

Creative Cities Convention

📍 **Camp and Furnace**

67 Greenland St
Liverpool
L1 0BY



Liverpool
6-7 May 2026



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What is the Creative Cities Convention?

The Creative Cities Convention is an annual gathering for people working across the UK's TV, film and digital media industries, created to champion and strengthen creativity outside London. With a focus on the Nations and Regions, it brings together broadcasters, producers, freelancers, policymakers and emerging talent to explore the ideas, challenges and opportunities shaping the industry now. At its heart is a simple ambition: to support local businesses, grow skills, back underrepresented voices and help build a more diverse, sustainable and representative creative economy across the UK.

Since launching in Leeds in 2018, the Convention has travelled to Cardiff, Glasgow, Birmingham, Newcastle, Bristol and Bradford. This year, we are delighted to be in Liverpool - a city with storytelling in its bones, from music and writing to world-class screen production, and one that stands as a powerful example of creative success beyond London. Thanks to our hosts Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Liverpool City Region Destination Partnership.

We'd also like to thank our wonderful stakeholders the BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Paramount and Pact and convention partners UKTV, ScreenSkills, Lime Pictures and Sony Pictures Television. We're also hugely grateful to our joint headline partners for our 2-day Skills Summit: Amazon Prime, Lime Pictures and ScreenSkills.

Thanks also to Sky, BBC Skills, 4Skills, Screen Alliance North, XE, Banijay, LFC Foundation, ITV Academy, Draw & Code, Tone, Creative UK, Action for Freelancers, Bectu, WFTV, TV Access Project and L16 Studios.

Your support is invaluable in keeping ticket prices low and our event as accessible as possible.

It's been fantastic having a locally-based Executive Producer this year, so huge thanks to Sol Papadopoulos for bringing together some of the biggest names in the business, including 'Liverpool Legends' – Sir Phil Redmond, Jimmy McGovern, Tony Schumacher and Jimmy Mulville. We're also proud that senior executives including Channel 4 CEO, Priya Dogra and Pact CEO, Nigel Warner, are making their first major industry appearance.

The Creative Cities experience is fast-paced and full of conversation, challenge and connection. See you on the other side.

Marketplace

We are pleased to welcome the following organisations to this year's marketplace.

AFF
Bectu
Creative UK
Draw & Code

Xe
L16 Studios
Screen Alliance North
ScreenSkills

TAPP
Tone
Women in Film & TV

Acknowledgements



Stakeholders

The Creative Cities Convention and Skills Summit is grateful to its stakeholders without whom this conference would not be possible.



Creative Cities Convention Partners

Thanks to all our partners who have contributed to the conference in many different ways.



Skills Summit Associate Partner



Supporting Industry Partners



Marketplace



Director's Welcome

Liverpool is not just a great creative city in its own right.

It also makes the case for something bigger: that UK production is stronger when more commissioning power backs the companies rooted in the Nations and Regions – the ones building local crews, training new talent and creating an industry with real depth beyond London.

What is happening here is not just a story about locations or inward investment, but about local businesses helping turn creative success into lasting jobs, skills and opportunity.

That idea runs through everything we are discussing over these two days: who gets to make content, who gets to build a career and what it would take to create a sector that genuinely reflects the country it serves.

It's there in the big conversations on stage and in our Skills Summit too, from supporting mid-career freelancers navigating a changing market to young people taking their first steps in the industry. Liverpool has always produced stories the world wants to hear. Now it is helping show how more of the country can do the same.



Lisa Campbell
Director, Creative Cities Convention

Programme Schedule



Day 1 — Wednesday 6 May

<p>13:00</p>	<p>Welcome Address</p> <p>Host: Mobeen Azhar</p> <p>Creative Cities Convention Director Lisa Campbell and Liverpool's Director of Culture, Major Events & Tourism Culture, Claire McColgan CBE open CCC 2026.</p>
<p>13:10</p>	<p>Sir Phil Redmond: The Future of Storytelling</p> <p>Few figures in British television have shaped the landscape quite like Sir Phil Redmond. In an era now defined by platforms, algorithms and global audiences, Sir Phil reflects on what's changed — and what hasn't. Has the digital revolution opened the door to bold new storytelling, or quietly narrowed the space for risk?</p>
<p>13:25</p>	<p>Liverpool: Centre of the Creative Universe</p> <p>PJ Smith (Writer and Unprofessional Scouser)</p> <p>Poet and performer PJ Smith brings Liverpool's creative spirit to the stage with a spoken word piece celebrating the city's imagination, humour and rebellious cultural energy.</p>
<p>13:30</p>	<p>Mainstream to Microdrama: What's the future for scripted?</p> <p>Paul Testar (Channel 5) • Louise Donald (Channel 4) • Megan Spanjian (Sky) • Angelo Abela (Lime Pictures) • Michelle Lin (K7 Media)</p> <p>Host: Marc Lorber (The Art of Co-Production)</p> <p>The scripted landscape is shifting fast. Budgets are tightening, audiences are fragmenting and platforms are redefining what success looks like. This session looks not just at what commissioners want, but how storytelling, business models and audience habits are evolving.</p>
<p>14:15</p>	<p>Refreshment break Free Immersive demo by Draw a & Code by main stage</p> <p>Exchange Lounge and Refreshments sponsored by Xe.</p> 



Speaker bios from page 20

Day 1 — Wednesday 6 May

<p>14:35</p>	<p>This City Is Ours: Inside the "Scouse Sopranos"</p> <p>Stephen Butchard (Writer) • Rebecca Hodgson (Exec Producer) Saoirse-Monica Jackson (Actor) • Jo McClellan (BBC)</p> <p>Host: Mobeen Azhar</p> <p>Dubbed the "Scouse Sopranos" and hailed as one of the BBC's standout recent dramas, This City Is Ours puts Liverpool front and centre with swagger, scale and critical acclaim. Writer, executive producer, commissioner and cast go behind the scenes of the hit show's journey to screen, exploring how it was developed, cast and crafted and what it takes to return for a second series with confidence.</p>
<p>15:15</p>	<p>Skilling Up the North</p> <p>Screen Agency and Film Office Leaders: Lynn Saunders • Rob Page • Caroline Cooper Charles • Alison Gwynn</p> <p>Host: John Whittle (Lime Pictures)</p> <p>With the collaborative effort of the four northern agencies to broaden the support they can offer, is the industry getting the skills it needs? Screen Alliance North evaluates its first three years.</p>
<p>15:55</p>	<p>Our Man In America</p> <p>Stuart Ford (Chairman and CEO, AGC Studios)</p> <p>Host: Rebecca Cooney (Insight Editor Broadcast)</p> <p>From Liverpool lad to LA studio boss, Stuart Ford has forged a career built on creative instinct and commercial strategy. Returning to his home city, he'll lift the lid on international dealmaking, the evolution of both film and TV independent financing and make the case for culturally specific storytelling as a driver of global success. Using examples including his recent return to British cinema with Giant, Ford will explore why distinctive stories often travel further than generic ones and what the streamer slowdown, AI and other market pressures mean for international production in the UK.</p>
<p>16:15</p>	<p>Comfort break</p>

Day 1 — Wednesday 6 May

16:25	<p>TV, Brands and the Digital Shift</p> <p>Alex Morris (Channel 4 Studios) • Paula Thomas (ITV Daytime and Ad-Funded Entertainment) • Holly Graham (Little Dot Studios)</p> <p>Host: Lucy Smith (Fawkes Digital)</p> <p>The lines between television and digital are no longer blurring; they've collapsed. This session brings together leaders operating on both sides of that divide to explore how content is now conceived, funded and consumed in a world where audiences are moving faster than broadcasters.</p>
16:55	<p>Fireside Chat: C4 CEO Priya Dogra</p> <p>Priya Dogra (CEO, C4)</p> <p>Host: Hannah Cheers (Executive Producer, Hollyoaks)</p> <p>In a coup for the Creative Cities Convention, Channel 4 CEO Priya Dogra makes her first official industry appearance and shares her thoughts on the challenges ahead.</p>
17:25	<p>Liverpool Legends: No Place Like Home</p> <p>Speakers: Jimmy McGovern (Writer) • Jimmy Mulville (Producer)</p> <p>Host: Mobeen Azhar</p> <p>Two of the industry's most entertaining and remarkable storytellers come together to celebrate the role that place plays in shaping great work. Between them, they've changed how Britain sees itself on screen — drawing on voices, communities and identities far beyond London. A conversation from the creators behind Cracker, Hillsborough, Time, Have I Got News for You, Father Ted, Whose Line Is It Anyway, and Derry Girls about why sense of place matters.</p>

Day 1 — Wednesday 6 May


<p>18:05</p>	<p>Creative Cities Champion Awards</p> <p>Inaugural Creative Cities Champions Awards recognising services to the industry proudly sponsored by Liverpool FC Foundation.</p> 
<p>18:20</p>	<p>End of Day 1</p> <p>Networking Party Begins</p> <p>All of our delegates are cordially invited for drinks, chatter and fun at our evening networking party with live music from Liverpool legends The Farm. A selection of delicious street food will be available for purchase.</p> <p>With thanks to Sony Pictures Television.</p> 




