MEDIA STUDIES
ACCOMPANYING READING

Toynbee School

These articles are available each week on 'Show My Homework'.
You should be reading them in preparation for class discussion.

Semiotics for Beginners - Daniel Chandler

D.I.Y. Semiotic Analysis: Advice to Students

Semiotics can be applied to anything which can be seen as signifying something - in other words, to everything which has meaning within a culture. Even within the context of the mass media you can apply semiotic analysis to any media texts (including television and radio programmes, films, cartoons, newspaper and magazine articles, posters and other ads) and to the practices involved in producing and interpreting such texts. Within the Saussurean tradition, the task of the semiotician is to look beyond the specific texts or practices to the systems of functional distinctions operating within them. The primary goal is to establish the underlying conventions, identifying significant differences and oppositions in an attempt to model the system of categories, relations (syntagmatic and paradigmatic), connotations, distinctions and rules of combination employed. For instance, 'What differentiates a polite from an impolite greeting, a fashionable from an unfashionable garment?' (Culler 1985, 93); the investigation of such practices involves trying to make explicit what is usually only implicit.

A 'text' (such as a printed advertisement, an animated cartoon or a radio news bulletin) is in itself a complex sign containing other signs. Your initial analytical task is to identify the signs within the text and the codes within which these signs have meaning (e.g. 'textual codes' such as camerawork or 'social codes' such as body language). Within these codes you need to identify paradigm sets (such as shot size: long shot, mid shot, close up). You also need to identify the structural relationships between the various signifiers (syntagms). Finally you need to discuss the ideological functions of the signs in the text and of the text as a whole. What sort of reality does the text construct and how does it do so? How does it seek to naturalize its own perspectives? What assumptions does it make about its readers?

I strongly recommend detailed comparison and contrast of paired texts dealing with a similar topic: this is a lot easier than trying to analyse a single text. It may also help to use an example of semiotic analysis by an experienced practitioner as a model for your own analysis.

Roland Barthes and Semiotics

Andrew Robinson, September 2011

Roland Barthes was one of the earliest structuralist or poststructuralist theorists of culture. His work pioneered ideas of structure and signification which have come to underpin cultural studies and critical theory today. He was also an early instance of marginal criticism. Barthes was always an outsider, and articulated a view of the critic as a voice from the margins. He was an outsider in three ways: he was gay, he was Protestant in a Catholic culture, and he was an outsider in relation to French academic establishment. By the end of his life, however, he was widely renowned both in France and beyond.

Barthes is one of the leading theorists of semiotics, the study of signs. He is often considered a structuralist, following the approach of Saussure, but sometimes as a poststructuralist.

A sign, in this context, refers to something which conveys meaning – for example, a written or spoken word, a symbol or a myth. As with many semioticists, one of Barthes's main themes was the importance of avoiding the confusion of culture with nature, or the naturalisation of social phenomena. Another important theme is the importance in being careful how we use words and other signs.

One characteristic of Barthes's style is that he frequently uses a lot of words to explain a few. He provides detailed analyses of short texts, passages and single images so as to explore how they work. Another trait of his work is his constant systematisation. He draws up schemes for categorising the signs and codes with which he works, which can be applied to divide a text, a narrative or a myth into different parts with different functions. He draws up something like a blueprint of the areas of discourse he studies, showing how the different parts hold together.

In Saussurean analysis, which Barthes largely uses, the distinction between signifier and signified is crucial. The signifier is the image used to stand for something else, while the signified is what it stands for (a real thing or, in a stricter reading, a sense-impression).

The signified sometimes has an existence outside language and social construction, but the signifier does not. Further, the relationship between the two is ultimately arbitrary. There are many different ways a particular signified could be expressed in language, or different objects divided-up. None of these ways is ultimately superior to the others.

Barthes is an anti-essentialist. He is strongly opposed to the view that there is anything contained in a particular signifier which makes it naturally correspond to a particular signified. There's no essence of particular groups of people (humanity, Britishness) or objects (chairness, appleness) which unifies them into a category or separates them from others.

For instance, there is no such thing as human nature. (This might be taken to mean that everything ultimately exists in an immanent, extensive plane of being). The division into categories is always a process of social construction. People don't start off with thoughts or perceptions of objects which they then express in language. The categories of language determine how people divide up objects into types.

Furthermore, all signs depend on the entire system of signs. None of them have meaning aside from the system.

Man Like Mobeen: BBC comedy defies Muslim stereotypes

(January 31, 2018 9.32am GMT; Dr Sarah Illot)

Comedy has the power to reflect or to challenge mainstream values. Laughing at difference or "otherness" can reinforce damaging social norms, while shared laughter at a flawed or failed system tends to work more subversively. The new BBC comedy, Man Like Mobeen, is a subversive comedy that implicitly challenges ways in which British Muslims have often been badly represented through lazy caricature and stereotyping – as in the terrorist, the submissive hijabi, or the interfering Auntie.

Man Like Mobeen is the brainchild of Guz Khan, who made his mark on the comedy scene through YouTube videos and stand-up comedy. Khan is a working-class former school teacher from Birmingham. He wrote this show with Andy Milligan, who is best known for writing Ant and Dec's gags for I'm a Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here.

The show is set in Khan's home city, a place that has frequently been the focus of Islamophobic scaremongering. In 2015, it was described by Fox News in the US as a "totally Muslim city" and in 2014 it was the focus of the notorious "Operation Trojan Horse" – a "fake news" story about a plot to Islamicise schools.

Khan himself takes centre stage in the show as Mobeen, accompanied by his buffoonish sidekicks Eight (Tez Ilyas) and Nate (Tolu Ogunmefun). Mobeen, 28, single-handedly looks after his teenage sister, Aks (Dùaa Karim), braiding her hair and tending to her needs while bearing the brunt of her sarcastic mockery. This is not your familiar representation of a young Muslim man.

Critics, including Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin, have described the ways that Muslims are often "framed" by the media, with recourse to a familiar set of stereotypes. Yet in this show there is no overbearing bigamous patriarch, Islamic Rage boy, blushing hijabi or interfering Auntie in sight. Man Like Mobeen simply does not engage with this series of stereotypes. Instead, the humour derives from its political commentary, tempered by the constant byplay of the main characters and others they come across, as in: "I saw your Mum last week. She still says you're a dickhead."

Approaching taboo

For psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, laughter is a release of psychic energy created through the social repression taken on by the superego. Jokes provide an acceptable means of engaging with subject matter considered taboo in other social contexts and the offensive subject matter is at once voiced and disguised through the gags.

In the case of British Muslims and other ethnic and religious minority groups in Britain, engagement with racist or Islamophobic sentiments have tended to take one of two forms in comedies. In one, repugnant attitudes are voiced by racist characters, with the apparently intended effect that audiences laugh at the racist not the racism. Yet this is problematic, as audiences can as easily identify with the racism as against it – a phenomenon that critics Sharon Lockyer and Michael Pickering describe as the "Alf Garnett syndrome" – after the central character in the 1960s sitcom 'Til Death Us Do Part.

An alternative is to engage with racist or Islamophobic stereotypes by having them voiced or embodied by ethnic or religious minority characters, effectively legitimising the laughter. This can come across as lazy and conservative – and Khan himself distances himself from the likes of Adil Ray's Citizen Khan for reiterating the same stereotypes circulating since the 1970s, asking people to "laugh at us rather than laugh with us".

What Man Like Mobeen does differently is to take structures and systems, rather than individuals, as the primary source of comedy. In the first episode (Bagpuss), Mobeen, Eight and Nate find themselves improbably accosted by armed police.

Nate quickly scarpers, leaving Mobeen to explain why his friend has run off: “If I had to guess, I’d probably say it’s cause he’s black…” The question of Mobeen’s potential racism (in the implicit association between black men and criminality) hangs in the air for a moment before he explains: “Look, officer, I don’t know if you’ve heard of this thing called history, but these situations very rarely work out for the black man.”

Gentle ribbing

Khan cites comedians Eddie Murphy and Dave Chappelle as his “comedy heroes” for their blend of “sharp political comedy” and “outlandish humour” and this influence comes across clearly in the show. Yet the comedy goes further than this in its generosity.

In a particularly poignant scene in the final episode (H-ALTRight), Mobeen is locked in a police van with a racist character, Robbie, who has been preaching Islamophobia to the assembled crowd. Here, the comedy does the kind of straight talking that critics of the liberal left claiming to speak for the putative everyman (Donald Trump or Nigel Farage, for example) suggest never happen.

The scene in the van allows Robbie openly to voice his questions and fears about Islam – yet the comedy doesn’t render him the butt of the joke at this point through superior laughter or intellectual snobbery. When Robbie suggests that “only the oppressed woman” wants to wear a burqa, Mobeen responds “Oo, Robbie. You dictating femininity to women against their will are ya? You sexist pig” – in a tone more suggestive of brotherly teasing than outright disgust. Mobeen challenges Robbie’s views, yet the colloquial speech and gentle ribbing leave his humanity intact.

It is interesting that, while the show shies away from stereotyping, reviews sometimes find it hard to do so. The Financial Times’ review claims in its subheading that: “Guz Khan stars as a Muslim man trying to shake off suspicions of terrorism.” Mobeen is indeed constantly hounded by the police, but this viewer understood Mobeen’s nefarious activity as being implicitly linked to drugs. When Aks is faced with snitching on a local drug dealer in episode one, she observes sarcastically that “there is one person in the family who don’t get involved in drug dealing”. Mobeen quickly dismisses the implication and changes the subject.

It seems that no matter how shows like Man Like Mobeen attempt to redraw the boundaries for what a comedy about British Muslims might look like, audiences may still be led to interpret it through all-too-familiar frameworks.

Damning New Report Reveals That BAME Representation Went Backwards in British TV Last Year

Jake Canter, January 2021

Diversity went into reverse in the British television industry last year, a damning new report has revealed, despite a global reckoning over racism and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement following the death of George Floyd.

The Creative Diversity Network, a membership network of major British broadcasters and producers, has produced its latest Diamond report — a health check on industry diversity, based on the 36,503 responses of industry figures between August 2019 and July 2020.

The report found that the representation of Black, Asian, and minority ethnic people went backwards both on- and off-screen. BAME representation behind-the-scenes stood at 11.8% last year, down from 12.3% in 2019 and below the UK workforce estimate of 13%.

Drama was the worst offender, with BAME representation in the genre standing at just 5.9%. BAME representation among writers and directors stood at 6.5% and 8.4% respectively, which was a considerable drop from 9.1% and 8.6% in 2019. Representation in senior roles across all genres was down 1.4 percentage points to 10.7%.

On-screen, hits including Michaela Coel's blistering BBC/HBO series I May Destroy You set a new high-bar for authentic Black stories, but decisions made by broadcasters and producers across the board resulted in a decrease in BAME representation. Contributions made by people from diverse backgrounds fell from 22.7% in 2019 to 21.2% last year. This was still, however, above the UK workforce estimate of 13%.

The figures are all the more chastening in the context of vocal commitments from all the UK's major broadcaster around improving diversity in light of the Black Lives Matter movement. Diversity was the central theme of the industry's talking shop, the Edinburgh TV Festival, last August, where British historian, producer, and presenter David Olusoga delivered a stinging address on race and racism in television.

The CDN acknowledged that the coronavirus crisis may have played a role in progress faltering, pointing out that "many productions have had to be cancelled or postponed, leading to changes in planned schedules from April 2020." Having said that, responses to the CDN report went up by more than 6,000 last year. Ultimately, CDN chair Paul Moore said the data "shines an unforgiving light on the scale of inequality" in the business.

And it's not just on BAME representation where TV needs to make improvements. The CDN report said that the UK television industry has "urgent" work to do on disability. It found that disabled people are only making 5.8% of contributions off-screen and 8.2% on-screen, compared to a 17% national average. These were meagre gains on 2019 and the CDN said there is "significant" under-representation across senior production roles.

Blumler and Katz Uses and Gratifications Theory

The Uses and Gratifications Theory is a user-centred approach that focuses on how people use media for their own personal uses and gratification. This theory emphasises motives and the self-perceived needs of audience members. Blumler and Katz argued that different people could use the same communication message for different purposes. The same media content may gratify different needs for different individuals.

This theory suggests that media has no power over audiences. Instead, audiences are highly active in their media usage, seeking out media to fulfil a certain need. Audiences create their own individual meanings after they seek out that media. Uses and Gratification actually come from the idea that the media serves a purpose. If the audience have certain uses or needs, then the media fulfils or gratifies those needs. Audience turn to media as a useful tool to gratify their needs.

This model starts with the audience. You have an audience that is looking to fulfil a need. It goes and seeks out a medium that will actually fulfil that need. If the media gratifies that need, then the audience will stick to that channel and continue consuming the content from that channel. On the other hand, if the media fails to gratify that need, then the audience will go back and find a different media and continue through that process until the need is gratified.

There are several examples where the audience stopped a TV show or movie from broadcast. Likewise, there are countless examples of the media being cancelled or pulled from broadcast due to audience backlash or disinterest.

Audiences have five different needs they seek to satisfy through different media use:

- Cognitive needs are all about knowledge attainment
- Effective needs are all about emotions
- Personal integrative needs are about the need to socialize with others (e.g., family, friends, and co-workers)
- Social integrative needs are based on self-esteem. Media allows us to compare our status and gain credibility by comparing ourselves to people or situations in the media

'Tension free' needs are about people using media to relieve tension in different ways. Blumler and Katz presented five core elements of Uses and Gratification. Namely;

- Media use is perceived to be goal-directed. We know exactly where to find the information we need. The audience is fully aware of the type of media it is looking for
- The audience is responsible for linking the type of media to fit their mass communication needs. The media itself doesn't look for an audience; instead, the audience chooses the media types that fulfill its needs
- Media competes with other sources for needs satisfaction. There are multiple ways to satisfy an audience's needs
- Modern media competes with more traditional media
- Audience has a sense of self-awareness of its motives and needs that allows it to share its media experiences as active media users

The last element explains that the audience chooses the information provided and explores the content on its own terms. Only the audience can apply value judgment to the media because each experience is unique and fulfils different needs.

Stuart Hall – Representation and Reception Theories

Note that Hall has two theories which are to be understood and applied in this specification.

Representation Theory

Stuart Hall's REPRESENTATION theory (please do not confuse with RECEPTION) is that there is not a true representation of people or events in a text, but there are lots of ways these can be represented. So, producers try to 'fix' a meaning (or way of understanding) people or events in their texts.

Representation is not about whether the media reflects or distorts reality, as this implies that there can be one 'true' meaning, but the many meanings a representation can generate. Meaning is constituted by representation, by what is present, what is absent, and what is different. Thus, meaning can be contested.

