

THE BBC NEWSPAPER

ariel

◆ Reggie Yates and Fearne Cotton present this year's **Top of the Pops Christmas special**. Ariel goes behind the scenes for an insight into the making of this BBC Christmas tradition. **See Page 5**

◆ **Radio gets creative with the schedules**, new presenters, new drama, new ideas for festive listening. **See Pages 8, 9, 10**



PHOTOGRAPH: MARK ALLEN

Christmas Countdown

ariel

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Guest contributors this week

BILL THOMPSON, technology writer, explains why he and his family will be gathered around the modem this Christmas. Page 6

GARY DUFFY, correspondent in Brazil, captures Christmas in the southern hemisphere, where the festive dinner is sometimes served at 2am. Page 15

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Expedition guide's death was 'a tragic accident'

◆ **THE DEATH OF EXPEDITION GUIDE** Anton Turner, who was killed by an elephant while working for the BBC in Tanzania, was a tragic accident, a BBC investigation has found.

The former army officer had been filming with a group of children for CBBC's *Serious Explorers*, following in the footsteps of David Livingstone, when the incident happened on October 30.

Turner was part of a group that was trekking in the Mbarika mountains. An elephant suddenly charged, and he was heard to shout at it and seen to point his weapon but no shot was fired. He was trampled and fatally wounded.

The report, commissioned by chief operating officer Caroline Thomson, was carried out by Donald-Iain Brown, head of talent divisions and operations Scotland, and came to the same 'tragic accident' conclusion as the Tanzanian Authorities, who are not investigating any further.

Information from experts indicated that the elephant reacted 'in an unusual, unexpected way', although the reasons for this are unclear. Possible factors could be that it was protecting a second elephant; that it may have been previously injured; that it may have felt threatened; that it may have felt trapped; that visibility in the bush meant it did not notice the trekking party until it was in its 'fight or flight' zone and that it chose to fight.

'This has been a difficult time for the fam-

ily and friends of Anton Turner,' says Thomson. 'We much regret his death and continue to offer them our condolences and support.'

The report identified examples of good practice and encouraged these to be shared across the BBC. For example, it considered that the preparations by the production and expedition team were 'appropriate, thorough, detailed and considered'.

Elephant charges had been identified as one of the risks of the Mbarika trek and steps had been taken to manage and minimise that risk. These included a strict walking formation based on recognised procedures for walking in a 'big game' environment, with Anton Turner at the head of the group as chief hunter/guide in the first line of defence.

There had been a sufficient number of professional hunters and armed guards. Adequate training and drills had been provided and the production team were all very experienced.

The expedition doctors considered that the provision of medical assistance was in accordance with the agreed plan for dealing with such an incident, and thought it 'extremely unlikely' Turner would have survived his injuries even if he had been close to a fully resourced hospital.

The emergency evacuation plans were 'very well planned', and the expedition leader had shown 'exemplary' skills in dealing with the situation, the report found.



Final link in the Chain

Radio 7's interactive drama, *Chain Gang*, came to a thrilling conclusion at St Pancras station last week, with audience members joining in the location recording of the final episode.

It was a fitting finale for the programme, in which plot development has been driven by listeners.

After the first two-minute episode, back in September, writer Robert Shearman was following the dramatic twists and turns suggested by the audience.

Shearman was at St Pancras to meet the audience, and the entire story, every link in the chain, will be broadcast in an omnibus edition on Dec 26 at 5.15pm.

'Encouraging' response from indies at green forum

◆ **SHINE, ENDEMOL AND HAT TRICK** were among 18 independent companies that took part in an environmental forum, hosted by the BBC's Environmentally Sustainable Productions team.

The forum was an opportunity for companies to share best practice, from sustainable lighting to rechargeable batteries, recycling and sustainable sets. Project manager Charles Simmonds said that the response from the indies had been 'encouraging'.

'There was a lot of enthusiasm and we all agreed that this was the start of a process we're keen to continue and develop,' he said.

The ESP team hopes to give the indies access to its specialist production carbon calculator – which will assess the environmental impact of tv productions – when it launches in the new year.

Debbi Slater, line producer on *Being Human*, said: 'Swapping information is a great start – when you are on set things can get stressful and people tend to forget things like recycling.'

NEWS BITES

WORLD SERVICE director Peter Horrocks has apologised for any offence caused after the question 'should homosexuals face execution?' was posted online by Africa Have Your Say, ahead of a debate in Uganda about a planned new law to make some gay activities punishable by death. Horrocks said the original headline, which was later changed, 'was, in hindsight, too stark'. *Mail*, Page 11

BBC PERSIAN television is continuing to broadcast into Iran despite attempts to jam its signal. Persistent interference, affecting the Hotbird 6 satellite, began on December 20 after BBC Persian began extended coverage of the death of reformist cleric Grand Ayatollah Hoseyn Ali Montazeri.

RADIO 3 presenter Fiona Talkington has received the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit for 'outstanding service in the interest of Norway'. For many years she has championed Norwegian music, films and literature and last year curated the Scene Norway festival in London.

BBC WORKPLACE is launching two design challenges for universities and colleges in the north of England. Undergraduates are invited to design a piece of furniture and a piece of fabric to be used in the BBC's new home at Salford.

PETER MANDELSON, the architect of New Labour and one of the most colourful figures in British politics, is to take part in next month's News Festival. The business secretary will be in conversation with Jon Sopel.

FOR THE first time Scotland's *Hogmanay Live* will be available across the world. It will go out on BBC One Scotland on December 31, and will be streamed live on-demand for 24 hours through bbc.co.uk/hogmanay. In addition it will be available on the red button in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, and on BBC iPlayer.

BBC WORLDWIDE'S Festive Recipes app, which includes food ideas and how-to videos, is available for £2.39 from the App Store on iPhone and iPod touch or at www.itunes.com/appstore/

STAFF ARE reminded that the VAT rate will revert from 15 percent to 17.5 percent on January 1. Sales of standard-rate goods or services on or after that date will charge VAT at 17.5 percent. Details of how to apply the rate change are available on <http://finance.gateway.bbc.co.uk/document-library/pdfs/vat-rate-change.pdf>

SEASON'S GREETINGS

■ Ariel wishes all its readers a happy Christmas. There is no edition on December 29. The next issue will appear on January 5

Wogan signs off - till February



PHOTOGRAPH: CHAS COMMANDER

Radio 2 staff lined the corridors on Friday to applaud Sir Terry Wogan as he left the building after closing the mic on 27 years of broadcasting at Breakfast. The studio was full of cards, cake, champagne and senior executives. TOGs queued in the cold outside the building to wave him goodbye, and the Prime Minister sent a goodwill message. His words lead a selection of some of the tributes to the veteran, much-loved broadcaster

GORDON BROWN

Terry, five decades at the very top of British broadcasting is a towering, indeed an unparalleled achievement. As you move on from *Wake Up To Wogan*, I wanted to let you know how very dearly you'll be missed, how delighted we all are you'll be returning with another venture before too long.'

SARAH KENNEDY

R2 early morning presenter
I'm actually in denial - I really can't believe I won't be hearing the Studio

6A to 6C squawk box chatter every morning, berating politicians, journalists, the BBC suits, the roads, the crazy behaviour of tv stars. It feels like a beloved member of my family has been taken from me and The Dawn Patrol Team.

JOHN 'BOGGY' MARSH
newsreader and inspiration for the infamous Janet and John stories...

He sounds a nice guy on the radio, the sort you would want to count as a friend - warm, generous, witty. And then you meet him for real. I can't remember a single day when I have seen him in a bad mood for more than a few minutes. Maybe it's the constant supply of food that does it. It has been an enormous privilege to be part of the team for so many years... If only he wouldn't insist on eating tepid curry first thing in the morning....

ALAN 'DEADLY' DEDICOAT
newsreader on Wake Up to Wogan

It's been 15 years of laughter - every day from the minute Terry arrives each morning. And he's a generous man. Some presenters hog the microphone; Terry shares it. If you come up with a witty line that is difficult to top, he'll just play the next record and let you take the glory.

The only downside to working with Wogan is that I've put on so much weight. At eight in the morning we've tucked into snails in garlic, fish and chips, curry... to us it's lunchtime.

It was Terry who christened me the 'Voice of the Balls' when I got the job calling the numbers on the national lottery. And that was the icing on the cake.

LYNN BOWLES,
Terry's travel presenter

I can never do justice to the talents of Terry Wogan, where could I possibly begin? I feel like I'm in an 'arms race' of superlatives when I try to describe him. No one touches his ef-

fortless ability as a broadcaster, and I think I may even miss him throwing biscuits at me while I broadcast.

SHAUN KEAVENY
Breakfast Show presenter, 6 Music

I had been on-air no more than three weeks when his right-hand man Alan brought him down, as a surprise, to join me on my breakfast show, and he was all the things I wanted him to be - giving, hilarious and a total pro. I'm going to miss him, and I know he'll miss his audience. ALL HAIL WOGAN!

MARK RADCLIFFE
R2 presenter 8-10pm Mon - Thurs with Stuart Maconie

I remember sitting next to Terry at the Sony Awards once and feeling like I was a 'made man' in the mafia as countless radio foot soldiers came up to pay homage to the 'Godfather' and kiss his ring. Farewell then Sir Terry. It was all for the best. All of it.

STUART MACONIE
R2 presenter

As a tiny child in the frozen North, the knocker-upper's rapping would rouse me from slumbers and it would be downstairs for thin gruel by the sputtering peat hearth, a cheerless repast turned into a feast by the warm and wonderful conviviality emanating from the radio. 'Who is that?', I would ask, and my silver-haired granie would reply, 'That my boy is Terry Wogan. His name is writ large in the warp and weft of broadcasting's colourful tapestry'. Almost none of the above is true. I have shared a curry at ungodly hours with Sir Tel, a happy by-product of sitting in for Ken Bruce. In fact, I have even occupied the great man's breakfast chair myself, a fact which, all joking aside, I am as proud of as anything I have ever done. To be considered even a half-fit stand-in for Terry Wogan is a real compliment. Because Terry is the Don of broadcasters. We shall not see his like again.

A fond farewell to the Togmeister from one Old Gal

FRIDAY'S FINAL WAKE UP TO WOGAN was an incredibly emotional affair for the millions of us who tuned in for the Togmeister's last hurrah.

'Now, I'm not going to pretend that this is not a sad day,' he said, voice cracking, as he signed off for the last time. 'You can probably hear it in my voice. I'm going to miss the laughter and the fun of our mornings together.' And he finished by saying, 'thank you for being my friend'.