Day 2 — Thursday 7 May

09:00	<p>The Wake Up Address: Wayne Garvie</p> <p>Speaker: Wayne Garvie (Sony Pictures Television)</p> <p>Host: Jane Millichip (BAFTA)</p> <p>Wayne Garvie, President, International Production, Sony Pictures Television, will deliver the inaugural Wake Up Address, launching a new annual Creative Cities Convention keynote designed to challenge assumptions, take stock of a fast-changing industry and spark debate about what comes next. BAFTA CEO Jane Millichip will pick up his main points and host a Q&A.</p>
09:40	<p>G'WED: How A Breakout Comedy Found Its Audience</p> <p>Speakers: Nana Hughes (ITV) • Mario Stylianides (Exec Producer) Dylan Thomas Smith (Cast) • Gemma Barraclough (Cast) Chloe English (Director)</p> <p>Host: Mobeen Azhar</p> <p>New comedy is one of the hardest things to land but G'WED proved it can still be done. With its unapologetically Liverpoolian voice, standout cast and sharp take on grief, sex, class and teenage life, the show connected with audiences and built real buzz. The creative team and cast share insights on how they made it work and how word of mouth and social media helped turn a fresh comedy into a breakout success.</p>
10:20	<p>ZIG A ZIG AH! : What the Factual Commissioners Really, Really Want</p> <p>Jo Clinton-Davis (ITV) • Harjeet Chhokar (Amazon MGM Studios) Emma Loach (BBC Factual) • Helen Nightingale (UKTV) Laura Marks (C4 Digital)</p> <p>Host: Kit Morey (C5)</p> <p>Designed to cut through industry noise and get to the reality of what broadcasters and platforms are actually looking for right now. With budgets tightening, risk tolerance shrinking and audiences fragmenting across platforms, the gap between what producers are pitching and what commissioners are buying has never felt wider. This session puts leading UK and global commissioners on the spot to unpack their current priorities – editorially, commercially and strategically.</p>

Day 2 — Thursday 7 May

<p>11:10</p>	<p>Refreshment break Free Immersive demo by Draw a & Code by main stage</p> <p>Exchange Lounge and Refreshments sponsored by Xe. </p>
<p>11:30</p>	<p>Working-Class Stories; Middle-Class Gatekeepers</p> <p>Natasha Hawthornthwaite (Doc North) • Laurence Clark (Screenwriter & Access Roles Project Champion) • Beth Johnson (Professor of Television and Media Studies, University of Leeds)</p> <p>Host: David Leach (Climate Spring)</p> <p>We celebrate working-class stories more than ever but are we actually letting working-class people tell them? With growing recognition that diversity must also mean class diversity, this session asks a blunt question: is access to the industry stalling, or even reversing? As costs rise and pathways narrow, who's getting the best jobs? What are the invisible barriers still shaping careers?</p>
<p>12:00</p>	<p>Whose Voice Is It Anyway?</p> <p>Speakers: Andrea Arnold (Oscar-Winning Filmmaker/Screenwriter) Tony Schumacher (Writer)</p> <p>Host: Ruth Pitt (Chair, Creative Cities Convention)</p> <p>Two of the UK's strongest voices sit down to discuss their own personal journeys to success - for Andrea (Cow, American Honey, Fish Tank, Bird) from a council house in Dartford and for Tony Schumacher (Responder, The Cage) via policing, taxi-driving and hard graft in Liverpool. Both bring hard-won, personal perspectives on class, access and authenticity and offer their advice to upcoming generations of content creators.</p>

Day 2 — Thursday 7 May

<p>12:25</p>	<p>Help? Finding Your Way in Digi-land</p> <p>Speakers: Ade Shannon (DiO) • Jonny McCausland (Hat Trick Productions) • Graham Gallery (Lime Pictures) • Jade Beason (Creator & CEO of Social People) • Laura Mansfield (ScreenSkills)</p> <p>Host: Mobeen Azhar</p> <p>A lively session exploring how artificial intelligence and audience analytics are influencing pitching, development and writing. How are algorithms changing how shows are created, tested and commissioned? This session tracks the new journey, with creators building audiences first, shaping content through data and using platforms and AI to bypass traditional gatekeepers.</p>
<p>13:00</p>	<p>Lunch Free Immersive demo by Draw a & Code by main stage</p> <p>With thanks to UKTV, the CCC Official Lunch Partner for providing all of the catering.</p> 
<p>14:00</p>	<p>Question Time</p> <p>Speakers: Nicola Shindler (Quay Street Productions) • Nigel Warner (Pact) • Mairi Brewis (YouTube) • Heidi Dawson (BBC) • Ben Zand (Zandland)</p> <p>Moderator: Hilary Rosen (UKTV)</p> <p>A fast-moving Question Time-style debate on the future of British TV and digital platforms. With funding pressure, Charter review questions, platform competition and regional growth all in play, this session asks what kind of UK screen sector we want to build next and who gets to shape it.</p>

Day 2 — Thursday 7 May

14:50	Podcasts: Where Audio Goes Next Speakers: Lizzi Doyle (BBC Radio 5 Live/BBC Sounds) Stella Binns (YouTube) Host: Mobeen Azhar For producers looking beyond traditional formats, podcasts offer new routes to audiences, talent and ideas. BBC and YouTube executives discuss the creative and commercial potential of audio storytelling and share where they see the space heading next.
15:15	Asif Kapadia: The Art of Documentary Host: Harjeet Chhokar Oscar-winning filmmaker Asif Kapadia, acclaimed director of Amy, Senna, Diego Maradona and Liverpool legend Kenny Dalglish, discusses the craft and evolution of documentary storytelling. From his groundbreaking use of archive to the challenge of making distinctive films for a global audience, Kapadia reflects on the creative decisions, narrative instincts and industry shifts that have shaped his work. An opportunity to hear from one of the most innovative voices in contemporary doc-making.
16:00	Day 2 Ends End time may vary slightly.

How to get there

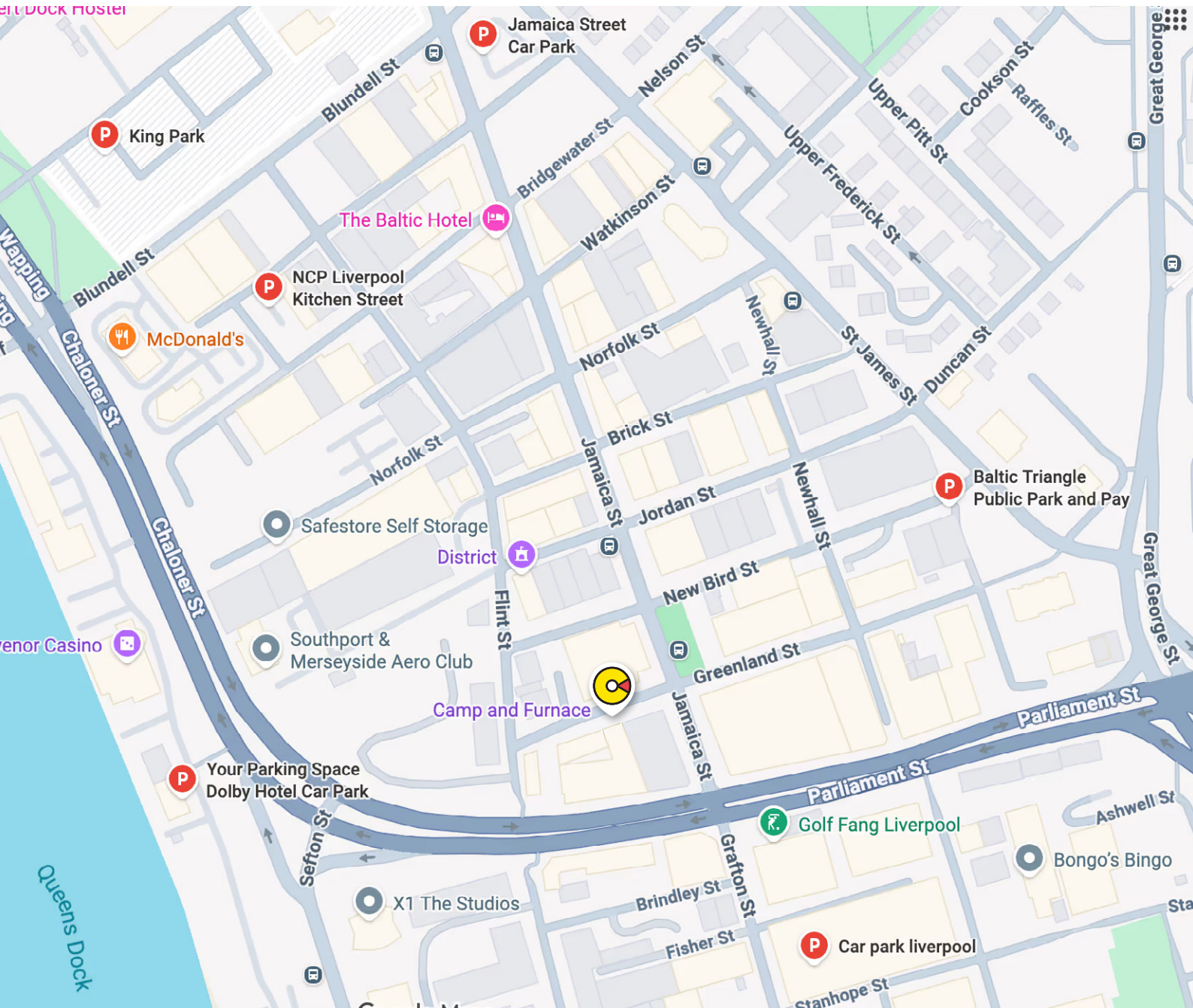
Creative Cities

Convention venue details:

Camp and Furnace

67 Greenland St
Liverpool
L1 0BY

[View in Google Maps](#)





Skills Summit

Part of the Creative Cities Convention
Liverpool | 6 & 7 May 2026

Venue details:

BoxPark Brewery Village,
Beaufort St. Liverpool L8 5XJ

[View in Google Maps](#)

The Skills Summit is two days of masterclasses, hands-on practical training and honest industry conversation — brought to Liverpool as part of the Creative Cities Convention and designed to make a real difference to real careers.