A representation implicates the audience in creating its meaning. Power – through ideology or by stereotyping – tries to fix the meaning of a representation in a 'preferred meaning'. To create deliberate anti-stereotypes is still to attempt to fix the meaning (albeit in a different way). A more effective strategy is to go inside the stereotype and open it up from within, to deconstruct the work of representation.

Any time a producer of a text tries to 'fix' a meaning of a person or event – this will usually reveal viewpoints and bias (political or otherwise) – usually newspapers attempt to demonise groups of people. However, anti-stereotypical representations also try to fix meanings too – so these groups of people who were demonised in some papers might be presented as heroic in others.

Reception Theory

People who make media products put ideas in their texts which they expect audiences to understand. Hall calls this a preferred reading, as this is what the producers of the text wanted them to understand.

However, each audience is different, so they might understand the text completely different to what was intended. Hall calls this an oppositional reading.

Finally, if the reading of the text by the audience is somewhere between the two, this is called a negotiated reading.

Extending the concept of an active audience still further, in the 1980s and 1990s a lot of work was done on the way individuals received and interpreted a text, and how their individual circumstances (gender, class, age, ethnicity) affected their reading. This work was based on Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model of the relationship between text and audience – the text is encoded by the producer, and decoded by the reader, and there may be major differences between two different readings of the same code. However, by using recognised codes and conventions, and by drawing upon audience expectations relating to aspects such as genre and use of stars, the producers can position the audience and thus create a certain amount of agreement on what the code means. This is known as a preferred reading.

Hall argued that the dominant ideology is typically inscribed as the 'preferred reading' in a media text, but that this is not automatically adopted by readers.

The social situations of readers may lead them to adopt different stances. 'Dominant' readings are produced by those whose social situation favours the preferred reading; 'negotiated' readings are produced by those who inflect the preferred reading to take account of their social position; and 'oppositional' readings are produced by those whose social position puts them into direct conflict with the preferred reading

Use this theory when analysing the effect of texts on an audience. What meanings did the producers encode and how would different audiences decode them?

From: https://guilsboroughschoolmedia.wordpress.com (2017)

Daniel Chandler's Theory of Media Representation

Representation refers to the construction of aspects of 'reality' such as people, places, objects, cultural identities and other abstract concepts.

The term representation refers to the processes involved as well as to its products. For instance, in relation to the key markers of identity - Class, Age, Gender and Ethnicity (the 'cage' of identity) - representation involves not only how identities are represented (or rather constructed) within the text but also how they are constructed in the processes of production and reception by people whose identities are also differentially marked in relation to such demographic factors.

A key in the study of representation concern is with the way in which representations are made to seem 'natural'. Systems of representation are the means by which the concerns of ideologies are framed; such systems 'position' their subjects.

· All texts, however 'realistic' they may seem to be, are constructed representations rather than simply transparent 'reflections', recordings, transcriptions or reproductions of a pre-existing reality.
· Representations which become familiar through constant re-use come to feel 'natural' and unmediated.
· Representation is unavoidably selective, foregrounding some things and backgrounding others.
· Every representation is motivated and historically contingent.
Reality is always represented - what we treat as 'direct' experience is 'mediated' by perceptual codes. Representation always involves 'the construction of reality'.

Hypodermic Needle Theory

The Hypodermic needle theory is a linear communication theory that suggests that media messages are injected directly into the brains of passive audiences.

In this theory the media is seen as powerful and able to 'inject' ideas into an audience who are seen as weak and passive and could be influenced by a message. In Nazi Germany in the 1930's and during World War 2 films were used to 'inject' propaganda ideas promoting the Nazi cause to the German audience. Today we still see party political broadcasts on television during elections.

The Hypodermic theory comes from a fear of the mass media, and gives the media much more power than it can ever have in a democracy. The concept ignores the idea that not everyone in an audience behaves in the same way. How can an audience be passive –there will be many times when you have disagreed with something you have seen on television or failed to laugh at a comedy show or just thought a TV programme was terrible.

Propp, Levi-Strauss and Todorov - Caitlin Soroka, 2019

Vladimir Propp was a Soviet folklorist , literary critic and scholar. He analysed the basic structural elements of Russian folk tales, identifying that certain characters were used in every narrative structure. He then influenced filmmakers into creating successful narratives in their films. He suggested that there are seven character types:

1. Villain – Struggles against the hero – usually juxtapose with the hero appearance and personality wise.
2. Dispatcher- Invites the hero to eliminate the villain.
3. Helper- Helps the hero fight against evil – sometimes has magical/ superior powers.
4. Princess – Needs to be rescued from the evil villain – often falls in love with the hero.
5. Donor – Helps the hero by providing objects to help them on their quest- and shares a close bond with the hero.
6. Hero-Arguably one of the most obvious and common out of the character types-typically fights against the villain and saves the princess.
7. False Hero- variant of the villain – act heroically in the beginning but turns out to be villainous- wants to steal the hero's thunder.

Propp's 31 Narrative Functions

Propp identified the 31 different elements of narrative structure and placed them in an order of which all film narratives mostly abide to. Although most films only contain a handful of these elements , they all appear in the same order of events that he originally proposed. Each of these elements are positioned within four possible phases: as shown below in the information found at: http://changingminds.org/disciplines/storytelling/plots/propp/31_narratemes.htm You don't need to know them for GCSE, but a knowledge of them will be very helpful.

Claude Levi-Strauss

Claude Levi-Strauss was a French Social Anthropologist and exponent of structuralist. He proposed the theory of binary opposites where the majority of narratives in film contain opposing main characters. These binary opposites are used purposely to help to thicken the plot and introduce a contrast. In more recent years, binary opposites are more complex, where two characters may have multiple binary opposites. Examples of these opposites are :

- Good vs evil
- Human vs supernatural
- Young vs old
- Man vs woman
- Peace vs war
- Democracy vs dictatorship
- Ignorance vs wisdom
- Humanity vs technology

Tzvetan Todorov

Tzvetan Todorov pioneered Equilibrium Theory, suggesting that all narratives follow the same three part structure. The story begins at equilibrium but with progress something happens that causes disruption of that balance. The story ends when a resolution has been made and they are back to the same, or a new equilibrium as they were at the beginning. This is his proposed order of narrative events:

- Equilibrium
- Disruption
- Recognition of disruption
- Attempts to repair disruption
- Return to equilibrium

From:

https://caitlinsorokasfilmstudiesblog.wordpress.com/2019/06/02/propp-levi-strauss-and-todorov/

Posh People: Inside Tatler – review: *like a sealed terrarium with filtered air, fresh flowers and definitely no lower-classes* - Julia Raeside, Tue 25 Nov 2014 07.00 GMT

The three-part series on Britain's oldest magazine took the form of a genteel safari where viewers could peer through the Land Rover window at the toffs – and draw our own conclusions

There was a time when Posh People: Inside Tatler (BBC Two) would just have been called Inside Tatler, but now a programme title must grab our flitting eyeballs before they skip on to something more shiny, such as jungle-based celebrity retching. The three-part series on Britain's oldest magazine took the form of a genteel safari – Look, posh people! – where viewers could peer out through the Land Rover window at the toffs cantering into lavish parties.

Tatler magazine has been "sending dispatches from the frontline of privilege since 1709", said the narrator, already gently guiding your reaction. The crew spent six months behind the scenes at the magazine to record not just the staff, but also the relatively small (literally) peer group they cater to. With a readership of around 160,000, it's fair to say many readers have appeared within it at some point and even the people who work at Tatler find their way into its society pages, so limited is the pool they fish from.

The airy office was populated by handsome youngsters, glossy manes framing neat, nicely spoken heads that punctuated editorial meetings with smirking suggestions about "dogs du jour" or "what to wear in the country". If there was an ugly person in the office, the camera didn't find them or else editor Kate Reardon had locked them in a cupboard to maintain clean lines. The open-plan loft they worked in was so white it actually gave the impression they worked in an ivory tower. The crew followed new writer Matthew Bell's first months in the job as he attempted to insert his middle-class self into high society. Needless to say he sounded like Lady Penelope and went to a fee-paying school but his new contemporaries are a gang who think it's great for the Royals that Prince William married someone so common and down-to-earth.

While not an all-out sneer at the landed gentry, this programme, like so many of its ilk – Made in Chelsea (E4), Life is Toff (BBC Three) – invited you to draw your own conclusions about the colossal amount of time the wealthy spent on inconsequential endeavours. As the camera surveyed a race meeting specifically for women who rode side-saddle, the narrator dryly lamented: "In just 50 years, many of these ancient families went from ruling the world to barely being able to afford their own staff." The Tatler world was portrayed as a sealed terrarium with filtered air, freshly cut flowers at all times and definitely no lower-class people.

The most openly damning sequence followed the style editor on an ironic shopping trip to Poundland. "David Cameron was here last week," she grinned as she wondered excitedly what her £15 budget would get her. Editor Kate peered at the spoils on the office floor with her hand over her mouth, as if the cat had just brought in a dead bird. They all seemed like nice people but what they represented was a revolting, self-serving waste of everyone's time and money.

On Channel 4 in the same time slot, the subjects of Skint drank daytime cider, wore ankle tags, pierced their own lips and went to prison. In Grimsby. "But 'ere in Grims-ber, they're used to stormy seas. It takes a lot to pull 'em under," said the powerfully patronising voiceover as cameras followed different people living on the breadline in the once-thriving fishing town. This was an incredibly well-directed, sensitively handled study marred by the use of a Shameless-style narration that kept chummily reminding you it's 'ard oop narth. Television and stage actor Steven Hartley was clearly asked to rough up his vowels to lend the phonetically awful script a falsely jolly tone it just didn't

need. His lines were peppered with “young ’uns” and added a needless “mind” at the end of every other sentence.

The people involved spoke for themselves without a constant loaf commercial running in the background. Hartley wasn’t at fault; this was a dreadful decision in an otherwise credible and non-judgmental hour of television. It became particularly awkward when a sudden and horrible twist came towards the end of the episode as a young couple they had been following were involved in a dreadful car accident that left one paralysed and the other, shortly afterwards, serving a prison sentence.

Before the crash, Ryan and Chaz (the aforementioned couple) talked about posh people with their multiple forks and “different shoes to walk into different rooms”. It was like the distant shout of class war across the EPG, but the Tatler terrarium is mercifully double glazed.

Interview - Heat magazine's Lucie Cave: 'It's about being cheeky, funny, not mean' The weekly's editor-in-chief on how celebrity coverage has changed – and why she doesn't fear Mail Online

John Plunkett, Sun 31 Mar 2013 18.28 BST

When Heat's editor-in-chief Lucie Cave appeared before the Leveson inquiry, the live video stream showed Lord Justice Leveson with the magazine laid out in front of him, opened at its regular double-page spread, "Who's doing who? (because celebs' love lives are even more bonkers than ours!)".

It was, the judge conceded, a "very different sort of journal" to his usual read. "He had a bit of a twinkle in his eye," remembers Cave, who appeared alongside Hello! editor Rosie Nixon and the then editor of OK!, Lisa Byrne.

"It was quite daunting because it was just the three of us, representing every magazine. I told it like it was, that the whole Leveson investigation had come about because of phone hacking and it wasn't anything that we as magazines had been a part of."

But Heat is not as hot as it was. The byword for celebrity gossip for much of the last decade, selling more than 700,000 copies at its peak, its average weekly sale slipped to 261,715 in the second half of last year. "We have been holding steady," says Cave. Not quite, down nearly 10% on the first half of 2012 and nearly 20% year on year.

Still, it can't be easy up against the showbiz behemoth that is the Daily Mail's website, Mail Online (which had 111 million users last month) and its infamous "sidebar of shame" featuring celebrities in various states of undress and disgrace. "It's there, I'm not frightened by it," says Cave. "The Daily Mail is very negative, they just churn stuff out and will cover literally everything. We are more selective. There is still a real role to play for a brand like Heat which is much more personality-led and there to make people laugh."

At its height Heat is estimated to have made profits of around £9m a year (launched by Emap, it is now part of privately-owned German media company, Bauer). Bauer does not talk numbers, but industry sources say it now makes around £2m.

A presenter on the (now defunct) teen TV channel Trouble before joining Heat in 2003, Cave knew its then editor Mark Frith, having done work experience for him while he was editing Smash Hits. It

was Frith who turned Heat around after its disastrous £4m launch in 1999 as a sort of UK equivalent of Entertainment Weekly. It failed to find an audience and was weeks away from closure before it was reinvented as a celebrity gossip title.

Regular features include "Spotted" in which readers are offered £200 for an unposed picture of a celebrity. Ten years ago, Ewan McGregor called Heat a "dirty, filthy piece of shit" over its use of paparazzi pictures. Cave says it still uses paparazzi photos but would never use them out of context or of someone who was "clearly distressed or had been harassed".

She told Leveson that she would support a register of celebrities who didn't want their pictures taken, but now admits it would be impractical. "I don't believe that celebrities are public property. They play the game – some of them more than others – but I don't believe that people should be followed around because they are a celebrity," she says.

"When we meet them they love the spirit of the magazine, they know we are not there to be mean-spirited. We are there to entertain and if they embrace that … it's going to make them look better."

Declining circulation figures can often precipitate a title's plunge downmarket but Cave, appointed editor in 2011 and editor-in-chief last year, says the reverse has been true. Innovations such as the "circle of shame" and the "hoop of horror" – pointing out an unfortunate sweat patch, wardrobe malfunction or worse – were ditched long ago. "If you had a bit of tit tape hanging out of your bra it would point that out. It made them seem a bit more real but … we play it a bit more responsibly now. It's about being cheeky and funny, not mean."

The magazine was never meaner than in 2007 when it printed a sticker of Katie Price's disabled son, Harvey, captioned "Harvey wants to eat me". The publication later apologised and made a donation to charity. Cave told the Leveson inquiry: "It was a grave mistake. Everyone who works for the magazine at the time and still works for the magazine is mortified by that incident."

Heat has also been criticised for the way it treats celebrities' bodies and suggesting they are too thin – or too fat. "That's quite a long time ago," argues Cave. "We are really careful how we approach that because it's a delicate issue. But ultimately if there's a picture of a celebrity in a bikini there will still be women readers who are interested because they compare it to their bodies. If you hear a group of women talking, that's what they do."

As editor-in-chief – Jeremy Mark is editor – Cave oversees its other platforms which include the Heat TV channel launched last year, Heat Radio, and its website, Heat World. Heat Radio, which had 767,000 listeners in the final three months of last year, previously suffered from a lack of investment and was based in Manchester. Now it has a studio in Heat's London office in Shaftesbury Avenue.

"We have got all these brand extensions but they were working in silos a little bit," says Cave. Such is her enthusiasm for "Heat 360" that staff joke they should have it tattooed on their arms. "OK, it's extra work for them to do but they're embracing it. It's liberating for us," she adds.