The show ended with Anthony Newley's *The Party's Over*, and what a party it has been. I am a TOG (Terry's Old Geezers or Gals) and proud of it. For

much of his 27 year reign as the King of the breakfast airwaves, I was one of Terry Wogan's eight million 'bewildered' listeners.

Although not naturally a morning person, Sir Terry's velvety brogue and whimsical take on life never failed to put a spring in my step and a smile on my face, so his final show was a sad occasion. Struggling to hold back the tears as he bade us farewell, I recalled happier times; driving to work laughing my head off, with tears streaming down my face; not only did I look like a complete idiot but I also had to pull the car over and stop because I couldn't see where



I was going. His wild fits of giggles not only set me off but also set me up for the day.

Wake Up To Wogan was a bit like Marmite, you either loved it or you hated it - so what was it that hooked me? I joined his merry band of listeners in the early eighties, during Wogan's hilarious obsession with *Dallas* and the *Poison Dwarf*. It was a joy to be lulled out of sleep by his chuckling and led into a world of gentle whimsy and wild flights of fancy.

He claimed the secret of his success was in trying to create a club, where; 'You're talking to one person, not eight

million, and you're trying to make that person feel part of the programme.' And feel part of it we did, revelling in the good natured banter with 'Deadly', 'Boggy' and 'The Travel Totty', and legendary contributions from 'listeners' such as Chuffer Dandridge and Helena Handcart.

I shall miss the shameless innuendo and corpsing, the gentle teasing and ability to see the ridiculous side of life, but most of all I shall miss the man who has been the soundtrack of my life. So thank you Sir Terry. Thank you for being my friend.

Sue Llewellyn

New faces for sport, arts & content

by Ariel staff

THE BBC'S NEW SPORTS editor is to be David Bond, currently sports editor at the Daily Telegraph. The job has been vacant since Mihir Bose's departure in August. Bond will start in the post in the New Year.

He will become the senior on-air specialist for sports news journalism, providing analysis and in-depth knowledge to coverage of major sports news stories and events.

He will work across news and sports services on tv, radio and online.

Bond currently runs a team of sports journalists at the Daily Telegraph, producing their daily sports supplement and websites. He has overseen the paper's coverage of the Beijing Olympics, and the in-depth reporting on rugby union's 'Bloodgate' story.

RUNNING THE EXPANDED BBC Scotland arts slate, including *Imagine* and a relaunched *Newsnight Review*, will mark a return to programme making for



David Bond

BBC Two and Four channel executive David Okuefuna and a chance to exploit the new network supply review investment in arts at Pacific Quay.

In the newly created role of Scotland's creative director of arts, he's looking forward to working with presenters like Alan Yentob, Kirsty Wark and Martha Kearney, but also winning commissions for ambitious new network content, including a major factual project he hopes to announce in February.

'There is already a strong team of production talent at PQ and through the network supply commitment, Scotland is destined to be a very important contributor, across all channels,' he says.

From January 22, BBC Two's late night arts magazine strand will be retitled *The Review Show* and run at a longer 45 minutes, with more single subject shows. BBC One's international *Imagine* series will move 'wholesale' to Glasgow in March 2012, although some programmes



David Okuefuna

will still come from London. *The Culture Show* will continue to be split between London and PQ.

A former editor in the BBC Arts studio, whose credits include *The Thirties in Colour*, *Art of Eternity* and *The Story of Maths*, Okuefuna has no concerns about attracting on and off-air talent to the banks of the Clyde.

'Regular contributors have already indicated they're happy to travel and talented programme makers will go where there are interesting opportunities to make great tv,' he says.

His own roots are in the north of England but he is looking forward to renewing 'a strong affection for Scotland' he developed as a filmmaker there.

TROY - THE ONLY PERSON IN THE BBC with just one name - is the company's first head of content release.

He will bring Vision and FM&T expertise together, to make more BBC content available, in more ways, to a wider audience.

Troy says: 'This job is a recognition that the ways in which we watch television are changing; it's about trying to fuse the successes of our channel scheduling with the immense potential of working with creative technologies, in FM&T and beyond the BBC.'

Currently a large part of the BBC's output is available on demand, in future it all will be, and Troy talks with enthusiasm of enabling on demand access to the vast riches of the BBC archive. He wants to offer viewers an interactive experience, so when they watch one programme they are pointed at other output - not necessarily more of the same but complementary programming, or explanatory pieces, or interaction with a character from whatever they were just watching - the possibilities are enormous.

He says: 'We are in the business of delighting audiences, and my role is to transfer and unlock that potential across a wide range of services - the

red button, mobiles, the iPlayer, the web.'

He notes that a lot of on-demand viewing at the moment is of 'hits', but says the BBC also has a wide range of material which reaches right across our diverse audiences. He sees his role as making that output available for audiences to discover, and helping them to access it.

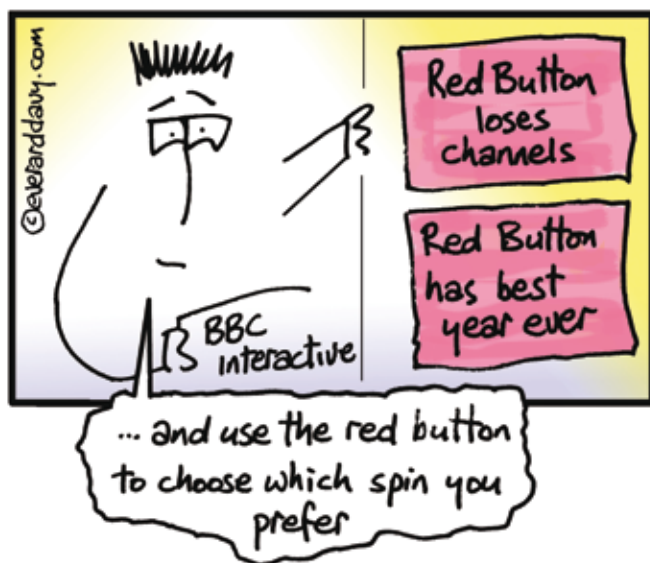
So - how will he measure success? He says: 'If the BBC is able to use the new services and existing channels to secure its future at the heart of viewers' lives, then that feels like a pretty successful outcome to me.'

And his name? His parents chose not to give him a Christian name, and he has always been just Troy.



Troy

Best year for red button



by Cathy Loughran

As the BBC red button celebrates its most successful year ever, 2010 and the growth of internet tv should offer even more opportunities for the 11 year old service, says Rahul Chakkara.

Interactive television from the BBC was used by more than 11m users each week in 2009 - 7.5m alone accessing the red button offering for Wimbledon, 6m for Glastonbury and over a million choosing Robbie Williams's exclusive tracks on *Friday Night With Jonathan Ross*.

In October, the BBC had to close down two of its three red button channels on Freeview, to make room for HD broadcast channels, but internet tv

via broadband - as proposed through Project Canvas - will free up capacity, says Chakkara, FM&T's controller, tv platforms.

'The new internet connected platforms and devices are a big opportunity for BBC red button. We recently started trialling BBC iPlayer on Freesat via the red button, delivered over the open internet.'

So what else can we expect via red button in 2010?

'We'll innovate to build better services for some of the key events like the Winter Olympics, the World Cup and Glastonbury - more details early next year. We'll also aim to deploy BBC iPlayer onto other connected tv platforms and devices,' the controller says.

English the BBC WS way

by Cathy Loughran

Journalists whose first language is not English now have free access to the online English training courses, via the World Service and College of Journalism's 30 foreign language microsites.

Three new modules, written by WS trainer Mark Shea, offer guidance in writing, editorial standards, vocabulary and accuracy. They are particularly aimed at staff and freelanc-

es in BBC offices around the world, who can link to the courses from each microsite's homepage. But, says English language development manager Sian Harris, they will also be useful to a wider, international, audience.

'As an organisation that broadcasts and produces content in more than 30 languages to a wide variety of audiences globally, it is vital that staff are aware of the impact of the language they use on output and

audiences.'

The WS language microsites were launched last year by CoJo's Najiba Kasree, with the aim of developing and reinforcing the in-house language style of each BBC language service.

Kasree says: 'They started the process of gathering and recording the unique BBC style that exists in every broadcast language. The sites are widening the linguistic and journalistic debate in the target areas, where the BBC is often

seen as a reference point.'

English language training from World Service has always been tailored to the professional needs of BBC staff, whether in journalism, production or business support, Harris adds, and it's paid dividends.

'We've seen lots of participants enhance both their professional development and their own confidence in contributing to English output, editorial and management processes as a result.'

Thompson says Worldwide needs BBC brand

Mark Thompson has given his strongest defence of the BBC's continuing connection with BBC Worldwide, arguing that it makes 'no commercial sense' without the BBC brand.

Writing in *Media Guardian* today, the director-general says: 'A Worldwide wholly separated from the BBC makes no strategic or commercial sense. Global audiences flock to BBC programmes and to the BBC brand; take those away and Worldwide becomes

an empty vessel.'

Responding to Treasury suggestions last week that the BBC Trust should look at options for Worldwide, including partial sale, Thompson - like trust chairman Michael Lyons before him - remains open-minded.

'A change [in the company's ownership structure] is not inevitable or even necessarily desirable at any point in the future. But nor should it be automatically ruled out,' he

says, adding that reports that the BBC is already preparing for a partial flotation are 'simply untrue'.

'What we cannot envisage is a Worldwide in which the BBC does not continue to play a central role. Without the BBC brand, BBC intellectual property and the ability to deliver international BBC services, Worldwide would only be worth a fraction of its present value,' Thompson argues.

'And a BBC stripped of

Worldwide would not only fail to capitalise on its present opportunities, but would struggle to maintain international visibility and relevance.'

The priority should be to decide how best to develop and exploit the company for the benefit of global audiences and the whole of the UK.

Read the full comment piece at www.guardian.co.uk/media/organgrinder/2009/dec/15/bbc-worldwide-mark-thompson

BY ADAM BAMBURY

STANDING IN A CAVERNOUS studio in East London waiting for the performance of Ballet Boyz: The Rite of Spring to begin, I have no idea what I'm about to witness. All I've been told is that it will be a 'radical reinterpretation' of the riot-provoking original ballet from 1913, and that as part of the audience I may be asked to 'learn some moves'. It's going out on BBC Three so I'm expecting something a little... different.

Just how different is made clear when a topless man with a torso the size of a small country leaps out from a hatch and ripples across the stage towards me like a caterpillar, smiling manically. Inches from my face he turns and jumps away, as two gangs of gimp mask-clad breakdancers start flipping about behind him.