The practical training covers three specialist areas: Vertical Drama, Generative AI, and Development and Pitching for a Digital Product. Now in its second year, the Skills Summit has grown into a practical and people-focused event.

Day One — Wednesday 6 May

For mid-level career freelancers in the screen industries

Day One is designed for experienced creatives who are navigating one of the most challenging periods the industry has seen. A full programme of masterclasses brings together some of the most respected names in our industry to talk honestly about where the work is, who is hiring and why, and how to build a career that is resilient enough to last.

A networking lunch gives delegates the opportunity to sit alongside leading industry figures in an informal setting — because the conversations that change careers rarely happen on a stage.

Day Two — Thursday 7 May

For potential new entrants aged 16 to 24

Day Two is for the next generation. Young people from across Liverpool and the North West — selected by their schools, colleges and industry partners — spend a day discovering what a career in the screen industries actually looks like, meeting the people already doing those jobs, and leaving with a clearer sense of what their next step could be.

From inspiration to exploration to action, Day Two is structured to take young people from *"I wonder if this is for me"* to *"I know what I'm going to do next."*

Supported by the industry, built for the industry

The Skills Summit would not exist without the extraordinary generosity of the screen industries. We are deeply grateful to everyone at Lime Pictures, Donna Taberer, Prime Video Pathway (Amazon), our colleagues at ScreenSkills, and to every individual and organisation who has given their time, expertise and commitment to making this event possible.

"The Skills Summit exists because this industry is full of talented people who deserve better access to opportunity — and because the next generation deserves a clear and honest picture of what a career can look like."

Sarah Wood, Head of the Skills Summit

Team credits

Convention Team

Executive Director

Lisa Campbell

Advisory Chair

Ruth Pitt

Director of Operations

Susie Townson

Executive Producer

Sol Papadopoulos

Content Producer

Barrington Paul Robinson

Head of Partnerships

Nina Harrison-Bell

Assistant Producer

Tammie Ash

Additional event AP and event showcaller

Helen King

Comms team

Cheryl Clarke

Paul Leather

Lucy Rouse

Video Editor

Billy Martin

Admin support

Laura Burrows

PDF Programme Design

Kev Price

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Rebecca Carey, Pact

Financial Accountant

Anish Khanderia, Pact

Legal Support

Samantha Ravenscroft, Pact

British sign language interpreters

Hayley Wiseman

Chelsea Powell

Live Event Team

Floor Manager

Steve Cass

Assistant Floor Manager

Paula McKie

Event Photographer

Charlie Swinbourne

AV team

Adlib

AP

Adi Alfa

Runners

Boo Grundy

Jobi Chan

Aisha O'Neill

Joanne Johnson

Dylan Pritchard

Eleanor Harrison-Bell

Skills Summit

Head of Skills Summit

Sarah Wood

Assistant Producer

Laura Trigg

Team Support

Eve Charlton

Joseph Rooney

Keri Mooney

BSLI

Cheryl Walker

AV supplier

C & L Events LTD

With thanks

Liverpool Film Office

Glen O'Connell

Kevin Sampson

Kevin McManus

Roger Shannon

John Whittle and the team at Lime Pictures

With special thanks to Banijay UK
from the CCC team for their support

Thanks to our 2026 Advisory Groups

We are as always indebted to the industry representatives who joined our advisory groups and contributed their much-valued thoughts, ideas and time to the conference this year.



Ruth Pitt
Advisory chair CCC

CORE

Luci Sanan
Lynn Saunders
Caroline O'Neill
Cait Fitzsimons
Chris Curley
Neila Butt

REGIONAL

John Whittle
Laurence Clark
Kate Haldane
Alison Lacy
Mark McMullen
Jessica Brown-Meek
Penny Hall
Andy Cooper
Cathy Skelly
Kevin McManus
Helen Cross
Glenn O'Connell

INDIE

Katy Thorogood
Sioned Wyn
Mike Benson
Eric Harwood
Mark Bell
Richard Fee

Special thanks go to our volunteer producers who did a great job supporting our programme.

Marc Lorber
Lucy Smith
Stu Mather
Mark McMullen

David Leach
Christian Hills
Kate Haldane
Kevin Sampson

Josie Besbrode
Cherry Sandhu

Speaker biogs





Ade Shannon

Chief Executive Officer, DiO

Ade Shannon is CEO and founder of DiO, a creative-technology platform driving innovation across culture and the creative industries. He has extensive production and development experience having co-founded Mad As Birds Films where his credits included *The Vanishing* (Gerard Butler), *Poms* (Diane Keaton), and *Six Minutes to Midnight* (Judi Dench, Jim Broadbent).

DiO captures real-time emotional, physiological, and cognitive responses at scale, revealing the unfiltered truth of audience engagement. We combine skin response (emotional intensity), facial emotion analysis, voice sentiment, and AI synthesis to predict audience behaviour with 93% accuracy. This results in confident, data-driven decisions across the production lifecycle, from concept validation through to post-broadcast analysis.

DiO supports the full broadcast lifecycle, from concept testing and script validation through to pilot screening, marketing execution, sponsor identification, and franchise development. At every stage, real-time audience intelligence replaces guesswork with evidence, helping broadcasters back winning formats, optimise creative decisions and build deep audience understanding that drives long-term commercial success.



Alex Morris

Managing Director, 4Studio

Alex Morris has spent the last 15 years building and running digital first content businesses at the heart of social media and the creator economy. In his current role as Managing Director of Channel 4's social-first division, 4Studio he plays a central role in developing and steering Channel 4's over-arching social strategy in close collaboration with peers across the organisation. Prior to this role Morris was Chief Creative Officer at SB Media Group where he helped to grow the business from a Dubai-based Content Creator operation into a global media company.

In addition, Morris has held positions at LADbible Group and Barcroft Studios, where he helped lead the business for over a decade before selling to Future PLC.



Alison Gwynn

Chief Executive, North East Screen

Alison leads North East Screen, the region's screen industries development agency, driving economic growth and supporting the sustainable expansion of film and television production across the North East.

Alison has over 25 years' experience in the cultural and creative industries, from providing marketing leadership at the Centre for Life to being instrumental in the planning and development of Seven Stories, the National Centre for Children's Books. Her passion is to support the sustainable growth of the creative industry in North East England.

Recent achievements include securing investment of £58 million through a BBC partnership and establishing the North East Screen Industry Partnership (NESIP), involving 3 Combined and 12 Local Authorities. NESIP aims to double the region's share of UK film and TV production, generating an economic impact of £88m annually. Alison received a Royal Television Society award for Outstanding Contribution to the Screen industry in 2022.



Andrea Arnold OBE

Oscar-Winning Filmmaker and Screenwriter (Fish Tank, Wuthering Heights, Cow)

Andrea Arnold began her career with notable short films like *Milk*, *Dog*, and *Wasp*, the latter earning her an Academy Award in 2005. Her debut feature film *Red Road* won the BAFTA Award for Outstanding Debut in 2006 as well as five BAFTAs at the BAFTA Scotland Awards ceremony, including Best Director and Best Screenplay. In 2010, her critically acclaimed film *Fish Tank* won a BAFTA for Outstanding British Film. *Red Road*, *Fish Tank* and *American Honey* all competed at Cannes Film Festival and subsequently won the Jury Prize in 2006, 2009 and 2016.

In 2022, her documentary *Cow* was nominated for a BAFTA and received several awards, including the Green Warsaw Award for Best Ecology Themed Documentary. She has also directed episodes for television series *Transparent*, *I Love Dick*, and the second season of *Big Little Lies*.

In 2024 *Bird* was nominated for a Palme d'Or and a BAFTA for Outstanding British Film. The same year Andrea was awarded the Carrosse d'Or award at Cannes.



Angelo Abela

Joint Head of Scripted, Kids & Family, Lime Pictures

Angelo Abela is Joint Head of Scripted, Kids & Family at Lime Pictures. He executive produced last year's award-winning Netflix animation *Wolf King* and directed CBBC's *Girl Troop vs Aliens*, which dropped in Spring.

In 2026, he has expanded into vertical drama, executive producing and directing two upcoming micro-dramas, as Lime enters the genre.

He joined Lime in 2011 as Lead Director and showrunner on BAFTA-nominated *House of Anubis* for Nickelodeon later developing and produced *Free Rein*, winning an Emmy, and was Emmy-nominated for directing both *Free Rein* and *Zero Chill*. He has also co-executive produced *Hollyoaks*.

Angelo began as an actor and comedy performer before building a writing and directing career across comedy, drama, entertainment, and children's television.



Asif Kapadia

Academy Award-Winning Director,
LAFCADIA PRODUCTIONS

Asif Kapadia, director of KENNY DALGLISH, is an Academy Award-winning director, screenwriter, and producer, also recognised with four BAFTA Awards, a Grammy Award, and a European Film Award. He is considered one of the most influential filmmakers of his generation, best known for his acclaimed trilogy AMY, SENNA, and DIEGO MARADONA.

Kapadia's most recent film, 2073, had its world premiere at the 2024 Venice Film Festival, starring Samantha Morton. 2073 is a hard hitting, epic, science-true-fiction thriller which pushed the documentary boundaries by mixing archive, nonfiction and drama, set in a dystopian near-future. The film uses fragments of the past to tell a story of what may be to come in the future, or what may already be our present. 2073 had been the No 1 feature film on HBO MAX in the US.