The magazine is to relaunch its "Heat extra" app, featuring video and quizzes you can access when you point your phone at the latest issue. Heat's live coverage of the red carpet from the National Television Awards in January had around 15,000 viewers online. It also launched its first "Twitter awards" last week, with categories including "lifetime achievement award for services to Twitter" (Twitter is seven years old).

But it is tough for a weekly magazine like Heat to keep pace with social media, with celebrities using Twitter to talk direct to their followers (in Heat staple Rihanna's case, all 29 million of them). "We go

to press on a Friday night and come out on a Tuesday. That is frustrating for a magazine like Heat," admits Cave. This lead time can be problematic too. Back in 2010 Heat published the "shocking truth" that Cheryl Cole would "stand by her misbehaving husband" Ashley Cole. On the same day it hit the newsstands, the Girls Aloud star announced they were separating.

Kim Kardashian is another Heat regular, but there are no guaranteed top-selling cover stars any more, says Cave, not even Victoria Beckham. In its heyday, Big Brother provided Heat with a succession of stars, none bigger than Jade Goody, with whom Cave collaborated as the ghost writer of her autobiography (she also wrote short-lived boyband Busted's 2004 "unofficial annual"). The decline of the show's ratings, now on Channel 5, mirrors Heat's circulation.

Appropriately for the editor of a weekly which has made a fortune from celebrity relationships, Cave is in one of her own, dating Ben Lunt, a former winner of Channel 4's reality show Shipwrecked. "I interviewed him but it was about a year later he started asking me out," she explains. "He's a builder, he's gone back to his roots. He's not after fame." Although he did experience his 15 minutes – possibly less – as Heat's "torso of the week".

Cave says her most memorable moment on the magazine was persuading James Corden to pose, David Beckham-style, in his underpants ("vintage Heat") in 2008. She also highlights, in an email after our interview, the first interview with Imogen Thomas, alleged to have had an affair with footballer Ryan Giggs, and a series of pictures of celebrities without make-up or airbrushing.

The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge briefly became the centre of Heat's universe – Pippa Middleton ("P-middy") made the cover – but the glow has faded.

What about the Sun's naked pictures of Prince Harry? "I quite admire the Sun for putting it on the cover. There was frustration … but the Sun operates in a totally different world to Heat. We would never have done that," says Cave.

"The closest we would have gone was to get David Walliams to recreate the shot for our Christmas issue, which nearly happened." Walliams posing as Prince Harry? Without any clothes on? Now that really would have been vintage Heat.

The Daily Mirror: A Paper that Broke the Mould

Adrian Bingham, 2019 , University of Sheffield

The British popular press is often seen as a reactionary force in British politics and culture: newspapers run by rich, profit-seeking proprietors, propping up right-wing parties and promoting jingoistic and conservative world-views. For its first three decades, the Daily Mirror fitted exactly that pattern, but it then it broke the mould. From the mid-1930s it gradually developed a populist, left-of-centre political appeal, and after the Second World War, it became the only paper in British history to sustain a market-leading position while supporting the Labour party. The Mirror was never dominated by politics - it recognised that its readers wanted entertainment as much as education - and in the final decades of the twentieth century it was unable to meet the challenge of the reinvigorated Thatcherite tabloids, the Sun and the Mail, but it remained an important alternative voice when covering both domestic and international events.

A Conservative Start

The first two proprietors of the Mirror, Alfred Harmsworth (1903-14, enobled as Lord Northcliffe), and his brother Harold (1914-36, enobled as Lord Rothermere) were both robustly conservative and imperialistic in their politics and ensured that the paper echoed these values. Because the Mirror was launched first as a publication for women, and then swiftly transformed into a picture paper, political content was rarely a priority, and the editorial line tended to follow that of its sister paper, the Daily Mail. After the First World War, Rothermere increasingly used the Daily Mirror to champion his personal crusades, such as the Anti-Waste League, which sought to mobilise opinion against 'excessive' government spending. The paper also sought to associate the emerging Labour Party and its trade union supporters with the 'Red Peril' of the Communist threat. The Mirror stoutly fought against the General Strike of May 1926, called by the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in support of the miners' action to maintain their wages and conditions. The strike was, in the stark words of the Mirror, 'the most formidable weapon ever presented at the head of a democratic Government by its own nationals', and it insisted that the government must use every power to resist. The government, it argued, 'represents the nation and must refuse to be intimidated into surrender. In protecting the national interests the Government can count upon the support of the people at large.' The 'nation' and the 'people' were silently conflated with the respectable middle classes, and opposed to the trade unions, a sectional and selfish interest group out to defend their own interests. When the strike was called off, the Mirror declared 'The Nation Has Won': the unions had failed 'in their attempt to substitute Government by force for Government by law.' 'We can already see,', the paper observed gravely, 'in diminished employment, in the suffering of workers, in the waste of millions, the hideous results of the action of a group of fanatics who have posed as the friends of working men and women.' Such was 'the inevitable evil of industrial war'. Over the subsequent years, the Mirror drifted further to the right. Its political nadir came in 1934, when Rothermere instructed the paper to support Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF): 'Give the Blackshirts A Helping Hand' declared a signed article from the proprietor.

New Talent Brings Transformation

From this low point, though, the paper's fortunes soon changed. With Rothermere stepping back, and an influx of new editorial talent entering the office (see 'Introduction to the Daily Mirror'), the paper transformed itself into a brash working-class tabloid, and in the process repositioned itself politically. The main existing popular paper on the left in the early 1930s was the Daily Herald, which was part-owned by the TUC, and loyally followed the Labour line. Although it briefly became market leader when its daily circulation topped two million, over time the Herald struggled to sell beyond its main constituency of trade union members. The Mirror, by contrast, sought to appeal to a non-unionised working audience perceived to be largely uninterested in the intricacies of party politics. To do so it developed a new model of political reporting. The coverage of routine parliamentary business was reduced even further than it had been in other popular papers – in 1937, only 8% of the Mirror's total news space was devoted to 'political, social and economic news', and even on the main news page, only 15% of the Mirror's stories were about public affairs.4 The coverage that remained, though, was more opinionated and provocative, with a greater use of feature articles, columnists, and readers' letters. The paper gradually developed a left-of-centre crusading rhetoric that expressed discontent with the political status quo and demanded a greater voice for its working-class constituency. It updated established populist traditions for a modern, mediated mass democracy.

https://www.gale.com/intl/essays/adrian-bingham-daily-mirror-left-wing-politics

History of The Times Newspaper

The Times newspaper is published in London and is one of Britain's oldest and most impactful newspapers. It remains to be one of the largest papers and is the 6th most-circulated daily newspaper in the UK.

The Times was originally founded as The Daily Universal Register on 1st January 1785 by John Walter. It began as a 2 ½ penny broadsheet newspaper with the main aim of publicising a system of typography that interested Walter. In his opening editorial, Walter declared that a newspaper:

"ought to be the register of the times and faithful recorder of every species of intelligence; it ought not to be engrossed by any particular object; but like a well-covered table, it should contain something suited to every palate: observations on the dispositions of our own and of foreign courts should be provided for the political reader; debates should be reported for the amusement or information of those who may be particularly fond of them; and a due attention should be paid to the interests of trade, which are so greatly promoted by advertisements."

Becoming *The Times*

On 1st January 1788, John Walter changed the name of the newspaper to *The Times*, which is a newspaper title recognised worldwide today as a newspaper of record. After the change, the newspaper began publishing commercial news, as well as some scandals.

In 1803, the founder's son, John Walter II, took over the newspaper and expanded it from 4 pages to 12 large pages. The reputation of *The Times* as Britain's leading national news publication and historical record had been firmly established when John Walter III took over the newspaper in 1848. Its first liberal editor, Thomas Barnes, was in charge when the newspaper became popularly known as the "Thunderer" and emerged as a strong independent newspaper. It had incredible standards of reporting and always strove for accuracy.

Change in Ownership

The Times remained in the Walter family for four generations up to 1908, when it was bought by Lord Northcliffe of the *Daily Mail*. On the death of Lord Northcliffe in 1922, the newspaper was purchased by John Jacob Astor, who was a son of William Waldorf Astor, 1st Viscount Astor of *The Observer* newspaper (not to be confused with John Jacob Astor IV who died on The Titanic in 1912).

The Times began to deteriorate after overspending and an inadvertent publication of a forgery against Charles Stewart Parnell, an Irish nationalist politician. Changes were made to the newspaper during the 1950s when Sir William Haley became the editor, making the Times more interesting and dynamic.

The Astor family sold *The Times* to the Canadian media entrepreneur Roy Thomson (1st Baron Thomson of Fleet) in 1966 and Rupert Murdoch's News International purchased *The Times* (as part of Times Newspaper Limited) from Roy Thomson in 1981. *The Times Library Edition* was introduced on 2nd July 1917 and became a special edition printed on quality paper for libraries and royal palaces. It was renamed *The Times Royal Edition* in 1922 and continued to be printed until 31st December 1969. *Times* back issues from this year are of particular interest to the public.

Brief Closure and Strike

For a brief period, *The Times* newspaper was closed down due to an industrial dispute from 1st December 1978 until 12th November 1979 and thus no *Times* newspapers were printed during this period. The first issue after the strike was 13th November 1979. This was a major event in the history of *The Times* newspaper. Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation obtained the publication through purchasing Times Newspapers.

The Times newspaper stopped printing during this time due to a dispute between unions and management over the introduction of new technology and manning levels. Talks broke down and the Thomson Organisation who owned the newspaper at the time suspended printing in November 1978. The other newspapers in the Times group, including its Sunday sister paper, were also suspended during this time

The strike was significant since it was the first break in *The Times*' production since it began. Allegedly, the dispute had cost the Thomson Organisation over £30 million. When the newspaper was reintroduced, an extra 200,000 copies were printed compared to usual. There was also a long tail of welcome back messages from advertisers as well as announcements of births and deaths that dated the past year *The Times* was not publishing.

Hollywood: A History **PART ONE**

Hollywood is a neighborhood located in Los Angeles, California, that's also synonymous with the glamour, money and power of the entertainment industry. As the show-business capital of the world, Hollywood is home to many famous television and movie studios and record companies. Yet despite its glitzy status, Hollywood has humble roots: It began as a small agricultural community and evolved into a diverse, thriving metropolis where stars are born and dreams come true—for a lucky few.

In 1853, a small adobe hut was all that existed where Hollywood stands today. But over the next two decades, the area became a thriving agricultural community called Cahuenga Valley. When politician and real estate developer Harvey Henry Wilcox and his second wife Daeida moved to Los Angeles from Topeka, Kansas in 1883, he purchased 150 acres of land west of Hollywood and attempted to try his hand at ranching. His efforts didn't go well, however, so in 1887, he filed plans with the Los Angeles County Recorder's office to subdivide the land. Soon, Prospect Avenue and upscale homes sprung up.

By the turn of the century, Hollywood had a post office, markets, a hotel, a livery and even a street car. In 1902, banker and real estate mogul H. J. Whitley, also known as the "Father of Hollywood," stepped in. Whitley opened the Hollywood Hotel—now the site of the Dolby theater, which hosts the annual Oscars ceremony—and developed Ocean View Tract, an upscale residential neighborhood. He also helped finance the building of a bank and was integral to bringing electricity to the area.

Hollywood incorporated in 1903 and merged with Los Angeles in 1910. At that time, Prospect Avenue became the now-famous Hollywood Boulevard. How Hollywood got its name is disputed. According to one story, after Harvey and Daeida Wilcox learned there was an Ohio town called Hollywood, she named their ranch the same and the name stuck. Another story states H. J. Whitley came up with the name while honeymooning in the area in 1886. Whichever story is correct (if either), all three people played an important role in the famous city's development.

The first film completed in Hollywood was 1908's The Count of Monte Cristo, although production of the film began in Chicago. The first film made entirely in Hollywood was a short film in 1910 titled In Old California. By 1911, the first movie studio appeared on Sunset Boulevard. By 1915, many major motion-picture companies had relocated to Hollywood from the East Coast.

Hollywood was an ideal place to produce movies since filmmakers couldn't be sued there for infringing on motion picture film patents held by Thomas Edison and his Motion Picture Patents Company. It also had warm, predictably sunny weather and diverse terrain perfect for movie backdrops.

The Hollywood sign is a must-see tourist attraction, although it didn't start out that way. It was originally a clever electric billboard advertising an upscale suburban neighborhood in what is now the Hollywood Hills.

The sign originally said, "Hollywoodland," and was erected in 1923 by Los Angeles Times publisher and real estate developer Harry Chandler at a cost of $21,000. Each original letter was 30 feet wide and 43 feet tall and attached to telephone poles. Four thousand light bulbs illuminated the massive marquis.

The sign was supposed to last just one and a half years; however, it became part of Hollywood's culture and remained. During the Great Depression, the sign deteriorated. It was partially restored in 1949 and the last four letters removed. In the late 1970s, the sign was restored again and has been featured in countless movies, including Superman, Mighty Joe Young and The Day After Tomorrow.

The Golden Age of Hollywood was a period of great growth, experimentation and change in the industry that brought international prestige to Hollywood and its movie stars. Under the all-controlling studio system of the era, five movie studios known as the "Big Five" dominated: Warner Brothers, RKO, Fox, MGM and Paramount. Smaller studios included Columbia, Universal and United Artists.

The Golden Age of Hollywood began with the silent movie era (though some people say it started at the end of the silent movie age). Dramatic films such as D.W. Griffith's The Birth of a Nation (1915) and comedies such as The Kid (1921) starring Charlie Chaplin were popular nationwide. Soon, movie stars such as Chaplin, the Marx Brothers and Tallulah Bankhead were adored everywhere.

With the introduction of movies with sound, Hollywood producers churned out Westerns, musicals, romantic dramas, horror films and documentaries. Studio movie stars were even more idolized, and Hollywood increased its reputation as the land of affluence and fame.

During World War I, after President Woodrow Wilson declared war on Germany, the Big Five jumped on the political-propaganda bandwagon. Often under pressure and guidance from the Wilson administration, they produced educational shorts and reels on war preparedness and military recruitment. They also lent out their wide roster of popular actors to promote America's war efforts.

By the 1930s, at the height of Hollywood's Golden Age, the movie industry was one of the largest businesses in the United States. Even in the depths of the Great Depression, movies were a weekly escape for many people who loved trading their struggles for a fictional, often dazzling world, if only for a couple of hours. Despite the tough economic times, it's estimated up to 80 million Americans went to the movies each week during the Depression.

Some of the greatest films made in all of Hollywood history were made in the late 1930s, such as Snow White and the Seven Dwarves, Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, Gone with the Wind, Jezebel, A Star Is Born, Citizen Kane, The Wizard of Oz, Stagecoach and Wuthering Heights.

As World War II dominated news headlines, people needed to laugh more than ever, and Hollywood was happy to oblige them. Movie studios created scripts for their funniest comedians such as Bud Abbott, Lou Costello, Bob Hope and Jack Benny.

