



Conference: Channel 4 - The First 25 Years

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Channel 4's Contribution to Public Service Broadcasting: Heterodox and Iconoclastic or Multiple Personality?

Georgina Born, Professor of Sociology, Anthropology & Music, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Cambridge

It is generally accepted that the founding of Channel 4 represents one of the most creative and auspicious acts not only of British media policy but of the history of national television worldwide, one that importantly combined an inventive remit with an imaginative and benign economic framework and institutional form. In this vision, C4's role was to bob, dodge and weave around the stolid, overweight, centrist BBC. It was to experiment by reshaping and stretching to the extremes the diversity-within-universality that is the essence of broadcast media. It was to add edge to Britain's television and respond attentively to, and represent, the complex, differentiated social and cultural maps of contemporary cosmopolitan life, proffering in this way, arguably, an entirely new kind of de-centred 'nationalism'. In this paper I address the long trajectory of C4's commitment to its public service remit, discerning its distinctive phases and zooming in on the last decade and the effects of the introduction of new channels and services. Continuing controversy evident in C4's drive to be heterodox and iconoclastic has been a constant and is written into C4's remit. But while this generates great heat, it is no guide to the more important question of the extent to which, in the new conditions of multichannel competition and convergent media, the Channel has not only sustained but evolved its particular public service orientation – a question often obscured in the public debates around C4. As at C4's birth, this question requires us to address not just C4's output but its organizational shape, particularly its relations with the production sector, and the political outlook for its continued existence. Since the efflorescence of new services in the early 2000s, has C4's diversification proven successful in supporting the delivery of its public service remit, or has it resulted in a corporate form of multiple personality? Have structural changes in the industry without, and cultural changes within the organization, damaged C4's capacity to deliver the remit? Can C4 regain the animating role that it has arguably, if unevenly, sustained in some periods of its history? I will address the challenges facing C4 today in the way the Channel's own history requires: that is, by moving between close attention to texts, seeing recent C4 drama as symptomatic of its contemporary output, and the larger economic and political climate, in which C4 has drawn public criticism for its share of the scandals wracking British television at the same time that it faces the threat that its funding model will not long continue to support its public service aspirations.

What did Channel 4 Do For Us? The Innovations of the Early Years

John Ellis, Professor of Media Arts, Royal Holloway College, University of London

It is difficult now even to conceive of the broadcasting environment in which Channel 4 was created. This is itself a mark of the channel's success. It was created in 1982 to challenge the then prevalent beliefs about impartiality, balance and universality of address. It did so through a guerrilla war with the regulatory body ITC which had the right to vet programmes before transmission. Channel 4 won this war, and enabled broadcasting in Britain to develop a greater degree of diversity and risk-taking. In doing so, Channel 4 worked itself out of a job, and it

has since struggled to find a role that matches its initial impetus. This is especially so as things did not work out quite how many pioneers had hoped.

Researching the Birth of a Television Channel: The Story of the Early Years of Channel 4

Dorothy Hobson, Course Leader - MA Contemporary Media/ Senior Lecturer, Media and Cultural Studies, University of Wolverhampton

In 1982 when Channel 4 Television began I was asked by Channel to work as a consultant investigating how the channel was perceived by the various constituencies who were involved in its inception and early years. I spent 1982-87 following the progress of the channel, interviewing Jeremy Isaacs, and the full commissioning and business teams, ITV and Independent Producers, sitting in on meetings, watching productions, interviewing regulators and audiences and generally spent my time as a participant observer throughout the period when Jeremy Isaacs was chief executive. The material gathered at that time forms my book and brings together the story of those years and assesses the way that the legacy of Jeremy Isaacs and those who worked with him to establish the philosophy for the channel.

Channel 4 – The Early Years and the Jeremy Isaacs Legacy, (IB Tauris) is not a conventional history nor a biography, rather it is a narrative based on a series of perception; an eclectic text. A mixture of interviews and observations, records of important meeting, views and comments from those who commissioned programmes, made the programmes, funded or managed the channel and those who watched the programmes.

In this session I will talk about the experience of conducting this research; the ethics of the research process and the overwhelming experience of writing up such a project and selecting and editing as well as interpreting the events. Writing the book took place both at the time and over the last year. It proved to be as fascinating as the research process and the intellectual involvement with the channel and its output remains.

‘All the 4s’: Developing the Identity of the Channel 4 Brand

Gatherine Johnson, Senior Lecturer in Television History and Theory, Royal Holloway, University of London

Over the twenty-five-year history of Channel 4 the television industry has changed dramatically. From merely four terrestrial channels, there are now hundreds of television channels available across different platforms in an increasingly competitive and commercial marketplace. The development of cable, satellite and digital means that Channel 4 has developed from a single television channel into a large corporation with a number of different channels and services linked by the ‘4’ brand. Channel 4 has expanded into new areas such as the Internet, and has recently launched a new on-demand service that may potentially revolutionise the ways in which we receive, watch and think about television. This paper traces the development of the channel’s identity over this history, and examines the ways in which branding has become an increasingly important means through which the corporation constructs and manages its identity in the new digital era of broadcasting. Through this analysis Channel 4’s brand identity emerges not simply as a marketing strategy, but rather as a central means through which the corporation balances the competing demands placed on it to maintain its original

identity while being responsive to new audiences, commercial pressures and technological developments.

Radical Pluralism in Early Channel 4

Rod Stoneman, Director of the Huston School of Film & Digital Media at the National University of Ireland, Galway

This critical examination of Channel 4 at the time of the 25th anniversary will be illustrated with extracts from independent programming from the first decade of its existence. What was the ethos of the new Channel at its inception? How does this relate to the predicament of contemporary television?

Rod Stoneman worked at Channel 4 and the Irish Film Board, and is currently Director of the Huston School of Film & Digital Media at the National University of Ireland, Galway. His film *12,000 Years of Blindness* was screened at this year's Cork Film Festival and book *Chávez: The Revolution Will Not Be Televised* will be published next Spring.

Channel Four and the New Millennium

Michael Tracey (University of Colorado) and Cinzia Padovani (Southern Illinois University)

Incubated in the mind of Tony Smith in a famous piece in the *Guardian* in the 1970s, given initial form in the Annan Report's Open Broadcasting Authority, given life by the patrician personality of Willie Whitelaw, Channel 4 was one of the greatest examples of the British capacity to establish a structure, a purpose and a financial mechanism whose sole purpose was to allow the programme-maker to make programmes that were worth making, rather than because they would attract a large audience.

From its beginning, the purpose of Channel 4 was to provide a place for those groups, individuals and ideas that had perhaps been under-represented by the BBC or ITV. This, it was argued, would be achievable if an independent sector of creative producers would be established and nurtured, and if the channel would function as a publishing house rather than as a traditional network.

The paper will examine the contemporary condition of Channel 4 in light of that historical ambition. It will raise a number of questions: Is the Channel still successful? How is success defined? Are the critics correct in suggesting that the Channel has lost its way, unable to fulfil its public service remit, mired in sleaze and tat, no longer vigorous, vibrant, socially significant? And if it is a shadow of its former self, is that a failure from within or is it one more portent, one more shrill illustration that history has moved on, the market is dominant, feeding public appetites that suggest a larger cultural and spiritual deterioration, a culture full of what Richard Hoggart once called "corrupt brightness, of improper appeals and moral evasions." And, if it has lost its way, is a Restoration possible or is the game up and across the landscape of the culture will roam the Bazalgette's of the new, grim ecology, with the Greenes and the Isaacs of British broadcasting a distant memory for those given to rheumy eyed nostalgia?

Speakers' Abstracts

(listed alphabetically by speaker's name)

A History of Sexuality

Jane Arthurs, Principal Lecturer, Television & Film Studies, School of Cultural Studies, University of the West of England

This paper will use three case studies from the history of Channel 4 in order to highlight the way that its treatment of women's sexuality in factual genres has changed over the 25-years of its existence. The cases are chosen to illustrate how generic innovation and socio-political change has impacted on the channel's portrayal of sexuality. The first case will assess the rhetorical innovations found in factual programmes addressed to women in the 1980s; the second case will consider the 'Red Light Zone' portrayal of the sex industry as entertainment in the mid-1990s, while the third case will investigate reality format shows that rely for their appeal on viewers' investments in game play amongst contestants. This trajectory will trace the shift from a focus on sexuality as a public sphere issue for feminist activists, via a move in the 1990s towards a fascination with commercial sex as a public spectacle, to contemporary investigations of sexuality that rely on 'performing the real'. In tracing this history, Channel 4's diverse approach to sexual content will be assessed against its remit to address minority audiences and to challenge established television forms.