MAKING THE RITE MOVES

Top score: a radical reworking of Stravinsky's ballet



All this is accompanied by Stravinsky's radical score ('it's got the best dissonances anyone ever thought up, and the best asymmetries,' composer Leonard Bernstein once enthusiastically remarked). The irregular 'primitivist' rhythms and blaring brass only add to the intensity as terrifying black-clad elderly tango dancers with rictus grins twirl slowly around young female 'sirens' writhing about on the floor. Billy Elliot it ain't.

This performance makes up the final 25 minutes of the finished programme. The rest of this hour duration documents the titular Ballet Boyz' (former Royal Ballet dancers Michael Nunn and William Trevitt) efforts to stage the ballet with dancers of varying experience and the obligatory short time period to do it in (five days once all the players

have been selected).

So what are BBC Three's target audience of 16-34 year olds going to make of it? 'I hope they'll be energised, and just enjoy the dance,' says exec Celina Parker. 'You can come to this piece without a PhD in classical music - you can enjoy the pure performance and the music. I think that they translate regardless of channel, age or demographic.'

There are also the, er, costumes... 'The scantily clad gorgeous babes?' Well, yes. 'There are some extraordinary bodies on that stage and also an S&M undertone, there's no getting around it,' she laughs. 'I think the performances speak for themselves, but yes, there are some bodacious babes wearing very little, if that helps.'

Ballet Boyz, BBC Three, Dec 23

THAT ONCE A YEAR MAGIC

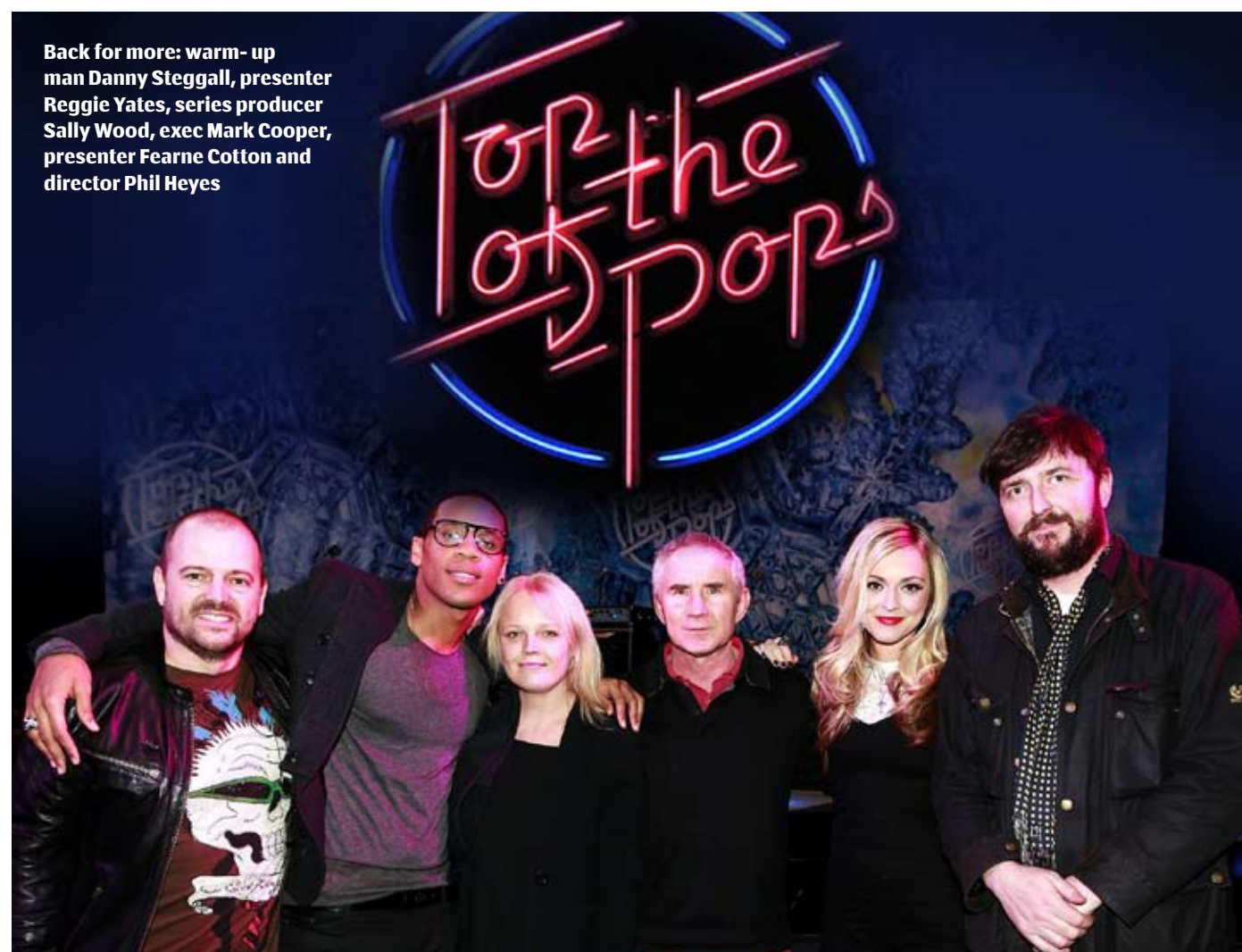
Adam Bambury checks out a Christmas tradition that brings fans closer to the performers

FAKE SNOW IS FALLING all around us. Onstage, million-selling rock band Muse perform hit single Uprising surrounded by dancers clad in tiny Father Christmas outfits playing air guitar. Singer Matt Bellamy croons his anti-establishment anthem while wearing sunglasses covered in flashing blue lights; the drummer's face is barely visible behind his false beard and Santa hat.

I'm at the recording of *Christmas Top of the Pops*, witnessing a scene that two weeks later will no doubt have the whole family enthralled as they lie in a postprandial haze. You know the drill: kids are hypnotised by the colourful costumes, adolescent girls

chatter in anticipation of the number one, teenage boys concede that, yeah, Muse are pretty cool I guess, Dad pauses mid-Quality Street as he stares at the dancers, Mum is dreaming of Robbie Williams, Granny wants to know why that man is singing in such a silly way...

Exec Mark Cooper is the man in charge of this yearly resurrection of the nation's most loved studio pop show, a programme that most are likely to have memories of - or at least think they do, such is its nostalgic pull. Does it feel like a big responsibility? 'Absolutely,' he acknowledges. 'I'm very conscious I'm working in a very long, honourable



Back for more: warm-up man Danny Steggall, presenter Reggie Yates, series producer Sally Wood, exec Mark Cooper, presenter Fearnie Cotton and director Phil Heyes

and snow-covered tradition.'

As creative head of music entertainment he has fingers in many musical pies, but still appreciates *TOTP's* unique place in the nation's hearts: 'I think people watch it to hear a song they love on the radio, and to see what the people look like who do it - whether they're good movers and whether they fancy them.'

Mark should know - he was the show's exec for two years before it ended as a weekly programme in July 2006. But despite the subsequent yearly hiatus the team behind the show remains much the same. Sally Wood has been series producer since 2003. 'We have a lot of people re-

turning to work on the show each year,' she says. 'They genuinely love it.' Some of the crew have been *TOTP* regulars since exec Chris Cowey's day in the 90s, before the reign of Andi Peters.

The team have had longer to prepare this year than last - in October 2008 *Christmas*

TOTP was cancelled. A public outcry ensued and a month later it was re-confirmed, plus an additional New Year's edition which remains this year. Was Mark surprised by the support? 'Not at all, but I think some people at the BBC were,' he replies. 'If you go into a pub and you say 'should they bring back *TOTP*?' nobody's really going to argue about it. Of course they should, and of course Father Christmas should exist - it's one of those things that everybody can agree with. I'm sure the outcry helped make people realise its value.'

I'm not even dancing but by 10pm I'm feeling the burn - it's not a problem suffered

by the crowd, many of whom have been queuing outside TVC since the morning to ensure they got in to the over-booked recording. Mark reckons it's these excitable pop-loving souls who make *TOTP* special.

'I don't know of another show where there's such a proximity of performer and band,' he enthuses. 'It's a punter's show - these are the songs that people have sung to and danced to and cried to all year. Being there with those people, there's a fantastic camaraderie which you don't get on any other pop show. I think that is the *Top of the Pops* tradition, and it's magic to rekindle it.'

'Of course, they should bring back TOTP'

MARK COOPER

So here it is... Merry Christmas

The festive schedule is a cracking mix of old and new tv favourites, Jana Bennett tells **Sally Hillier**



PHOTOGRAPH: PETER SEARLE

ALONG WITH ALL THE SHIMMERY, shiny, feel-good content on offer this Christmas, Jana Bennett is looking forward to something a bit grittier: *Top Gear* on December 27.

It was filmed in Bolivia's Altiplano desert, which the director of *Vision* drove across with her husband some years ago. At least they did until their vehicle conked out. 'We were stuck in the desert and had to be rescued,' she recalls.

Fast forward to this year's Edinburgh TV Festival where she met the *Top Gear* presenters ahead of their trip to Bolivia. 'I told them which volcanoes to drive around. I'm interested to see how they got on. From what I can tell, they did better than we did.'

Or maybe not, given that their route included a mountain pass dubbed the Road of Death.

This brings us to *EastEnders* and, according to the publicity blurb: 'Archie's mission of hurt and destruction is brought to an abrupt end when he is brutally murdered.'

Does Bennett think it's time for some seasonal happiness on the soap? 'I'm not saying there isn't happiness, but *EastEnders* wouldn't be delivering at Christmas if it didn't have a lot of intensity,' she replies. 'The audience expects a dramatic denouement.'

It's not just Archie who meets his end. In a 'spectacular' two-parter, David Tennant bows out as *Doctor Who*. Old enemy The Master (John Simm) returns alongside former companion Donna, played by Catherine Tate.

Tate also appears in *Nan's Christmas Carol* on BBC One, in which foul-mouthed Nan experiences Christmases past, present and future.

But will she be swearing as much as usual, given the sensitivities around harm and offence and the Dec 25, kiddies-still-up, slot?

'It's not the first time *Catherine Tate* has been shown on Christmas Day,' Bennett observes. 'And I wouldn't say Nan has been toned down, but she is playing her character in a particular way around the Christmas story.'

For humorous viewing suitable for all the family, turn to *Outnumbered*, which has a festive one-off on December 27. The part-improvised show is establishing itself as one of the entertainment greats.

Cue Victoria Wood, who nine years after her last Christmas special - nine years! - returns with *Victoria Wood's Midlife Christmas* (December 24), complete with Lark Pies to Cranchesterford, a skit on BBC period dramas.

As Bennett points out, 'viewers like to see big names in their liv-

'The theory is it's harder now to make an impact with films but I don't think that's true'

ing rooms at Christmas' and she is delighted that Wood is back.