Pre-movie cartoon reels left audiences guffawing and were often used to promote war propaganda in a lighthearted way. On a serious note, documentary newsreels brought the realities of war to life in ways audiences had never experienced yet couldn't resist. But things weren't business-as-usual in Hollywood. Movie studios had to prepare for civil defense and erected elaborate bomb shelters. Filming from the sea or near military installations was banned. Nighttime blackout rules prohibited filming at night.

PART 2

In 1942, the War Production Board initiated a maximum $5,000 budget for new film sets, forcing movie studios to cut corners, recycle props and equipment and find creative and cheap ways to produce movies.

Many established movie stars enlisted in the armed forces, including Clark Gable, Henry Fonda, Jimmy Stewart and Mickey Rooney. Hollywood actresses such as Rita Hayworth, Betty Grable and Lana Turner lent their sensual appeal to the war effort by becoming pinups for love-starved GIs. Most Hollywood movie stars used their fame to help sell millions of war bonds.

In 1948, the Supreme Court ruled movie studios couldn't own movie theaters that showed only their films. This was the beginning of the end of the Golden Age of Hollywood. The ruling forced the Big Five to sell their movie theaters and become more selective about the films they produced. Movie studios were also bound by the Hays Code, a voluntary set of rules for censorship in movies. While not a major issue in the 1950s, it tied their hands even as audiences grew more liberal in the 1960s.

As television popularity exploded in the 1950s, movie attendance suffered. In the 1960s, foreign movie studios proved they could easily snag some of Hollywood's glory with their James Bond franchise and movies such as Zulu and Lawrence of Arabia. Finally, with the advent of tabloid magazines, many Hollywood stars were called out for scandal and questionable behavior, eradicating their wholesome images and knocking them from their lofty pedestals.

During the Cold War, paranoia grew in Hollywood and the rest of the United States over communism. In 1947, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), a House of Representatives group who investigated potential communist ties, decided to investigate communism in films. At least 40 people in the movie industry were called to testify.

Ten directors and screenwriters, known as the Hollywood Ten, chose to challenge the legality of HUAC's actions. They claimed the investigation violated their civil rights; however, their efforts backfired when they were held in contempt of Congress, fined and eventually jailed. One of the ten, Edward Dmtryk, later chose to cooperate with authorities and identified 20 of his peers with possible communist ties. After the fiasco, the Hollywood Ten, not including Dmtryk, and anyone else in the industry suspected of supporting communism were blacklisted and denied work. Hundreds of

actors, musicians, writers, producers and directors made the ignominious list, including Lena Horne, Orson Welles, Charlie Chaplin, Lloyd Bridges, Burl Ives and Anne Revere.

The Dark Side of Hollywood

On the surface, Hollywood reeks of glitz, but a dark side lurks underneath. As Oscar Levant famously quipped, “Strip away the phony tinsel of Hollywood, and you’ll find the real tinsel underneath.” Each year, the appeal of fame attracts thousands of starry-eyed runaways and naive dream-pursuers to Hollywood with little chance of making it big.

Many spend what little money they have on acting classes, agents and headshots. When the money runs out, these would-be stars often become desperate, even homeless. Some turn to drugs, prostitution. Drug and alcohol use has always been rampant in Hollywood and is often blamed on the stress of fame and a non-stop flow of money. Hundreds of celebrities have experienced drug or alcohol-related deaths including Marilyn Monroe, Judy Garland, William Holden, Truman Capote, Heath Ledger and Whitney Houston.

But Hollywood’s biggest secret may be rampant sexual abuse. Although the “casting couch” has existed since the dawn of movies, it reached a scandalous climax in 2017 when The New York Times broke the story that movie studio mogul Harvey Weinstein had allegedly sexually abused actors and employees for decades. He was fired from his movie studio as dozens of victims came forward to accused him.

Weinstein’s downfall empowered many more entertainment industry employees—both male and female—to come forward with their own sexual abuse stories, some of them decades old. The fallout is challenging Hollywood to face its culture of silence in the face of abuse and enact meaningful change.

Some critics and movie fans regard the 1960s and 1970s as a second Golden Age of Hollywood, as the old studio system of the 1930s completely broke down and restrictions on sexual content, obscenity and violence loosened. These changes gave groundbreaking directors like Martin Scorsese, Stanley Kubrick, Mike Nichols, Francis Ford Coppola and others free reign over controversial content that definitely wasn’t “family-friendly.” Noteworthy films that embraced the counterculture ethos of the 1960s and 1970s include Bonnie and Clyde, The Graduate, Easy Rider, 2001: A Space Odyssey, The Conversation, Mean Streets, The Godfather and All the President’s Men.

By the mid-1970s and 1980s, computer-assisted special effects had evolved and helped launch massive blockbuster action movies such as Jaws and the Star Wars and Indiana Jones franchises. Feel-good movies like Rocky and E.T. sent moviegoers flocking to theaters and made their movie stars larger-than-life. Movie ticket sales declined in the 1990s, but Hollywood pressed on thanks to a surge in VCR video rentals and later, DVDs and Blue-Ray. With the 2000s came an increase in Disney movies, big-budget blockbusters and crude comedies.

Changing technology continues to move people to a more digital world and Hollywood has more exposure than ever. Yet in an era of economic inequality, many Americans today are much less enthralled with Hollywood movie stars and their glamorous lifestyle. Social media, tabloids, a 24-hour news cycle and online movie review websites can make or break movies, movie stars and movie industry professionals overnight.

As a result, Hollywood will no doubt remain on the cutting edge of technology and continue to evolve how they do business to stay relevant by engaging and entertaining audiences worldwide.

Black Widow Began as a Sexist Stereotype. More Than a Decade Later, Scarlett Johansson Is Reclaiming Her Story BY ELIANA DOCKTERMAN, JULY 2, 2021 7:00 AM EDT

Black Widow sauntered into the mainstream consciousness in 2010's Iron Man 2. Not walked—sauntered. Natasha Romanoff, the Russian agent turned U.S. spy played by Scarlett Johansson, first meets Tony Stark, a.k.a. Iron Man (Robert Downey Jr.) when he's working out in a boxing ring with his employee, played by Jon Favreau, the film's director. Favreau's Happy Hogan condescendingly offers to teach Natasha how to box, so she slips off her high heels, slinks into the ring and immediately kicks the man's butt. That's the joke: Surprise! This unbelievably fit woman can fight.

But it's the moment after Natasha handily beats Happy that truly rankled fans. Stark turns to his assistant turned girlfriend Pepper Potts, played by Gwyneth Paltrow. "Who is she?" Tony asks. To which Pepper replies, "Potentially a very expensive sexual harassment lawsuit." Tony, after Googling for photos of Natasha in her underwear, quips, "I want one."

Victoria Alonso, executive vice president of production at Marvel Studios, never liked the line. "It bothered me then and it bothers me now," says Alonso, who was a co-producer of Iron Man 2. "I remember thinking, 'She's not a thing.' But how apropos: the world sees a sexy woman and thinks that because she is beautiful, that's all she has to give." The scene feels like a relic of a pre-#MeToo Hollywood.

And it was a different Hollywood, and certainly a different Marvel: for 10 years, more white men named Chris headlined Marvel movies than women and actors of color combined. It took 17 movies for the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) to introduce a female villain (Cate Blanchett in 2017's Thor: Ragnarok) and 21 to debut a solo female lead (Brie Larson in 2019's Captain Marvel). Now, 11 years after she first appeared onscreen, the MCU's first major female character is finally getting her own movie.

Black Widow, due July 9 in theaters and on Disney+ Premier Access, is a repudiation of the character's retrograde origin story. After suffering countless indignities in nine preceding films—written as a seductress, an ogled object, a love interest, a self-described "monster" due to her infertility—Black Widow now headlines a movie that grapples directly with the very things that once oppressed her: sexism, objectification, even human trafficking.

Directed by Cate Shortland—the first solo female director of an MCU film—Black Widow makes a radical new female-dominated action space suddenly seem possible. It's also a terrific film, a taut and tense spy thriller populated largely by female heroes and villains. Watching it ahead of its release, I found myself fantasizing about a woman-led Bond or Mission: Impossible. There have been efforts at female team-up action films before (Birds of Prey, Terminator: Dark Fate), but rarely executed so well. Critics agree, praising the well-crafted caper for giving an unsung hero her due.

The character's reinvention owes much to the woman who originated the role. Over the years, Johansson fought to develop her into a fully realized human being. She helped improve Natasha with each film, even though no female screenwriters wrote for the character until now. (WandaVision writer Jac Schaeffer gets a story credit on Black Widow.) Now, Johansson's an executive producer on Black Widow. When we spoke in March 2020, just before the pandemic would delay the movie's release by more than a year, she said she'd frequently been asked why it hadn't been made a decade ago. "And I'm like, 'It couldn't!' It was a different climate. I wouldn't have been able to have conversations [about sexism] with my director and see it actually translate onscreen."

Usually characters in the MCU are introduced in a solo film before they join the big Avengers team-ups. So Black Widow's most evolved iteration arrives both late in her story arc and at an odd time: the character died in Avengers: Endgame; Black Widow is a prequel set before that film. Johansson's first and presumably last solo outing as Black Widow feels like a bittersweet tribute to the character that broke ground for the many women Marvel now spotlights. It also marks a new chapter for one of the most successful movie studios, one in which women, at long last, will redefine blockbusters for millions around the world.

Hollywood's investment in female-led action and superhero films is an embarrassingly recent phenomenon. Even in the years after female-fronted adventure flicks like The Hunger Games and Frozen broke box-office records, Alonso argues that ingrained prejudices stymied the fight for representation in superhero movies. "There was always a myth that women's stories don't sell," she says. "That super-heroes can't be women. We had to demystify a bunch of these myths that were very much a part of what Hollywood was all about."

These weren't whispered notions. The 2014 Sony email hack contained a leaked missive with the subject line "female movies" sent by then Marvel Entertainment CEO Ike Perlmutter, arguing that such projects were not bankable. The email went viral just as female fans had begun to lobby for a Black Widow movie. But she remained a sidekick. "In the beginning she was used as a kind of chess piece for her male counterparts," says Johansson. But in those dark years before Wonder Woman or Captain Marvel graced the big screen, feminist fans of genre film clung to her, flaws and all. She was all we had.

The studio also had some time to deal with Black Widow's particular baggage. Like Wonder Woman, Black Widow has a backstory rooted in her sexuality: in her first comics appearance, she tries to seduce Tony Stark and spends much of her early comics runs mooning after Hawkeye. Natasha is just one of many "widows," female Russian spies trained in the art of combat and (the films heavily imply) seduction. By the time she made her big-screen debut in Iron Man 2, she's left that life behind, but she still deploys her sultry stare as a weapon. In her first scene in 2012's Avengers, she's tied up in a chair being interrogated by bad guys. She's wearing a revealing dress and playing vulnerable until she breaks character and takes down the henchmen, wrists still bound.

In 2015's Avengers: Age of Ultron, Natasha begins a romance with Bruce Banner (a.k.a. Mark Ruffalo's Hulk). The story should have offered Johansson a chance to further explore the character's motivations. But the actor notes that the plot line was "again dependent on another man's desire."

It was in this movie that Black Widow, in relating to Hulk's insecurity over turning into an actual green beast, described herself as a "monster" because of her forced hysterectomy and inability to bear children. The line outraged fans who called out director Joss Whedon on Twitter. He left the platform soon after, though he told Buzzfeed that his departure was unrelated to the blowback and that "militant feminists" were always criticizing his work. (Whedon has since been accused of bullying behavior, particularly toward female and BIPOC actors, on sets.)

Read the full article here:

https://time.com/6077666/black-widow-scarlett-johansson/

I, Daniel Blake 'doesn't represent reality', says jobcentre manager

Exclusive: Boss at Newcastle agency shown in Ken Loach hit criticises how it is portrayed but director says film was fair. Tom Seymour, Fri 10 Feb 2017 14.37 GMT

A senior manager of Jobcentre Plus in Newcastle, whose office was depicted so damningly in Ken Loach's indictment of the social security assessment system I, Daniel Blake, has hit out at the veteran film-maker's treatment of his agency.

Steve McCall, employer relationship manager at Jobcentre Plus in Tyne & Wear and Northumberland, who is based at the branch featured in the film, said: "I, Daniel Blake is a representation … I hope people don't think the film is a documentary, because it's a story that doesn't represent the reality we work in."

Loach's film, which is nominated for five Bafta awards at this weekend's ceremony, follows the titular Daniel Blake, a 59-year-old carpenter who has recently had a heart attack yet is deemed fit to work by a "healthcare professional" at his local jobcentre. Patently unwell, and unwilling to try to twist the system, Blake is soon caught in a Kafkaesque cycle of bureaucracy, appeals and sanctions, as he finds himself descending into a life of abject poverty.

But McCall says Loach's depiction diverges dramatically from his day-to-day experience of Newcastle's employment services. "My team and I try to treat people as individuals, and we care about the work we do," he told the Guardian. "There will be times when we get it wrong, but I don't believe we are ever as wrong as how we are portrayed in this film.

"I remember talking about the film in the canteen. We were concerned about how it might affect our relationship with the people we were trying to help find work. How would they react to it?"

Loach, however, stands by his film. "I challenge anyone to find a single word in that film that isn't true," he said. I, Daniel Blake, which won the Palme d'Or at last year's Cannes film festival and is frontrunner for outstanding British film at Sunday's Baftas, was shot on location in Newcastle, though its jobcentre scenes were filmed in a specially created set.

"I think we were more than fair to the jobcentre," said Loach. "The making of the film was at least as rigorous as any piece of journalism. We were determined to be rigorous with the truth, because we knew people would try and shoot us down."

Support for I, Daniel Blake came from far beyond the film industry, with the Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn, urging Theresa May during prime minister's questions to watch it.

Damian Green, the work and pensions secretary, said the film was "monstrously unfair" – though he added he had not seen it. I, Daniel Blake has been criticised by some media commentators, such as Toby Young (in the Daily Mail) and the Sunday Times film critic Camilla Long who said it did not "ring true". However, Hayley Squires, who plays a single mother in the film, said it showed "the absolute truth of what's happening to millions of British people in this country" and accused Young and Long of "irresponsible journalism".

Loach cites testimonies he and the screenwriter Paul Laverty took from current and former jobcentre employees. He said: "Many of [them] walked away from the jobcentre because they were disgusted by what they were being asked to do. They left because they didn't want to be part of something they believed to be wrong. Steve [McCall] has obviously chosen to stay."

The jobcentre and Department for Work and Pensions employees Loach refers to are thanked in the film's closing credits but were too scared to be named individually for fear of retribution, Loach said.