Ben Zand

Founder and CEO, Zandland

Ben Zand is a British-Iranian filmmaker, and founder & CEO of Zandland, a documentary studio built for the new era of content. Ben works across premium global documentaries and digital-first original IP, focusing on ambitious, access-driven storytelling that helps audiences understand the forces shaping the modern world, from online movements and belief systems to power, culture, identity, and how people make meaning today.

Zandland sits at the intersection of journalism, entertainment, and internet-native storytelling, combining cinematic production values with the pace, openness and audience expectations of the digital era. The studio develops character-led narratives and globally scalable formats designed to travel across platforms, cultures and communities. Today, Zandland operates in a hybrid model: producing premium commissioned series for the biggest streamers while also building its own original IP and direct audience relationships. Ben sees the next generation of studios not just as content producers, but as cultural sense-makers and story brands, helping audiences navigate a complex world through narrative, access, and trust.



Professor Beth Johnson

Professor of Television and Media Studies,
University of Leeds

Beth Johnson is Professor of Television and Media Studies at the University of Leeds, based in the School of Media and Communication. Her research explores the intersections of social class, gender, race, and place in the television industry, with a particular focus on how these shape representation, production practices, and public trust.

She is Principal Investigator of the AHRC-funded project *What's On? Rethinking Class in the Television Industry (2023–2026)*, delivered in collaboration with the BBC, Channel 4, and Candour Productions. The project examines how questions of who produces television, what is made, and how class is represented are interconnected across contemporary UK drama.

Working alongside the Film & TV Charity, she has co-authored (with Anna Theodoulides) a major policy briefing, *From Evidence to Action: Class Inequality, Workforce Sustainability and Workforce Wellbeing in UK Television*, due for publication in May 2026.

Beth is a member of the DCMS College of Experts and Vice Chair of RTS Yorkshire.



Caroline Cooper Charles

Chief Executive, Screen Yorkshire

As Chief Executive of Screen Yorkshire, Caroline champions the film, TV and wider screen industries in Yorkshire and the Humber and provides leadership to a talented team of industry experts who deliver skills and talent development, production support and content investment.

Caroline's 25-year career within the screen industries has evolved from running her first

production company with acclaimed music video director Dawn Shadforth to her previous role as Head of Creative at Screen Yorkshire. Along this journey she has spent time as Talent Development Executive for Scottish Film Talent Network, Head of Film at Creative England, Head of Creative Development at Warp X, managed the UK Film Council's nationwide short film programme through her company Lifesize Pictures and spent a year as Director of the Sheffield International Documentary Festival.



Chloe English

BAFTA-Nominated Director & Writer

Winner of the Pixielogic Media Director Award for her work on G'WED, Chloe English made her directorial debut on Season 2 of the BAFTA nominated show, which she also co-wrote and starred in. Her work on the show has also earned her a BAFTA nomination in this year's emerging talent category.

Chloe's ability to bring out a wide range of outstanding performances from a young and largely inexperienced cast, as well as the more experienced and seasoned actors, is testament to her strength and skill as a director. Through her clear vision and direction, the young cast were able to navigate the sometimes complex issues with trust and confidence while exploring the power of humour and self-awareness in dealing with these issues.

Chloe has recently finished directing Block 2 of Season 3 and has several projects in development.



Claire McColgan CBE

Director of Culture, Major Events & Tourism
for the City of Liverpool

Claire McColgan CBE is a highly respected cultural leader with over 30 years' experience delivering transformational culture-led regeneration across local and national government. As Director of Culture, Visitor Economy and Major Events for Liverpool and the wider region, she has produced world-class, award-winning events including Liverpool 2008, Eurovision 2023, and the UK COVID-19 reopening programme, while also leading the bids for and delivering, amongst others UNESCO City of Music and the UN Accelerator City Programme.

She is an expert in community engagement and invented the groundbreaking creative communities programme, cited as the reason for Liverpool's European Capital of Culture win. This approach has been emulated internationally.

A sought-after international advisor and speaker, Claire currently serves as Deputy Chair of the UK City of Culture programme, a Non-Executive Director at Carnegie UK and Visit Isle of Man, and has been recognised with an MBE, CBE, and honorary awards from LJMU and Edge Hill University for her outstanding service to culture and the City of Liverpool.



David Leach

Head of Unscripted, Climate Spring

Originally from East Lancashire, David has worked as a TV Freelancer for 20 years based in Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool, Bristol, Cardiff and Leeds. He started as a runner, eventually becoming a shooting PD and then made the leap into development.

His production CV is packed with famous formats including Embarrassing Bodies, Panorama, Snog Marry Avoid, Countryfile, Geordie Shore, and Back in Time for Tea.

In his development career, David has been on the creative teams at some of the UK's leading production companies including True North, Multistory, Boom Productions, BBC Bristol, Plimsoll and Lime Pictures. David is Head of Unscripted at Climate Spring a narrative change organization and development fund with a focus on climate.



Dylan Thomas Smith

Actor, G'Wed

Award-winning actor, Dylan Thomas Smith is best known for his portrayal of Reece Duffy in ITV's G'WED. The role has earned him outstanding reviews, with Russell T Davies calling him, 'An absolute star...,' a BAFTA nomination and the award for 'Best Breakthrough Performance in a Comedy' at The Edinburgh TV Awards. The show was also nominated for a BAFTA.

Dylan recently finished filming season 3 which will be out in June and can also be seen in Keyside's upcoming music video Lemon and Lime. Dylan currently has two projects in development.



Emma Loach

Interim Head of Documentary Commissioning, BBC

Emma Loach is the BBC's Interim Head of Documentary Commissioning, responsible for all documentary output across the BBC's channels.

Recent credits include The Mother of All Cons; Atomic People; Backlash: The Murder of George Floyd; Forensics; Sarah Everard: The Search for Justice; The Search for Nicola Bulley; Rose Ayling-Ellis: Old Hands, New Tricks; The Real Mo Farah; Parole; The Met; Christine McGuinness: Unmasking My Autism; Louis Theroux's Forbidden America; Gods of Snooker; and Black Power.

Before joining the BBC, Emma worked as an executive producer across a diverse range of series and singles. She was instrumental in originating and delivering the Ambulance brand for BBC One and The Trial for Channel 4.



Gemma Barraclough

Actor, G'Wed

Gemma stars as Mia Louise in ITV comedy G'WED, for which she was nominated for Best Performance in a Comedy at the Northwest RTS Awards in 2025.

Gemma recently reprised her role for the second series of BBC drama This City Is Ours and completed filming The Cage for BBC1.



Graham Gallery

Head of Digital16, Lime Pictures

Multi-award-winning, Cannes Lions and BAFTA-nominated creative leader with over fifteen years' experience in producing engaging multi-platform content for broadcast, commercial and digital sectors.

As a multi-disciplined creative, I have produced content for some of television's most prominent talent, social media channels, broadcasters, and brands, including Hollyoaks, TOWIE, Celebs Go Dating, Free Rein and Sexy Beasts.

Leader of a team of digital creatives at Digital16 (formerly Lime Digital), our roots go

back to the early days of social media for television, we're building on that experience to help brands, creators and media companies connect with audiences in smarter and more creative ways.

Digital16 are at the intersection of television and digital culture, our focus has always been on creating work that resonates with audiences and develops real impact.



Hannah Cheers

Executive Producer of Hollyoaks, Lime Pictures

Hannah Cheers is Executive Producer of Hollyoaks. Having begun her career at Hollyoaks in 2009, she returned to showrun C4's flagship continuing drama in 2023.

Since her return, she has overseen a major transformation of Hollyoaks, including its shift from a five-night broadcast schedule to a three-night, digital-first soap. Under her leadership, the show engineered a lauded 'time-jump', boldly moving the narrative forward in time to refresh the show's pace.

Her tenure has prioritised issue-led storytelling, most notably the Sibling Sexual Abuse storyline, which received critical acclaim and contributed to wins at the British Soap Awards, including Best Storyline, Best Family and Best Newcomer, alongside Royal Television Society nominations.

Hannah led Hollyoaks' 30th Anniversary last October, including a Brookside crossover and a Hollyoaks Later special, filmed on location across Merseyside. Earlier in her career, Hannah worked on Coronation Street and Emmerdale, with her projects earning BAFTA, Broadcast and RTS recognition.



Harjeet Chhokar

Senior Unscripted Creative Executive,
Amazon MGM Studio

Harjeet Chhokar is a Sr. Unscripted Creative Executive at Amazon MGM Studios, where he works across the factual slate and on shows such as Clarkson's Farm, The Grand Tour, Kaleb Down Under and the award winning sports documentaries and true crime slate. Prior to joining Amazon MGM Studios, Harjeet was a Commissioning Editor in the Channel 4 Factual department, and commissioned a number of factual shows, including Murder Island, Sex Actually with Alice Levine and 999: On the Frontline. Before entering the world of commissioning, Harjeet worked in unscripted production for over 17 years; starting his career as a BBC Production Trainee and working his way up to Series Producer.

Harjeet is a passionate advocate for the powerful impact television can have on viewers' lives and the cultural fabric of the country; he is committed to mentoring and supporting junior members of the industry. He is currently a Trustee at the Grierson Trust and The TV Foundation, and was the Advisory Chair of the 2024 Edinburgh TV Festival.