Looking at common people? The Class Politics of Reality TV

Heather Nunn, Reader in Cultural and Media Studies School of Arts, Roehampton University and Anita Biressi, Head of Film, Media and Cultural Studies, School of Arts, Roehampton University

The impetus to depict ordinary people firstly in documentary and then reality TV has been linked to often politicised debates about the real and the representational strategies used to convey real life. Often problematically, 'ordinary people' (formerly called the 'working classes' or 'common people') have been taken *in themselves* as signs of the real and the authentic. Although reality TV frequently dwells on issues of social difference and hierarchies of classed or cultural distinction and is predicated on the importance of depicting ordinary people's experience its trajectory is nonetheless quite different from its more overtly politicised documentary antecedents. Nonetheless, it still deploys ordinary people as markers of the authentic and as objects of fascination. This paper explores the spectacle of 'common people' in relation to *Big Brother* and *Honey We're Killing the Kids*. It suggests that reality TV often operates through narratives of class transformation within a politicised realm crosshatched by social observation and moral judgement on the part of programmes and the constructed viewer.

All Day on Four: Some Observations from Watching Four Complete Days' Output from Different Stages of Channel Four's Development

Steve Bryant, Senior Curator (Television), BFI National Archive

The BFI National Archive contains many examples, recorded regularly, of complete days of output from Channel Four, from the very first evening to the programming on the 25th anniversary. Watching these gives us much more of an insight into the

channel's identity than looking through the schedule of programmes or watching the separate programmes ever can. This paper will look at four specific examples, from 1982, 1988, 1993 and 1999, to examine how the identity of the channel changed with the changing times, and with changes to the channel's personnel and financial independence. It will include examples of presentation, promotion (including cross promotion with ITV), advertising and scheduling.

**Televising British Film Culture: Large Door Productions and Visions
Dylan Cave, Curator (Fiction), BFI National Archive**

Airing a week after the start of Channel Four, *Visions* stretched beyond the usual Hollywood-centred content of other film review programmes. Adopting a purposefully eclectic approach - combining reviews of mainstream releases with celebrations of the avant-garde, international film cultures and historical perspectives - the series nevertheless based its broad remit in a distinctly British perspective. Its participants, ranging from writers and academics to actors or festival programmers, presented a diverse range of film analysis, using political, historical, even basic psychoanalytic theory, in their reviewing.

This unashamedly intelligent approach seems, with hindsight, at odds with the commercial crisis facing the industry 25 years ago. The early 1980s witnessed a definitive low in the British industry, producing the country's lowest ever attendances. Moreover, the series began just as the power of PR companies over television programme-makers was strengthening. The interplay between the relative freedom offered by a fledgling television company, and the apparent crisis underpinning the British film industry is very evident onscreen. But what role, if any, did the series play in the rejuvenation of British film culture, more commonly attributed to the success of *Film on Four*?

Through analysis of broadcast masters and production rushes, the paper will show how this ambitious series sought to address a rarely addressed audience whose taste stretched beyond Hollywood and engaged in the debate of serious cinema.

**From Race-Riots to celebrity race-rows: Channel Four's Scripting of the changing
British-South Asian Immigrant Experience
Angshukanta Chakraborty, PostGraduate Research (PhD) Scholar, School of Social
Sciences, Media and Cultural Studies, University of East London**

In this paper, by considering the works of three Indo-British artists, viz., Hanif Kureishi, Gurinder Chadha and Meera Syal, I want to probe the portrayals on Channel 4 of the shifting relationships and evolving immigrant sensibilities of the South-Asian Diaspora in Britain, particularly those based in London. The trajectory that the on-screen immigrant characters chart, depict the emerging cultural patterns out of the several decades of racial, religious and linguistic intermixing, the changing representations of which have been put forward by Channel 4 ever since.

Clearly, there's a marked change in concern that Channel Four has been able to grasp and tap. In my opinion, it began as an outright political anti-establishment stance, with Kureishi's black humour and lewdness as metaphors and instruments against racialisation and ghettoisation of British Asians and Blacks, exposing the ruckus on the streets of suburban London on the one hand, while the inadvertent

interracial and interreligious relationships in the immigrant communities on the other.

I will look at how Chadha and Syal (major contributors to British-Asian television/Channel Four) have been commercially much more successful than the sardonic Kureishi, though of course, the women came in during (or they themselves created?) a globally viable and expanding market for Indo-British ventures, both in India and abroad. My 'key question' is how far Channel Four has been representative of a changing British-South Asian presence in UK, and does it merit a re-interrogation especially after the Jade/ Shilpa race row.

'That's Why I'm Going to Channel Four ... 'Dennis Potter and The Quest for 'Independence' and 'Taking Control'

John Cook, Senior Lecturer in Mass Media, Caledonian Business School, Glasgow Caledonian University

The famous late television playwright Dennis Potter (1935-1994) is best known for his work at the BBC (*Pennies from Heaven*, *The Singing Detective*, *Blue Remembered Hills* amongst many others), however towards the end of his life, he decamped to Channel Four. It was at Channel Four - under the patronage of the then Chief Executive, Michael Grade - that Potter gave his famous final interview to Melvyn Bragg (*Without Walls: An Interview with Dennis Potter*, 1994) which touched millions of viewers and it was Channel Four which was instrumental in ensuring production of Potter's final posthumous works, *Karaoke* and *Cold Lazarus* (1996), by agreeing to enter into an unprecedented co-production alliance with the BBC.

This paper will examine Potter's relationship with Channel Four, setting it against the backdrop of what it will argue was a 25-year struggle by Potter and his erstwhile producer Kenith Trodd to achieve a relationship with the television broadcasters that was founded on greater artistic respect and 'independence'. This included the formation (by Trodd) of the first independent TV drama production company, Kestrel, in the late 1960s and (by Potter and Trodd) 'PFH (Pennies from Heaven) Limited' 10 years later. The paper will suggest that in many ways, the 'independence' concept which Potter and Trodd carved out in the late 1970s was one that provided a precedent for the 'broadcaster as publisher' model which underpinned the foundation of Channel Four, even though in Potter and Trodd's case this would ironically come to be undermined by none other than Michael Grade (in 1980 when, as Director of Programmes at London Weekend Television, Grade pulled the financial plug on PFH Limited's ambitious plans to 'independently' produce a range of high-end drama for LWT).

In exploring Potter's 25-year quest for true television 'independence', the paper will draw on a range of primary research sources, not least an interview I conducted in 1990 with Potter on the eve of his departure from the BBC to Channel Four in which he candidly discussed the reasons he was moving to Channel Four in the context of his view of 'the way that television was going'. The paper will also include rare video clips from Channel 4 talks and discussion programmes which Potter appeared on in the early 1990s and that have never been aired since (*Right to Reply Special*; *Opinions*, both 1993). These show the extraordinary latitude which Channel Four, under the leadership and patronage of Grade, was prepared to give Potter at that time.

The paper will conclude by arguing that Potter's relationship with Channel Four provides an interesting case study in which to consider the relationship of a broadcasting institution like Channel Four as artistic 'patron' to the creative practitioner and conversely, the difficulties which artists like Potter face when, striving to tilt at television windmills, they attempt to achieve real 'independence' from the established broadcasting order.

Drama on Four, 1982-1991

Lez Cooke, Research Fellow in Television Drama, Manchester Metropolitan University

One of the most successful and celebrated initiatives on Channel 4 in its early years was *Film on Four*, which almost single-handedly rejuvenated the British Film Industry in the 1980s. In 1992, the British Film Institute published John Pym's book-length survey of *Film on Four*, to mark its first ten years. Yet while *Film on Four* was celebrated for its contribution to British Cinema, the television dramas broadcast by Channel 4 during its first decade have received much less attention, apart from *Brookside*, Channel 4's ground-breaking soap opera which helped to forge the channel's reputation for radicalism in a repressive political climate.

