

## CELEBRATIONS AT BAFTA

The importance of Voice of the Listener & Viewer on the broadcasting scene was demonstrated on 7 October at a charity evening at BAFTA in Piccadilly, to celebrate VLV's '25 years of campaigning for the best in British broadcasting'.

Andrew Marr acted as host, introducing extracts — shown on a big screen — from 25 Top radio and television broadcasts. He thanked members of VLV for: 'in a sense being activist shareholders' and 'engaged and assertive owners' of the whole public service broadcasting enterprise. Twenty-five years ago Jocelyn Hay had been protesting against a planned news-only Radio 4. Ever since VLV had been listened to because 'its only axe to grind is on behalf of VLV'. Today broadcasters were 'struggling to find new ways', he said. 'Morale was pretty low' and 'we want to remember how good we are'.

## THE TOP 25

The Top 25 programmes were chosen by a wide cross section of programme-makers and supporters of public service broadcasting

.BBC' Radio 4's *Today* programme came top, followed by Radio 3 and BBC TV's *Proms (2007-08)*. *The Jewel in the Crown (1984)* and *Inspector Morse (1997)* tied 3rd and Radio 4's *I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue (2009)* and *Planet Earth (2006)* both came 5th, followed by *Blackadder II (1986)*, *Death of Yugoslavia — Wars of Independence (1995)*, *Bleak House (2005)*, *Our Friends in the North — 1984 (1996)*, *The Singing Detective — Skin (1986)* and *This Week — Death on the Rock (Thames Television for ITV, 1988)*. Tied 13th: *From Our Own Correspondent (Radio 4, 2009)* and *BBC TV's Edge of Darkness — Northmoor (1985)*. 15th came *World in Action — The Spy who Never Was (Granada for ITV, 1984)*. Tied 16th were *In Our Time (Radio 4, 2009)*, *28 Up (Granada for ITV, 1984)*, *The Two Ronnies (1986)*. Six programmes tied 19th: *Dispatches (Channel 4)*, *South Bank Show — P.D.James (ITV, 2006)*, *State of Play (2003)*, *Channel 4 News (an ITN Production for C4)*, *The Thick of It (2005)*, *Newsnight (1997)*. No 25 was *Test Match Special (BBC Radio 5 Live Sports Extra, 2009)*.

## INSIDER VIEWS

Between the clips, three people from broadcasting spoke about public service broadcasting. Dorothy Byrne, Head of News and Current Affairs Channel 4, said throughout VLV's 25 years the British people had been able to take for granted 'journalism which challenges, enlightens, investigates and holds power to account'. It was vital that this 'continues to be properly funded and given prominence on the schedules'. To channel controllers: 'I would say — we give you your credibility with the British public...we can't afford not to afford something which contributes so much to civic life'.

Steve Morrison, Chief Executive of the 'super-indie' All3Media, asked 'How often do you hear someone say how British television is looking cheaper — less high quality drama — or documentaries — less original children's programmes? The truth is that it literally is cheaper: between 2004-2008 our five main channels cut British

programmes by about £350m each year. With the advertising recession that annual reduction has gone up to about £500m.

He thought British programme-makers were at a tipping point: 'I believe that people like us, who care about UK quality content, need to get together and insist that our audio visual culture and creative industry are too important to let slide. Let's start a campaign for UK content — now.' Roger Wright, Controller of BBC Radio 3, expressed heartfelt thanks for audiences who cared and 'when we get it wrong we're told so'. The role of art, he said, was to 'reveal suffering and offer healing': in music 'the player provides a sense of being taken further'. Commitment to new music was also crucial.

## TWO PRIZEWINNERS

Jocelyn Hay presented the children's programme *Blue Peter* with a special President's Award. She said, 'One of the glories of British television, including children's, 'is the fact that the commercially funded ITV could compete with the publicly funded BBC in the quality and range of its programming. So I am saddened that ITV has now virtually withdrawn from this genre.' She singled out two magazine programmes which for more than four decades have stimulated and served young viewers — *Newsround* and *Blue Peter*.

For Biddy Baxter, *Blue Peter's* former editor, the prize was a huge honour, particularly for those who had created the 'new' Blue Peter. Yet she had mixed emotions: 'delight of course but also sadness because — amazingly — today *Blue Peter's* biggest enemy is the BBC. The BBC's schedulers have decreed that the programme should transmit at 4.35pm instead of its usual 5 pm slot, which has had a disastrous effect.'

Accepting the Top prize for *Today*, John Humphreys re-asserted Lord Reith's broadcasting maxim to 'inform, educate, entertain' — with the emphasis on *inform*. "In the end the real job is being done by reporters who find out things", he said.

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