Heidi Dawson

BBC Head of the North of England and Controller,
BBC Radio 5 Live

Heidi represents the BBC with partners across the North of England, embedding the BBC within the local communities in a transformative way, building new relationships with businesses, political bodies and audiences to drive forward the BBC's strategy and ambition to grow its impact and investment across the region. Heidi is based at BBC Salford where she is the Controller of BBC Radio 5 Live, setting the strategy for 5 Live's network of live radio, online audio streams, podcasts and digital video content.

Heidi's career began as a freelance TV producer. She joined the BBC with Radio Solent, before working as a journalist at BBC Radio 4 and BBC Radio 5 Live. Heidi produced live news programmes on 5 Live, before moving to Salford with the BBC and taking on the role of Managing Editor at the station.

Working all over the world with the BBC, including Iraq, Israel and at various major sporting events including World Cups and Olympic Games, Heidi has rich and varied experience in news and sports journalism. She has also commissioned a number of award-winning podcasts, from Brexitcast/ Newscast to Miss Me? with Lily Allen and Miquita Oliver.

Since stepping into the role of 5 Live Controller in 2019, Heidi has overseen continued growth of the network, with radio stations 5 Live and 5 Sports Extra plus audio streams Sports Extra 2 & 3 on BBC Sounds, as well as audio and video podcasts and YouTube content. She has welcomed a number of high profile presenters such as Naga Munchetty, Rick Edwards, Patrick Kielty, Jeanette Kwayke and Matt Chorley to the schedule.



Helen Nightingale

Head of Factual and Factual Entertainment Commissioning at UKTV

Helen Nightingale is Head of Factual and Factual Entertainment Commissioning at UKTV, where she has played a key role in shaping the unscripted strategy across U&Dave, U&W, U&Yesterday and U&Gold. Since joining in 2015, her commissions have included titles such as *Emma Willis: Delivering Babies*, *Gemma and Gorka: Life Behind The Lens*, and more recently, *Guy Martin Proper Jobs* and the award-winning *Pete Wicks for Dogs' Sake*.

Helen previously held senior roles at Gogglebox Entertainment and IWC Media.



Hilary Rosen

Director of Commissioning, UKTV

Hilary Rosen is Director of Commissioning at UKTV, where she leads a team responsible for a growing slate of original scripted and unscripted programming. Her recent commissions include new drama series Bergerac, Bookish and The Marlow Murder Club, alongside unscripted titles such as Pete Wicks: For Dogs' Sake, Will & Ralf Should Know Better and Guy Martin: Proper Jobs. She was also the original commissioner of Dave's BAFTA-winning Taskmaster.

Hilary began her career in BBC News & Current Affairs on Panorama, later moving into the independent sector with senior roles at Lion Television before becoming Creative Director at Silver River Productions.

She is deputy chair of the BAFTA Board of Trustees and will succeed the chair in autumn 2026. Hilary supports mental health and inclusion across the industry, serving on the working group for the Film and TV Charity's Mentally Healthy Productions initiative, and is a mentor of mid-career women.



Holly Graham

Chief Commercial & Strategy Officer,
Little Dot Studios

Holly Graham is Chief Commercial and Strategy Officer at Little Dot Studios, working to shape the company's long-term growth strategy while overseeing the studio function and all client relationships across Entertainment, Sport and Consumer Brands.

One of Little Dot Studios' earliest employees, Holly joined the business in 2013 and has held several senior roles across audience growth, client services and international expansion. In 2018 she relocated to Los Angeles to launch and lead Little Dot Studios US as Managing Director, establishing the company's American operations and securing key partnerships with Warner Bros., Disney and NBCUniversal while driving significant growth. Holly returned to the London headquarters in 2020 as Chief Business Officer, was promoted to Chief Commercial Officer in 2024, and now leads both commercial strategy and global partnerships across the group.



Jade Beason

Creator & CEO of Social People

Jade Beason swapped her corporate marketing career for life as a full-time creator and multi-business entrepreneur - and hasn't looked back. After eight years in marketing, she launched her YouTube channel and turned it into a six-figure business within months.

Today, Jade runs multiple ventures: The Creator Project, a digital community helping creators turn passion into profit, and Social People, a social media marketing agency blending cultural insight with data to make content that actually works.

Her work has attracted an audience of over 450,000 creators and entrepreneurs, and she's hosted events for global giants like Google, Apple, and Meta. Whether she's on stage, online, or strategising behind the scenes, Jade's mission is simple: to show creators and brands how they can make social media their superpower & earn an income!



Jane Millichip

CEO of BAFTA

Jane Millichip is the CEO of BAFTA, the leading arts charity, awards body and membership organisation that represents the film, games and television industries. BAFTA's charitable remit is to level the playing field for all creatives and practitioners, regardless of background or life experience; to advocate progressive practices; and to champion the screen arts. As CEO of BAFTA, Jane also oversees albert, the sustainability organisation for the screen industries dedicated to the reduction of harmful greenhouse emissions and to the provision of research and data to enable creators to tackle climate narratives in storytelling.

Prior to BAFTA, Jane was Chief Content Officer of Sky Studios, overseeing editorial and commercial activities in Europe. At Sky she also established Sky's production portfolio and built its IP and distribution business.

She has over 30 years of experience in media, including TV production, distribution, broadcasting and an M&A in Print Journalism.

She is a trustee of SEEd, sustainability and environmental education charity, a WFTV mentor and is a regular contributor to independent arts and culture magazine Good on Paper.



Jimmy McGovern

Screenwriter & Producer

Liverpool-born Jimmy McGovern has a formidable reputation for writing powerful dramas for the stage and screen, often based on real events or social issues. Jimmy's writing credits read like a list of classic television.

Having honed his skills working on Brookside, his major breakthroughs came with Cracker, Hillsborough and Time. Jimmy received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Royal Television Society in March 2018.



Jimmy Mulville

Managing Director, Hat Trick Productions

Jimmy was one of the founders of Hat Trick Productions in 1986 and since then has seen it grow into one of the country's leading producers of comedy, drama and entertainment, regularly bringing to the screen distinctive and popular series. In the US Hat Trick launched 'Whose Line Is It Anyway' in 1997 which ran on ABC for seven years and was the very first British series to be recreated for American network television by a British producer.

In 1999 he received the BAFTA Award for Outstanding Creative Contribution to Television. Jimmy is a Fellow of the Royal Television Society and recently received an honorary doctorate from the University of Liverpool. Before moving to television in 1982, he produced for BBC Radio, where he developed and produced the award-winning Radio Active.



Jo Clinton-Davis

Controller of Factual, ITV

As ITV Factual Controller Jo's commissions include: BAFTA-winning Long Lost Family/Born Without Trace and Ellie Simmonds Finding My Secret Family. Award winning Kate Garraway: Finding Derek; 7 up (56 & 63); Prince William: We Can End Homelessness; The Queen's Green Planet; Paul O'Grady: For The Love Of Dogs. Joanna Lumley & Trevor McDonald authored series; TikTok: Murder Gone Viral & The Undercover Police Scandal: Love and Lies Exposed.

At the BBC, Jo was Head of Independent Commissioning and commissions including Masterchef and Hairy Bikers. Jo Directed & Produced BBC One's 7-part award winning documentary series Making Babies and The Shop about Selfridges, plus single docs for award winning strand 40 Minutes and Inside Story. Cut (long) teeth on Newsnight, Crimewatch etc.



Jo McClellan

Commissioning Editor, UK and North of England, BBC

Since joining BBC Drama in 2018, Jo has worked on many projects including *I May Destroy You* by Michaela Coel, *US* by David Nichols, *The North Water* by Andrew Haigh and returners such as *Sherwood*, *Silent Witness* and *Waterloo Road*. Upcoming projects include *Dear England*, the new series of *Peaky Blinders* and *Sherwood*, *Ministry of Time* and Michaela Coel's new project. Jo joined BBC Drama from *Seven Stories TV* where she was Creative Director and Executive Producer on *Selection Day* for Netflix.

Prior to that, she was Executive Producer at Sky, where she oversaw many projects, such as *The Tunnel* series 1 and 2 and *The Last Panthers*. Before Sky, Jo spent nine years at Film4 in Development on films such as *Submarine* by Richard Ayoade and *Attack The Block* by Joe Cornish and as the New Talent Executive and Executive Producer for short films such as BAFTA-winners *Pitch Black Heist* and *Dog Altogether*.



John Whittle

Managing Director, Lime Pictures

John Whittle is Managing Director of Lime Pictures and Wise Owl Films, having been promoted to the role in 2024 after joining the company as Finance Director in 2016. He leads the businesses' strategic vision, working closely with the creative and production leadership across scripted, kids & family, animation and premium factual.

2025 marked Hollyoaks' 30th anniversary as Channel 4's flagship soap with a nostalgic return to Brookside Close. Lime also launched its on-site L16 Studios in Liverpool which housed part of the production for CBBC's Girl Troops vs Aliens. Epic fantasy animation Wolf King also landed on Netflix in 2025 to critical acclaim.

Across Wise Owl Films, John has overseen continued success including the Our Farm Next Door franchise with Amanda Owen and the BBC Two music documentary strand When...Came to Britain.

Before joining Lime, John held senior international finance roles at NBCUniversal across its theatrical and home entertainment divisions.



Jonny McCausland

Head of Creative Innovation, Hat Trick Productions

Jonny set up the Hat Trick Lab in 2023, establishing a team with a focus on cross-medium development and a goal to explore how emerging technologies can be used to tell stories. Working alongside all the fantastic talent at Hat Trick, the team is now developing projects across games, animation, live and digital – looking in particular at the areas where boundaries between these mediums are blurring.

Jonny has a masters in Creative Business from the National Film and Television School and leads the new NFTS AI Protocols and Practices for Film and TV course.