People also like a good film at this time of year, and the BBC hopes they won't be disappointed with Christmas Day animations *The Gruffalo* and *The Incredibles*.

Surely, though, movies are not quite so eagerly awaited as they used to be? 'The theory is that it's harder now to make an impact with films, but I don't think that's true in practice,' Bennett declares. 'Even if people have already seen the dvd, they still like coming together to watch again. I see no diminishing of appetite for films, if they are the right sort.'

A huge amount of time and money is invested in the BBC's Christmas, with planning starting a good 12 months in advance. The line-up is drafted and redrafted countless times until the final version is unveiled in early December.

Traditionally, the BBC's De-

ember 25 audience is double that of ITV, which tends to broadcast its big hitters, like *The X Factor*, in the preceding weeks, maximising advertising revenue.

At the BBC, the rise in channels means a lot of effort goes into ensuring that schedules complement each other. Bennett says there is a particularly strong mix this time across the terrestrial and digital services, and that BBC Four's Orsen Welles season is among the highlights.

'Actually, I think scheduling is easier now because you can offer different experiences to different audiences. BBC One is the focus, but it's a pleasure to think about viewers [on other platforms].'

There is more HD programming than ever, and with around 2.3m HD boxes in UK homes - a three-fold increase on winter 2008 - a big rise is expected in viewing to the BBC HD channel.

Also on offer is 'more of a bang' on New Year's Eve. 'The celebrations are bigger as it's the end of the year and of the decade,' Bennett notes. This also means more reviews across the season, including one hosted by Russell Howard on BBC Three. Bennett describes Howard as 'a shining new star'.

And as everyone knows, the stars always come out at Christmas.

RIGHT MAN FOR PROMOTION: WHO ELSE COULD IT BE?

IT'S NOT JUST THE TV schedules that take a long time to plan, but also the promotional effort around them.

Way back at Easter, the marketing team started conjuring up ideas for Christmas idents.

For BBC One, it was decided to peg the promotions around David Tennant's departure as *Doctor Who*, with Tennant taking viewers on a journey of 'tv fun'.

'Using the Tardis as a sleigh pulled by reindeer was a brilliant idea, and David was an obvious choice - popular both with young and mature audiences,' says Reemah Sakaan, head of marketing, BBC One and Fiction. Tennant was



whisked off to a warehouse in west London to start filming the trailers, which he had to fit in around making the *Doctor Who* Christmas special.

Many people were involved in the trailers, from graphic designers and post production specialists to online teams and Big Screen staff who were asked about how best to make them work for the iPlayer and the web.

cutting edge



BILL THOMPSON

Happy holidays with the modem

IT'S EASY TO FORGET how much what we think of as 'traditions' are shaped by technology. Apart from the obvious impact of the discovery of fire, or agriculture, on the sorts of celebrations that early hominids might have enjoyed, many of us are old enough to have lived through the emergence of television as the centrepiece of the stereotypical 20th century family Christmas.

Whether it was Morecambe and Wise, the Queen's Speech or yet another screening of *The Great Escape*, Christmas in Corby during the 1970s revolved around all-day chocolate, discarded wrapping paper and constant attention to the screen.

And even though I watch relatively little broadcast television during the year, having the sort of life where I rely totally on on-demand viewing, the Christmas schedule remains a real draw.

We'll gather round the wireless network

But instead of a single screen in the corner of the living room - or even a massive HD screen on the wall - we'll be sitting down with our laptops and smartphones to enjoy a proper 'connected Christmas'. I'll be

enjoying the day with my children, and we'll have time for presents and meals together, but we won't be alone because a constant stream of text messages, Facebook updates and, of course, tweets will keep us connected to our friends and family around the world.

Some people might think this is an appalling idea, but the idea of Christmas as a time for nuclear families to cut themselves off from the rest of the world is one 20th century tradition I am happy to abandon.

Instead of stewing together we'll all be gathered around the warm glow of the wireless network, hoping the modem holds up for the holidays and using it to exchange virtual kisses instead of real ones under the mistletoe, and I suspect you'll be doing the same.

However, even our connected Christmas is a product of a specific set of technologies, and it too will adapt and evolve. This year the images on the tv screen and the conversations on the social networks are distinct - one in the linear broadcast world and one happening in the new public space formed behind the screens of all the world's connected computers.

But if Canvas comes together as planned next year the two will be linked and we'll be able to wish everyone an 'IPTV Christmas', then watch as the digital generation decides how to reinvent the holiday tradition in a post-broadcast world. A Morecambe and Wise tweetup, anyone?

Bill Thompson is a technology writer

HOW DO YOU SAY 2010

HAPPY (almost) New Year from the Pronunciation Unit! But should we say 'twenty ten' or 'two thousand and ten'? The broadcasters want consistency and we want to reflect our audience's preferences. Linguists puzzled by the popularity of two thousand – no one says the Norman conquest happened in one thousand and sixty-six – are blaming millennium fever and expressions like the year two thousand and the film 2001: A Space Odyssey.

For 2010, our research leads us to expect the shift from two thousand forms to twenty forms to accelerate over the next couple of years. The London Olympics, for instance, is consistently and officially said to be taking place in 'twenty twelve'. As we enter a new decade, the need for the 'oh' in the twenty forms ('twenty oh nine') disappears, and the smaller number of syllables required will make these even more appealing.

Catherine Sangster, the Pronunciation Unit



Having a laugh: Stephen K Amos, *The Boy with Tape on his Face*, Seann Walsh and Michelle Farr

BBC IN ACTION

PHOTOGRAPH: MARK BASSETT

BBC COMEDY PRESENTS pitched up in the capital for a Christmas Extravaganza at the Bloomsbury Theatre.

Stand-up comedian Stephen K Amos, who will have his own BBC Two show next year, headlined the gig, with its glittering bill of *Mock the Week* panellist Seann Walsh, the *Boy with Tape on his Face* (recent star of

Michael McIntyre's *Roadshow*), Ava Vidal, *The Thick of It*'s Chris Addison and Comedy Presents favourite Milton Jones.

BBC Comedy Presents launched two years ago as a non-broadcast, live initiative. As well as regular shows in London, there are gigs all over the country showcasing 'the best in vari-

ety, music, sketches and stand-up'.

'Over the past two years, some of the biggest names in comedy have performed, including French and Saunders, Vic and Bob, Lenny Henry, Horne and Corden, Miranda Hart, Noel Fielding and, most recently in Cardiff, Rob Brydon. The reputation of the BBC Comedy Presents brand ensured that

500 tickets for the Christmas show were snapped up within weeks, even before the line-up was announced.

'BBC Comedy Presents is in-house BBC Comedy's commitment to supporting the live circuit,' says producer Michelle Farr. 'As well as having a line-up of big name comedians, it is also a fantastic way to nurture new talent.'

WHAT TO WEAR

SUNNY DIMITRIADOU
BBC OUTREACH, TVC

Where did you buy your outfit?

The mustard bolero cardigan is part of a twin set from a Spanish brand called Hoss Intropia, who do quite unusual clothes with Mediterranean flair! The stripy top was a warehouse-sale special from Orla Kielly, whose HQ is near my house – I always stick my head in to absorb colour and patterns. The velvet flares are See by Chloe from TK Maxx at a fraction of their original price. The boots were another sale purchase from Ash at Selfridges.

What kind of clothes appeal to you?

Oranges, browns and certain types of pattern reminiscent of the 70s always attract me like a moth to a light bulb. Oh, and anything playdough coloured. Having gone through decades of pastels and earthy non-colours, and black uniformity, I am single-handedly starting a crusade for people wearing bright colours again.

Do you need to dress a particular way for work?

Not really, although I do avoid wearing jeans as I don't think they look very professional. Other than that I like to wear something that is smart but casual.

Whose wardrobe would you most like to rummage through?

I would love to go through my aunt Pepa's wardrobe. I've seen photos of her in a number of family albums from the 70s and she was one cool chick.

What's the ideal Christmas party outfit?

Anything sparkly would do. The bigger the jewellery the better! Sequins can be a bit too much to carry from work to party, but lurex is a great alternative and can be toned down with plain black or even jeans. As for guys, a little cufflink action is always a welcome smart addition to the usual uniform and although reindeer-jumpers and singing ties are a definite no-no, a colour injection is a nice festive twist to winter frost.



SHAMELESS PLUG

BEN MACDOUGALL,
BBC RADIO CUMBRIA, PRESENTER

AFTER SEEING THE DEVASTATION left behind by the Cumbria floods, I felt compelled to do something to help the victims. I'm a musician and came up with the idea to use my talent to help raise money. Last Christmas my composition 'Svalbard' reached number 3 in the iTunes charts so this year I decided to release two new recordings. All profits from the sale of 'Oh Holy Night' and 'Silent Night' will go towards the Cumbria Flood Recovery Fund. I urge everyone to buy a copy of the releases so that together we can help those who are suffering over the Christmas period. The songs are available for download only on the iTunes music store. The albums also feature full backing tracks which can be downloaded in the same way. I am also providing a free download of the sheet music on my website so you can play along.



Radio gets re unexpected

Boot out the djs, tear up the schedule and make the most of the fact you've got a new audience for the day. Who needs telly? From 1Xtra to Radio 4, **Robert Wilson** unwraps Christmas on network radio...

JOE HARLAND, executive producer at **RADIO 1**, is sifting through a pile of around 2500 competition entries when Ariel catches up with him. He's whittling them down to 24 winners, who will each be given a 15 minute slot on Greg James's show as part of the station's 'tinsel takeover' on Christmas Day – the kind of opportunity made possible by the festive schedules.

Stars could be born – and not just in the east. 'For all we know, this could be the opportunity for the next Chris Moyles,' says Harland.

Entrants' pitches range from the straightforward – *I will come on the radio, play records and make you laugh – to me and my gran will cook our favourite basmati rice recipe*. Winners will choose songs from the Radio 1 playlist and one or two personal favourites.

'All radio stations know that Christmas is a different listening experience – people bump into you who haven't heard you for a long time, or haven't heard you at all. We thought, why don't we give people their own show, something that speaks for them?'

Over on **RADIO 2**, the Togs will be braving their first Christmas morning for many years without the familiar ho, ho, ho of Terry Wogan.

But the Togmeister may well be tuning in to hear the big name specials presented by the likes of Katherine Jenkins, Robbie Williams and Barry Manilow, doing his first ever radio

programme on Christmas Day – as well as iconic artists and djs celebrating songs from the last five decades for the *Great British Songbook*.