The veteran BBC producer David Rose was appointed Senior Commissioning Editor for Fiction at Channel 4, responsible not only for *Film on Four* but also for drama series and serials. Rose had previously been Head of BBC English Regions Drama, based in Birmingham, from 1971-81, where he led a highly creative department responsible for producing original 'regional' dramas by writers such as Alan Bleasdale, Philip Martin, Alan Plater, David Rudkin and Willy Russell. A number of English Regions Drama writers, producers, directors and script editors followed Rose to Channel 4, including Peter Ansorge, who was appointed Commissioning Editor for Series and Serials in 1987, after two years working as a script associate on *Film on Four*. The importance placed by Rose on filming on location at BBC Birmingham was significant when it came to *Film on Four* and BBC English Regions Drama's emphasis on originality, innovation, diversity and the creative input of the writer was also important when it came to Channel 4's drama output.

This paper will reassess the television drama produced at Channel 4 in its first ten years, in the context of British television drama's response to Thatcherism. Was this period the final stage in a 'golden age' of British TV drama, before deregulation and the advent of multi-channel television in the 1990s, when ratings increasingly became the measure for success? Or did Channel 4's television drama in its first ten years mark a new phase in the history of British television drama, as significant in its contribution to British culture as the films produced for *Film on Four*?

The Communicative Architecture of Television News: A Study of Channel Four News **Simon Cottle, Professor of Media and Communications, School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies, Cardiff University and Julian Matthews, Lecturer in Media Communications, Bath Spa University**

This paper provides findings and discussion from a major academic investigation into international television news that includes the *Channel Four News* programme. Specifically, systematic findings and discussion relating to the communicative structures routinely deployed by *Channel Four News* in its programme presentation reveals both similarities and differences with other UK (and international) TV news

programmes. These similarities and differences, we contend, are important in so far as they shape and impact the public elaboration of contending issues and the engagement of cultural identities. Hitherto they have been overlooked and under-theorised. In contemporary pluralized and agnostic societies how contending interests and cultural identities are deliberated and displayed in the public realm of television news is constitutive of processes of mediatized democracy. This paper explores the unique contribution of Channel Four News Programmes to this realm of mediatized democracy and how its communicative forms of presentation position it within the wider ecology of today's television news.

"Hysterical Christians" and "Sacred Cows" on Channel 4: Angela Carter's *The Holy Family Album* (Without Walls, 1991)

Charlotte Crofts, University of the West of England

The Holy Family Album was novelist Angela Carter's first foray into television documentary in which she imagines that all the representations of Christ in Western Art History are photos in God's photo album, only the Holy Father does not appear in any of the pictures because he's behind the camera, calling the shots. Using a mix of old-fashioned camera tricks and video wizardry, director JoAnn Kaplan brings Carter's script to life, whilst Carter's acerbic voice-over challenges Christian orthodoxy with her Oedipal reading of the crucifixion.

Producer John Ellis at Large Door Productions Ltd was commissioned to make the programme by Waldemar Januszczak, Channel 4's Commissioning Editor for Arts and Music at the time, who was looking for adventurous ideas for *Without Walls*, an eclectic arts series with an avant-garde brief. One might expect the programme to be "unconventional" given the heady mix of Carter's committed atheism and Channel 4's alternative remit, under the Broadcasting Act 1980 'to provide programmes that are calculated to appeal to tastes not generally catered for by ITV, and to encourage innovation and experimentation in the form and content of programmes ... in particular programmes for ethnic, cultural and occupational minority groups. It also has to ensure that a suitable proportion of programmes are of an educational nature or of a recognizably religious aim' (MacDonald, 1988: 24, 79).

The programme was aired in the run up to Christmas 1991 and caused a great deal of controversy, including a vitriolic *Times* Editorial, a letter to *Right to Reply* and a complaint to the Broadcasting Standards Council (not upheld). Returning to the programme in the current political climate it is fascinating to explore the role of Channel 4 in the commissioning, broadcast and the aftermath of the programme, and to wonder whether a programme like this would still get made today.

'The Life and Death of *First Edition*: a case study in children's and educational broadcasting on Channel 4'

Máire Messenger Davies, University of Ulster, Cynthia Carter, Cardiff University and Stuart Allan, University of the West of England

This presentation will be based on a case study of a Channel 4 Schools programme, now no longer in production: *First Edition*, 1994 - 2003. Drawing on uniquely-accessible archive materials from the programme, the presentation will examine the perennially-besieged field of educational and children's programming. It will suggest that the life and death of *First Edition* provides a fruitful case study of the impact of changing media technology, regulation, economics and conceptions of

the child audience on public service programme-making at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Educational and children's programmes have always been seen as part of a public service broadcaster's remit, but currently – 2007 – children's programming, particularly in the commercial sector, is being curtailed. A campaign to protect children's production in the UK, 'Save Kids TV' (<http://www.savekidstv.org.uk/>), is lobbying parliament, Ofcom and other policy-making bodies but it remains to be seen whether children's production in the commercial sector can be saved. *First Edition* was a Schools programme and had a classic public service agenda, in that it conceptualised children as potential citizens, rather than consumers, both as audiences, and as participants in the programme. It was an extended news bulletin for 9 - 13 year olds, presented by Jon Snow, aired twice weekly on Channel 4 during the daytime, and produced by ITN & Libra Television. When the programme was cancelled in 2003 - to be replaced by another short-lived current affairs documentary, *Citizen Power*, seen as more economically viable than live news – the producers offered Davies, Carter and Allan their archive material. The researchers received a grant from the British Academy to archive what was seen as a valuable record of a particular moment in public service broadcasting: the beginning of the end of the broadcast era in educational television, and the move of educational output to the internet. *First Edition* was also of interest because of its crossover with the award-winning Channel 4 News, including having the same prestigious presenter, and because of its adult treatment of news material – including coverage of events such as 9/11. The programme was also innovative in its use of child reporters and presenters.

This presentation will draw on materials from the *First Edition* archive, held at Cardiff University, and available to researchers (see <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/jomec/en/Archives/71.html>). It includes videotapes of all the programmes, production documents such as scripts, tie-in newspaper cuttings and internet resources. The producers of *First Edition* were also in correspondence with children in a primary school in Glasgow who sent weekly letters to them, expressing their views on the programme and their interest in current affairs. The correspondence is part of the archive. The archive is supplemented by questionnaire data and audio interview recordings with pupils at the school who wrote to the programme makers and these will also be quoted where appropriate.

**“Flagship” Television: New Labour, Queer As Folk and the process of modernisation
Natalie Edwards, Institute of Film and Television Studies, Nottingham University**

At the time of its initial screening in 1999, Channel 4 billed *Queer As Folk* as “flagship television”- unlike the channel's previous gay-themed output, largely designed to cater to a minority lesbian, gay and bisexual audience. Despite its graphic sexual content, Channel 4 executives commended the programme for its mainstream appeal. This paper investigates both the political and industrial contexts of *Queer As Folk*'s production, looking at the multiple determinants which shifted gay programming from “special interest” to “flagship,” minority to mainstream:

- the installation of a ‘modernising’ New Labour government in Britain in 1997
- the media controversy surrounding amendments to the age of consent laws and the proposed abolition of Section 28;
- institutional changes within Channel 4 in the run-up to 1999;

- the influence of such American imports as *Sex and the City*, which reject the married-heterosexual paradigm and depicted frequent, explicit and unapologetic sex.

I conclude by analysing the effect which the success of *Queer As Folk* has had on gay-themed programming in Britain since 1999 and the degree to which it has come to be incorporated into not only media but political discourse in the period since its initial broadcast run.

