

BBC Charter Review;  
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26th May, 2005.

In response to your notice in the Daily Mail, here are our views, with apologies for delay in sending.

First, the good news: programmes of excellent quality.

'Costume' drama; Dickens, Austen, A. Trollope etc.

Religious; especially Songs of Praise.

Travel; all of Michael Palin's series.

Education/Discovery: Alan Titchmarsh's series on where the British Isles came from. The range of locations, through all seasons & climates, was staggering, all drawn together by his seamless commentary, which, considering the time-span & thousands of miles between each on-site speech, was a masterpiece of forethought and continuity.

Andes to Amazon; really new material brought to our screen with breath-taking photography from the heights to the depths. Excellent commentary.

David Attenborough's many programmes - now with some humour too!

Bill Oddie's wild life programmes; his way of explaining things makes learning easy, and puts us 'townies' at ease in our hitherto ignorance.

Adam Hart-Davis' "What the .... did for us" series.

History: The Seven Wonders (Engineering) series. The 1800's (etc) House series.

Interest/Concern: Crimewatch UK; Countryfile; A Country/Seaside Parish; Who Do You Think You Are? (We 'townies' do respect & have interest in the countryside!)

Gardening: Groundforce; 'Chelsea' coverage and others.

Entertainment: (Comedy) Born & Bred; Monarch of the Glen (although this has lost much of its comic element, giving over to emotional elements, not always wholesome) New Tricks (but bad language does spoil it). The old favourites: The Good Wife, To the Manor Born, Yes Minister/PM, As Time Goes By, Only Fools & Horses, Keeping Up Appearances, Steptoe!

News/Politics: News at Six/Ten; BBC London; Question Time.

(The 'weather' has always had a bit too much input to take it all in, but now, with the new graphics it's a total turn off. We thought John Prescott had succeeded in concreting over Britain!)

And now the bad news.

Too many 'makeover' programmes, but we appreciate the positive input at Boscastle and for Comic Relief projects.

Too many crude comedy programmes like "The Office" & "Little Britain".

The News (at 6 & 10): A bias to New Labour does seem evident; introductions to and reporting on incidents are often marred by repetitive statements, e.g. "... has received serious injuries in the accident and has been taken by ambulance from that accident to ... Hospital where he will be treated for those injuries." Football, when occupying the top story spot (is it really so important?) is given far too much time, we've noted in excess of 10 minutes at times.

Jargon is used much more now, & colloquialisms. While we enjoy the sound of the Welsh accent, it is disconcerting that Huw Edwards often omits the word 'THE' from the beginning of sentences, thus causing the listener to grapple for the meaning of the sentence in some cases, or to wonder if they missed hearing the beginning. Huw also says 'er' so many times it is a nuisance. Other newscasters are fine.

The Politics Show: That nice Tim Donovan turned into a pre-General Election savage when interviewing main parties candidates, not letting the Conservative or Liberal Democrats candidates speak more than a few words before shoving perceived main issues into their mouths over & over again. Appalling.

Quiz Shows: With the exception of Mastermind there is so much loud intrusive 'music' & lighting effects it's impossible to watch or concentrate on questions. Are the participants hearing & seeing what we do?

On the subject of visual discomfort, the current trend for the camera to be constantly on the move, whether on an interview live or filmed, or in dramas, or on outdoor subjects, wildlife or landscapes, or studying art, one can never get a good look at someone or something. The camera is circling, swooping, zooming in & out, twisting at angles - in all one ends up 'sea sick' & unable to watch. It's all very clever <sup>up</sup> but totally useless for the viewer. Similarly, in studio debates, interviews, news programmes - the background is on the move, images floating, sliding, swirling - it's hopeless trying to concentrate on the speakers.

And sound - this fluctuates so much, even with just 'talk' programmes, let alone bursts of music, that the sound control button is in constant use. It didn't used to be like that.

Narration/Commentary: Some has become inane at times. In "When Will I Be Famous", featuring puppets at the Sylvia Young stage school, we were told the same information over and over again, even within the same episode: the child's name, age, ambition, as if weeks had passed for us since we saw them two scenes ago. Similarly in Amazon Abyss, which was on several consecutive nights, we still got told the same things over and over within each screening. And the voice full of menace were about this-  
cont'd.

Captions/subtitles are sometimes hard to read. A white background with clear, open style black lettering would be best, at least for the text of what's being said.

This about sums up our views. We rarely watch anything other than BBC1 & 2. I hope I haven't included a programme from another channel inadvertently.

And finally - please do not assume that all viewers have computers, mobile 'phones, texting facilities, we have none. So often only an 'online' 'address' is given, or texting contact. Please include normal telephone numbers and postal addresses on all programmes over which we may want to make contact.

Thank you for the service you give, and may excellence be regained in all areas.

Yours faithfully,

Hazel Barrett (Miss)

Wileen Barrett