"They told us that jobcentre employees understood they were working in a bureaucratic trap that had been built with the intention of catching people out," he said. "They told us that people working at the jobcentre were given targets when it came to how many people they were expected to sanction. There is no doubt in my mind that, if a random cross-section of people went to the jobcentre every day, did everything they were asked to do, dotted every 'i' and crossed every 't', some of them would still be sanctioned."

Loach is backed up by Amanda Payne, who worked at the same Newcastle branch in a number of positions, including as work search assessor and hardship allowance officer, before leaving in 2015. She was cast in a small role in I, Daniel Blake. "The processes for claimants portrayed in the film are set by the government," she said. "They are the working practices an adviser's performance is measured against … The film, I feel, portrays the exact way jobcentre staff are trained to work – but, in reality, personality dictates the degree of empathy and compassion a person can show."

McCall said there was an undeserved stigma attached to jobcentre workers. "As an employment coach, you get a buzz when someone you have worked with, sometimes for a long time, finds employment," said McCall. "That's what makes my job worthwhile. We do have difficult conversations with people at times. We do have disputes with people. We have to deliver the benefit in the way it's designed to be delivered. And yeah, we do make mistakes. We're not trying to hide that. But we are there to help people, and sanctions are all always a last resort. That's the reality of the jobcentre. The film doesn't show that, and I think that's for a reason."

Loach said jobcentre workers were not the film's primary target but added: "They're imposing a system that is unjust. If you impose a system at the government's behest that is wrong, of course you'll be stigmatised."

"I'd be keen to see if Mr Loach would be willing to make a film with the jobcentre," said McCall. "The offer is there. We would very much welcome him to get in touch."

Further Reading:

I, Daniel Blake Shows us the Virtuous Poor – How Conservative

It takes real arrogance to suggest the poverty in I, Daniel Blake is unrealistic

Register and Represent – Blood.co.uk

Grime artist Lady Leshurr leads a star-studded cast in our new 'Represent' campaign.

The '#Represent' campaign sees NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) join forces with MOBO (Music of Black Origin) to recruit a new generation of blood donors. Together, we are asking young people, especially young people with black and Asian heritage, to step up and represent by signing up to become blood donors and sign the Organ Donor Register.

Why the MOBOs?

Since day one, MOBO has had a social and cultural responsibility beyond the parameters of music, motivating and elevating young people to achieve their full potential. NHSBT are also asking people to fulfil their potential, if possible, by becoming lifesavers. A partnership with MOBO seemed the perfect fit.

The vital work of NHSBT would not be possible without our donors - ordinary people doing extraordinary things by saving and improving the lives of others. We hope that our partnership with the MOBOs will encourage even more young people to become lifesavers.

Why is the campaign needed?

More young donors, especially more black and Asian blood donors are needed. Donors with Black or Asian heritage are more likely to be rare blood types. These rare blood types are essential in the treatment of patients with sickle cell disease and thalassaemia which mainly affect patients of black and Asian heritage respectively.

These patients who require regular transfusions need blood which is more closely matched to their own to get the best outcome; the best way to get this match is blood from a similar ethnic background.

People of Black and Asian heritage also have a higher incidence of conditions such as diabetes – which increases the chances of needing an organ transplant. As a donor from the same ethnic background could provide the best and closest match for patients, we need more people with Black and Asian heritage to sign up as organ donors.

The Represent Film

To inspire the next generation of donors in a new and creative way, we have created a music video with a powerful message.

Written and performed by fantastic UK Grime artist and 2016 MOBO Award nominee Lady Leshurr, the video showcases leading UK celebrities including record breaking Olympian Nicola Adams MBE, TV presenter and wheelchair basketball player Ade Adepitan, Chuka Umunna MP and MOBO's own Founder and CEO Kanya King MBE. (For a subtitled version of the video click here)

By partnering with the MOBO Awards and engaging with key role models and influencers, NHSBT aims to highlight the importance of blood donation and motivate more young people to book an appointment and help save lives.

Step up and #Represent.

Mike McGee, *The Guardian*, 08/10/14

How we resurrected Audrey Hepburn™ for the Galaxy chocolate ad

In the first of a new blog series from those who have made some of the world's most memorable ads, Mike McGee tells us how the ad pushed the boundaries for computer graphics

It's not every day you're asked to bring dead celebrities back from the grave, but in our line of work, it's becoming more common. It's something we at Framestore were asked to do when we resurrected Audrey Hepburn™ for Galaxy's chauffeur commercial.

Audrey represents heritage, classiness and elegance. So from a strategic and creative point of view, it made sense for Galaxy to communicate its "silk, not cotton" branding through these qualities. What was less clear, however, was just how we were meant to recreate an iconic and globally recognised face when the original footage exists at a resolution incompatible with today's high standards.

We ended up completely recreating Audrey's face in computer graphics (CG) – a feat never before achieved at such close-up scale. If this doesn't sound like a big deal, it is. Replicating a photorealistic 100% CG human that stands up to close inspection is the mecca of visual effects (VFX). So this project was an industry first and took us to the edge of what's possible.

Skin, eyes and facial hair are just too "perfect" when rendered through a computer. Crucial human subtleties, like the flicker of an eye, can also look robotic when computer-generated. So why go 100% CG?

We couldn't take the easy option of filming a lookalike and disguising mismatched nuances through shadows and camera angles because, first, Audrey was the absolute star of the show and there was no hiding her in a dark corner; second, as the ultimate symbol of beauty, the likelihood of casting a near-perfect match was nil. So we went the whole hog and digitally recreated every millimetre of her face.

To get reference material of how Audrey would look and act in the script's scenes, two body-doubles were cast: one to represent her minute 20-inch waist and another to convey as closely as possible her distinctive facial bone structure. Once shot, we'd have footage and data to augment with VFX.

Before the main shoot began on the Amalfi coast, we scanned the face-double using FACS (facial action coding system). This session captured a plethora of hi-res skin textures and more than 60 different facial expressions for animators to replicate when creating the CG Audrey.

Once this preparatory work was cracked, our VFX supervisors joined the production team in Italy. But there was no time to kick back and soak up *la dolce vita*. Instead, they tirelessly recorded lighting information – to help "bed in" VFX further down the line – and tracking data, to perfectly lock the actor's body to our soon-to-be-made CG head. Without a perfect head joint, we'd get the dreaded "nodding dog" effect: the nadir of VFX that breaks reality.

Fortunately, we worked on the film Gravity's VFX at the same time. In the film, Sandra Bullock's body was CG but her face was live-action, so we'd already perfected an efficient method for joining head to body and could apply this time-saving technique to Audrey.

Once back at Framestore HQ, the lookalike's FACS scan was used to build a CG facial rig: a replica of the lookalike's face that provided the foundations for our digitally reimagined Audrey. To turn the

lookalike's CG face into an authentic-looking Audrey, we researched Hepburn's back catalogue to identify the subtleties that make Audrey look like Audrey. But not just any old Audrey; our brief was to recreate a 19-year-old Ms Hepburn.

The next big challenge was to make the CG skin look real, the holy grail of CG. We experimented with a new renderer, Arnold, which hadn't previously been used on a commercial. It paid off once we'd perfected the soft, translucent look of real skin. Combined with some cunningly created soft "peach fuzz" to break-up robotic perfection, we finally began to see an authentic-looking apparition.

Without access to geometrical data of Audrey's face (if only they'd foreseen the future of VFX in the 1940s) recreating her as a CG entity was an inexact science, making it difficult to judge when we'd reached perfection. Our only option was good old-fashioned trial and error, persisting until everyone screamed: "That's it!"

This final layer of perfection is the most demanding. Getting 95% of the images right took 50% of the time. Getting that extra 5%, the photorealism, consumed the second 50% of the schedule.

Although the ad first aired more than 18 months ago, it's still enjoying international airtime today. It caused much debate in VFX circles, with many making misguided guesses about how we did it. But perhaps its most defining achievement is marking a milestone in the creation of photoreal CG humans. The repercussions are being felt far and wide.

Hollywood is quietly debating the consequences of photoreal CG actors and posthumous usage rights. Rumour even has it that savvy young A-listers are having their bodies scanned at various ages as a form of digital cryogenics. It's no coincidence that shortly after resurrecting Audrey, Michael Jackson arose from the dead as a moon-walking hologram. Thanks to Audrey and Galaxy, it looks like CG humans are here to stay.

OMO Advert – Further Context

Adverts reflect the culture and attitudes of the time they were created. Evolving attitudes towards such factors such as gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation will result in changes to the images and messages depicted in the product.

This ad was produced at a time when attitudes were very different to today. Husbands and fathers were 'breadwinners' who went to earn money, whereas wives and mothers stayed home to carry out domestic duties such as cooking, childcare and cleaning. **Often, their value and worth to society was measured by others by their domestic successes, such as clean, bright sheets on the washing line(!).** This wasn't the case for all, as some women needed to work out of financial necessity, but they were more likely to be focused on domestic issues hence the imagery in this ad. It would have been acceptable to only market this towards women; men would not have been interested in washing powder!

It could be argued that this ad **exploits insecurities women may have felt when comparing their domestic 'success' to others.** This product therefore provides a shortcut to the visual evidence (clean sheets on the line!) that this 'success' is measured by.

Stereotypes

Advertisements often make use of positive stereotypes to **endorse** and sell products. In this case, the image is immediately recognisable as a happy and hardworking housewife so the stereotypes saves the need for the advertisers establishing this scenario. It assumes that all women in a domestic setting identify with taking pride in their 'brilliantly bright' laundry and look for ways to make their lives easier. Most ads for domestic products in the 1950s were influenced by this assumption.

In Context

Often, the job of washing was assigned to a certain day of the week (hence 'washday' in the ad's **copy**). Washing machines were only just becoming more common so most washing was done by hand which would have taken many hours. The text 'Boil with OMO' implies boiling on the hob and not using a washing machine. At the time, it would have been quite a challenge to remove dirt and stains and ensure whiteness is retained after washing, so this may be why the advert capitalises the word 'Bright'; it is a **USP** of the product as it was difficult to achieve.

Think about how you, as a 21st-century person, react to the ad on a personal level as you are likely to interpret the signs and representations different to a 1950s audience. Are you offended? Do you find it funny? Are you concerned about the claims made about the product? You may even wonder what damage the chemicals or bleach may do not only to clothes but to the user, the wearers of the clothes, and the environment. How easy is it to put yourself in the place of the target audience? **It is important to be aware of how your own values, beliefs and experiences shape your responses to media products, and how difficult it is to separate your response from these influences.**

What Is Genre and How Is It Determined?

Click the link for the full article; it's very interesting!

Webster's Encyclopaedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language defines genre as "a category of artistic, musical, or literary composition characterized by a particular style, form, or content. In other words, genre categorizes movies. Categorizing movies makes it easier for the viewer to discover what he or she likes and will want to see. Putting a movie into a particular genre or category does not diminish the quality of the movie by assuming that if it can be put into a genre, the movie is ordinary and lacks originality and creativity.

Genre consists of four elements or parts: character, story, plot and setting. An equation for remembering the genre is: Story (Action) + Plot + Character + Setting = Genre. This becomes an easy way to remember the elements of a genre. The elements of story, plot, setting, and character equal a specific category of movie. These elements are discussed regarding how their variations create a different category of movie.

Some genres may be as general as comedy but do not have sub-genres like comedy. The sub-genres of comedy differ from one another based on the fluctuations of the characters and the story.

Other genres are crime, war, Westerns, spy, adventure, science fiction, horror, fantasy, biography, and mystery. This is why this chapter is longer than the others because of the discussion of these variations. Drama can be considered a genre, even though some critics do not consider it a genre because it is too general. If the movie elements are serious and cannot fit into a more limited genre, then it can be considered a drama. Categorizing a movie indirectly assists in shaping the characters and the story of the movie. The shaping determines the plot and best setting to use.

Movies often have genres that overlap, such as adventure in a spy movie, or crime in a science fiction movie. But one genre is predominant.

Other movie labels cannot be considered genres. Film noir, thrillers, and action movies are not actually genres but a director's style, which will be discussed in a later chapter. They are considered director's style because their characteristics include cinematography and editing, which are not among the four elements that make up a genre. These labels reflect or accentuate the movie genre rather than defining the genre.

Likewise, musicals and animation are not considered genres but rather "treatments" as to how a particular movie genre is told, even though people, over generations, refer to these types of movies as genres.

You have to be very specific in the discussion of movie terminology, sticking within the particular definition of the terms. Some people will say that genres are labels that are given to stock movies, stating that these movies are routine. Being labelled in a genre is not a negative action.

Movies have their own personalities. Each movie is different. Having a movie labelled in a genre assists people to find a particular movie that they may be interested in watching. Many people like a specific genre or two and will only watch movies in those genres.

What People Like the Most about a Movie

People will state that a particular movie had a good plot or an intriguing story. What people are actually referring to is that they enjoyed the characters, the problems/conflict the characters got into, and how the characters got out of the problems and conflict.

People love a movie because they like to watch characters/people. How many people do you know who like to go to the mall, plaza, or beach and state that they like to people watch? How many people are nosey neighbours because they like to watch what is going on with the people around them?

People may like to watch crime movies or Westerns. They like characters within this particular type of story because of the amount of action or the time period setting. People may like Westerns because they wish they lived in the 19th century because it was considered a simpler time.

Dr Who: An Unearthly Child

A claustrophobic economy of design and writing, allied to an unsettling juxtaposition of the mundanely familiar with the subtly strange, are key factors that mark the opening episode of Doctor Who as one of the finest examples of episodic drama ever produced for television.

From its classic opening continuous tracking shot which takes the viewers on a point-of-view journey from the fog shrouded confines of Totter's Lane in London, and on through the gates and into the interior of I.M. Foreman's shadowy and vaguely ominous scrap yard, to end before the incongruous exterior of an oddly humming official Police Call Box, we the viewers, are presented with a tight, skilful and economically written intellectual puzzle that serves as the fundamental foundation on which future decades of a televisual legend will be built.

Working in a near perfect unison of intent that few productions will ever come close to equalling, writer Anthony Coburn, Story Editor David Whitaker, director Waris Hussein and designers Peter Brachacki and Barry Newberry and the young but talented eye of producer Verity Lambert, have succeeded in fashioning twenty-five minutes of unique television drama that effortlessly succeeded in breaking new ground in the presentation of a science-fiction concept, to a mass early Saturday evening family viewing audience.