Creating an iconic brand – an account of the history, development, context and significance of Channel 4's idents

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On 2nd November 1982 multiple 3D brightly-coloured blocks exploded onto the nation's screens with a fanfare, uniting to form a figure 4 to signify the launch of Britain's fourth terrestrial television channel. This memorable ident was to endure for over 13 years, during which time it became synonymous with the concept of Channel 4 as a brand. It was superseded in 1996 by 'Connections' which superimposed four circles, one containing the figure 4, over images of Channel 4 celebrities or ordinary people engaging in everyday life activities. Later in 1999 viewers were offered the minimalist chic of the 'Lines' campaign, in which bars of related shades of colour traversed the screen bringing glimpses of what was to come. This was followed in 2005 by the current iconic idents which drew on the latest technology to revisit the original theme of re-converging 3D elements of a figure 4, albeit in a range of contemporary yet often surreal settings such as a council estate, motorway diner, Tokyo and Trafalgar Square.

Why did the original ident endure for so many years, and what were the aspirations driving the quest for change? How significant is Channel 4's unique remit to its branding strategy? What are the synergies between identity and output? How do these issues relate to the new digital channels and how and why do their idents differ from that of the main channel?

This paper seeks to address these and other questions by tracing the history and development of Channel 4's on-air identity from launch to the present day. It deconstructs the images, accounts for the rationale underpinning developments, appraises and evaluates the on-air products in the context of the changing wider broadcasting ecology, and estimates the contribution and value of the idents both in terms of reflecting the innate nature of the channel and also of strengthening it as a brand. It is based on an analysis of the work and observations of key personnel involved in the creation and development of Channel 4's identity. These include Martin Lambie-Nairn who created the original ident, Steve White, Transmission Controller on launch night and currently Channel 4's Head of Channel Operations, and Brett Foraker, Channel 4's Creative Director, who together with NPC's Russell Appleford is responsible for the acclaimed current idents.

Channel 4's idents reflect the development of the channel within an historical timeframe. Yet in attesting to the rise in the importance of branding within broadcasting over the past twenty-five years their significance extends well beyond the bounds of the channel itself.

Channel 4 - could it be a lesson for European public service broadcasters?

Suzana Zilic Fiser, Media Communications Programme, University of Maribor, Slovenia

The changes in media environment will significantly change present PSB and commercial broadcasters. One of the possible solutions could be seen in a hybrid model of PSB. The example of Channel 4 proves that media institution can work and satisfy cultural and economic dimensions of a society at the same time.

The aim of the paper is to examine the strategy and the background of activities of British commercial public service broadcaster Channel 4. I am also going to discuss whether Channel 4 can work as a future model of Public Service Broadcasting in Europe. The presentation is based on findings of research of a long-running case study of commercial public broadcaster in UK. The research has been focused on the activities of a broadcaster that acts as a hybrid model of broadcasting. Special circumstances for establishing the fourth channel, its programme and financial strategy of broadcasting institution are also going to be analysed. Findings are based on the research of the most dynamic period of Channel 4. The aim of the paper is to find out whether both goals of the media institution; commercial (seeking for a profit) and public remit (social responsibility) could be fulfilled at the same time. I would like to provoke the thesis that social responsibility in broadcasting and profit seeking are incompatible.

“Undramatic drama. Unreal reality.” Comparisons between C4 Drama and the improvised "drama" of Reality TV

Adam Ganz, Lecturer in the Department of Media Arts, Royal Holloway, University of London

When you're looking for ambitious complex and above all modern TV you find yourself watching not British but American pieces, *Six Feet Under*, say or *24*. There are exceptions but the idea that British TV is teeming with that kind of creative risk is a joke. Mark Thompson (then Head of Channel 4).
MacTaggart Lecture 2003

Why has Channel 4 drama become so formally conservative with such predictable characters? In this paper I will argue that the formula of TV Drama as currently understood at Channel 4 means that strong writing is largely excluded in favour of formulaic ideas, highly controlled during development, and often originating from talent-owned production companies. At the same time The Channel's investment in reality TV actually indicates an extraordinary breakthrough in the kinds of drama that might be possible using improvisation, multiple narratives and complex story structuring.

Lost logos: Channel 4 and the branding of American event television

Paul Grainge, Associate Professor in Film and Television Studies, University of Nottingham

This paper examines branding strategies arising from Channel 4's negotiation of the burgeoning multi-channel environment. With terrestrial channels wrestling with tangible losses in market share in the 1990s and 2000s, and with a host of cable networks creating powerful niche constituencies in their place, British

television channels such as Channel 4, ITV and the BBC developed a range of brand strategies in the resulting competition for audiences. From promotional campaigns and network tag lines to channel 'idents' and revamped logos, channel branding was fuelled in the 90s by what John Caldwell calls 'the growing sense that there simply was not enough of an audience to go around, that is, not enough to share profitably with all of the competition'. As he suggests, 'Branding was the first of many tactics that exploited the instability of the televisual form in the digital age'. In examining the will-to-brand in contemporary television culture, specifically as it bears on Channel 4, I will bring together two concerns: Channel 4's development of graphically innovative channel idents and brand logos in the mid-2000s - specifically, the current ensemble of logos that situate and project the '4' in panoramic and geographically dispersed scenes - and the domestic marketing of American 'event television'. Focusing on the way that Channel 4 has nurtured its brand identity through association with 'quality' American imports such as *The Sopranos*, *Six Feet Under*, *Sex and the City*, *Desperate Housewives* and *Ugly Betty*, I will examine the particular case of *Lost*.

First aired on ABC in 2004, *Lost* is a key media property in the era of 'convergence television', epitomizing the kind of multiplatform content that, through cumulative series architecture and the spawning of books, web sites, chat rooms and phone messaging, enable audiences to immerse themselves in a brand world (a principle that has been accelerated, in a different vein, by multiplatform reality formats such as *Big Brother*). Critically, this paper considers the means by which Channel 4 worked to position *Lost* as a signature media event, from its release of oblique, but highly atmospheric, television teasers, to the constellation of channel logos and series sponsorships that framed the 'Lost experience' before the property transferred to Sky in 2006. Critically, I consider how *Lost* can be linked to Channel 4's own promotional stake in quality popular television, a key, if not uncontroversial, platform of its contemporary brand identity.

Becoming Independent: The Effect of Channel 4 on Female Career Paths in Television
Julia Hallam, Senior Lecturer and Head of Communication Studies, University of Liverpool

The emergence of Channel 4 in the early 1980s corresponds with enactment of equal opportunities legislation by the BBC and ITV as they responded to union evidence to the Annan report on the lack of women in key production roles. Channel 4, with its public service remit to serve minority audiences, tackled the problem by employing Liz Forgan, a former editor of the *Guardian* women's page, in the key role of Senior Commissioning Editor for Actuality. The effect was immediately apparent when the Channel announced that their weekly half hour current affairs programme would be produced by women although a press release was keen to point out that the unprecedented move 'had nothing to do with positive discrimination or social justice, it is a journalistic experiment' (Channel 4 press release, April 1982 in Baehr and Dyer 1987: 117). Drawing on programme archives and industry analysis, this paper will assess the contribution of the Channel to the development of female career paths in television in the 1980s and 1990s, focusing in particular on the growth of the independent production sector. It will argue that by working as independent producers, women created programmes they were unable to make in the corporate climates of the BBC and ITV, leading to a wave of innovative programming that, by the early 1990s, was being taken up by Channel 4's competitors.

Opening the Box: Channel Four's Contribution to Media Literacy
Bruce Hanlin, Senior Lecturer in Media and Journalism, University of Huddersfield

The first decade of Channel Four's existence was a period of unprecedented debate and controversy for the media in Britain - a period when the media not only reported the news but began to make the headlines themselves. The launch of Channel Four in November 1982 was, of course, one such headline. It came a few months after the reporting difficulties of the Falklands/ Malvinas conflict and a little more than a year since Times Newspapers passed controversially into the hands of Rupert Murdoch.

Murdoch's 'Wapping Revolution' and the sudden expansion in newspaper publishing it encouraged came four years later, and by then Channel Four was pioneering a new type of television programme that looked behind the headlines to show how media content was created, packaged and delivered. The six-programme series *Open The Box*, which began in May 1986, had a directly educational aim (it was co-produced by BFI Education) and connected with the expansion of Media Studies as a subject in schools and higher education. It was followed the next year by *The Media Show*, which was to run for four years and 87 programmes. The focus was mainly on production and marketing in television and cinema, but with frequent items on advertising and more occasionally on radio and the press, and with an interesting international agenda. This formula was so attractive that within a year the BBC had poached both the idea and the founding editor (Michael Jackson) for its own foray into arts and media with *The Late Show* on BBC2.

