

29 March 2004

BBC Charter Review Consultation
Department for Culture, Media and Sport
2-4 Cockspur Street
LONDON SW1Y 5DH

Dear reviewers

When I watch television, about 95% of my viewing time is devoted to BBC 1, BBC 2 and S4C. When I listen to radio, it is mainly to BBC Wales or BBC Cymru and Classic FM.

I'd like to answer some of the questions posed in the pamphlet YOUR BBC - YOUR SAY, concerning TV.

Funding

I think the BBC should retain the licence fee and BBC Worldwide.

Advertising

I wouldn't like to see the BBC go into commercial advertising. However, I support the trend to let viewers know about forthcoming programmes, as long as this is done just a day or two beforehand - not a week ahead.

I don't support some of the fill-ins (such as the sweaty Latin dancers or the inane 'sketches' of rugby fans on BBC 1 Wales). Where they are tasteful or amusing, OK; otherwise, "Where in doubt, leave them out" (difficult to decide, I know, as tastes vary).

I think a pause is needed between serious or affective programmes before the next programme is shown. This might be achieved by playing quiet or relaxing music or screening a re-run of what I'd call "picture poems" of some decades ago where a scene was shown in complete silence - such as a snow scene with just the wind blowing through trees or over a moorland, or a scene with swans drifting down a river. (Sorry I can't recall the name of the photographer - believe it was Hugh someone.)

What I value most/least about the BBC

I rely on the BBC to set high standards of taste, decency and general morality, without pandering to commercial considerations, such as ratings, which often result in "playing to the gallery" or general "dumbing down". If the BBC gives a lead, maybe commercial channels will follow; if not, there'll always be the BBC. Please continue your newscasts, sport, arts and educational coverage, though I'd like to see some changes:

Newscasts

1. Content: A broader coverage of world events (eg. What is life like in the countries about to become members of the EU?). I'm pleased to see that recently the constant reporting of terrorist strikes in Iraq is occasionally tempered by other happenings in that country. More balance, please. Also, how about some good news as well as the bad news?

.../2.

Newscasts (contd.)

2. Presentation: (a) There's been a tendency lately for newscasters NOT to drop their voices at the end of a sentence but to continue as though there are no full-stops in the language! This is not good communication.
- (b) I find it irritating that female presenters squint at the viewer through a long fringe due to the current fad in hairstyles. It would be nice to see their eyes!
- (c) Why the battery of TV sets (all switched on) behind the presenter? This is distracting. Also, seeing that most of our electricity comes from fossil fuels, it adds to pollution and hence global warming.

Sport

Coverage of rugby, soccer, gymnastics and athletics is excellent. Also golf and billiards - though there's a tendency in billiards for the commentators to do the viewer's thinking for him/her by predicting the next move!

I'd like to see more tennis, if possible - perhaps more of the "low-key" competitions such as the Davis Cup or other comps. as I understand that Wimbledon will soon go to the highest bidder in the commercial world.

I'd also like to see more ice-skating.

Arts

I'd like to see more ballet and more of the Young Musician of the Year.

Ideas for new programmes:

1. The music (with interview) of composer Karl Jenkins.
2. Ice-skating gala concerts at the end of championships.
Also, special programmes featuring winners and runners-up in heats and finals of figure-skating championships, hosted by Robyn Cousins.
3. The culling of the winners of gymnastic competitions (especially the ladies' floor exercises) presented as a programme.

Education

I enjoy HORIZON, PANORAMA and THE MONEY PROGRAMME, also the recent IF programmes. More, please. I believe some of the Open University programmes are also being shown on BBC 2 (history, for instance). Good! I'd also like more on history, nature and programmes along the lines of RESTORATION.

In addition, I'd like to see more on the environment and religion.

Religion: I thought Jeremy Bowen's presentation of the life and times of Christ (a couple of years ago) was interesting and original. More on these lines, please.

I also thought WHAT THE WORLD THINKS OF GOD (BBC 2, 26/02/04) was very good, but marred by the distracting moving images behind each of the people being interviewed. (Why do programme-makers think that the viewer should be bombarded with a stream of images or constant background music, often a drum-beat or a pop singer who can't sing?)

The Environment: A programme on BBC 1 Wales (Sept.2002) called A LAND WORTH LOVING was excellent as it showed how we all have an effect on our environment. More programmes like this, particularly emphasising HOW families, industry, etc. could live more sustainably, would be appreciated. I understand there is a programme called EARTH STORY shown only on BBC 4 (digital). If it's applicable, could this be shown on BBC 1 or BBC 2?

Education (The Environment) -contd.

Referring to sustainable development, this is the main purpose of the National Botanic Garden of Wales (also known as Middleton Gardens). I'd like to see a special programme made on this garden.

I think the BBC could itself give a lead on energy conservation by ending its TV coverage about midnight instead of continuing on into the night.

Light Entertainment

Amongst the repeats I'd like to see THE TWO RONNIES and the KRYPTON FACTOR (also a new series of Krypton).

Please, more of

- * Hollywood musicals starring dancers Fred Astair, Ginger Rogers, Ann Miller, Yvonne de Carlo, Vera Ellen, Carmen Miranda, Danny Kaye (a distinct change from the annual "White Christmas" starring Bing Crosby).
- * The Hetty Wainwright Detective Agency - regrettably only one series was shown, a few years ago.
- * Films starring Shirley Temple, for children.
- * A new series of the comedy "High Hopes" (BBC 1 Wales), 2003.

Other

1. Language: I'd like to see respect shown to God's name; expressions like "Oh God" (when there's no thought of the Deity) or expletives such as "Jesus Christ" should not be allowed.
2. A pat on the back to all the people who deal with correspondence! Whenever I've written to the BBC I've always received a courteous and considered reply. Thank you for this - also thanks to all at the BBC for many hours of good viewing.

I know little of the internal workings of the BBC or advanced technology to answer others questions in your pamphlet "Have your Say" (maybe an idea for another programme?), but I hope the above will be constructive.

Yours sincerely

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