Brilliantly employing the characters of inquisitive school teachers, Barbara Wright and Ian Chesterton, as the eyes and ears of his wider audience, writer Coburn deftly defines the small mystery of a paradoxically brilliant but mysterious young schoolgirl that will ultimately lead the two adults - and by extension, we the viewers - to a revelation of literally staggering proportions. Character, economy and the inexorable build-up of tension as each small question about the true nature of the circumstances of young Susan Foreman's mysterious life lead tantalisingly to ever more larger questions, is the central cement that binds viewer to story forming an unbreakable bond. From the outset, Barbara and Ian are entirely believable as real people. Their initial introduction apart from giving spoken substance to the wordless mystery presented in the dialogue free opening tracking shot, also brilliantly imbues the characters with a genuine sense that these are people with fully functioning unseen lives and personal histories which exist beyond the confines of the story being presented. It's this very real substance to the characters that allow them the authority to act as the bridge between the events unfolding around them and the audience watching at home. And as such is as much a tribute to the acting acumen of Jacqueline Hill and William Russell as it is to Coburn's scripting.

Taken from a different angle, the same holds true for Carol Ann Ford's decidedly otherworldly portrayal of Susan, the eponymous Unearthly Child of the story's title. Armed with a specially created hairstyle from Vidal Sassoon, and a near ethereal mixture of otherworldly aloofness wedded

to an entirely earthly sense of teenaged vulnerability, Ford's performance perfectly offsets the everyman normality of her teachers to become an integral factor in the overall believability of the air of subdued mystery that surrounds her.

But without doubt, from his first appearance over half way through the events of the story, the rock upon which the entire underlying series structure depends is William Hartnell's masterful performance as Susan's mysterious, quietly devious and imperious and high-handed Grandfather, Known simply as "The Doctor". In what amounts to a virtual master class in seemingly effortless acting technique, the veteran actor offers up a performance of such assured confidence and regal authority, that the character of the aging alien traveller through time and space assumes centre stage from his first bout of verbal sparring with his intrusive human interlopers. With sparse economy and perfectly pitched playing from the small, self-contained ensemble cast, the ultimate revelation of the Foreman's true nature and the enticing hints of their origins as well as that of the advanced technological marvel that serves as their habitat, are persuasively brought home to the appreciative viewing audience.

In fact, the sheer impact of the vast, alien machinery of the interior of the Doctor's TARDIS, housed as it is within the impossibly confined dimensions of its outer Police Box shell, are the greatest triumph of the episode from a purely design and technical standpoint. Up until Barbara and Ian's forcible invasion of the Doctor and Susan's sanctuary, director Waris Hussein has cleverly reinforced a near subliminal atmosphere of claustrophobic closeness in his framing and shooting of the earlier scenes, leading up to the revelation of the Police Box interior in such a way as to maximise the colossal surprise experienced by both teachers and viewers, when both are finally confronted by the near incomprehensible vastness of the alien craft's cavernous interior. That such an astonishing sight manages to succeeds in imparting such a genuine sense of credibility, despite the obvious impossibility of its existence, is as much a testament to TARDIS interior designer Peter Brachacki's, imaginative flair as it is to the performances of the actors and the joint imaginations of the writer and production team.

From its fog bound opening moments to its cliff-hanger ending which sees the TARDIS materialising within a bleak, rocky landscape over which an ominous shadow falls, Doctor Who: An Unearthly Child, is a vastly imaginative and atmospheric exercise in mystery and adventure that will surely become a benchmark by which all subsequent new series introductions should be measured.

Doctor Who was the brainchild of Canadian Sydney Newman who joined the BBC as Head of Drama in 1962. A big science fiction fan himself Newman was looking for a programme that would capture the Saturday teatime audience and bridge the gap between the afternoon sports programme Grandstand and the early evening schedule that kicked off with the popular music show Juke Box Jury. What Newman wanted was a show that was suitable family viewing attracting the younger children and teenagers as well as their parents. To this end it was suggested that the series be tilted towards the 14-year old age group, which at that time was considered 'the most difficult, critical, even sophisticated audience there is for TV.'

Newman knew that it would be difficult to get the correct balance and saw in science fiction a concept that would appeal to all age ranges. He then set about developing the character of The Doctor describing him thus: A man who is 764 years old - who is senile but with extraordinary flashes of intellectual brilliance. A crotchety old bugger - any kids grandfather - who had, in a state of terror, escaped in his machine from an advanced civilisation on a distant planet, which had been taken over by some unknown enemy. He did not know how to operate the time-space machine and he never intended to come to our Earth. In trying to get home he simply pressed the wrong buttons - and kept

on pressing the wrong buttons, taking his human passengers backwards and forwards and in and out of time and space.

Having decided on that concept Newman then approached his Head of Script Department Donald Wilson to compile a list of suggestions for a workable format for the series, which would run for 52 weeks of the year and be comprised of a number of shorter serials within its overall conceptual framework. Over a period of many months Doctor Who went through a number of changes before Newman was happy with a workable format. However, when An Unearthly Child did finally make it in front of the cameras (27/09/1963) Newman was far from pleased with the result and in an unprecedented move he ordered the whole episode be re-shot with a number of 'fine-tune' alterations made to the script, as well as the character of The Doctor.

The first episode of Doctor Who aired on BBC television at 5.15pm on Saturday 23rd November 1963. The day before the whole world had been shaken by the assassination of US President John F. Kennedy, and as a result of many people's attention being turned to the unfolding true life events in Dallas, Texas (and an untimely power failure that affected large parts of the country) An Unearthly Child was not watched by as many people as the BBC had hoped for (4.4 million tuned in). However, critics in the British press received the show so well that the following week the BBC repeated the first episode immediately before showing part two (pulling in an audience of 5.9 million).

HIS DARK MATERIALS IS FINALLY GETTING TOLD WITHOUT (MUCH) RELIGIOUS BACKLASH

Nathan Smith, 20/11/20

I had a religious upbringing in a fairly conservative town in central Texas, but thankfully, my parents encouraged me to read; they didn't restrict my consumption of fantasy and science fiction, unlike other kids in strict Christian families that I knew. I was an absolute nut for anything involving magic or alchemy, and if it didn't have a map of a fictional country at the front of the book, I wasn't reading it. Phillip Pullman's The Golden Compass, the first book in the His Dark Materials trilogy, hit that worldbuilding sweet spot.

Many children of my generation were similarly swept up in a mysterious world filled with mystical daemons and sinister conspiracies. Given its international fanbase, it's no surprise that His Dark Materials has been considered ripe material for adaptations in other media — the series has taken the form of a radio play, a theatrical production, a failed movie franchise, and now as a television series co-produced by HBO and the BBC, the second season of which premiered this week. Though the airing of the new His Dark Materials show has been relatively quiet and controversy-free, the series has had a long, hard road to mainstream acceptance despite its many fans.

His Dark Materials — published from 1995 to 2000 and consisting of three novels, The Golden Compass, The Subtle Knife, and The Amber Spyglass — infamously chronicles an attempt to overthrow the Christian God and his kingdom in heaven; the great evil in the books is the sinister Magisterium, a loose stand-in for the Catholic Church. In other words: Pullman's books, while marketed to an adolescent audience, never infantilized that audience and ventured into some heady thematic territory. So it's no surprise that the trilogy was the subject of relentless criticism and condemnation from the moment of its genesis, both in Pullman's native U.K. and here in the United States.

When I read His Dark Materials in middle school, I was still steeped in my conservative religious upbringing and started to feel increasingly uncomfortable reading the second book in the series, The Subtle Knife. By the time I got to the end, when the book's characters fully announce their intention to assassinate God, I was utterly scandalized — I promptly returned the "heathen" book to the public library and never read The Amber Spyglass, the final book in the trilogy.

Since its release by Scholastic in the '90s, the series has been dogged by complaints by various religious groups. Pullman's books were significantly more subversive than their peers in the Young Adult section, but it's much easier to sneak criticism of the Catholic Church into a book than it is a blockbuster motion picture event. Though the recent HBO series His Dark Materials has so far gotten away with relatively little pushback from the religious right, the previous adaptation of Pullman's work, 2007's The Golden Compass, wasn't so lucky.

Despite the filmmakers' efforts to make the material more palatable to conservative audience members — which only succeeded in alienating fans of the series — Christian groups had their knives out from the get-go. Religious critics even admitted the movie was more toned-down compared to the book, but that would never be enough. In a statement released by The Catholic League, the anti-defamation group urged parents to boycott The Golden Compass "precisely because [The Catholic League] knows that the film is bait for the books: unsuspecting parents who take their children to see the movie may be impelled to buy the three books as a Christmas present. And no parent who wants to bring their children up in the faith will want any part of these books." The League launched a major campaign to protest the movie, publishing an expository pamphlet called "The Golden Compass: Agenda Unmasked." Protestants took issue with the film for similar reasons, with Dr. R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, arguing that Pullman's work is "as subtle as an army tank," and that "his agenda is nothing less than to expose what he believes is the tyranny of the Christian faith and the Christian church."

The movie casts the book's spiritual conflicts as more of a struggle between science and magic than science and religion; the Magisterium's members clearly look like men of the cloth, but there's enough difference to explain away any connections. Nicole Kidman, perfectly cast (and utterly wasted) as Mrs. Coulter, was raised Catholic and said she would not have done the film if she considered it "anti-Catholic," and the rest of the cast and crew stood by the movie as a critique of authority in general, not organized religion or Christianity specifically.

In the newest envisioning of His Dark Materials, the Magisterium has more explicit religious overtones, and they strictly govern and punish anything considered "heresy" or "blasphemy." But all in all, this series' version of the Magisterium still feels less like any real church and more like a dystopian and authoritarian organization more interested in ruling power than religion.

Considering how fervently religious critics have come for His Dark Materials in the past, it's a little shocking how little flak the new series has gotten. Writing for the Jesuit publication American Magazine, John O'Keefe calls the series' depiction of the Magisterium to be "quite harsh" and faults its negative feelings toward organized religion, but even then, his most severe criticism is that the miniseries tones down the book trilogy's environmental message. A warm review in Christianity Today explains that the show's religious commentary is less about the church itself and more about authority run amuck, imagining a society where a "hierarchical church authority controls society, but lacks the genuine faith to guide it." James Parker wrote a scathing takedown in The Atlantic — but of Pullman's original books and his own atheism, not the miniseries. The Catholic League didn't even bother to put out a statement.

Maybe it's just that times have changed, but this dilemma is why a project like His Dark Materials is perfect for a platform like HBO — HBO gets money from its subscribers whether His Dark Materials does well or not, so there's less risk involved. All in all, HBO is resistant to controversy in a way theatrically-released feature films are not.

I never actually got around to reading The Amber Spyglass; my fear of God was a little too intense at the time. But my own personal beliefs and views have changed quite a bit in the years since, and it seems the rest of the world has changed too — the HBO series will be the first time anyone has ever adapted The Subtle Knife or The Amber Spyglass to the screen.

Several years after the film adaptation of The Golden Compass was released, star Sam Elliot blamed the Catholic Church for its failure. Thankfully, now we can enjoy His Dark Materials whether the Catholic Church wants us to or not.

Why the *His Dark Materials* Books Were Considered Controversial, Even Dangerous

- Madison Vain, 04/11/19

Philip Pullman's addictive His Dark Materials trilogy is getting its third shot at a live action adaption this week. HBO's iteration—which stars James McAvoy, Ruth Wilson, Lin-Manuel Miranda, and Dafne Keen—debuts Monday night on the network. And while it may be hard to believe now—a movie which starred the then-brand new James Bond, Daniel Craig, and Nicole Kidman hit theaters back in 2007—Pullman's books were once considered controversial, even dangerous.

The work of scientific fantasy takes place in a series of parallel universes and was marketed as children's fare when originally released between the years of 1995 and 2000. It follows two pre-teens (Lyra Belacqua and Will Parry) on their occasional hunt for, and occasional run from, their respective parents. It's a tale that involves angels and magical bears and ex-nuns and outer-body souls that accompany humans in the form of various animals called Daemons. Many of the plot lines about destiny, and whether we create it or embrace it, spurred controversy with Christian groups.

Lyra and Will must traverse several worlds, ages, and continents because some of those that they are chasing, like Lord Asriel, are working furiously to dismantle earth's most prominent church, the Magisterium. They're also attempting to take down "Dust" (in Christian terms: original sin) while others, like Mrs. Coulter, work to maintain the church's mighty power. That the god, here called The Authority, is a merciless tyrant and a fraud, certainly didn't help.

In 2002, conservative UK journalist Peter Hitchens published an article about Pullman titled "This Is the Most Dangerous Author in Britain." "He is the anti-[C.S.] Lewis, the one atheists would have been praying for, if atheists prayed," he wrote. In 2007, as the film was nearing release, the Catholic League campaigned against the movie and source material. Pullman wrote, they argued, "to promote atheism and denigrate Christianity, especially Roman Catholicism." The following year, the series was second in the top 10 books that individuals and organizations tried to have banned across the United States, according to the American Library Association. It was No. 8 overall for the decade stretching from 2000-2009 on the ALA's Top 100 Banned/Challenged Books list. (The Harry Potter series claimed the top spot.)

Pullman's public appearances did little to quell the uproar. Shortly after the final installment's release, he reportedly told the Washington Post that his aim was to "undermine the basis of

Christian belief." In a 2002 interview with the Guardian, he said organized religion is necessarily corrupt. "Whenever you get a political structure, with ranks and hierarchies, you get corruption," he argued, "you get people who are more interested in progressing through those ranks than in doing good. Power corrupts." In a 2003 conversation with the Sydney Herald he summed up his plot: "My books are about killing god."

In 2005, at a lecture at East Anglia, in Norwich, England, centered around the subject of religion and education, he said, “Quite what prompted you to ask me to talk about religious education I can’t immediately see. . . . Given that I’ve voiced some criticisms of religion in the past, and that various Christian groups have expressed their criticisms of me, it might be that whatever I said on the subject would be hostile in any case." He continued, says the New Yorker, who had a reporter on site, "I don’t profess any religion; I don’t think it’s possible that there is a God; I have the greatest difficulty in understanding what is meant by the words ‘spiritual’ or ‘spirituality’; but I think I can say something about moral education, and I think it has something to do with the way we understand stories."

Pullman's vindication, of course, came in the form of tens of millions of copies sold and a handful of illustrious awards. He has been declared one of the greatest writers in post-war Britain and in 2019, he was knighted for his contributions to literature. The books have now been translated into more than 40 languages and, a nod to Pullman's brilliant world building, are one of the few titles that can be found in both the children's and adult sections of bookstores.

Marcus Rashford and Manchester United are Better Together

- Ian King, 09/03/22

Marcus Rashford is unhappy at Manchester United, but would his best interests be served by leaving the only club he’s ever played for?

It hasn’t been an easy season for Marcus Rashford. He’s managed just five goals in all competitions and there’s a chance that he’ll fail to make double figures for the first time since his debut season, seven years ago. But this figure is distorted by his somewhat patchy appearance record; he’s only made 24 appearances for Manchester United and ten of those have come from the substitutes’ bench, and this is presumably the reason he is considering leaving Old Trafford to try his luck elsewhere.

