

6 March 2004

Dear Sir/Madam

I have become thoroughly fed up with the BBC over the last few years, and in particular over the last year.

This all started last year when BBC Scotland decided to show an omnibus edition of the absolutely dire "River City". It is bad enough that we have to suffer two hours of "Eastenders" repeats on a Sunday, but to show another hour of soap repeats is pathetic, and shows a distinct lack of care for those who do not wish to watch three hours of repeated soaps on a Sunday. Perhaps if this garbage were shown on the BBC in England, it would soon be shelved. I have written to BBC Scotland about this, who of course think this garbage is the greatest thing since sliced bread, but for some reason can't seem to keep it in a regular slot! So much for looking after the interest of those who do watch this drivel.

Around the same time as this was happening the BBC started advertising its Digital Channels, and this has now made me so angry that I will not be renewing my T.V. Licence when it expires.

I live in the largest town in the Scottish Borders, and yet 2/3 of the town still cannot get Channel 5, never mind Digital services, through terrestrial aerials. This is not because the signal is not there, as parts of the town can get a signal from the transmitter at Melrose, but because we have a secondary transmitter to beam the signal from that into the valley, and no modifications have been carried out to enable signals to be put into the valley. The BBC and ITV both say they are no longer responsible for the transmitters, but having asked them who is I have received no answer.

It annoys me that I have to put up with the BBC advertising on BBC1 and BBC2, that, this that and the next thing, is on their digital channels, and I am left with the choice of BBC Scotland, or BBC2. If I am paying to fund the BBC then I expect to be able to receive all their programmes. I do not accept the BBC's position that the licence is to fund the BBC and does not guarantee a service. This is blatantly hiding behind the law to avoid providing a service that millions are forced to pay for. You wouldn't expect to pay for someone else's electrical, gas or water services, so why should you expect me to subsidise a service for others when I cannot get what I am paying for?

Then there is the always-contentious issue of repeats. Again the BBC is advertising new programming on its digital channels, while on terrestrial channels we are inundated with repeats. The period over Xmas 2003 was the worst period of programming I have ever seen. It appeared to be one endless stream of repeats. I am not against repeats but the BBC's constant running of the same old crap, (in particular "Only Fools and Horses") is getting beyond a joke, I particularly enjoy "The Simpsons", but I am now fed up of watching the same episodes over and over again.

Another major irritant are the on screen banner's that seem to have become an integral part of the News. I often have BBC News 24 on Saturday mornings, when it is on BBC 2, and have become extremely irritated by the junk that is displayed on top of the images being shown. During "Gulf War II" banners telling us who the reporter was, a brief synopsis of what was being reported and a scrolling message along the bottom of the screen repeating the same thing over and over again, obscured the images shown, my own particular favourite being "Breaking News" flashing away. If this is designed to attract attention, then it succeeds admirably, as it is so distracting that it is impossible to pay attention to what is being reported.

This fashion of cluttering the screen with banners has now made its way onto the normal BBC News, where it appears that we cannot have a reporter reporting their story, without an idiot's guide being displayed on screen to tell us what is being reported. God knows how reporters on Radio get by without this junk!

To illustrate my point, try watching the sports round up on BBC1 at around 4.40 on a Saturday, the screen is split into four with, scrolling results along the bottom, sports headlines above that, a reporter on screen in the top left, and league tables on the top right, all constantly changing, and a recent new innovation, a small box within the box with the league tables, flashing away informing us of what the live game on Sunday will be. Just how are you supposed to ingest all this garbage?

The medium is known as Television, however it seems to have become a medium for displaying Internet pages. I'm sure that all concerned think that they are incredibly clever by how much they can display on screen, but the real message is being lost in the clutter!

In Scotland we have to suffer some law that dictates that BBC Scotland has to show programming reflecting Scotland. WHY? We have recently had to suffer endless Scottish Current Affairs Programmes, Scottish History Programmes, and the ever-present Scottish Political Programmes. Do viewers in England have to suffer local interest programming at these times, and if we have to have them in Scotland, they should be instead of British programming.

I looked forward tonight, (3<sup>rd</sup> March) to watching "Animal Camera" as it is advertised in my newspaper's TV listing magazine as being on at 8.30 pm, only to discover in small print "not Scotland". On trying to find out when it is on, I have discovered it was in fact on last night. Why are these programmes not shown across the U.K. at the same time?

As I understand it the licence fee also provides funding for BBC Radio, so why was my licence fee being used recently to fly a reporter for Radio 1's Newsbeat, to Australia, to report on an ITV television programme, (I'm a celebrity get me out of here). Since this programme had wide coverage on ITV, what possible excuse can be used to justify this expense to licence payers?

Programme times are advertised in T.V. listings as starting at a particular time, but are starting early. "The Simpson's" are regularly advertised as starting at 6pm, but invariably start at 5.59 or 5.58, thus causing you to miss the opening "lines" and "couch" gag.

If all this BBC bashing gives you the impression I hate the BBC, then let me assure you that this is not the case, as I very rarely watch ITV, as their programming seems to be appealing to the lowest common denominator. Unfortunately I get the impression the BBC is going the same way. The BBC has a unique source of funding and should be providing quality programming, and not competing for ratings with other broadcasters.

While I am quite happy to pay a licence fee to provide the BBC with funds, I am not prepared to fund the BBC for others to enjoy, while I cannot get any of the benefits from my licence fee. The BBC should take responsibility for making sure that digital services are available to all who want them through terrestrial aerials, as I personally have no intention of buying a satellite system. To quote Bruce Springsteen "57 channels, and nothing on", except it's a lot more than 57 channels. Otherwise the BBC should take steps to get its funding from pay per view, as I am not going to pay and not be able to view.

As for repeats, then if these are as popular as you claim, you can have a repeats channel on digital, and those of us who don't want to watch the millionth repeat of "Dads Army" or "Only fools and Horses" can watch something else.

"The BBC at your beck and call" I don't think so, and as for "Your BBC your say", I suspect that this charter review will make some loud noises, make some patronising remarks, but in the end the government will just give you the charter, and you will continue to take the money, and accept no responsibility for making sure that licence payers get the services they are paying for.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Bowie". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

D. BOWIE