickets to the European premiere of Creation on Sunday September 13 at the Curzon Mayfair in London. To enter to win one of two pairs of tickets, tell us which film Paul Bettany starred in as naturalist and surgeon Stephen Maturin? Email ariel competitions by September 7.



EARWIGGING

OVERHEARD AT THE BBC

...So she's lost a parrot and seven dogs...

...Pulleys are the way forward...

...He's big time – small time...

...This is not to embarrass you, but would you know who this is?...

...It was all going well, then the Cyberman couldn't get his helmet on...

...I've had enough of vicars...