For television the key development in this period was the long debate leading up to the 1990 Broadcasting Act. Meanwhile in the press the circulation battle between the tabloids caused increasing complaints about sensationalism and invasion of privacy, leading to parliamentary debates, official enquiries, reform of the Press Council and its eventual replacement by the Press Complaints Commission. These developments formed the backdrop for a relentless expose of journalistic misdemeanours and editorial prejudice by a new programme, *Hard News*, which began in April 1989 and ran for 70 programmes over the next three years.

The Media Show and *Hard News* were quintessential 'public service' programming, attracting consistent interest but never the size of audience likely to greatly excite advertisers. While helping to fulfil Channel Four's remit they turned the spotlight on areas that were otherwise looked at only occasionally, if at all, by other channels.

This paper will review some of the issues they covered and assess the contribution they made to public awareness of the media debates and to more general understanding of the workings of the media.

Pushing the Boundaries in Popular Drama: Assessing Brookside's Legacy
Lesley Henderson, Lecturer in Sociology and Communications, Brunel University

During the 1980s and 1990s the Channel 4 soap opera *Brookside* developed a number of storylines which pushed the boundaries of popular television drama in form and representation (the first lesbian kiss, the longest story arc, the 'stripped' story special). The programme became the focus of considerable public debate and

provoked significant discussion in wider media. This paper draws upon interviews with programme producers and scriptwriters who were involved in developing key storylines to address their motivations and values which underpin the *Brookside* approach. Using the case study of the 'Jordache' story (a ground breaking treatment of sexual violence and incest in popular television) it critically discusses how the programme provided a crucial template for developing controversial material in pre-watershed 'entertainment' television. The paper also discusses key findings of research conducted with audiences to consider issues concerning censorship and controversy and the ways in which audiences were targeted and envisaged by the team. In particular it raises questions concerning the potential of television drama to make an impact on audience understandings of previously 'taboo' topics and argues that it is important that those interested in media and public issues should consider the role of popular television as a site of definition. The paper concludes that such storylines pushed British drama in specific directions and has provided British television drama with an important legacy of programming for social change.

S4C: Placing the First 25 years in an International Context

Elin Haf Gruffydd Jones, Lecturer, Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies, University of Wales, Aberystwyth

This paper will present an analysis of S4C as the first in a series of dedicated television channels established during the past 25 years in a number of minority language communities all across Europe, and indeed in other parts of the world. In placing S4C in the context of other minority language television providers, this paper will seek to identify commonalities and contrasts between it and other broadcasters operating in similar linguistic situations in terms of the terms of reference upon which the broadcasting authorities were established as well as the policies and practices of their various channels. The paper will draw upon the work of the Mercator Centre, based at the University of Wales Aberystwyth whose research on minority language media is well established in the European context. In doing so, it will also address wider issues such as the typology of media in minority languages and aim to identify specific threats and unique opportunities facing minority language broadcasters and content providers – with a particular focus upon S4C and the Welsh context – in a multi-platform, de-territorialised, global environment.

Channel 4 and the History Documentary Boom

Dafydd Sills-Jones, Lecturer, University of Wales, Aberystwyth

Many commentators within academia, the television industry and journalism have located a boom in the production and viewership of historical documentaries on UK terrestrial television during the late 1990s. Such claims raise important questions: what empirical evidence exists to support this notion, what were the factors that led to this boom, and what was the role of Channel 4? This presentation examines the motivations of individuals and institutions involved in the production of historical documentaries shown on Channel 4 since its inception.

In a period which has seen a dramatic transformation in the political economy of television in the UK, the documentary and other 'serious' forms of programming seem to have lost ground to newer hybrid forms of factual programming. Such factual entertainment forms, according to John Corner have exchanged documentary's seriousness in favour of entertainment, a change that has breathed

new life into an ailing form. Critics such as Kilborn and Dovey see this shift as a consequence of the marketisation of television during the 1990s, and have an altogether darker view of its consequences for the public sphere. But where does historical documentary fit into this picture? Does its increase signify a rearguard action against the forces of commercialisation? Or is the blossoming of history documentary a welcome effect of new technology and a market-led sense of experimentation and invention?

I will outline how issues surrounding the fast-changing political economy of television throughout the 1980 and 1990s can be said to have influenced editorial decisions made by producers and commissioners of historical documentary. I will do this by presenting the fruits of research into the schedule of Channel 4 and other broadcasters, of over twenty in-depth interviews with commissioners and producers, and an analysis of industrial literature surrounding the business of producing historical documentaries. I also will illustrate through the use of clips from key Channel 4 historical documentaries.

A Winter of Discontent? Whatever You Want and Post-Punk Popular Music Culture
Paul Long, Department of Media and Communication, University of Central England

Like the more well-remembered and celebrated *Tube*, *Whatever You Want* and its 'supplement' *Whatever You Didn't Get*, ran on Channel Four from its very first week for a relatively short run into early 1983. It was produced by RPM (Rock People Movies) and hosted by the relatively unknown Keith Allen.

It featured a mixture of the then nascent 'alternative' comedy (courtesy of Allen and Peter Richardson), current affairs and, predominantly, a range of live music performances. The roster of bands and artists included Killing Joke, The Birthday Party, Fad Gadget, Jah Wobble and many more indicative of a 'post-punk' landscape of music that offered an alternative to mainstream pop and rock.

This paper draws upon archival research into the series conducted at the BFI, examining the social, cultural and institutional context of the show. It seeks to explore the way in which the series can be understood generically (pop music programming, 'youth' TV) and as an exemplar of the founding remit of the Channel Four. The paper will examine the ways in which the interaction of current affairs, 'comedy/satire' interacted with contemporary aspects of popular music discourse. It will also relate the show to *The Tube* and the manner in which such shows are canonised as well as the popular archive they present or are used for.

Twenty-five years later, the majority of musical TV programmes seem to exploit two main lines: the hit parade lists with their respective video-clips, or programmes focused on discovering new unknown pop-stars, like *American Idol*, *Star Academy* or *The X Factor*. These programmes are more centred on the process of the creation of a commercial product and, consequently, in finding some patterns of reproduction cover-versions, rather than offering real samples of production. And although in those shows there is a sense of active participation from the spectators through mobile phone votes, these programmes lose part of that dialogue between society and popular music and culture that characterized *The Tube* so much as a pioneer. In its portrayal, there is a bit of history, a piece of the underground and the popular culture of an epoch, which this paper would like to explore.

'Keeping It Real': The Politics of Multiculturalism, Mainstreaming and Mandates
Sarita Malik, Brunel University

This paper will focus on the issue of policy and practice in relation to the area of cultural diversity in UK television policy, and specifically Channel 4.

When it launched 25 years ago, Channel 4 was established with black and other ethnic minority programming built into its structure with a Multicultural Programmes Department and dedicated Commissioning Editor. Channel 4 had been vociferously campaigned for by those who realised the importance of a third space to the BBC and ITV duopoly. By the mid 1980s, Channel 4 was airing a number of 'black programmes' targeted at African-Caribbeans and Asians. Channel 4's unique public service role was coupled with a 'duty to be different'.

In 2002, Channel Four decided to scrap its long-standing Multicultural Programmes Department, preferring to incorporate its ethnic minority focus into future mainstream programming. But was this decision based on cultural intelligence or commercial pressure, and what impact has it had in an already dramatically changing television landscape?

Channel 4 maintains its strategic pledge to cultural and other diversity ("it lies at the heart of our remit"), and it continues to be recognised as a perfect model of diversity-aware media both within Europe and internationally. However, new conceptualisations of cultural diversity as related to ideas around economic productivity, social cohesion and democratic renewal, have coincided with the emergence of altered hierarchies and models of cultural representation. Changes in dedicated institutional commitment have coincided with ethnic minorities being incorporated as a more general part of the mainstream.