Kit Morey

(VP) Commissioning Editor, Non-Scripted UK Originals, Channel 5 / Paramount+

Kit Morey has been a (VP) Commissioner Editor in Unscripted at Channel 5/ Paramount since 2019, originating and commissioning hundreds of hours of original prime time content including talent led series: Sam & Ade Go Birding, Barts: Our Hospital Through Time with Prof. Alice Robert, Wonders of The Human Body with Micheal Moseley, Motorhoming with Merton & Webster, Lost Dogs with Clare Balding, Tom Read-Wilson's Grand Tour, Ben Fogle: Make a New Life in The Country, and Sally Lindsay's Posh Sleepover.

Million Pound Motorhomes, Ambulance Code Red, Dogs Behaving (Very) Badly, Rich House Poor House, The Hotel Inspector, The Yorkshire Vet and Springtime on The Farm are a selection of their high-volume, returnable commissions.

They've also ordered dozens of access doc series including The Hospital: Life on The Line, Inside The Hilton, Kensington Palace: Behind Closed Doors, Platoon, and poppy one offs: Britain's Poshest Farm Shop, Britain Best Service Station, Inside Gails: Britain Poshest Bakery, Worlds Most Luxurious Retirement Home...not to mention RTS Winning Best Features series for Air Fryers!

Before Commissioning at 5, Morey was Head of Popular Factual at Rise Films, developing Channel 4's noisy social experience series, Meat The family and have held many Executive Producer roles: ITV's Real Full Monty, C4's One Born Every Minute, Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners and the first series of First Dates.



Laura Mansfield

Chief Executive, ScreenSkills

Laura has extensive industry experience both in production and as a non-executive member of some of the sector's most influential organisations. Currently a non-executive board director of Elstree Film Studios, Laura was a member of Pact Council between 2012 and 2016, and its Chair from 2014 to 2016. She also served as an advisory board member of the Indie Training Fund (2012-2014).

Prior to her appointment as Chief Executive of ScreenSkills, she enjoyed a successful thirty-year career in television.

In 1999, Laura co-founded BAFTA-nominated Outline Productions Ltd and has been responsible for multiple globally successful formats and programmes including Remarkable Places to Eat (BBC and Channel 4), House of Tiny Tearaways (BBC 3 and TLC), and Sarah Beeny's New Life in the Country (Channel 4). After Outline Productions was acquired by Tin Roof Media in 2017, Laura was appointed as one of the group's Creative Directors. During her tenure, Laura set up the Outline Wales office and launched a mentoring scheme across the Tin Roof Media Group.

Starting her career at BBC Youth and Entertainment Manchester and BBC Entertainment as well as working at independents Watchmaker and Rapido TV on programmes including Eurotrash, The Clive James Show, The Travel Show, Reportage and Rough Guides.



Laura Marks

Head of Digital Commissioning, Channel 4

Laura Marks is Head of Digital Commissioning at Channel 4, leading Original and Branded Digital Content across the channel. She stepped into the role in January 2026 after serving as Senior Digital Commissioner and Business Operations Lead.

She has overseen award-winning digital successes including BAFTA-nominated Kingpin Cribs, The Boy Who Climbed The Shard, Mission Accessible, and Unseen Kingdoms.

Previously, Laura was Nations and Regions Executive Producer at Channel 4, where she supported independent production companies across digital, entertainment, and comedy. Before that, she was Digital Commissioning Editor at BBC Three, commissioning UK indies across multiple genres, including scripted.

With over a decade of senior experience, Laura is recognised for setting editorial strategy, developing successful formats, managing platform partnerships, and leading high-performing teams. She has also built Channel 4's Digital Commissioning team to champion talent development and strong industry relationships.



Laurence Clark

Freelance Screenwriter & Access Roles Project Champion, TV Access Project

Laurence Clark is a screenwriter, playwright and award-winning comedian whose work spans television, theatre and radio. He won the UKTV Triforce Writerslam, leading to his comedy pilot Perfect being broadcast on Dave in 2022. His CBBC screenwriting credits include Odd Squad, Andy and the Band and the sci-fi series Gifted, for which he adapted Episode 3 and wrote Episode 8. His new play Cured tours nationally in May - June 2026 following support from Unlimited and the National Theatre's Generate programme.

Laurence is also in demand as a Disability Editorial Advisor, contributing to Half Man (BBC/HBO), Mandy S4 (BBC), Pushers (Merman/Channel 4) and The Responder S2 (BBC). He chaired the BAFTA-winning organisation TripleC DANC and nowadays works for them. He is a core group member and the Access Roles project co-lead for the TV Access Project, a coalition driving improved access and inclusion across the UK screen industries.



Lizzi Doyle

Assistant Commissioner, Podcasts,
BBC Radio 5 Live & BBC Sounds

Lizzi Doyle is the Assistant Commissioner for Podcasts at BBC 5 Live and BBC Sounds, specialising in sport. She is a multi-award-winning producer, known for her work on "The Wayne Rooney Show", "Jill Scott's Coffee Club," "The Tooney & Russo Show," and "Football Daily."

Her journey began at Radio City in Liverpool, where she became the station's first-ever female sport producer. She later joined "The Anfield Wrap," Liverpool's iconic fan podcast, which led to appearances on the BBC, Sky Sports, and Premier League.



Louise Donald

Commissioning Executive, Drama, Channel 4

Louise Donald joined C4 Drama in December 2024 and has editorial oversight over Hollyoaks and a number of original dramas, as well as leading on Channel 4's new talent schemes – including 4Screenwriting and the New Writers Scheme. With over fifteen years of script development experience in the UK drama industry Louise is a highly experienced script and story editor.

She started her career in Independent Drama Commissioning for the BBC before moving on to script editing. Louise has worked as a story producer and script editor for some of the UK's biggest drama producers including BBC Studios Drama, Tiger Aspect Productions and Red Planet Pictures. Script editing credits include EastEnders, Holby City, Death in Paradise (series one) and Good Karma Hospital (series 4). With a passion for nurturing new voices, Louise has worked with a number of emerging writers on schemes such as the BBC Writers Academy and Tiger Aspect's mentorship programme. Louise loves authentic character driven stories with universal themes at their heart.



Lucy Smith

Creative Director and Founder, Fawkes Digital

Lucy Smith is Creative Director and Founder of Fawkes Digital, an IP studio developing, producing and exploiting original digital-first entertainment formats for brands, creators and digital broadcasters.

Hosted by the world's most ambitious online creators, our formats are devised as IP universes. This paradigm-shifting approach allows us to test and iterate distinct content IP fast and exploit it in pioneering ways, spawning merchandising empires, transforming brands into broadcasters, and generating format sales across international territories.

Recent original formats include Baddest in the World (4.0), CEOs Go Wild (LinkedIn), Korea Ladder (Korean Tourism Board x Richard Sales), Campus Clash (4.0), Texture Talks (L'Oreal x Paige Lewin), MOVE IT: The Dance Off (Immediate), Spin the Dish (Good Food), Date Me Right Now (MTV).



Lucy Willis

Commissioning Editor, Factual, 5

Lucy is a Commissioning Editor at 5 where she looks after a wide-ranging factual slate including documentaries, popular factual and history. She has been responsible for commissioning a number of the channel's peak-time programmes, including *Warship: Life at Sea*; *Inside the Tower of London* as well as the stripped history event *The Great Plague* and *The Disappearance of Shannon Matthews*.

Lucy was also behind the major eight-part drama documentary series *Eight Days That Made Rome*; *Diana: Seven Days That Shook The Windsor's*; and the *Cotswolds* with Pam Ayres. Lucy also commissioned *Secrets of Our Universe* with Tim Peake, fronted by the British astronaut.

Lucy has worked extensively with diverse talent in front of and behind the camera, bringing JJ Chalmers, Raksha Dave and Onyeka Nubia to the channel.

Before moving to 5 Lucy was at Raw Television for eight years where she became Head of UK Factual and Multiplatform and won a number of awards including two International Emmys.



Lynn Saunders

Head of Liverpool Film Office

Highly respected management professional with 35 years' experience developing the UK's film & TV sector. Has led the strategic development of Liverpool City Council's Liverpool Film Office since 2000 and is responsible for creating a thriving production hub and making Liverpool the 2nd most filmed city in the UK.

Also manages the successful LCR Production Fund (with investments into the award winning HETV dramas such as ITV's 'G'Wed' and BBC's 'Time', 'The Responder', 'This City is Ours') in addition to managing The Depot purpose built HETV stages.

Part of the executive management team of Screen Alliance North and is currently leading initiatives to further evolve the screen eco-system to attract investment, create jobs, build social value and support the development of skills to progress a fair and inclusive screen workforce in Liverpool and across the North of England and UK.

Lynn was the proud recipient of The Mercury Studios Business Award in 2023 at the Women in Film & Television Awards presented by David Morrissey and recently received a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Liverpool City Region Tourism Awards 2025 recognised for her exceptional work in attracting film & TV opportunities to the region and for long-standing service and influence on the Liverpool City Region Visitor Economy.



Mairi Brewis

Head of Mediaco and Responsibility Partnerships, UK, YouTube

Mairi Brewis is YouTube's lead for partnerships in Media and Responsibility for the UK. Her team manage relationships with the lead broadcasters, production companies, sports and news organisations, to help them maximize their YouTube presence.

Mairi has a strong interest in education, learning and children. She is a school governor, and previously served as a Trustee for Polka Theatre.



