

26/3/04

BBC Charter Review Consultation "Your BBC Your Say"  
Department of Culture Media and Sport  
2-4 Cockspur Street, London SW1 Y SDG

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to influence the future of the BBC

Radio 4 and 3

I'm addicted to having these programmes throughout the day at home and in the car. I have lived in other countries, mainly USA, and the absence of such an opportunity seemed to leave life pretty empty. On radio 4 the availability of the News, the Today Programme, Letter from America, Desert Island Discs, Front Row, the Archers, Poetry, and of the late lamented Round the Horne has been wonderful. Also a number of documentary and feature programmes seems either a luxury or a treat.

The downside has been the incredibly awful flood of completely weak comedies that have appeared in the last 10 or 15 years. Someone at the BBC must be amazingly kind to allow these programmes to exist. Dramas, often regional, are commissioned with the weakest of results. Embarrassing. It was not always this way. Also designed to fill the space are the feeble unstructured advice shows, like You and Yours which give the reader no predictable promise. All these slots would be better cancelled and the airwaves merged with Radio 3 or left silent. More time should be given over to simple explanatory programmes outlining to dummies like myself what Broadband etc etc are all about

BBC tv 1 and 2

The past gave us high expectations of QUALITY, eg dramas like 1984, Forsyth Saga, Portrait of a Lady, Jude the Obscure, Barchester Chronicles, Likely Lads, the Good Life, Yes, Minister etc. We now have a plethora of WEAK WEAK comedies, even though some seem to win awards for the lack of any competition. Detective programmes have proliferated on all terrestrial channels and only exist as time killers or sleeping potions. BBC News is a useful fixture certainly, but could take lessons from Channel 4 7pm news for pace depth and true usefulness. In all BBCtv 1 and 2 have become fairly drab, Eastenders being an exception.

The BBC should recapture the love of quality and all that goes with it that was so evident in the very ambitious but much more humble years 1950 - 1975. It should rid itself of trendiness, self-love, self-indulgence and a self-seeking ethos. A new broom which learns from the past would probably benefit from separating the regulating function for the running function. Quality / Daring to Amaze - these should go side by side.

I hope these thoughts will encourage a return to the higher standards of the BBC 1950-1975. What has happened since is largely mistaken.

Yours sincerely  
DONALD WILLIAMSON