Rashford’s public profile ensured that he was always going to be under the spotlight after Euro 2020, but his form following his shoulder operation is now clouding the fact that he continued to play while injured beforehand, and the goodwill shown towards him over his off-field activities was always likely to be more brittle than the feelings of United supporters. Over the course of this season, he has fallen further and further down the pecking order at Manchester United. The acquisition of Cristiano Ronaldo at the very end of last summer’s transfer window certainly did not help, and the emergence of Anthony Elanga has offered unexpected competition.

But does this necessarily mean that Rashford would be best leaving Old Trafford for pastures new? His current contract with Manchester United expires in the summer of 2023, but United have an option to extend it by a year, and if the club’s previous in this sort of situation is anything to go by, there seems little doubt that they will trigger that extension to prevent him from running down his contract and leaving on a free transfer next year. But as Jesse Lingard will attest, this certainly does not guarantee a regular place anywhere near the Manchester United starting XI. Staying to ‘fight for a place in the team’ isn’t a guarantee that said place will be forthcoming.

There have been reports that PSG might be interested in taking him to Paris and, as will now be happening with every footballer with anything like a high profile, the same has been said for Newcastle United. Whether joining either of these two clubs would be a good idea is very much open to debate. PSG are one of the few clubs in Europe rumoured to have an equally unhappy dressing room, while going to Newcastle may damage his carefully cultivated persona as a man of principle, but the fact is that these two clubs are among the few that could consider signing him without it being something of a gamble.

This is an inevitable side-effect of football's hyper-wage-inflation over the last 30 years. Rashford is on £200,000 a week at Manchester United while the likely extension of his contract would also add a not-insubstantial transfer fee, and the question of where he might be able to match that sort of money considering his form over the last couple of seasons is genuine. As inequality in football grows, the number of clubs who'll spend, say, £60m down and then commit to more than £10m a year on wages for one player is getting smaller and smaller.

But if we look elsewhere in the Premier League, who might be interested? In the Premier League, Manchester City and Liverpool can probably be safely taken out of that equation. Chelsea might have learned a lesson from spending almost £100m on Romelu Lukaku last summer (though they also might not) and then being unable to get that much of a tune out of him. Arsenal have a process which seems to be working pretty effectively. Spurs are Spurs. A move abroad might be more appealing, but it is clear that Rashford wants to be playing football, and there'd be no guarantee of that at, say, Barcelona, Real Madrid or Juventus, even if we don't take into account that the number of clubs who can afford him might be diminishing.

The uncertainty over what Manchester United might be in just a few months' time adds a further layer of doubt to it all. Ralf Rangnick may not be sold on Rashford, but he's only an interim manager and his replacement might have very different ideas. It has been said that Mauricio Pochettino, one of the front-runners for the job, is a big fan, but no decision has yet been taken over Rangnick's successor, and current speculation is that Erik ten Hag has been heading to the top of their priority list.

Added to this, Manchester United will surely be having something of a clear-out this summer. Edinson Cavani and Cristiano Ronaldo, two players in direct competition with Rashford for a place in the first team, may well be gone in a few months, while it remains unlikely that Mason Greenwood will return any time soon, if ever. In other words, even the emergence of Elanga doesn't detract from the possibility that there will be greater opportunity at Old Trafford in the future.

There are a lot of moving parts in any transfer, from the desires of the player and managers concerned to the needs of both buying and selling clubs, and the guiding hands of agents. In this case, the number of variables at play means that it might well make sense for Rashford to stay for next season with the contract extension and see if he can break through once the 30-somethings and other assorted driftwood in their first-team squad have been cast aside.

Manchester United is the only club that Marcus Rashford has ever played for, and at 24 years of age he still has the time to get a career that has stalled slightly back on track. Manchester United may be a deeply unhappy football club and he may be deeply unhappy to not be playing for them. This is ideal for no-one, but this can easily be said for much of Marcus Rashford's last couple of seasons or, indeed, much of Manchester United's last decade. One final push to re-establish himself in the first team once the new manager's identity is known might turn out to be his best option.

Kim Kardashian Labelled 'Out of Touch' After Claiming She's Set 'Attainable' Beauty Standards

- Chelsea Ritschel, 08/07/22

Kim Kardashian has sparked backlash after suggesting she isn't responsible for contributing to an unrealistic beauty standard because her looks are "attainable".

The Kardashians star, 41, spoke candidly about the effort, time and commitment that goes into her appearance in a new interview with Allure, where she revealed that she gets laser treatments done at night after her family goes to bed and would even consider eating "poop" if it would make her look younger.

However, when asked whether she ever feels "guilty" or "responsible" about her role in influencing the standard of beauty, which is largely unachievable without her immense wealth, the billionaire business mogul denied that the standard she's set is "unattainable".

"If I'm doing it, it's attainable," the Skims founder said, before claiming that, unlike when she "was a teenager," there are "so many different beauty standards" now. Kardashian then referenced her own "mentality," which she said has never been to look up to those on TV or in magazines, but rather to "be yourself" and "find beauty in everything".

On social media, the Skkn by Kim founder's comments have been met with criticism, with many accusing Kardashian of "delusion" for alleging that the standard she has created is "attainable" or accessible without her wealth and privilege.

"If I'm doing it, it's attainable" - @KimKardashian has the same delusion as people who say everyone in this country has 'access' to healthcare. Nothing is attainable if you need to be absurdly wealthy to gain access to or actually attain it. Pure narcissistic delusion," one person wrote.

Beauty critic Jessica DeFino also condemned the comments, and the rest of Kardashian's Allure interview, in a lengthy Twitter thread, in which she shared excerpts and claimed "publishing sh*t like this is so damaging and irresponsible". "None of this is normal or okay," DeFino wrote, before questioning the "journalistic integrity" of the article while noting that beauty standards are "associated with anxiety, depression, eating disorders, facial and body dysmorphia, self-harm, suicide, addiction, not to mention the physical harms of surgeries, procedures, and products".

The thread prompted a response from one individual, who claimed that Kardashian's quote about her beauty being attainable "literally makes [her] seethe". "She is Kim Kardashian," she added.

In response to that comment, DeFino also alleged that the standard isn't "attainable" for Kardashian either. "It's not 'attainable' for her either! When I worked on Kim's app we employed a full-time Photoshop artist and nearly every photo of her was edited before publishing," she claimed.

"A wealthy person saying hundreds of thousands of dollars in procedures and products is 'attainable' is laughable. In a sad, laughing and crying while society burns sort of way," someone else tweeted. The criticism also extended to Instagram, where many users accused Kardashian of being "tone-deaf" with her comments.

"Attainable if you have endless cash. She's so tone-deaf it's pitiful," one person commented under Allure's post, while another said: "'If I'm doing it, it's attainable.' Jesus - that is the most out-of-touch statement she may have ever uttered. It isn't attainable for all girls and women, especially without surgery, other non-invasive cosmetic procedures such as lasers, and hired help."

Elsewhere in the interview, which began with Kardashian offering cosmetic procedure suggestions to the interviewer, the reality star claimed that, although she is “at peace,” she would “still do anything to look and feel youthful”.

The mother-of-four’s comments come after she recently admitted that her new nine-step skincare line, which retails for $630, is not for everybody as it is “more prestige”.

“It’s definitely more prestige, and in order to get the types of ingredients that I would not really miss out on, it was kind of a necessity,” she recently told The New York Times regarding the suggestion that many people will not be able to afford Skkn by Kim.

Tomb Raider Anniversary Articles

Tomb Raider: How Lara Croft became a game changer

By Caroline Lowbridge BBC News 25/10/16

A feminist icon, a virtual blow-up doll, the sixth Spice Girl, a cyberbabe, an ambassador for Britain, or a distorted male fantasy? Lara Croft, who turns 20 today, has been described as all of these.

Born at the height of Britpop, the female protagonist of computer game Tomb Raider became one of the pillars of Cool Britannia - but also provoked the ire of feminists who criticised her sexualised image.

Her journey took in two Hollywood films, numerous magazine covers and advertising campaigns but began in the comparatively unglamorous English city of Derby. Lara Croft was made of just 250 polygons in the original Tomb Raider, while she was made of 200,000 polygons in 2015's Rise of the Tomb Raider Tomb Raider was created by a small team of people working for Core Design, a video game developer founded in the city in 1988.

"The story goes that within the industry it wasn't easy to sell a female heroine," says Heather Gibson, one of the six developers who created the original game. "Up until then they were quite masculine characters because your main market was men or boys."

The character was thought up by one of Heather's colleagues, Toby Gard, who has cited the comic character Tank Girl and musician Neneh Cherry as inspirations. "He wanted a strong female character as the lead role," says Ms Gibson. "It was pooh-poohed in its very original form but Toby just stuck with it."

The game was launched on 25 October 1996 - three months after Spice Girls released their debut single Wannabe. "It's not coincidence that it was that sort of time," says Iain Simons, director of the National Videogame Foundation and the GameCity festival. "I think she [Lara Croft] was part of a broader movement towards a new kind of powerful feminism that came about."

While the game's developers expected it to appeal to men and boys, it found an unexpected audience among women and girls. In fact, early data from parent company Eidos suggested that 40% of the early players were female. Among these was Meagan Marie, who was 12 when the first game was released. "The initial attraction to the game was feeling represented," she says. "It was really cool to see this beautiful woman who was so powerful and in control."

Ms Marie, who has written an official book - 20 Years of Tomb Raider - to mark the anniversary, says that Lara inspired her to push herself. "That's one of the reoccurring things that I hear, especially

with women specifically in my age range, in their early 30s," she says. "I know so many women who talked about wanting to be an archaeologist or wanting to go into these other fields because Lara inspired them."

Ms Marie says there was a "perfect storm" when Lara popped up into public consciousness. "She was a female protagonist and there weren't many," she says. "It was also really at the time where Girl Power was starting to gain movement because of the Spice Girls."

Heather Gibson and the rest of the team The game was originally launched on the Sega Saturn but it really took off when released on the more popular PlayStation the following month. Its lead character soon became ubiquitous, gracing not just the covers of videogames magazines but lifestyle magazines too.

Brands used her to endorse their products, with notable adverts including Lucozade, Seat cars and Visa. The band U2 used the character during their PopMart tour in 1997, where she appeared on stage in custom footage broadcast across a massive screen.

Lara also had a stab at becoming a pop singer herself and Rhona Mitra, the official Lara Croft model for 1997-8, recorded two whole albums with Dave Stewart, best known for being one-half of Eurythmics. Even the government was keen to capitalise on the game's success. Lara was named as an ambassador for British scientific excellence. "There was a kind of Britsoft along with Britpop, it was 97 when [Tony] Blair got in [as prime minister]," says Mr Simons. "I think she's part of that fabric of icons that came out of Britain, that was part of that Cool Britannia, Blur and Oasis, Spice Girls sort of period."

Ian Livingstone CBE, who launched Tomb Raider when he was executive chairman of Core Design's parent firm Eidos, said nobody expected the game to be as successful as it was. "I think we had budgeted 100,000 units... and we ended up selling 7.5 million units of the first Tomb Raider. Lara Croft became arguably as iconic as James Bond did in films."

Angelina Jolie starred in two blockbuster Hollywood adaptations - Lara Croft: Tomb Raider (2001) and the sequel Lara Croft: Tomb Raider - The Cradle of Life (2003). Jolie has said that filming in Cambodia for the first film was a life-changing experience. She adopted her first child from the country shortly after the film's release, and it also sparked her humanitarian work. In the film companion she explained her reservations about how the film would thrust her into the limelight. “Did I really want to star in a massive blockbuster that was going to up my profile like never before and would make it impossible to disappear from the public eye?" she said.

Jolie said she was "extremely out of shape" before the film but spent months training to prepare for the role, including weapons training by an SAS instructor, fight training, gymnastics, motorcycle riding and dog sledding. She only wore shorts once throughout both films and her bra was only padded by one extra cup size. Jolie said: "My Lara has still got what makes her a cyber-icon, but I'm more athletic than curvy, in control rather than cute."

It was a hit because it was "an amazingly high-quality game", Mr Livingstone says, and having a powerful, female central character boosted its appeal. "Men wanted to play the character of Lara Croft and a lot of women wanted to be Lara Croft."

Lara Croft figurines were produced to tie in with the 2001 film. However, the character's exaggerated feminine image has antagonised many. Feminist Germaine Greer dubbed her a "sergeant major with balloons stuffed up his shirt" and "not a real woman".

Sex was certainly used to sell the games. A series of models were hired to play her, including former Page 3 girl Nell McAndrew - who was later fired when she posed nude as Lara for Playboy. "Sex has been used to market things in the world since marketing pretty much started," says Mr Simons. "And that's not peculiar to videogames by any means." And while the games emphasised Lara's athleticism, Mr Simons said later versions featured a character who now had noticeably larger breasts.

However, Ms Marie thinks being a sex symbol is not incompatible with being a powerful female icon. "To some people Lara was a sex symbol and was this beautiful woman who was positioned as a pinup character in the advertising," she says. "But she was also inspirational on so many levels and had a fairly fleshed out character and a very interesting one, and inspirational in terms of her independence and quick wit."

Now, 20 years on, Tomb Raider has evolved and the Lara Croft character is noticeably less sexualised - the hotpants have gone and her breasts have shrunk. The 2013 reboot featured a younger Lara, and explored her origins and how she became the Tomb Raider.

"This Lara was definitely positioned as more of a flawed character in that she's very human," says Ms Marie. "So she expresses fear and has to push through that to be courageous and save her friends."

Lara may be less prominent in mainstream media now, but the 2013 reboot was the best-selling game in the history of the franchise, and a new film is set to come out in 2018. "It's really incredible to see that 20 years after Lara first debuted she is still doing incredibly well and the future looks very bright for the franchise," says Ms Marie.

CHILD AND ADOLESCENT HEALTH - MENTAL HEALTH - Sep. 27 2021

Just How Harmful Is Social Media? Our Experts Weigh-In.

A recent investigation by the Wall Street Journal revealed that Facebook was aware of mental health risks linked to the use of its Instagram app but kept those findings secret. Internal research by the social media giant found that Instagram worsened body image issues for one in three teenage girls, and all teenage users of the app linked it to experiences of anxiety and depression. It isn't the first evidence of social media's harms. Watchdog groups have identified Facebook and Instagram as avenues for cyberbullying, and reports have linked TikTok to dangerous and antisocial behavior, including a recent spate of school vandalism.

As social media has proliferated worldwide—Facebook has 2.85 billion users—so too have concerns over how the platforms are affecting individual and collective wellbeing. Social media is criticized for being addictive by design and for its role in the spread of misinformation on critical issues from vaccine safety to election integrity, as well as the rise of right-wing extremism. Social media companies, and many users, defend the platforms as avenues for promoting creativity and community-building. And some research has pushed back against the idea that social media raises the risk for depression in teens. So just how healthy or unhealthy is social media?