Marc Lorber

Executive Producer, Art of Coproduction

Multiple series premiered in 2025 with Marc's EP credit, including the soon to be returning MIXTAPE (Foxtel Binge/BBC from Subotica & Aquarius/Boatrocker), THE RIDGE (BBC-SKY NZ with Great Southern/Boatrocker), and LEONARD & HUNGRY PAUL (BBC with Subotica/Avalon), BLUE MURDER MOTEL (TVNZ with Great Southern/APC), and VIDEO NASTY (ARD/BBC/VIRGIN).

Residing in London as a dual citizen, Marc works with diverse media enterprises on a mandate to build upon their content creation/development and/or physical productions, acquisitions, and/or co-production opportunities.

As one of the most experienced international multi-genre creative content and programming executives; a Bafta, Emmy and International Emmy-nominated Executive Producer with oversight of both scripted and unscripted projects; formats and originals in the 20+ non-English speaking countries he has worked or lived in to date.



Mario Stylianides

Executive Producer, Golden Path Productions

Golden Path Productions was founded by BAFTA award-winning producer Mario Stylianides. Prior to this he was Head of Comedy at Hat Trick Productions. During his time there he enjoyed enormous success. He developed, sold and Executive Produced the BAFTA award-winning FONEJACKER, FACEJACKER and THE ARMSTRONG AND MILLER SHOW, BAFTA nominated THE WORST WEEK OF MY LIFE, the British Comedy Award winning comedy drama DROP DEAD GORGEOUS and Golden Rose winning sitcom SPY.

He was then headhunted by NBC Universal and tasked with setting up a comedy label – Lucky Giant – for the International arm of the business. While he was there he developed and Executive Produced Christopher Guest's FAMILY TREE for HBO and BBC2 and comedy drama QUACKS for BBC2. After four years running Lucky Giant he decided to form his own production company Golden Path Productions. Golden Path specialises in scripted comedy and drama.



Megan Spanjian

Senior Executive Producer, Sky Entertainment Group

Megan Spanjian is a Senior Executive Producer at Sky Entertainment Group, based in London. Megan works across the development and editorial oversight of premium scripted drama, collaborating closely with writers and producers to shape Sky's drama slate. Recent projects include the upcoming series WAR from George Kay, the recently released UNDER SALT MARSH, AMADEUS, and ATOMIC.

Prior to joining Sky, Megan spent 15 years in the US as an executive across network and cable programming, with roles at United Talent Agency and The Weinstein Company, where YELLOWSTONE was developed and WACO was executive produced.

Megan began a scripted career in the ICM mailroom before moving on to CBS TV Studios.



Michelle Lin

Director of Digital Strategy, K7 Media

Based in Manchester and originally from Taiwan, Michelle Lin is a strategic leader specialising in the intersection of traditional media and the digital-first ecosystem. As K7 Media's Director of Digital Strategy, she translates complex shifts across streaming, social platforms, AI, and creator-led content into commercially actionable insights.

With nearly nine years of international experience in Asian television, Michelle now oversees K7's digital editorial direction, including high-level reporting on branded entertainment, microdramas, and global platform trends. She acts as a vital bridge, helping clients navigate the fast-moving digital landscape through data-informed research and expert consultation.



Mobeen Azhar

Presenter, Journalist and Filmmaker

Mobeen has produced and presented across BBC flagship platforms for more than 20 years and is a BAFTA, Grierson, Amnesty International, Broadcast and Royal Television Society award winner.

He has created longform podcast series for BBC Sounds, Spotify and Audible including: Fatwa; Hometown: A Killing; Lives Less Ordinary; The Kanye Story and Catching the Kingpins, which featured on BBC Sounds' 'Best of 2024' list. Mobeen also hosts the BBC World Service strand, Outlook.

Mobeen has produced and presented numerous narrative television documentaries and multi-part series across BBC One, BBC Two and BBC Three including: Behind Bars: Sex, Bribes And Murder, Predator: The Secret Scandal of J-Pop; Secrets of an ISIS Smartphone; The Battle for Britney: Fans, Cash and a Conservatorship; Hometown: A Killing; A Black and White Killing: The Case That Shook America and The Satanic Verses: 30 Years On, as well as multiple editions of flagship current affairs series Panorama.

In recent years he has also made programmes with BBC Studios, Vice Studios, Expectation, Mentorn and ITN Productions. Mobeen is a regular host on BBC 5Live and the BBC World Service.



Nana Hughes

Head of Comedy, ITV

As Head of Comedy at ITV, Nana has rejuvenated ITV Comedy with award-winning and award-worthy shows for ITV and ITVX, including Changing Ends, G'wed, The Dry, Transaction, Piglets, Deep Fake Neighbour Wars, Count Abdulla, and Significant Other.

Prior to joining ITV, she was Head of Comedy at Talkback Thames and Head of Development at Retort, where she executive produced the award-winning Chewing Gum Series 1 & 2. Nana is a BAFTA, RTS, and Broadcast award-winning comedy executive producer.



Natasha Hawthornthwaite

Documentary Filmmaker, CEO of Doc North
and Co-Founder Northern Heart Films

Natasha is the Co-Founder of Northern Heart Films, backed by the BBC small indie fund, and the CEO of Doc North CiC. As a Documentary Filmmaker who grew up in a working-class household in the North of England, Natasha is a passionate advocate for developing and platforming working-class documentary talent. This is something that she actively champions through Doc North.

Having represented the UK screen industry at SXSW, the BFI Future Film Festival, and the Creative UK Summit, Natasha uses her experience to mentor others through Creative UK and welcomes opportunity to help influence industry change.



Nicola Shindler OBE

Executive Producer & CEO of Quay Street Productions

Nicola Shindler OBE is a prolific, multi award-winning British television producer, and CEO of Quay Street Productions, based in Manchester.

With over 25 years' experience in television, Nicola has produced some of the UK's most successful and award-winning dramas, including Years and Years, Happy Valley, Queer As Folk, Fool Me Once, The Stolen Girl, The Guest, After The Flood and Run Away. Forthcoming series include The Blame starring Michelle Keegan and Douglas Booth for ITV and Tip Toe written by Russell T Davies starring Alan Cumming and David Morrissey for Channel 4.

Renowned for her relationships with writers, Nicola has worked with an array of the UK's most prolific and exciting writing talent including Russell T Davies, Sally Wainwright, Lenny Henry, Paul Abbott, Dan Sefton, Tony Marchant, Amelia Bullmore, Danny Brocklehurst, Matt Greenhalgh and Sarah Solemani, on series starring some of the world's leading on-screen names.



Nigel Warner

Chief Executive, Pact

Nigel has extensive experience in both the political and creative sectors, having been Special Advisor (SpAd) to the Rt Hon Mo Mowlam MP at the Northern Ireland Office and Cabinet Office, and also SpAd to the Rt Hon Tessa Jowell MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.

Following his time in Government, Nigel became Director of Public Affairs at ITV for four years at a crucial time for the future of the public service broadcaster. He then co-founded Creative Access with a mission for the UK media to become more inclusive, which is now an industry-funded social enterprise. He has also written for the Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR) on policy for the media and creative industries.

More recently Nigel was the UK Policy Consultant for the Motion Picture Association as well as Special Counsel at strategic communications consultancy, Lexington, where he focussed for more than ten years on policy issues of concern to the creative industries providing policy, strategy and political communications advice.



Paula Thomas

Commissioning Editor, ITV

Paula Thomas is a Commissioning Editor at ITV, looking after Daytime and Ad-Funded Entertainment. She is responsible for over 1,300 hours of television a year, nearly 900 of which are broadcast live.

As the lead commissioner for Ad-Funded Entertainment, Paula's slate continues to grow; with 13 titles and 380 hours of branded content already commissioned for 2026 across the ITV schedule. Alongside the team, notable credits include *Cooking with the Stars* (M&S) - ITV's most successful ad-funded show to date - *Tom Kerridge Cooks Britain* (M&S), *Style the Nation* (M&S), *Be Your Own Boss* (Royal Mail), *Sara Davies' Christmas Craft Off* (Amazon) and the 'Taste of' brand for weekend mornings.



Paul Testar

Commissioning Editor, Scripted, 5

Paul Testar joined Paramount in January 2022 as 5's first dedicated drama commissioner and has helped oversee the major expansion of 5's scripted slate, working alongside Head of Scripted Sebastian Cardwell to establish 5 as a major home of original British drama.

Since joining Paramount, Testar has commissioned over one hundred and fifty hours of drama series including *Ellis*, *Murder Before Evensong*, *The Crow Girl* and 5's revival of the iconic *Play For Today* format.

Before joining Paramount, Testar was a producer for Mammoth Screen with credits including *The Serpent* (BBC1/Netflix) and *The Tower* (ITV). He began his career as a script editor on numerous shows for the BBC, ITV, Netflix, Amazon and Channel 4.



Sir Phil Redmond

Chair, UK Town and City of Culture Advisory Panels

Sir Phil has always been considered creatively and technically innovative throughout his television career, creating a number of ground breaking drama series including Grange Hill, Brookside and Hollyoaks. He also created Mersey Television, to produce his own work, which became the biggest independent drama producer in the UK and global centre of excellence for lightweight portable digital recording.

He is a great advocate and ambassador for Liverpool and Merseyside and became the face of Liverpool's European Capital of Culture year in 2008. Liverpool's success inspired the UK City of Culture programme which he has chaired since 2011, and more recently has also become Chair of the new Town of Culture competition.

He was awarded a CBE in 2004 for services to drama and a Knight Bachelor for services to broadcasting and regional arts in 2020.