Shifts amongst ethnic minority audience patterns have also signalled a broader fragmentation of the UK television audiences. With a plethora of viewing options and channels across news and entertainment, and the ability to pick and choose from and produce a broader range of media, we are seeing what Philip Schlesinger has termed "identity by choice", where communal values are being reflected in and forged out of channel proliferation. Accompanying this broader range of representation is the opportunity to access coverage outside of a UK context and connect with the Diaspora, something that has been important for sections of the Asian audience, for example, since the early days of multicultural programming. Asian viewers were among the first sub-demographic group to turn to pay-TV models and have, since the mid-1990s, increasingly moved away from free-to-air channels such as Channel 4. This has put ethnic minorities at the centre of the commercial threat posed to terrestrial broadcasting.

What have these changes meant for Channel 4? What is the future of cultural diversity on the Channel as the notion of 'multiculturalism' itself is being broadly contested and other forms of diversity are becoming more pronounced? Was the 2007 *Celebrity Big Brother* furore, as some have suggested, a symbol of the end of the Channel's commitment to ethnic minorities?

When the Underground takes The Tube

Manel Jiménez Morales, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona

As a perfect paradigm of autonomy and self-management in television, Channel 4 dramatically launched *The Tube* in its first week of broadcasting with this uninhibited and provocative programme not subject to the strict rules of BBC public service broadcasting. *The Tube* first launched in 1982 from the Newcastle Studios and was conceived principally as a musical programme which broadcast live performances of both new and established Anglo-Saxon bands. But the contents revealed larger interests in fashion, arts, (sub)cultural trends and other social manifestations linked to the world of music.

During its five years of broadcasting *The Tube* became the noisy voice of a part of young society which found its expression through music. A representation of a particular public sphere emerged on the small screen thanks to the bands which appeared in the show. The programme was a real platform for appreciating their music style, their lyrics and their aesthetics, and consequently it offered clearly an idea of pop-cultural interests among young English people in the eighties.

This article tries to explain how *The Tube* gave voice to this generation. The programme found its own fresh and carefree register through its presenters and participants, its casual look and with the studio audience which played a really active role during transmission. Channel 4 underlined youth/social differences with its own special language which the programme articulated every week. Some controversial and challenging subjects were dealt with from an innovative point of view and, sometimes the implications with social or political issues shared the stage with the bands which visited the studio.

Restless Natives: Film on Four, FilmFour and the case of Scotland, 1982 – 2001

Jonathan Murray, Lecturer in Film and Visual Culture, Centre for Visual & Cultural Studies, Edinburgh College of Art

Channel 4's central role in preserving and subsequently defining, whether for better or worse, the aesthetic and representational characteristics of British Cinema from the early 1980s on has become a central truism within British Cinema Studies. Much seminal critical work on the broadcaster's role within British cinema understands the Channel's institutional agenda as fluid, fragmented and susceptible to wholesale revision, much different in 2002 compared to 1982. Yet the national-industrial context in which a series of different commissioning agendas are argued to have been at work is regularly understood in a much more static and homogenous way: consistently, unchangingly 'British'. Comparatively little work has been undertaken to date on the differing ways in which Channel 4 rationalised its activities and influenced developments within the British nations plural, as opposed to the British nation singular.

This paper aims to start filling, albeit in a very minor fashion, that absence in the critical literature on Channel 4. It does so by investigating the broadcaster's role within and influence over the development of Scottish film culture from the early 1980s. On the one hand, what is thus traced looks like an uneasy, but comparatively one-sided relationship of dependence. The two best-known and most important expansions of Scottish feature production, the first between 1981 and 1985, the second 1995 to 2001, were both dependant on sustained and significant financial support from Channel 4; the respective ends of both periods of

growth are roughly conterminous with the broadcaster's patronage moving elsewhere within the UK and beyond. Yet on the other, during the mid-90s the Celtic tail often seemed to wag the British metropolitan dog, despite the huge differences in locally-available production funding. *Post-Shallow Grave*, developments within and films from one of Britain's 'Celtic Fringes' were crucial in re-shaping the priorities driving Channel 4's UK-wide film funding activities, not to mention the way in which the broadcaster rationalised and justified these to observers.

This paper therefore argues that the traditional critical view of Channel 4 as a radical metropolitan development which made possible a range of activities within the British nations and regions might usefully be re-thought on occasion, acknowledging and emphasising instead the historic extent to which the ostensibly dominant metropolitan core of British cinema has often been influenced by and reshaped from that cinema's apparently powerless peripheries.

Kabaddi – The Triple Whammy?

Tom Nicholls, Senior Lecturer in Media theory, Media Production Department, University of Lincoln

The televising of Kabaddi on Channel 4 could be seen to hit three key purposes of the channel, to broadcast to minority cultures within the UK, to serve and develop an interest in a new, minority sport as part of Channels 4's sports output, and to commission programmes from small independent producers rather than the ITV network stations. Kabaddi is an Asian sport, most popular in Indian, and Pakistan, involving two teams who attempt to tag and capture each other. Much as the earlier (1987) coverage of Sumo championships did, this presented an unusual aspect of a minority culture to UK audiences. Produced by Endboard Productions, a small, Birmingham-based production company, Kabaddi ran for two series in 1991 and 1992). However, during this short run it created a brief national following for the sport, not to mention a playground craze.

This paper, based upon a small scale study of Endboard and textual study of the programmes, will consider the process of commissioning and the extent to which Kabaddi fulfilled the channel remit as part of a wide portfolio of minority sports and minority programme-makers. The opportunities it raised for a regional, independent production company, primarily concerned with Indian and British Asian issues will be considered. The intention of the new channel was to allow for new voices in television, but it is often assumed that post-1990 this became less frequent with the change in funding regime. How far Kabaddi demonstrates an opposing trend will be considered.

GBH (1991): 'Quality' Authored Drama, Politics and Public Debate

Leah Panos, University of Reading

Alan Bleasdale's *GBH* remains one of Channel Four's most controversial and widely seen serial dramas in its 25 year history. Its critical portrayal of a northern city in the grip of a far-Left council headed by megalomaniac madman, Michael Murray, (played by Robert Lindsay) and a thinly-veiled reference to Liverpool under Derek Hatton's Militant Labour, who encounters his nemesis in the liberal Head Master, Jim Nelson (Michael Palin), provoked both consternation and praise.

The case serves as a prime example of how, in the post single-play era, socially and politically informed serial television drama still had the capacity to generate public debate and become a national talking point, as it achieved sufficient newsworthiness to warrant a promotion from the review pages of the press to leading front editorials and commentaries.

In this paper I will explore the status and role of drama such as *GBH* for Channel Four at the time, in terms of its programming policy, remit and reputation for pushing boundaries and the factors in its success as a 'quality' authored drama and the controversy it courted. I will also focus on specific themes and formal aspects of the serial, examining how far it subverts 'traditional' modes of social realism and political satire in its anti-ideological stance and its focus on individuals' damaged psyches and personal moral conundrums.

Bleasdale was criticised by some for having betrayed his roots and 'sold-out' the socialist cause he once championed, and celebrated by others for confronting difficult issues about the contemporary state of the left. Critics were also split by the comedic modes of surrealism and melodrama adopted by Bleasdale and the extent to which the caricatures of his leading roles deviated from more credible and 'serious' realist models.

The mood and content of the drama encompasses the confusion and disorientation experienced by socialists after the collapse of the Communist bloc, the defeat of the British Left during the 80s and widespread disillusionment with politics, and, in its rejection of 'extremist' factions and privileging of personal over social change, *GBH* strongly advocates a moderate 'third way'.

The tagline widely used to promote the drama, '*... one caring liberal madman's odyssey through the appalling farce of life in Great Britain today ... trying to make sense of the place*', sums up the psychological and political breakdown and the conflation of ideological and moral values that *GBH* heralded.

The 2003 Invasion of Iraq: assessing the 'spirit of innovation and scepticism' at Channel Four News

Katy Parry, University of Liverpool

According to its editor, Channel Four News aims to 'provide a broadsheet news service which reflects Channel 4's own spirit of innovation and scepticism', with a commitment to 'set[ting] our own agenda' and 'com[ing] up with a distinctive take on events.' The following paper provides an assessment of the broadcaster's success in these areas through an analysis of its coverage of the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Through the use of both quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques, we compare this coverage to that of other broadcasters to assess the extent to which Channel Four News did in fact offer its viewers an original and distinct take on this highly controversial event.