'We're going to be reminiscing and speaking to icons of the time

– Tony Blackburn and Cilla Black on the '60s and Noddy Holder and Kiki Dee on the '70s,' says Bequi Sheehan, producer. 'It's a great way to look back and see just how much we have got to shout about.'

Lewis Carnie, head of programmes, reckons that the seasonal schedule is a chance to experiment with different artists, presenters and programmes... and to see how they go down with the public. 'It's the only time of year we would be able to give that much airtime to a theme like the Great British Songbook, because normally we would be carrying an afternoon show,' he says.

RADIO 3 will be marking the anniversaries of Purcell, Handel, Haydn and Mendelssohn – the climax of its Composers of the Year. There are new recordings of carols by the BBC Singers at breakfast time and the world premiere of John Rutter's *Carol for the Magi*. Joan Bakewell talks to writers, artists, thinkers and other public figures in a new series of *Belief*.

Controller Roger Wright promises that the richness of live and specially

recorded music 'won't let up' during the Christmas and New Year period. 'Listeners expect us to have music that isn't from disc, some new work and something that feels international,' he says. 'And in the *Belief* programme with Joan there is the opportunity for ideas to be taken further, in a very personal way.'

On New Year's Eve, much of the schedule is cleared for the four composers of the year – an evening of what promises to be passionate live debate, culminating in the announcement of the listeners' choice. Advocates, who include Alan Rusbridger, editor of the Guardian (Purcell) and Roger Scruton, philosopher (Haydn) can phone a friend and play music they loathe from the other composers as they vie to convince the public.

'We thought this was the moment to throw things open and say to our listeners, you have heard all this wonderful music but who would you really like to be on your desert island with you,' says Jessica Isaacs, senior producer. 'We have 15 minutes when we have to count the votes, which we will be doing very carefully!'

Family drama and big names are a centrepiece of the **RADIO 4** Christmas schedule. There's a fresh adaptation of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and new productions including Roald Dahl's children's tale *Matilda*; an 18th century adventure, *Black Hearts in Battersea*, and Mike Stott's semi-autobiographical play, *My Mad Grandad*. Two episodes



R1's Greg James



Purcell on Radio 3



Ready for some Special guests



of *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* will bookend the Queen's speech.

'We want to give the audience some nice treats and there's an opportunity to break open the schedule a bit,' says Jeremy Howe, commissioning editor. 'We've deliberately commissioned what we call family-friendly drama – *Matilda* is absolutely targeted for Christmas.'

The station will also broadcast the first ever radio adaptation of a Willy Russell play, *Educating Rita*. The author joined producer Kirsty Williams when Laura dos Santos auditioned to play Rita opposite Bill Nighy. 'When Laura walked into the audition room she broke their hearts, and she is almost completely unknown,' Howe recalls. 'I think that will be a real treat.'

Mike Stott, who died in September, was working on the play when he learnt that he was terminally ill. 'It is a great way to remember him and the most beautiful piece of funny writing about un-PC growing up. People were just queuing up to be in it – Alison Steadman, Bernard Hill, Kenneth Cranham, Johnny Vegas, Gwyneth Powell and Matthew Kelly. I am so pleased that it's there, all singing and dancing, to bring in the New Year.'

ON 5 LIVE, one difference is obvious: several of the stand-out shows will have been pre-recorded, which commissioning editor Jonathan Wall says will be 'a great chance to show a bit more depth to the station'.

Regular 5 live tennis pundit Annabel Croft presents *James, My Alcoholic Friend* – a follow on to her BBC One documentary, *Famous, Rich and Homeless*, tracking down the man she met when sleeping rough on the streets of London. 'It's a very emotional story. And it broadens out into the issue of homelessness, something that people think about at Christmas in

particular,' Wall says.

In another one-off documentary, *In Search of the Real Drogba*, the Chelsea striker explains his motivation for helping to build a new hospital in his home country, Ivory Coast. With the guidance of football pundit Ian McGarry, listeners will gain an insight into one of the Premier League's most talked-about players – an interview which Wall surmises will be 'much deeper than getting a five minute interview with him after a match'.



Roald Dahl's *Matilda*

6 MUSIC offers a burst of sunshine from down under as Hamish and

Andy's *MidWinter Warmer* goes out on the shortest day of the year. It will be the first time a UK audience will have heard the duo, who present Australia's most popular radio show.

On Christmas Day, Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page and Gossip's Beth Ditto follow Derek Smalls from Spinal Tap: the Pet Shop Boys chat to Dave Pearce about dance music, and Martin Freeman waxes lyrical about Curtis Mayfield.

'What we are trying to do throughout this whole schedule is to choose important musicians and presenters, while looking at interesting musical context,' says Paul Rodgers, editor, 6 Music. There's also a treat



Drogba on 5 live

for Adam Buxton and Joe Cornish fans who missed the duo's podcasts the first time round – as the station offers the 12 Podcasts Of Christmas – which Rodgers assures us are 'raving popular'.

For lovers of black music listening at lunchtime on Christmas Day, **1XTRA** asks 'jerk turkey, anyone?' as it rewinds to August with highlights from the Notting Hill Carnival. Then it's back to Ayia Napa to relive a week of pool parties, MCs and special guests before Dizzee Rascal's performance and other highlights from the 2009 BBC Electric Proms.

The ghosts of Christmas past and

unexpected guests

present come to have a good laugh on **RADIO 7**. There is a second chance to hear a special round of Just a Minute to mark the station's seventh anniversary, in which Nicholas Parsons challenges the panel to talk about the station without deviation or repetition. 'Very hard for a repeat network,' says Mary Kalemkerian, head of programmes. Barry Cryer presents a Christmas selection box of treats including *Hancock and Father Christmas*, *The Goons* and *The International Christmas Pudding* and Ken Dodd's *Christmas Cracker*. 'You can hear years of Christmases all in the one Christmas stocking. We are even competing with the Disney movie by broadcasting a dramatisation of *A Christmas Carol* – it is not in 3D of course but the pictures are better on digital radio!'

Hot on the heels of all the coverage of her appearance in *Strictly Come Dancing*, Laila Rouass is the big attraction on the **ASIAN NETWORK** on Christmas Day. She picks a selection of songs from her record collection and recalls her time in India meeting Bollywood stars. 'Her profile has shot up since *Strictly* and we thought it would be a nice time to bring her back on board,' says Kuljinder Singh, assistant editor. 'She is very well known to Asian audiences and did a small stint with Asian Network a few years ago.'

Over the festive period the station will re-view some of the year's big interviews and live music sessions as well as bring in big personalities. 'It's a family radio station so we are celebrating a family Christmas. And trying to bring together as many elements of a warm Yuletide as opposed to the cool, edgy

stuff that we have sometimes done in the past.'

Finally, **WORLD SERVICE** adds its global perspective. 'We do news coverage in the same way as we always do, but we add a little seasonal spice – not all of our audience celebrate Christmas, but a lot of people do have a holiday around now,' says Gwyneth Williams, director of English networks and news.

Perhaps the most moving story is told in *Refuge Bethlehem*, the Christmas edition of the weekly spiritual strand *Heart and Soul*. Christopher Landau, religious affairs correspondent, visits 'La Creche', where unwanted children are cared for and desperate young women can give birth. He witnesses an unfolding drama as a young pregnant woman makes her long and perilous way to Bethlehem, hoping to deliver her baby in safety.

Other highlights include a special edition of *Outlook* about the unlikely friendship between an Iraqi academic in Baghdad and a World Service journalist living in London. *Reading Jane Austen in Baghdad* picks up the story through the emails they exchanged. *Witness*, the new daily history programme, takes a look at toys down the years and *The Strand*, the global arts show, names the world's best cds of 2009 as guests scour the globe from

Bamako to Brooklyn and Iceland to Senegal. On New Year's Day, *The Sound of Snow and Ice* tells how visually impaired children at a Finnish school learn to navigate using sound. The children find their way through nearby forests as they go ice fishing on a frozen lake. Truly atmospheric radio to start 2010.

through nearby forests as they go ice fishing on a frozen lake. Truly atmospheric radio to start 2010.



Scrooge on R7



Laila and Kuljinder

RADIO WALES

RADIO WALES has trawled its archives to find the **Twenty Welsh Moments of the Noughties** which helped shape the decade in Wales for a five part series running from December 28 to New Year's Day. They range from Wales winning the Grand Slam in 2005 to Rhydian Roberts in *X Factor*, *Gavin and Stacey* and a record

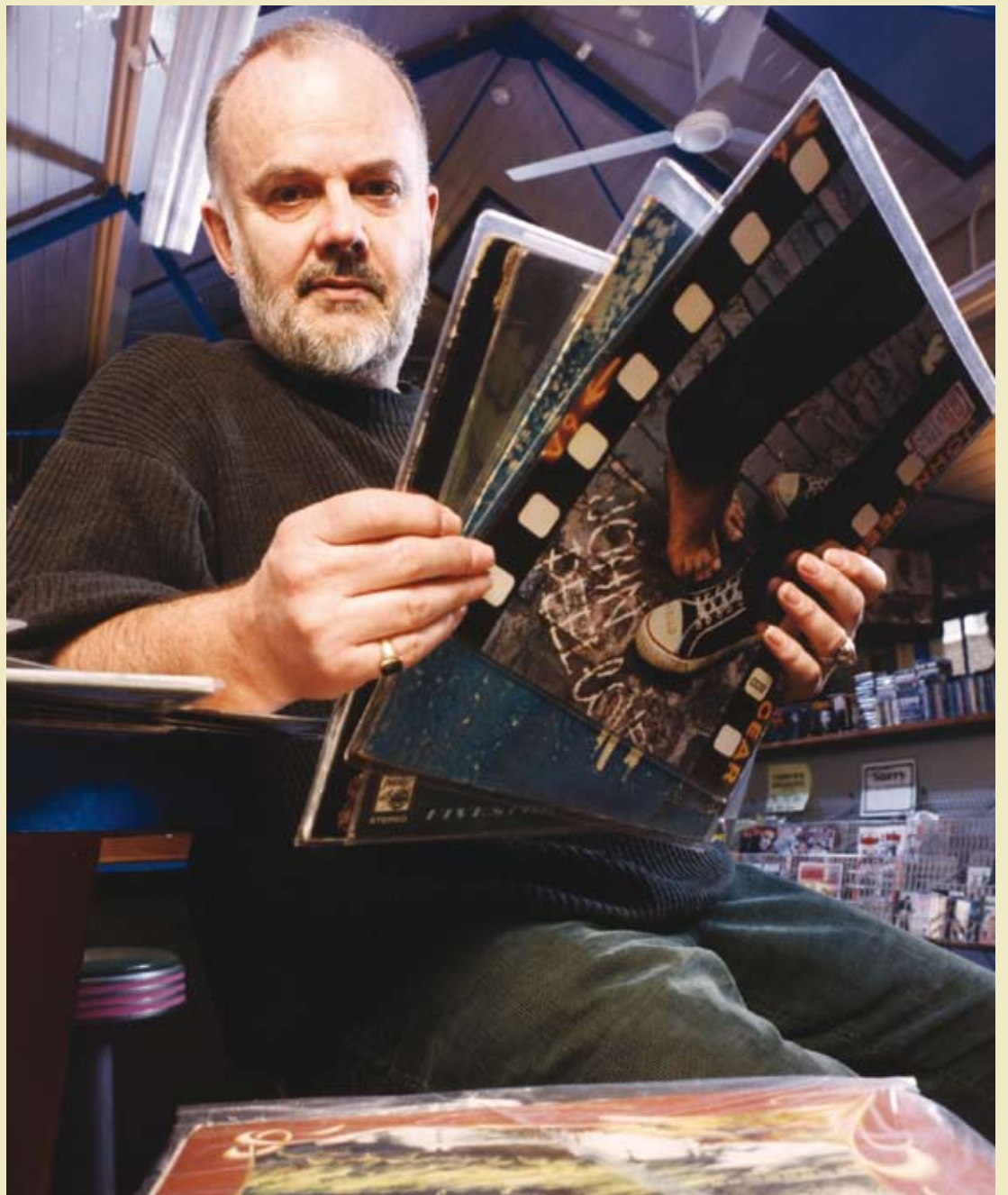
number of Welsh woman in politics.