PJ Smith

Writer and unprofessional Scouser

PJ is the nearest thing to a modern-day Dickens. His writing swerves between urban magic realism, deadpan tragicomedy and hardboiled psychodrama. Dead dads talk through smart speakers. Gangster mams kick off on the bus. Hard cases go to meditation class in search of salvation.

You will laugh out loud and cry inside. PJ's stories teem with all the love, astonishment, horror and hilarity that modern life has to offer.



Priya Dogra

Chief Executive, Channel 4

Priya Dogra is the Chief Executive of Channel 4, a publicly owned and commercially funded public service media organisation that creates change through entertainment.

She brings more than 20 years of global media experience across the US, EMEA and the UK, spanning operations, programming, production, strategy, M&A and business development.

Priya spent 14 years at Time Warner / WarnerMedia and Warner Bros. Discovery, including as President & Managing Director for Warner Bros. Discovery EMEA, responsible for programming, marketing, advertising and commercial partnerships across the company's lines of business including TV networks, film and streaming. She also led local original series production for HBO and HBO Max. Earlier in her career, she headed M&A and corporate strategy for Time Warner / WarnerMedia.

Prior to joining Channel 4, Priya was Chief Advertising, Group Data & New Revenue Officer at Sky, where she oversaw Sky Media, the company's advertising sales house, the development of non-subscription revenues and its data and analytics capabilities. She spearheaded Universal Ads, a cross-industry initiative between Sky, ITV and Channel 4, alongside Comcast's FreeWheel, to create a self-serve trading platform that opens up TV advertising to small businesses.



Rebecca Cooney

Insight Editor, Broadcast

Rebecca Cooney is the insight editor at Broadcast, overseeing the publication's long-form feature and analysis content – basically, anything that isn't news. She is responsible for Broadcast's tent-pole projects including the Indie Survey, the Commissioner Survey, Best Places to Work in TV and the Hot Shots emerging talent scheme.

Before joining the Broadcast team four years ago, she was features and analysis writer at Third Sector, the trade publication for the charity sector, and a reporter at FE Week, which covers further education.

In her other life, she is a published poet and spoken word artist, and has performed at Glastonbury Festival and the Royal Albert Hall.



Rebecca Hodgson

Executive Producer, Left Bank Pictures

Rebecca Hodgson is the Executive Producer of This City is Ours. She joined Left Bank Pictures in September 2023, where her credits as EP also include The Lady for ITV and Britbox and Dear England for BBC1.

Rebecca started her career as a journalist at Screen International. She is an award-winning producer with recent credits including ARCHIE for Etta and ITVX, RTS award winning SHERWOOD for House and BBC1, THE IRREGULARS for Drama Republic and Netflix and DEEP WATER for Kudos and ITV. Earlier credits include VINCENT, WIRED and THE GIRLS WHO CAME TO STAY, STOLEN, WE'LL TAKE MANHATTAN, THE ROAD TO CORONATION STREET, BAFTA winner for Best Single Drama, GOOD COP, RTS winner for Best Drama Series, and FREE REIN for Netflix, which won two Emmys.



Rob Page

Managing Director, Screen Manchester

Rob Page is an accomplished leader in the UK's creative production sector and currently Managing Director of Space Studios Manchester, The Sharp Project, Arbeta and the Film Office for Manchester City Council, Screen Manchester.

With a strong background in finance and commercial management, he has played a central role in transforming Manchester into a major centre for high-end TV, film and commercial production. Under his leadership these assets and services now collectively deliver £100M+ of annual production spend for national and international clients including Netflix, Amazon, NBC Universal, Sony, BBC and ITV.

Screen Manchester is also a strategic partner alongside Screen Yorkshire, The Liverpool Film Office and North East Screen in Screen Alliance North. This Alliance is the largest of the BFI Skills Clusters and benefits from £2.3M of funding to tackle screen skills shortages and improve access to quality training provision for diverse talent and communities in the North.



Ruth Pitt

Advisory Chair, Creative Cities Convention

Co-founder and former director of the Creative Cities Convention, Ruth is MD of Under The Moon Ltd, a media consultancy specialising in levelling the industry playing field for people from all backgrounds and advising on the strategic development of the film and TV sector outside London.

She was previously head of documentaries at Granada Television, creative director of documentaries at the BBC, head of factual at Tiger Aspect Productions, founder of Real Life Productions and Advisory Chair of the Edinburgh International TV Festival. She is an IPC trained print journalist and a former radio and television reporter.

Ruth is also co-founder (with the Poet Laureate Simon Armitage) of the National Poetry Centre, which will be the nation's first dedicated national cultural centre for poetry.



Saoirse-Monica Jackson

Actor, *This City is Ours*

Saoirse-Monica Jackson is a celebrated Irish actress who gained international acclaim as Erin Quinn in the Channel 4 smash-hit *Derry Girls*.

She recently captivated audiences in Lisa McGee's *How to Get to Heaven from Belfast*, earning rave reviews for a performance described by *The Guardian* as "absolutely wild." Other productions include Netflix's 14th-century comedy *The Decameron* and the Prime Video rom-com *Upgraded*, Paramount+ thriller *The Doll Factory* and BBC series *This City is Ours* alongside Sean Bean.

This year Saoirse will star in the upcoming Irish-American feature *The Body is Water* opposite Isiah Whitlock Jr. Saoirse will be reprising her role in the second instalment of *This City is Ours*.



Stella Binns

Traditional News & Podcasting Partnerships Lead,
UK, YouTube

Stella is YouTube's lead for news & podcasting partnerships in the UK. She manages relationships with leading news broadcasters, publishers & podcasting companies to grow engagement & reach.

Prior to YouTube, Stella was a civil servant, leading media & creative industries policy at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport.



Stephen Butchard

Screenwriter and Executive Producer

Stephen Butchard is an award-winning screenwriter and producer, born in Liverpool. Before writing full time, he trained as an engineer and spent a year in Beijing as a British Government secondee, managing upgrades to the city's underground rail network.

He began writing for theatre and radio before winning the Dennis Potter Award in 1997 for his first screenplay *Soft Sand, Blue Sea*. His early TV work includes *Little Bird* and *Lie With Me* for Granada.

Stephen has created and written numerous acclaimed dramas, including *A&E*, *Vincent*, and the BAFTA-nominated *House of Saddam* for BBC/HBO. His mini-series *Five Daughters* won Best Drama at the RTS Awards, with Stephen receiving both the RTS and BAFTA for Best Writer.

His credits also include *Good Cop*, *The Child in Time*, *The Last Kingdom*, *Baghdad Central*, *The Good Mothers* (Berlinale Series Award), *Shardlake*, and *This City Is Ours*, now in its second series for BBC One.



Stuart Ford

Chairman & Chief Executive Officer, AGC Studios

Los Angeles-based Stuart Ford is one of the most experienced and prolific independent film and television producers, financiers and entrepreneurs in the global entertainment industry. UK born and Oxford University educated, Ford is a former entertainment attorney and Miramax Films senior studio executive who in 2007 founded IM Global and built it into one of the industry's leading independent production, financing and international sales platforms.

In 2018, Ford launched the so-called "super-indie" AGC Studios, an independent content studio with major backing from Silicon Valley, Abu Dhabi and Latin America that develops, finances, produces and sells a diverse slate of feature films and scripted, unscripted and factual television. Since its inception, AGC has been involved in over 50 major productions.

As a producer and financier, Ford has worked with a huge array of leading directors such as Martin Scorsese, Mel Gibson, Ron Howard, James Wan, Roland Emmerich and Richard Linklater. Across his career, he has produced or executive produced nearly eighty films and television shows and has assembled in excess of \$2 billion in independent production financing from North America, India, China, Latin America and the Middle East.



Tony Schumacher

Screenwriter

Tony Schumacher had one dream when he was a kid, and that was to be a writer. Instead of becoming a writer he bombed out of school aged 16 with no qualifications and a sigh of relief.

He worked his way around the world as a roofer, a jeweller, a bouncer, a barman, a binman, and on-board cruise ships selling underpants, before eventually returning to Liverpool to become a response policeman dealing with 999 jobs morning, noon and nights.

Eleven years later, after a breakdown and a period of homelessness, he found himself driving a taxi around the night-time streets of Liverpool. That was when he remembered his dream and finally started to write.

His first three novels were published by HarperCollins in the USA, and since then he has been mentored by Jimmy McGovern as part of the ScreenSkills High End TV Writers Bursary Scheme (2018) and been invited to join the BBC Writersroom Northern Voices Scheme. The Responder series and The Cage are his creations.



Wayne Garvie

President of International Production,
Sony Pictures Television

Wayne Garvie is President of International Production at Sony Pictures Television (SPT) and oversees SPT's global network of production companies outside the US, covering Europe, Latin America and Australia. The 14 wholly-owned or joint venture production companies within the business deliver both original and formatted content for local broadcasters in their markets, and create nearly 1,500 hours of entertainment around the world each year. He is also responsible for driving creative development within international production, steering the business to develop locally created properties into global formats and fostering co-developments across the group.

Garvie joined SPT in June 2012 and reports to Keith Le Goy, Chairman, Sony Pictures Television. He joined SPT from All3MEDIA, where he was Managing Director, International Production with special responsibility for the company's growth in the US. Previously, Garvie was Managing Director for Content & Production at BBC Worldwide, responsible for establishing the corporation's global network of production companies and overseeing its international formats business. Prior to that role, he was Head of Entertainment Group for the BBC, where his teams were behind shows like Strictly Come Dancing and Dragons' Den. Garvie also held senior positions in UK broadcasting, including Director of Broadcasting for Granada.



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