

Creative forward look

Director of Programmes

Ian Katz

In 2019 we will dial up the difference, commissioning popular and entertaining programmes that challenge orthodoxies and say something significant about Britain.

From a searingly timely drama about the Brexit vote to a landmark exploration of Britain's creaking justice system, via some of the most original new comedy and anarchic entertainment anywhere, Channel 4's new slate will take shape in 2019.

Through entertaining and provocative shows like *Mums Make Porn*, *The White Kids Are Coming* (tackling race at school) and *The Restaurant That Makes Mistakes* (dementia), we will engage broad audiences with some of the most pressing issues in Britain today – and always approaching them from an unexpected angle, always with something challenging to say.

Across Entertainment, Comedy, Drama and our Factual genres, we will introduce a diverse and exciting host of new faces, renewing Channel 4's reputation for innovation and championing new talent. From *100 Vaginas*, an exploration into the vagina's definitive role in women's lives, to *The Surjury*, a new factual entertainment show about plastic surgery, we will air shows that other channels wouldn't, ask awkward questions and make waves.

Our creative approach is underpinned by five key pillars: dialling up the difference; a focus on young viewers; putting comedy at the heart of Channel 4; one show, many platforms; and being the best partner for talent.

Dialling up the difference

By dialling up the difference, we aim to ensure that Channel 4 is always the most distinctive British broadcaster – taking creative risks and airing unheard voices, but always with the ambition of being broad and popular. Channel 4 will speak for the marginalised but should never be marginal.

At our best, our shows drive the national conversation. James Graham's *Brexit: The Uncivil War* managed the seemingly impossible feat of being praised – and damned – by all sides in the Brexit debate. With a widely-acclaimed central performance from Benedict Cumberbatch, it was highly entertaining, revelatory and humane.

Equally distinctive, *Leaving Neverland* was an unflinching and meticulous two-part film, originally commissioned by Channel 4, showing how Michael Jackson groomed and abused two young boys for years. It made headlines around the world for weeks, triggered a wholesale re-evaluation of Jackson's legacy and vividly illustrated the kind of bold risk taking that few other broadcasters can match.

Elsewhere, big contemporary issues that we will cover include social mobility (*How The Other Kids Live*), gender and sexuality (*The Making of Me*) and the housing crisis (*Lodgers for Codgers*).

Our '4 All the UK' plan, meanwhile, will boost diversity of voice, drawing on our new creative centres in Leeds, Bristol and Glasgow, while a new daily live show from Leeds will be firmly rooted in the North.



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Focus on young viewers

We are determined to deliver more programming that appeals to younger viewers this year. In 2018, Channel 4 aired 30 of the 50 youngest-skewing shows broadcast by any of the major PSBs, and we hope to build on that with this year's slate, which combines broad family shows, such as the heart-warming *Flirty Dancing*, with young-skewing series such as the brilliantly bonkers *Rick and Morty*.

The Circle – our reality show for the social media age in which contestants communicate through a specially-created social network – will come back bigger and better. The first series was Channel 4's youngest profiling show since 2012. The *Big Narstie Show* is also returning; one of the most distinctive and unpredictable shows on TV, its BAME audience share in 2018 was more than double the slot average.

While successful young-skewing shows, such as *SAS: Who Dares Wins*, have earned longer runs, we are also opening more slots for experimentation in order to find the next big landmark factual programmes for young people. Programmes appealing specifically to older children will also be commissioned, such as *Junior Bake Off*, *The Tiger Who Came To Tea* and *When I Grow Up*. For teens and young adults, a variety of educational-skewing titles include *Secret Teacher*, *Race in the Classroom* and *Grime Up North*, while *Hollyoaks* will keep its finger on the audience's pulse and continue its proud tradition of tackling important social issues.



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(continued)

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We have also committed an additional £10 million to the young-focused E4. This will help to develop the next generation of signature shows and enable us to keep investing in other important genres for young people, such as Factual Entertainment, Reality, Comedy and Formats.

Comedy at the heart of Channel 4

With two of our biggest comedy hits in many years playing in 2018 – *Derry Girls* and *Friday Night Dinner* – our ambition is to become the unequivocal home of youthful British comedy in 2019 and beyond. To achieve this, we have increased our commitment to scripted comedy on Channel 4, as well as creating a 'Comedy Sandpit' to showcase new talent and short-form comedy on All 4 and social platforms.

At 11pm, a number of new pilots will offer late-night topical humour and authored comedies. We will experiment in the highly challenging area of pre-watershed comedies too. And Harry Hill will return to Channel 4 with a new series showcasing up-and-coming comedians. As well as *Derry Girls*, we will also see the second series of recently-launched titles such as *Stath Lets Flats*, *Gameface* and *Lee & Dean*, along with the final season of acclaimed hit *Catstrophe*.

One show, many platforms

As the media landscape changes, with young people increasingly turning to VoD services and social media for content, we are stepping up our commitment when commissioning innovative programmes to incorporate digital and social from the very start. 2019 programmes that exemplify this approach include *Moon Landing Live*, which will allow viewers to follow the progress of the original Apollo 13 mission in real time across linear, digital and social, *Shipwrecked*, *The Circle* and our new, updated version of *Four to the Floor*.

£10m

additional investment for E4 in 2019 to develop the next generation of signature shows for young people

Significant investment will continue in the All 4 platforms and technology. From relaunching the All 4 brand and its new mobile app to enhance functionality and usability, to acquiring wider VoD content rights, we want to ensure that our programmes can be played across all of our platforms – giving audiences what they want, where they want.

New content partnerships will support this strategy, including a deal with Adult Swim, which will bring hours of edgy, young-skewing content to All 4. The new Digital Creative Unit, based in Leeds, will help us take our shows to where young people are spending more time, while also experimenting and forming relationships with future generations of talent.

The best partner for talent

We are rethinking how we behave and position ourselves in the creative ecosystem with the ambition to make Channel 4 the best partner for creative talent.

On and off screen, we will refresh and diversify the talent that we work with, attracting new partners and developing existing contributors. We want to be the most writer-friendly broadcaster and will continue to invest in developing new writers and directors. As part of this, our significant investment in digital content will provide a stepping stone for newer talent.

Reflecting our ambitions, an exciting mix of new faces will join some of the biggest stars from the UK and beyond – from Jamali Maddix (*Adventures in Futureland*), Alice Levine (*Sleeping with the Far Right*) and Mo Gilligan (*The Mo Show*), through to Stephen Graham and Keeley Hawes (*The Virtues*), Sarah Lancashire (returning in *The Light*, the final part of Jack Thorne’s state of the nation trilogy) and George Clooney (*Catch 22*).

From our bases in Leeds, Bristol and Glasgow (all launching this year), we will develop further capacity in the Nations and Regions, discovering new production partners and working closely with existing indies to drive our Nations and Regions commissioning spend up to 50%.

2019 promises to be a pivotal year that could define Britain’s place in the world – and sense of itself – for decades to come. It is a moment that demands all the imagination, boldness and challenge of a vibrant Channel 4, to which I am confident we will rise.

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Derry Girls