And Radio Cymru is revealing what happened when three high profile Welsh musicians spent a day busking at a London Underground station, to raise money for Children in Need. **Bysgio'r Dolig – aka Christmas Busking** – goes out on Christmas Day at 12.30.

RADIO ULSTER

OVER TO BBC ULSTER for Christmas Eve, where John Bennett plays Christmas requests from Northern Irish ex-pats living all around the world. And on Christmas Day, presenter Hugo Duncan plays popular country

music and takes request dedications. Producer Maggie Doyle said that listeners 'enjoy calling the radio to exchange Christmas greetings, from thanking Granny for socks to new partners sending Christmas love'.



PEEL'S SCOTTISH SCENE

BY SUE LLEWELLYN

THE PEEL SESSIONS are the stuff of musical legend. For more than 35 years, from 1967 to his death in 2004, **John Peel** hand-picked over 2000 bands to come and record over 4000 sessions on his show. For many it was the start of their career and for others it was the only exposure they ever got. Now, in a special programme on Christmas Day, John Peel's son **Tom Ravenscroft** (pictured) charts the contributions his father made to the Scottish music scene through the sessions he offered Scottish acts.

'It's five years since John Peel died,' says Nick Low, producer *John Peel's Scottish Sessions*. 'We wanted to mark that and examine the legacy he left to Scottish bands and Scotland's music industry. Bands there felt at a distance from the happening scene in London and John Peel bridged that gap.'

The team trawled the existing archives of the Scottish sessions – several significant recordings, including those with Lulu, AC/DC, Altered Images and Al Stewart, have since been lost – to find out what John's support meant to those bands.

For many, like Del Amitri and Belle and Sebastian, their musical tastes were influenced by what John Peel played when they were growing up. For others, on the brink of giving up, his support kept them going. Camera Obscura, for example, acknowledge that they never would have made it if John Peel had not supported them when they needed it. His enthusiasm and support meant

bands that might have been one hit wonders went on to have a career and even if Peel stopped supporting them at any point, nobody felt cheated.

Ravenscroft presents the programme and was initially going to conduct the interviews but it was felt that having John Peel's son posing the questions might affect the way the bands answered. 'As a result,' says Low, who did many of the interviews himself, 'we got more genuine enthusiasm and praise for his father and people weren't worried about upsetting him.'

In the five years since his death Low says that John Peel is still much missed, not just as a person and champion of new music but also because 'bands feel that the public service remit he fulfilled is now somewhat missing. Where else can you find dub next to techno next to hardcore? There's no doubt that through his sessions he kept careers going and it wasn't just the mechanical exposure, it was a stamp of approval. If John Peel liked you then you were doing something right.'

John Peel's Scottish Sessions, BBC Radio Scotland, December 25, 4.05–6.00pm



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

Screen the extreme

As an openly gay man, I don't need BBC News to tell me that homophobia exists, but neither do I need them to fan the flames of it. There are ways of highlighting the situation in Uganda, and other nation states with oppressive governments, without inviting every homophobe online to vent their hatred on a BBC website that has until now been praised for its balanced and sensitive reporting.

I thought it was against BBC guidelines to 'make statements... which are offensive on the grounds of religion, race, gender or sexuality'? Replace the word 'homosexuals' with 'Blacks', 'Jews' or 'Muslims' and ask yourself, would this question have ever been posed? I can't quite see, 'The BBC asks the white working class of Bradford if they think immigrants should be executed to make way for more jobs'. The double standard is offensive.

Stephen Duffy, marketing communications executive, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra

■ There were some sickening comments on Facebook and Twitter about Uganda's anti-homosexuality bill, so I listened to the World Service *Africa Today* debate on the issue with great interest. You can't, after all, condemn people for infringing human rights while quashing freedom of speech.

I was disappointed, however, with the

Have Your Say discussion board which, knowing how heated this debate would be, should have been better moderated.

I was pleased to see a lot of views condemning this absurd bill, but there were still several extremist and offensive views posted which would not have been acceptable if this was a debate on race.

Daryn Carter
recruitment consultant, BBC People

Peter Horrocks, director, World Service, replies: We apologise if you found any of our coverage of the issue offensive. It was not our intent. Uganda's democratically elected MPs were discussing an anti-homosexuality bill last week. The reality is that if the bill becomes law it would bring onto the statute book legislation that could condemn people to death for some homosexual activities.

In hindsight, the headline on the discussion page was too stark. But it was accompanied by clear explanatory text which gave the context of the bill itself. We believe the bill is a legitimate and crucial area of discussion for the Africa Have Your Say programme and its audiences on the continent.

We have sought to moderate these debates rigorously while trying to reflect the varied and hugely diverse views about homosexuality in Africa.

Share if you care

Following Jo Babbage's letter (December 8) regarding her experience with cab share, we'd like to remind people why we believe the policy is a good idea. The BBC is aiming to cut its carbon emissions from transport by 20 percent by 2012/3. This is the right thing to do environmentally, and should also save the BBC money. Cab share is one of the ways in which we can reduce the thousands of journeys made on behalf of the BBC every week.

Unfortunately, there may sometimes be a slight delay as the cab waits for all its passengers to arrive. We ask people to be patient in such circumstances.

Passengers can still opt out of cab share when booking. But bearing in mind the main environmental motive behind the policy, we'd be grateful if travellers use the opt out clause in emergencies only.

Hattie Park
BBC Environment team

Small omission

Thank you for your feature on *Small Island* (December 1), the BBC One adaptation of Andrea Levy's novel which received fantastic reviews and some lovely audience feedback.

I just wanted to note that the feature didn't mention AL Films, the company that produced

the drama alongside Ruby Television. Vicky Licorish and Joanna Anderson from AL Films, who were co-producers of *Small Island*, were passionate about the project from the outset and did a wonderful job of getting the drama off the ground and worked with Ruby to bring it to the screen. We hope everyone who watched it enjoyed it as much as we enjoyed making it.

Lucy Richer
BBC executive producer, *Small Island*

Freezing out the rest

Typical... snow in London and the South East turns into a national crisis on the News Channel and radio networks, despite 70 percent of the United Kingdom seeing no snow at all. So much for trying not to be London-centric.

What about a near deal at the climate change summit? What about Greater Manchester Police admitting failure after a domestically abused woman is killed by her ex-partner? What about holidaymakers trying to get home for Christmas after Scottish company Globespan collapses... I could go on...

We never learn; leave the snow for regional tv and local radio. A mention perhaps on the national news certainly, but it's not a lead unless the entire UK is snowed in.

Steve Saul
Radio Manchester

OBITUARY

DIMA KOSTENKO

As he was to many throughout the World Service and throughout the world, Dima was a good friend and valued colleague to all those he worked with over the past 12 and a half years at BBC English and later BBC Learning English. But no one ever just worked with Dima. We laughed with him, we drank with him and – for those of us who still meet several times a day outside Bush House, we smoked and enjoyed a good gossip with him.

In every way, Dima will be missed. On a personal level, we'll miss his impish sense of humour and his hearty laugh. We'll miss the way he brought so many of us together. On a professional level, Dima was a creative, dedicated producer and a pioneer. Look back on so many of today's success stories in the department – online, China, Egypt, music... – and you'll find Dima there at the start.

But in the end, we simply miss our friend and our thoughts and love are with Alex and Dima's family.

Sean Keegan

Nick Randall adds: I first met Dima over 15 years ago when I joined the BBC as a studio manager for the World Service. The effortless way he made people welcome made a big difference to me and others during that time, with socialising outside work hours (with him and his partner, Alex) a big part of that.

His personable and professional nature shone through in all that he did, inspiring people (including me) along the way. When leaving the Ukrainian service as presenter/producer to work with BBC English, he continued to excel in his new role there, producing a variety of English language teaching programmes and online related work.



where we passed the time of day. It does seem surreal that he will not be seen again. Gone but most definitely not forgotten.

Tania Godwin adds: Dima was my best friend, my partner in crime, my joy and my laughter. We were both new to the Ukrainian Section, some 17 years ago now, and it was Dima who showed me the Bush House ropes, Dima who made me laugh uproariously at the silliest of things. He found hilarity in the most absurd situations, phrases and the oddities of people.

He could translate, write a news item or a magazine piece at a rate of knots, and it was always first class. Oh how we would laugh when he would have to translate 'Peter's tractor is in the field' for Learning English and how useful this phrase would be walking down Oxford Street. It is however, a useful phrase in Ukrainian, in New Zealand these days, and I have never forgotten it.

He would sit me up for hours learning useful Ukrainian phrases, to say them over and over again until I got them right and they were perfect and, would and could not ever be forgotten, indelibly etched on my mind, my heart and my soul forever....just like my dearest, darling Dima.

I'll miss you always but I carry you in my heart wherever I go because you made my life a bed of roses and my garden is that much richer for having known you.