The paper forms part of a broader ESRC-funded study into UK media coverage of the 2003 Iraq conflict. It draws from a detailed content analysis of the flagship evening news bulletins for BBC1, ITV1 and Channel Four in the early days of the conflict in 2003. We sought answers to the following questions:

- To what extent did Channel Four News offer an alternative account of the Iraq conflict to the other terrestrial evening bulletins?
- Which elements of the reporting could be said to have been noticeably innovative or sceptical?

- When coverage was critical, subjective or 'biased', which side(s), if any, did it tend to favour?

In addressing these questions, our quantitative analysis paid particular attention to: the prominence broadcasters gave to different themes or topics; the diversity of the sources they used to provide comment; the reporters' tone towards the key individuals and groups involved; and the relative prominence of the main rationales for or against the Anglo-American invasion. These results have been complemented with a more nuanced framing analysis that considers the verbal and visual cues that may guide viewers' interpretations of the conflict and of the reasons put forward to justify it.

We found that Channel Four News, which had been accused by the Anglo-American 'Coalition' and its sympathisers of being overly critical, in fact demonstrated a commitment to impartiality. In line with the editorial statement cited above, Channel Four correspondents were in general more sceptical of coalition claims and were more active than their competitors in seeking alternative views to the official position. We also found that the tone of reports about costly coalition errors, such as civilian casualties and the failure to maintain law and order, tended to be more critical.

The Irish Angle: C4, Ireland and the Irish in Britain

Lance Pettitt, Principal Lecturer in Media and Popular Culture, Leeds Metropolitan University and Helen Gibbins, University College, Cork, Ireland

This paper will shed new light on the cultural history of the Irish in Britain during the 1980s by analysing *The Irish Angle* (1983-87). The context for the series was Channel Four's unique remit as a commissioning broadcaster to reflect Black, Asian and Irish identities in Britain. *The Irish Angle* addressed two kinds of viewer in a seminal fashion during the 1980s: the long-standing Irish community in Britain and a left-liberal audience sympathetic to and eager for independent views that dared to dissent from the Thatcherite view of Ireland. In the politically-charged climate in the immediate wake of the Republican Hunger Strikes this was a bold commissioning strategy. Emblematic of its broad interest in and commitment to re-presenting Ireland and the Irish as a minority community, the series provides an ideal case study. As has been noted (Pettitt, 2000a: 156-58), this series was a precursor to later cable and satellite initiatives in the 1990s addressing a more confident, affluent Irish community. In terms of film and television representation, McIlroy, 1986; Barton 2004; Pettitt 2000, have provided case studies of individual directors from earlier periods (e.g. Hurst and Donnellan) but little work has appeared yet on institutional contexts of the independent production sector's treatment of Ireland (Curtis, 1984) particularly in relation to new commissions for TV produced by the advent of C4 and the cross-over of Irish-produced RTE material transmitted by C4 in themed programming strands.

Viewing one series in its entirety at the BFI allowed for a detailed revision of current metadata where necessary on the existing data base. However, the heart of the project will be to provide a close textual analysis of individual programmes, the range of topics, films/ programmes, and address questions of scheduling and re-purposing of RTE-generated material, including its sporting, arts and popular entertainment strands. My hypothesis is that *The Irish Angle* reflects tensions within C4 in this period as the organisation attempted to address divergent audiences. Such tension arose from its distinctive commitment to commission

formally inventive and radical TV and the need to address taste communities defined by a more conservative aesthetic, formed within their ethnic-national, generational and class identities. The series spans the period of a diplomatic *rapprochement* in Anglo-Irish relations yet episodic political violence leading to unprecedented media censorship (1988), and an increase movement of Irish people to Britain including, as well the traditional lower socio-economic groups, a nascent professional middle-class migrant. In this way, the paper will explore how the issues of class, ethnicity and media representation raised by the series articulate with the 'high' politics of period, including the formation of 'Irish Studies' within the academy?

Critical Discourses: Channel Four News and the Conflict in Iraq

Stuart Price, Senior Lecturer in Media and Cultural Production, De Montfort University

Channel Four's news coverage of the conflict in Iraq has been notable for its critical assessment of the formal positions taken by the US and UK governments. Its reports on the 2003 War and the subsequent 'insurgency' have demonstrated an awareness of the rhetorical character of official statements, together with an appreciation of the increasing chasm between these utterances and the situation 'on the ground'.

This paper, written from a critical realist perspective (Archer, et al, 1998), supports this distinction between a 'discursive' and an extra-discursive reality (Foucault, 1980), but poses additional questions about the nature of contemporary journalism. Using a form of thematic analysis, it identifies a series of key events, including the opening phases of the conflict and major incidents during the occupation, which reveal the extent of Channel Four's 'dissent' from official perspectives.

The paper concludes by asking if the Channel's Iraq coverage, despite its progressive orientation, fell short of a radical critique of state power. The outcome of this question turns on how we should regard its presenters' use of *the same rhetorical techniques* employed by the politicians subjected to critical scrutiny. In other words, in their use of the inclusive 'we' (Atkinson, 1984) to indicate a national perspective on the 'war on terror', did Channel Four elide an essential difference between those in positions of authority, their own news journalists, and an absent public in whose name the whole process of enquiry is justified?

Are We All Out Today? Context and Legacy: The significance and legacy of Channel 4's Out on Tuesday and Out (1989-1994)

Tony Purvis, Lecturer, Department of Cultural and Media Studies, Newcastle University and Gareth Longstaff, PhD student in Media and Culture, Newcastle University

What does it mean to view a television programme? And what does it mean to view a programme that represents *your* identity? What happens if you are excluded from representation altogether? What does it mean to be included, to be able to speak, and to be seen and heard? Do television series, which always have a lifespan, have a legacy? Is television output able to say something about an identity that has passed? And can such output represent the 'now' of identity and its futures? These are important questions in any conference which deals with programming, diversity, representation, and production values; and they are key questions which

our discussion of *Out on Tuesday* and *Out* (1989-94) will explore and examine in relation to history and legacy of LGBT identities.

This body of work and Channel 4 generally, has a *context* before it has a *legacy*. British television during the period up until the mid-1970s was consumed within a culture and society still pledged, albeit problematically and precariously, the concept of the nation. Despite much national upheaval during this period, institutions such as education, the Church, and the BBC relied on consensus values and thus ensured a degree of political, social and institutional consensus. The televisual representation of this culture on ITV and the BBC invariably reinforced family values, heterosexual relations, domesticity, and monogamy.

By the 1980s and early 1990s, this common culture was more under threat than ever before. Film output such as *My Beautiful Launderette* and *Looking For Langston* served to question the dominant culture's relationship to Black, Asian, and sexual sub-cultures. And in television, it was Channel 4 which championed the concerns and anxieties of Britain's ethnic and sexual minorities. The neo-conservative politics of the Thatcher years, alongside a commitment to monetarist economics, were being questioned by the trade unions and coalitions on the Left. But the personal-political and cultural dimensions of the period were also being scrutinised by, amongst others, Channel 4, in its diverse output. It was the groundbreaking *Out on Tuesday* and later *Out* which first facilitated a public voice for LGBT filmmakers, media production teams, reporters and researchers. This output also gave voice to the concerns of LGBT audiences and communities within and beyond the UK.

How might this output be assessed? What were the production values which underpinned *Out on Tuesday* and *Out*? Did these programmes really document the changes in sexual politics taking place in the period 1989-1994? How reflective were these reports of the politics of sexuality and identity? What is its legacy in terms of media analysis and media production today? Are we all 'out', today, in the post-gay, queer new millennium? It is questions such as these which will structure the discussion and analysis of two of the most ground-breaking programmes of the last fifty years.

Channel 4: A Scottish Perspective

Alistair Scott, Lecturer, School of Media, Language and Music, University of Paisley

Even before November 1982 and the coming of Channel 4, Scotland was a significant, small centre of independent film and television production. This paper surveys how Scottish companies and independent producers were able to win commissions in the early days of the channel and quickly establish Scotland as the largest centre of 'indies' outside London and the M25. The range of commissions meant that that throughout the 1980s there were often programmes with a clear Scottish identity on C4. The paper will chart how the vocal demands of Scottish independents was partly responsible for the development of a more structured 'nations and regions' policy in the course of the late 1980s and into the 1990s and investigates what has happened to Scottish companies twenty-five years on.

