

Ken Unwin

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

~~18th~~ 23rd March 2004.

Dear Mr Humphreys

I thank you for and welcome the opportunity to offer my opinions, comments, and complaints regarding the BBC whereby I might obtain , as Anne Robinson would have said when presenting WATCHDOG "A RESULT".

My problem now is where to begin and will I have enough paper?

I first wrote to the BBC in the days of Christopher Bland then subsequently to John Birt, and Greg Dyke. For some inexplicable reason I never had any faith whatsoever in Gavyn Davies so desisted any urge to write to him.

I've also written to Jane Root, Lorraine Heggese, Barbara Slater, BBC Information Glasgow so many times I've lost count and Radio 2's Jim Moir and Sarah Kennedy plus 'phoning 08700100222 many times.

I must say that I have had limited success.

My undoubted number one complaint concerning Tv transmission, together with goodness knows howmany other viewers throughout the country, is the infuriating intrusion of so called background music. Don't you people ever read Ceefax P. 145 or Teletext P. 346 or read the letters pages in national newspapers?

I know when producers, commissioning editors etc come on camera and face their critics the usual automatic response is "We think we got it right" when what they mean is "We think we got it right and don't give a damn what you think".

Well we are your customers, we are paying you, and we are telling you that you haven't got it right. We want it cutting out but in situations where it may be argued as necessary at least reduce the volume considerably.

Where dialogue is involved we want to listen to that dialogue not some indiscernible din. The volume of the constant drumming to introduce the Main News followed by Look North is really too much.

We don't want or expect 'adverts' on the BBC. Alright, I know that you use the word 'trails', so, we don't want or expect 'trails'. At every programme change during the 24 hours of both BBC 1 and BBC 2 we are bombarded with this inescapable, infuriating nuisance. We are sick, tired , and fed up to the back teeth by this intrusion. There are so many listings facilities available nowadays, some even free of charge, not least Ceefax, that it is an intrusion we can well do without. In this respect you are little different to the independents.

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One of the areas in which I did achieve a limited success was having complained about reporters, correspondents, presenters, and the like, waving their hands and arms about as if conducting The Last Night Of The Proms. Yes, there was a limited improvement but still a long way to go, like, for instance, your auctions type programmes for instance. The epitome, to which all people in front of camera should aspire to emulate is John Cundy of Look North. Before anyone is allowed to do a piece to camera, read the news, conduct an interview or whatever they should be made to sit and watch John for a quarter of an hour or so and be told this is how we want it, this is how you will do it or you are out.

You have ruined your presentation of snooker coverage which is why I wrote to Barbara Slater. Have you ever sat through a live professional snooker tournament session? You daren't breathe heavily let alone whisper and to speak is criminal in the extreme. What happens on the box? Has-been hangers-on inanely and patronisingly yap yap yapping away for all they are worth. In desperation I press 'mute' but then, of course, lose the atmosphere and ambience of the situation completely. Bring back Ted Lowe. I would also prefer it if you would keep the camera-man in the players lounge from embarrassing the wives and girl friends of the players by trying to look up their skirts or down their cleavage. Top-of-the-pops- maybe but not National or World class professional snooker.

Retain the licence fee by all means but whilst you continue to transmit such a banal selection of programmes and repeats you cannot justify increasing it annually. Twice, around September/October time, well in advance of preparing the Christmas schedules I've written in to ask for the ballet Coppelia as a change from the now hackneyed Swan Lake and The Nutcracker. Unsuccessfully. When did we last see La Boheme or it's ilk for instance?

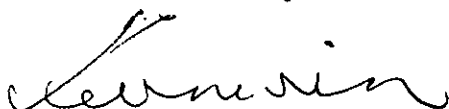
I'm given to understand that there is a move afoot to poach that Graham Norton person from Channel 4. God forbid. I'm given to understand that a figure of a million pounds has been mentioned. God absolutely forbid! How much lower does the BBC want to sink? No way in a million years can you justify having this man on the BBC or using any licence payers money to fund him. Absolutely positively NO!

Is there no one responsible for dress codes or sense nowadays? Our dust-bin lorry driver looks smarter than some of your presenters etc. Why a sudden absence of neck ties? Don't argue that women don't have to wear them. There are garments traditionally, normally only worn by women that I wouldn't expect men to wear. Smarten them up a bit. Discourage them from lowering their standards to match others.

My grouse re Sarah Kennedy concerns some of the language and deliberate mis-pronunciation of selected words at a time when impressionable schoolchildren will be listening. Also the volume of the thumpity thumpity thump background whilst some one is trying to read the Travel News. It's read at such a speed against such a racket it is difficult at times to comprehend what is being read.

That ought to be enough to give you something to work on. I shall watch and wait with interest for publication of any findings unless of course I'm privileged to appear on a mailing list.

Yours sincerely



Ken Unwin