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Regional Editor (South Asia), WSNCA
London
Bush House
9D/Ref: 22534009
E 30-Dec-09 A months

Regional Editor (Middle East), WSNCA
London
Bush House
9D/Ref: 22533909
E 30-Dec-09 A 12 months

Regional Editor (Asia Pacific), WSNCA
London
Bush House
9D/Ref: 22533809
E 30-Dec-09 A 12 months

Regional Editor (Africa), WSNCA
London
Bush House
9D/Ref: 22533709
E 30-Dec-09 A 12 months

Regional Editor (Europe), WSNCA
London
Bush House
9D/Ref: 22533609
E 30-Dec-09 A 12 months

Editor, Asia Pacific, News Website
London
TV Centre
8/9D/Ref: 23594209
E 12-Jan-10 A 06 months

World Briefing Presenters, WSNCA
London
Bush House
8/9D/Ref: 22534109
E 30-Dec-09 A 03 months

Senior Broadcast Journalist (News), BBC Tees
Middlesbrough
8D/Ref: 22936809
E 09-Jan-10

Newyddiadurwr Darlledu, Materion Cyfoes
Cardiff
5/7D/Ref: 23453409
E 03-Jan-10

Broadcast Journalist (Sport), Part Time, BBC H&W
Worcester
5/7D/Ref: 23407709
E 04-Jan-10 A 14 months

Broadcast Journalist (Producer Weekend Programmes)
Reading
5/7D/Ref: 21993209
E 11-Jan-10 A 09 months

Part-time Broadcast Assistant (Technical) Radio Bristol
Bristol
3/4H/Ref: 23145809
E 07-Jan-10 A 12 months

News Systems Trainer, BBC Newsroom
London
TV Centre
Under Review/Ref: 23567909
E 05-Jan-10 A 06 months

BUSINESS SUPPORT AND MANAGEMENT

Editor, BBC Radio Cambridgeshire
Cambridge
11D/Ref: 21402509
E 31-Dec-09

Programme Manager, MC&A
London
White City
10D/Ref: 22324909
E 07-Jan-10

Interactive Data Analytics Manager, BBC Marketing Communications & Audiences
London
White City
9D/Ref: 23388509
E 30-Dec-09

Departmental Manager
London
Broadcast Centre Media Village
9D/Ref: 23134409
E 10-Jan-10

Channel Manager, Children's, BBC Vision
London / Salford Quays
9D/Ref: 22735609
E 10-Jan-10

Project Manager, BBC North (6 posts)
London
TV Centre
8D/Ref: 23611409
E 04-Jan-10 A 2 years

Senior Trainer, Journalism and Production
London
Bush House
8D/Ref: 23568109
E 12-Jan-10 A 09 months

Business Analyst
London
White City
7D/Ref: 23687709
E 11-Jan-10 A 12 months

Production Manager, BBC Global News
London
Bush House
7D/Ref: 23675209
E 04-Jan-10 A 12 months

HR Manager (FM&T), BBC People
London
Broadcast Centre Media Village
7D/Ref: 23633009
E 11-Jan-10 A 12 months

Brand Executive, BBC Children's
London / Salford Quays
7D/Ref: 23562109
E 04-Jan-10

Regional Manager, BBC Children in Need
Manchester
7D/Ref: 23526709
E 12-Jan-10 A 06 months

Project Manager, BBC News Outreach
London
TV Centre
7D/Ref: 23451109
E 10-Jan-10 A 14 months

Business Coordinator
London
Broadcast Centre Media Village
7D/Ref: 23393909
E 03-Jan-10 A 06 months

Operations Co-ordinator, Secretariat & Governance
London
7D/Ref: 22548709
E 07-Jan-10 A 06 months

Press & PR Officer - Midlands, East & London
Birmingham
7D/Ref: 22515509
E 12-Jan-10

Project Management and Communications Co-ordinator
London
Windmill Road
6D/Ref: 23700709
E 11-Jan-10 A 12 months

Project Associate- Blast
London
Media Centre
5D/Ref: 23678709
E 03-Jan-10 A 06 months

Research Executive
Glasgow
5D/Ref: 23446409
E 10-Jan-10 A 12 months

PMO Co-ordinator, BBC PMO
London
5D/Ref: 23430009
E 03-Jan-10

Services Co-ordinators, BBC Beaumont House
London
Beaumont House
4D/Ref: 23557009
E 04-Jan-10 A 06 months

NEW MEDIA

Senior Web Producer
London
Bush House
9D/Ref: 20588209
E 10-Jan-10 A 03 months

Senior Usability & Accessibility Specialist
London
Broadcast Centre Media Village
8D/Ref: 23663109
E 04-Jan-10

Future Media Developer
Cardiff
7D/Ref: 23394109
E 03-Jan-10 A 06 months

SPECIALIST TECHNICAL AND DESIGN SERVICES

Multi-skilled Operators, BBC Yorkshire & Lincolnshire
Hull
5/7H/Ref: 23492609
E 04-Jan-10

Multi Skilled Operator, North West Tonight
Manchester
5/7H/Ref: 23349309
E 04-Jan-10 A 06 months

Multi Skilled Operator, North West Tonight
Manchester
5/7H/Ref: 23349109
E 04-Jan-10

Technical Assistant, BBC Lincolnshire
Lincoln
4D/Ref: 23395909
E 04-Jan-10 A 12 months

TECHNOLOGY

Software Engineering Team Leader, TV Platforms
London / Salford Quays
9D/Ref: 21532609
E 11-Jan-10

Senior Interaction Designer
London
Broadcast Centre Media Village
8D/Ref: 23350609
E 12-Jan-10

Senior Test Automation Engineer
London
Henry Wood House
8D/Ref: 22366309
E 08-Jan-10

System Specialist, Studio/Arbenigwr System
Cardiff
8D/Ref: 22149409
E 06-Jan-10

Broadcast Technology Systems Engineer
London
TV Centre
7H/Ref: 23381309
E 03-Jan-10 A 06 months

Senior Installation Supervisor
Multi Location - London
Under Review/Ref: 23474709
E 04-Jan-10

BBC WORLDWIDE

Picture Researcher, Lonely Planet
London
Media Centre
3W/Ref: 23461909
E 29-Dec-09

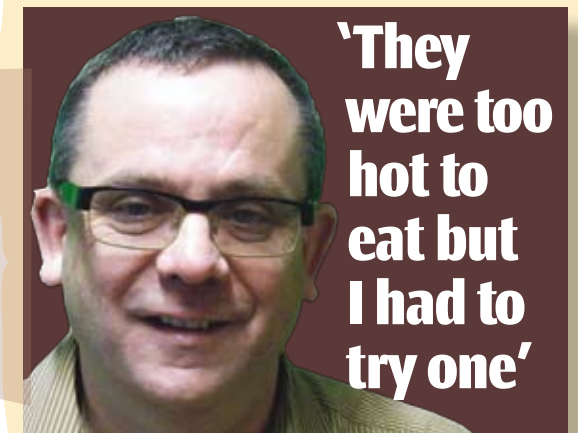
Head of Scheduling x3
London
Media Centre
SENEX/Ref: 23441709
E 09-Jan-10

See Attachment

Cooking up Christmas

Glasgow-based radio news reporter **Huw Williams** spent three months in Jerusalem last Christmas as a radio producer. During that time the bureau moved to a new building, and covered the Israeli offensive in Gaza. But one highlight was an evening in Bethlehem, recording a piece for the World Service about Christmas food...

GEORGETTE RISHMAWI had mixed semolina, vegetable fat yeast and oil with sugar and warm water to make the dough. She took dried dates, more oil, and a spoonful of cinnamon to make the filling. Then she and I made ma'amoul together. They're traditional Palestinian pastries. Some of them pressed into shape in our hands. Others made



with a mould. Her son, George, explained that Palestinian Christians make them for Easter and Christmas. Muslims make them for Eid.

'We Palestinian Christians are Christians by faith, Muslims by culture, and we might have Jewish blood, we just don't know,' he told me.

We were in the kitchen of the family home, in the village of Beit Sahour on the outskirts of Bethlehem. It's where, according to tradition, shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks, when an angel of the Lord appeared to tell them Jesus had been born.

'Sometimes from my porch I look towards the Shepherds' Field and try to imagine with my mind,' George said. 'I try to see the angels, two thousand years ago, spreading the message of peace.'

Georgette and I filled two huge baking trays, with my messy attempts and her perfect ma'amoul. The family settled down to listen to some music from the cd. A jaunty version of the carol 'Angels from the Realms of Glory', sung in Arabic. George talked about how amazing it was to celebrate Christmas 'in this special place'.

Fifteen minutes later the whole house had filled with the smell of Christmas. Georgette pulled the pastries from the oven.

'We must wait a little,' she said. But I couldn't. The ma'amoul were too hot to eat. But I had to try one. As I told Georgette how delicious it was, she smiled graciously. 'You made it,' she said.

Then she turned to the microphone I was holding. She added 'Merry Christmas to you, and to all the world.'

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
For assistance contact BBC Recruitment's Response Team on: 0800 082 8080 or 0370 333 1330

EXTERNAL APPLICATIONS

Vacancies published on this page are open to BBC Staff. Where indicated (E), external applicants may also be considered. Please contact (quoting the appropriate ref.no.): Recruitment BBC HR Direct, PO Box 1133, Belfast BT1 9GP Tel: 0370 333 1330. Textphone: 028 9032 8478

JANE HILL

NEWS PRESENTER

Are you working again this Christmas?

Yes, I reckon I've had five Christmases off in the 18 years I've been full-time at the BBC, and this year I'm working both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day from 12.30-4pm on the News Channel and I'll also be doing the BBC One Christmas Day lunchtime bulletin.

Do you get a choice?

You never have to work both Christmas and New Year and this year I've got New Year off. In the early days of the channel and for years afterwards I was the only presenter without children so I thought I should volunteer and let those with kids have Christmas off.

What's the atmosphere like in the newsroom over Christmas?

It varies enormously. I've had years where I'd go in and it's quite upbeat, especially in the early days of the channel and when I used to work at 5 live. Then people brought in booze and more mince pies than you could ever eat in a day. People do make a lot of effort to bring in nice food and lots of it.

Talking of Christmas 'spirit', will you have a glass?

Some might have a drink, but I won't have a sip until afterwards because if, God forbid, we should have a big news story on Christmas Day, and I'd had even half a glass and slipped up, I'd never forgive myself. But when my shift's over I'll definitely have a glass with the team.

So is it ok working over Christmas?

Broadly it is. The only time it's bad is if you work with someone who'd really begged for Christmas off but still couldn't get it. Inevitably they're a bit down in the mouth. Generally you're with people who are there for a reason – because they want New Year off or they've got other plans or, let's face it, because they wanted to get out of spending time with the in-laws

What do your family think of you working almost every Christmas?

They think it comes with the territory of working on a 24 hour news channel. I do try to make up for it and will go and see my parents on Boxing Day and take lots of lovely food and drink. My brother has just emigrated to Australia so I'm already thinking that maybe I'll want to go and spend Christmas there next year.