'Indies' came into existence in Scotland long before the Annan Committee or the Broadcasting Act of 1980. In both Glasgow and Edinburgh there was already the infrastructure of a loose confederation of independent film and television companies eager to win business from the proposed new fourth channel. This was

also a collection of film-makers who were familiar to the in-coming first Chief Executive of Channel 4, Jeremy Isaacs. Isaacs was a native Glaswegian who had spent his whole career in London, until his last job before going to Charlotte Street and Channel 4. As a freelance producer Isaacs had been hired by Scottish TV to produce their big-budget franchise-round-winning, feature length drama *A Sense of Freedom*, based on Jimmy Boyle's autobiography. The production of this film meant that Isaacs had spent several months in Scotland and had met all of the local independent film and television community. And consequently they all felt confident to approach him directly with a wide range of ideas for programmes.

As well as already having a loose pre-existing infrastructure Scottish independents started their relationship with Channel 4 with a heightened consciousness about the treatment granted to another part of the United Kingdom in the Broadcasting Act. The campaign of the Plaid Cymru leadership had led to the establishment of S4C in Wales in the place of Channel 4. Some Scottish producers argued that if the Welsh language film-makers had this outlet it was appropriate that Scottish companies and Scottish talent must be represented by a proportionate outlet on Channel 4.

In 2007, after twenty-five years, Channel 4's only office outside London is in Glasgow and the output produced in Scotland is still an important element of Channel 4's mix with regular series such as *Location, Location* produced in Scotland and significant one-off dramas such as *Wedding Belles* reflecting contemporary Scottish culture. But the shape of the industry is now very different. The paper will investigate what remains of the original Scottish pioneer production companies and examine what this reveals about the changing structure of the industry.

Channel 4's Dockers: a move beyond the rhetoric of participation?

Karen J. Shepherdson, Principal Lecturer, Canterbury Christ Church University

Raymond Williams stated that the inclusion of 'ordinary working people' in television production should be of 'great interest' to us' (Williams, *Screen*: 77). Such inclusion appears to offer a double opportunity: the 'ordinary working person' is given the chance to articulate authentic experiences and, by using 'real' people from their own locales, such drama can perhaps amplify its own authenticity. Few television dramas provide genuine opportunity for either the inclusion of participants or for them to contribute to their own dramatic re-presentation. However, Channel 4, throughout its existence, has been an occasional site for the articulation of the demotic voice through drama. This paper, as part of a larger research project, will examine how 'ordinary' people, in this instance specifically dockworkers, have contributed to their own representation through television production.

Channel 4's *Dockers* (1999) was a single drama, innovative in its production, emerging from a WEA course and written by fourteen sacked Mersey dockers, along with two of their wives and the professional writer Jimmy McGovern. A parallel documentary was also produced *Writing the Wrongs* which, as its title connotes, charted both the writing process of the drama and the history of the dock dispute upon which the narrative is constructed.

It is this accompanying documentary that provides the revelatory perspective. It shows, perhaps inadvertently, that demotic participation in television production remains highly problematic. On first viewing it is both deeply moving and

convincing: working-class men and women are given the opportunity to write *their* story, seemingly within a democratic forum, with the means to harness television as a medium and drama as a form in which to articulate their own narrative. This appears to demonstrate television as potentially, according to Raymond Williams' earlier suggestion, a genuinely 'socially extended medium'.

This parallel documentary, whilst movingly showing the sacked men and their wives struggling to craft nascent writing skills, more importantly reveals the hierarchical power relationship between the professional writer and the men and women. It shows Jimmy McGovern taking their contributions away to shape the writing to a broadcasting standard and, with the script completed, experienced professionals occupying the key roles of producer (Sally Hibben) and director (Bill Anderson). In addition, a further power relationship is shown between the entire writing team (including McGovern) and the commissioning channel: Channel 4.

This paper will examine how television, by its very nature, is perhaps bound to transmute the demotic voice to the point of silencing it, and in this instance how genuine dockers contributed to the drama, yet ultimately have their voices confined by the context in which they are presented.

Chairing S4C

Elan Gloss Stephens CBE FRSA, University of Wales, Aberystwyth

Over the past eight years I have been appointed by Chris Smith and then Tessa Jowell at DCMS to Chair S4C (actually still a non-devolved public body) and I ended my term of office after the statutory two terms on March 31st last year. I then returned full time to Aberystwyth University where I hold a Chair in Communications and Creative Industries. During my time in S4C I was severely constrained as an academic by the fact that Chairs are seen to speak on behalf of the institution. In particular, in the case of S4C, we had a substantial funding stream from the BBC which made it very difficult to confront the organisation. I will present a paper on eight years of Chairing S4C as an academic looking back on the absolute threat and possibilities of digital television and multi platform television to a minority language. These include in the case of S4C:

- the very early move to digital;
- the understanding of digital as volume, almost wallpaper television;
- the growing understanding that multi platform is more highly competitive and that wallpaper will not do;
- the growth of multi channel strategies where S4C cannot compete;
- the ultimate emphasis on creativity;
- the new platforms.

Channel 4 and Comedy: The Case of Peep Show

Phil Wickham, Curator (Television), BFI National Archive

From its birth Channel 4 has used comedy as an indicator of its difference from the rest of British television. From the transmission of *The Comic Strip's Five Go Mad in Dorset* on the opening night, C4 set out to move the boundaries of comic forms, content, and audience expectations. Over the years this has elided with the channel's pursuit of a specific demographic, the 16 - 34 age group. Comedy has

come to be seen as a way to reach this audience - a group judged open to outrage and adult content, and willing to embrace dissonant forms.

Peep Show (Objective Productions 2003 -) has been one of the channel's recent big successes, at least critically. The series follows the adventures of twentysomething flatmates, corporate Mark and 'alternative' Jez, partly through the device of a point-of-view perspective that sees the action through their eyes and allows us into their head to hear their unspoken thoughts. In this paper I argue that it represents a number of trends within Channel 4 comedy content in its experimental use of address and technique, and because it features young protagonists and adult content. However, the show also raises some tensions in Channel 4's approach to comedy. Much of its success, despite its modernity, derives from classic sitcom influences on British TV. And sitcom, notwithstanding some recent hits, has not always seemed a form with which Channel 4 is comfortable. There were doubts that *Peep Show* would be re-commissioned because of low ratings. It survived the scare but do Channel 4's commercial pressures mean that sophisticated narrative-led comedy will be incompatible with its future? Is the future of comedy on the channel just *The Friday Night Project* and other successors to *The Word*?

S4C and Welsh language films: the first ten years

Kate Woodward, Aberystwyth University

This paper will focus on S4C's early attempts to nurture and develop Welsh language films. It could be said that the channel's film production got off to the worst possible start when its first commissioned feature film, *Madam Wen* (1982, produced by the Welsh Film Board) spiralled out of financial control, and made dramatic headlines in the Welsh press. Despite this initial setback, the channel developed a film strategy which seemed to bear fruit in 1994 with *Hedd Wyn* (1992) which was nominated for an Academy Award in the Best Foreign Film category. The journey from *Madam Wen* to *Hedd Wyn* will be explored, and this paper will consider a number of key trends during S4C's first decade of film-making. It will give reasons for the initial dependency on historical/ heritage films, assess the trend of filming 'back to back', examine European co-productions, and will take account of the role of non-Welsh speaking directors in the channel's success.

The paper will be illustrated by a number of feature films produced or co-produced by S4C during the first ten years, and will include the following: *Madam Wen* (Pennant Roberts, 1982), *Owain Glyndwr* (James Hill, 1983), *Aderyn Papur...And Pigs might Fly* (Stephen Bayly, 1984) *Boy Soldier* (Karl Francis, 1986), *Coming Up Roses* (Stephen Bayly, 1986), *Elenya* (Steve Gough, 1991, with Frankfurter Film Produktion for ZDF and the BFI) and *Cwm Hyfryd* (Paul Turner, 1992, with French channel Arte), and *Hedd Wyn* (Paul Turner, 1992).