What will you eat on Christmas day in the newsroom?

I eat everything known to man. I love food but I'm very used to taking in my own because I do actually eat quite healthily. I haven't thought about Christmas Day but

it will probably be fish at lunchtime. For volunteering, though, I have been given a very nice shift so will be home by 4.30. I think that's quite civilised and means I can also cook a lovely supper.

What's your favourite festive food?

I love mince pies. They're my Christmas weakness. It's a given that I'll get to the end of my shift and will have eaten too many mince pies.

Do you get cards or presents from viewers over Christmas?

I get lots of Christmas cards from viewers, and sometimes flowers, and my friends will text me during the day and say 'we just saw you' and they'll wish me Happy Christmas.

Did you ever think you'd be presenting the news and working over Christmas?

Radio was my thing. Aged 16 I worked for BBC local radio in Brighton and was so keen, that's all I wanted to do. After university I worked on Capitol Hill in Washington and then a job came up in Traffic and I got it on the basis of my years of experience in local radio. I worked as a researcher on 5 live, then went on the regional news trainee scheme – that was one of the few years I did have Christmas off.

What happened next?

I did a couple of years in regional telly with *South Today* in Southampton until News 24 started. I thought I might get some freelance shifts there, so I did a screen test and they practically offered me the job on the spot. I was on nights and it was a good way back to London, but it was hard work.

Talking of hard work, weren't you on presenting duties on September 11?

Yes, I went on air at about three and did about five hours that day and the following day. I remember we were getting first pictures through of that grey mist after the towers had collapsed, Brian Hanrahan sitting next to me on the set, and the two of us almost open mouthed watching the live feed come in. He turned to me and said, 'My God, it's like War of the Worlds.'

Was that one of the hardest things you've had to do?

Yes, that and the Madeleine McCann story. I was out there the day after she disappeared and ended up being there for the whole of May. It was emotionally draining, that lack of resolution. I'm not a parent but I don't need to be one to know how absolutely horrific it must be.

What do you like to do away from the newsroom?

I love the arts, but my special interest is theatre. I go once a week on average and it has been a very good year for it. I also go to the gym a lot and will certainly need to go after Christmas if I'm to work off the mince pies..

Interview by Sue Llewellyn

CV

Degree: Politics at London University

Career highpoint: Covering the Presidential election, simply because, whatever your politics, I was witnessing history in the making. It was just so extraordinary and very emotional

Family: Partner Sara and dog Mavis. Parents still live in Sussex; brother in Australia. Four god children.

foreign bureau



GARY DUFFY

CORRESPONDENT, BRAZIL

I WAS DRIVING RECENTLY in the north east of Brazil on an almost unbearably hot day, when a young man wobbled past on a bike going in the other direction, a small decorated Christmas tree clutched in his hand.

Brazilians adore Christmas, and they have embraced its traditions with true passion. There are some interesting modifications, one of which requires a lot of staying power for any visitor from the UK. For many Brazilian families Christmas dinner is consumed at midnight on the 24th, and the presents are opened then too.

The first year I was here, the family I was visiting ate around 2am. I've never been so glad to see a turkey and never felt less guilty about overeating. Yes – Brazilians do eat turkey (though here it's called 'Peru!'). French toast and Italian panettone are almost obligatory and, even in the heart of summer in a tropical country, people buy expensive imported dried fruits and nuts rather than fresh produce grown locally.

Alternatively, you can spend Christmas Day in gentle slumber, interrupted by a barbecue or 'churrasco' in the middle of the afternoon.

Like every celebration in this country, fireworks are ubiquitous, especially the closer you get to New Year. Speaking of which, sharing New Year's Eve with a million people on Copacabana beach in Rio de Janeiro, the majority dressed in white for peace and good luck, is one of the modern wonders of the world.

White flowers are often placed on the water in tribute to the African deity Iemanjá. I have to admit, though, the year I was there, one of the huge crowd was hit by a bullet that had been fired into the air by a celebrating drug dealer in a local shanty town. It struck the poor unfortunate on the way back down, though thankfully he wasn't killed.

Christmas 2009 finds the BBC 'sponsored reporters' in South America in a reflective frame of mind. The positions we hold are to close, to be replaced by locally recruited regional reporters.

In Brazil I would say, with not a little envy, they are lucky to be taking on this responsibility at such an exciting moment for their country. Brazil is apparently set to be the fifth largest economy in the world in the near future; there have been huge oil finds off the coast; the World Cup and the Olympics are just around the corner.

Even Brazilians are starting to concede they can no longer hide behind the old saying that 'Brazil is the country of the future, and always will be'. It really looks as if the future has finally arrived.

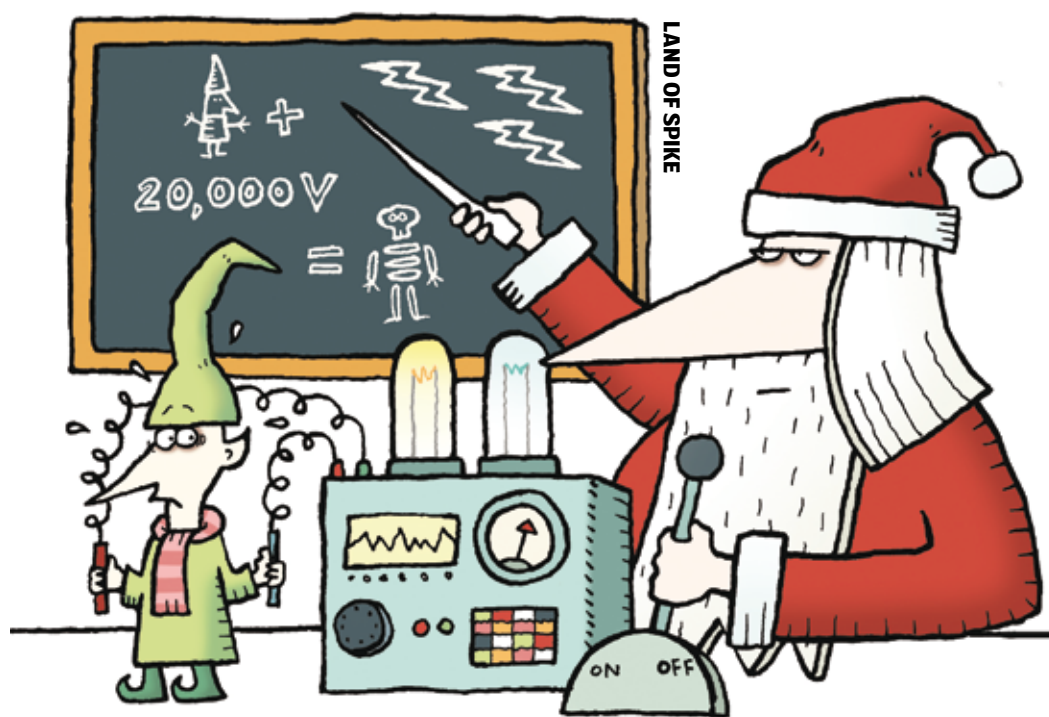
Speaking of which: to all my colleagues and friends in London – and in various parts of the world – Happy Christmas from Sao Paulo! Feliz Natal!



PHOTOGRAPH: MARK BASSETT

The green room Christmas quiz

'Tis the season to grapple with Christmas-themed general knowledge conundrums. Oh yes it is! So gather your few colleagues who aren't sitting at home with their feet up because they booked holiday, place a mince pie in the nearest Kitchen Hub microwave oven, stop checking the train times and enjoy our Green Room Christmas Quiz. And what a quiz it is – the questions have been kindly provided by the seasoned trivia buffs in The Weakest Link team,



so you can be assured of their accuracy and intellectual calibre. It



also means you can dress up as Anne Robinson to pose the questions and caustically berate your friends for not knowing the answer, should you be so inspired...

1: WHICH James Bond film ends with the line 'I thought Christmas only comes once a year'?

2: WHAT place-name is shared by a historic province of South Africa and a city in Brazil, which were both so-named because of supposed connections to Christmas Day?

3: WHICH nineteenth century poet wrote the words to the Christmas carol that begins with the lines 'In the bleak midwinter Frosty wind made moan'?

4: WHICH major race did Santa Claus win on June 3 1964, without the aid of a sleigh or any reindeer?

5: IN the cartoon South Park what is the name of the so-called 'Christmas Poo' who emerges from the toilet bowl and talks to Kyle?

6: IN Norse mythology, what was the name of the god who, in one version of the story, was killed when his blind brother Hod was tricked into throwing a sprig of mistletoe at him?



7: IN 1825 which scientist, known for his work on electricity and magnetism, established the Christmas Lectures for children at the Royal Institution?

8: WHO was crowned King of England, in Westminster Abbey, on Christmas Day 1066?

9: ACCORDING to the lyrics of 'Fairytale of New York' by the Pogues and Kirsty MacColl, 'the boys of the NYPD Choir' were singing which song?

10: DELIVERED by George V in 1932, the first Royal Christmas Broadcast was scripted by which author?

Answers will be available on Ariel online from December 23

WE HEAR THAT...



RAGE AGAINST the Machine may have made a mockery of the charts (or reinvigorated them for the iPod generation) by taking the Christmas number one spot with 1992 single Killing in the Name, thanks to a campaign to stop *X Factor*'s Joe McElderry reaching the top, but one thing's for sure: 5 live's Shelagh Fogarty didn't help them do it. 'Get rid of it!' the breakfast show host was heard to shout over the band's live performance on her show last week, after singer Zac De La Rocha began screaming the song's uncensored chorus 'Fxxx you, I won't do what you tell me.' 'We asked them not to do it and they did it anyway,' said the presenter. 'So buy Joe's records.' The clue was in the lyric, Shelagh.

CHRISTMAS HAS finally come to Manchester. 'It's the last Christmas at Kingswood Warren but the first for many of you in Manchester,' says head of FM&T Erik Huggers in his recent 'Seasons Greetings' email. Don't worry Mancunians – a Christmas training course ('T' is for Turkey, Tinsel and Too Much Booze) can only be around the corner...

EARWIGGING OVERHEARD AT THE BBC

... Well I did try voxing the other donkeys but they weren't as good...



...Is Prosecco a musical instrument?...

...I'm just trying to warm my bum up...

...Is that my bear downstairs?...

...I'm not going to take you seriously if you're not even going to take your face seriously...

...I love you, I love you, I love you. I mean, in a professional way...

...Which radio station covers Southampton? Is it BBC Plymouth?...

...I've got something up my sleeve involving fish going downstream...