Two experts from Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health and Columbia Psychiatry share their insights into one crucial aspect of social media's influence—its effect on the mental health of young people and adults. Deborah Glasofer, associate professor of psychology in psychiatry, conducts psychotherapy development research for adults with eating disorders and teaches about cognitive behavioral therapy. She is the co-author of the book Eating Disorders: What Everyone Needs to Know. Claude Mellins, Professor of medical psychology in the Departments of Psychiatry and Sociomedical Sciences, studies wellbeing among college and graduate students, among other topics, and serves as program director of CopeColumbia, a peer support program for Columbia faculty and staff whose mental health has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. She co-led the SHIFT research study to reduce sexual violence among undergraduates. Both use social media.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE MENTAL HEALTH RISKS OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE?

Mellins: Facebook and Instagram and other social media platforms are important sources of socialization and relationship-building for many young people. Although there are important benefits, social media can also provide platforms for bullying and exclusion, unrealistic expectations about body image and sources of popularity, normalization of risk-taking behaviors, and can be detrimental to mental health. Girls and young people who identify as sexual and gender minorities can be especially vulnerable as targets. Young people's brains are still developing, and as individuals, young people are developing their own identities. What they see on social media can define what is expected in ways that is not accurate and that can be destructive to identity development and self-image. Adolescence is a time of risk-taking, which is both a strength and a vulnerability. Social media can exacerbate risks, as we have seen played out in the news.

Although there are important benefits, social media can also provide platforms for bullying and exclusion, unrealistic expectations about body image and sources of popularity, normalization of risk-taking behaviors, and can be detrimental to mental health. – Claude Mellins

Glasofer: For those vulnerable to developing an eating disorder, social media may be especially unhelpful because it allows people to easily compare their appearance to their friends, to celebrities, even older images of themselves. Research tells us that how much someone engages with photo-related activities like posting and sharing photos on Facebook or Instagram is associated with less body acceptance and more obsessing about appearance. For adolescent girls in particular, the more time they spend on social media directly relates to how much they absorb the idea that being thin is ideal, are driven to try to become thin, and/or overly scrutinize their own bodies. Also, if someone is vulnerable to an eating disorder, they may be especially attracted to seeking out unhelpful information—which is all too easy to find on social media.

ARE THERE ANY UPSIDES TO SOCIAL MEDIA?

Mellins: For young people, social media provides a platform to help them figure out who they are. For very shy or introverted young people, it can be a way to meet others with similar interests. During the pandemic, social media made it possible for people to connect in ways when in-person socialization was not possible. Social support and socializing are critical influences on coping and resilience. Friends we couldn't see in person were available online and allowed us important points of connection. On the other hand, fewer opportunities for in-person interactions with friends and family meant less of a real-world check on some of the negative influences of social media.

Whether it's social media or in person, a good peer group makes the difference. A group of friends that connects over shared interests like art or music, and is balanced in their outlook on eating and appearance, is a positive. – Deborah Glasofer

Glasofer: Whether it's social media or in person, a good peer group makes the difference. A group of friends that connects over shared interests like art or music, and is balanced in their outlook on eating and appearance, is a positive. In fact, a good peer group online may be protective against negative in-person influences. For those with a history of eating disorders, there are body-positive and recovery groups on social media. Some people find these groups to be supportive; for others, it's more beneficial to move on and pursue other interests.

IS THERE A HEALTHY WAY TO BE ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

Mellins: If you feel social media is a negative experience, you might need a break. Disengaging with social media permanently is more difficult-—especially for young people. These platforms are powerful tools for connecting and staying up-to-date with friends and family. Social events, too. If you're not on social media then you're reliant on your friends to reach out to you personally, which doesn't always happen. It's complicated.

Glasofer: When you find yourself feeling badly about yourself in relation to what other people are posting about themselves, then social media is not doing you any favors. If there is anything on social media that is negatively affecting your actions or your choices-—for example, if you're starting to eat restrictively or exercise excessively—then it's time to reassess. Parents should check-in with their kids about their lives on social media. In general, I recommend limiting social media— creating boundaries that are reasonable and work for you—so you can be present with people in your life. I also recommend social media vacations. It's good to take the time to notice the difference between the virtual world and the real world.

A History of Radio 1 – Nostalgia Central

Radio 1, the BBC's pop music station, began broadcasting on 31 August 1967 with Tony Blackburn spinning Flowers In The Rain by The Move.

The new station was designed to replace the various pirate radio stations that had transmitted from waters off the UK since 1964. The pirates had recently been closed down, when the legal loophole which allowed them to operate was closed with the introduction of the Marine Offences Act on August 15.

Weekdays on Radio 1 began with Tony Blackburn, who broadcast for 90 minutes between 7.00 and 8.30 am and was also heard on Saturdays for a few months. Then Radio 1 united with Radio 2 for Family Choice (successor to the immortal Housewives Choice which had begun in 1946 and was re-named for the new -style radio service).

It had a different compere each week and mingling with established favourites like Rolf Harris, David Jacobs and Val Doonican were a sprinkling of the BBC's latest signings – Stuart Henry, Simon Dee and Keith Skues.

After the competition 'Crack The Clue' at 9.55 came Jimmy Young who was also heard on Radio 2. Jimmy's show was followed by Midday Spin (also shared by Radio 2) with a different DJ each day – the original five being ex-Radio Caroline DJ Simon Dee (Monday); Duncan Johnson (Tuesday) – a recruit from Radio London who also presented the first 'Crack The Clue' competition; Kenny Everett (Wednesday) – another ex-London DJ; David Rider (Thursday) – a BBC Studio Manager who had previously broadcast in the European Service, and Stuart Henry (Friday), the sole representative from the Radio Scotland ship.

At 1.00 pm the network continued the old Light Programme pattern with four programmes featuring big bands and one other live programme. On Monday, Dave Cash introduced Monday Monday with the Ray McVay Sound; on Tuesday, Keith Fordyce welcomed listeners to Pop Inn in which stars with current hits and new releases were interviewed; Wednesday brought Parade of the Pops, the long-running show with Bob Miller and his Millermen introduced by Denny Piercy; Thursday saw radio switching to Manchester for the BBC Northern Dance Orchestra's show Pop North, presented originally by Ray Moore and later by Dave Lee Travis; and it was back to London on Friday for The Joe Loss Show which was linked in turn by Tony Hall, David Hamilton and staff announcer Roger Moffat.

Between 1.55 and 2.00 pm, there was a repeat of 'Crack The Clue' followed by Pete Brady, another converted pirate. After Pete's 2½ hour slog was finished, What's New took to the air. A rota of DJs reviewed current albums and singles for at least one very good reason: record reviews were not counted as part of the BBC's needle time allocation.

After the 5.30 pm news bulletin, David Symonds wrapped up the afternoon and opened up the evening for two hours. David was another "inside" man who had been a staff announcer and had also hosted a souped-up Easy Beat on Sunday mornings.

In the first three months, there was little change in this pattern. 'Crack The Clue' was succeeded by 'Starwords'; Duncan Johnson (who had come to Britain from Canada) lost Midday Spin after eight weeks ("Disc Jockey Duncan too old at 29" said the Daily Mail) and was replaced by Tony Brandon.

The pattern of weekend programming was different from the weekday schedule. Saturdays on Radio I originally began with 1½ hours of Tony Blackburn after which came Junior Choice (which had been called Children's Favourites until then) and this was initially presented by Leslie Crowther.

After the answers to the daily competition at 9.55, there were two hours Of Saturday Club with Keith Skues. This venerable programme had begun in 1958 and was the province, until the advent of Radio 1, of Brian Matthew. The show was developed from an earlier venture, Saturday Skiffle Club, which was begun at a time when washboard rhythms ruled.

For many years, Saturday Club was regarded as a prime showcase for new and established artists but when Radio 1 started there were so many shows of a similar nature that its special aura was devalued and, inevitably perhaps, its days were numbered.

Noon on Saturdays saw the start of what was undoubtedly the most earth-shattering programme of the week. Never before had the BBC had the temerity to transmit anything quite so extraordinary as the show recorded in Paris by Emperor Rosko. Although he appeared to be speaking English, there were moments when one wondered as he battered his way into the fans' minds with his unique rhyming style and apparent total unity with the music he was playing.

In contrast, he was followed at 1 o'clock by another established favourite from the Light Programme – Jack Jackson. With his skillfully edited clips from comedy albums which were used and reused to suit all manner of strange situations, Jackson had developed a distinctive and very popular programme although the music content leaned towards 'easy listening'.

Chris Denning was in charge of Where It's At for the next hour and at 3.00 pm there was a further needletime saving exercise with Pick Of What's New, presented at various times by Pete Murray, Dave Cash, Ed Stewart, Chris Denning, Don Moss, Johnny Moran, Keith Skues, Rick Dane, Jonathan King, Dave Lee Travis and David Symonds.

Pete Brady then assaulted the airwaves for hours, calling his listeners 'cousins', presumably in case any of them actually were. An hour of more specialised entertainment came next, Country Meets Folk with Wally Whyton at the microphone, and this was in turn succeeded by Scene and Heard, a weekly magazine programme, introduced by Johnny Moran.

Saturday's programming concluded with two Radio 2 orientated products – Pete's People, with the long-running Pete Murray, and a further session of Night Ride. There was only one important change in the Saturday order of things in the first three months of the network when Pete Brady was given a 2.00 to 4.00 pm slot and Pick of What's New was retimed to fill his original 4.00 to 5.30 pm space, these changes being occasioned by Chris Denning's move to take over Wednesday's Midday Spin from Kenny Everett.

Sunday programming was always relatively simple. The network's second day of broadcasting fell on a Sunday and started at 9.00 am with Junior Choice (although Radio 2 also broadcast the show, it was officially classified as a Radio 1 programme).

The two hours from 10.00 am were occupied by Ed Stewart, newly arrived from Radio London with a Saturday Club type mix of discs and BBC recordings entitled Happening Sunday.

Between noon and 2.00 pm, Radio 1 joined Radio 2 for Family Favourites and then went very much its own way for Top Gear. In 1964, in the hands of producer Bernie Andrews and DJ Brian Matthew, this had been a trendsetting show, broadcast on Thursday evenings between I0.00 pm and midnight.

Amid vociferous protests from listeners it was dropped after six months, promptly voted Top Radio Show in a poll and was, somewhat reluctantly, reinstated as a one-hour show on Saturday afternoons for a further six months.

Now the title was revived for three hours of less commercial music of the kind which became known as heavy or progressive. For the first five weeks, Pete Drummond was the principal DJ and the duties were shared in turn by John Peel, Mike Ahern, Tommy Vance, Rick Dane and John Peel again. Mike Ahern holds the unenviable record of being the DJ with the shortest career on Radio I: just one programme, Top Gear on 8 October.

Brought in from Radio Caroline he later emigrated to the Antipodes and began broadcasting upside down. After these permutations had been effected, John Peel and Tommy Vance became the two regular comperes for a few weeks.

Between 5.00 and 7.00 pm, another well-established show continued – Pick Of The Pops with Alan Freeman (who used to broadcast upside down but was now the right way up).

Another newcomer to the network came on at 7.00 pm for half an hour – Mike Raven, who specialised in rhythm and blues and soul music.

The remainder of the programmes for Sundays were, as in the case of Saturdays, somewhat inclined towards Radio 2. The only significant change to the Sunday schedule during 1967 was on 17 December when Kenny Everett, moved from Wednesday's Midday Spin and replaced Ed Stewart between I0.00 am and noon.

1968 brought a significant event in the station's history when on 2 June Savile's Travels brought the extraordinary Jimmy Savile to Radio 1. Savile was immensely popular throughout his radio and subsequent TV career – but a year after his death in 2011, multiple claims of sexual abuse came to light, highlighting what a predatory monster he had been in life.

Over the coming years, other Radio 1 DJ's included "Tatty" Tom Edwards, Tom Lodge, Alan Black, Mark Roman, Alan "Fluff" Freeman, John Peel, Terry Wogan, Guy Blackmore, Anne Nightingale, Richard Park, Nicky Horne, Dave Eager, Paul Burnett, Bob Baker, Phil Jay, Dave Eastwood, Peter York, Paul Gambaccini, Kid Jensen, Tom Browne, Gary Taylor, Bob Harris, Mike Lennox, Chris Grant and Simon Bates.

Kenny Everett was famously dismissed from Radio 1 in 1970 after making what now seems a relatively innocuous joke following a news bulletin. He was replaced on his Saturday morning show by an up-and-coming young DJ named Noel Edmonds. In 1973 Noel would replace Tony Blackburn on the breakfast show. Kenny returned to Radio 1 for a series of recorded shows, and would also be heard on Radio 2 in the early 80s.

Following its 15th birthday in 1982, Radio 1 finally severed its last remaining links with Radio 2 and broadcast its own output for 18 hours a day, every day. In October 1984 Janice Long became the first female presenter of a weekday show, taking over the evening slot from David Jensen.

Everything to Know about K-Pop Group BLACKPINK

- Kat Moon, 03/04/2019

The word K-pop has, of late, become almost synonymous with the letters B, T and S. But there's another K-pop group that's been breaking records as their music captures the attention of a global audience. The four women of Blackpink, who debuted as a group in 2016, comprise a multilingual performance powerhouse connecting with fans across borders. Jisoo, Jennie, Rosé and Lisa may have just begun touring globally, but a strong fanbase stretching far beyond South Korea is already powering their rapid ascent.

Blackpink's song "Ddu-Du Ddu-Du" is currently the most-watched music video by a K-pop group on Youtube, boasting 730 million views. (Individual artist Psy's 2012 single "Gangnam Style" continues to be the most-viewed music video by a Korean music act, with more than 3 billion views.) The group's social media followings are also breaking records. Lisa, the group's main dancer and youngest member, is the most-followed female K-pop artist on Instagram with more than 16 million followers.

Blackpink's upcoming schedule is packed with international opportunities to connect with their fans, who are called "BLINKs," a portmanteau of "black" and "pink." Later this month, they will become the first female K-pop group to play at the Coachella music festival, before continuing the North American, European, and Australian legs of their first world tour.

This week, the group releases a new 5-track EP, "Kill This Love," already trending on social media and expected to top charts. Here's everything you need to know about Blackpink, the girl group elevating K-pop's global popularity.

Why are they called Blackpink?

The group's name was conceived to contrast with the perception of femininity commonly associated with the color pink. When Blackpink debuted, their label YG Entertainment said the name intends to convey that the group embodies more than beauty. "I may look sweet, but I don't act like it," Jennie sings in the opening lines of "Ddu-Du Ddu-Du," echoing this message.

What makes Blackpink different from other groups?

Blackpink's discography is limited — before "Kill This Love," the group had released fewer than 20 tracks since their debut in 2016, including the Japanese versions of their Korean songs. Nevertheless, a handful of their singles have not only ranked on Billboard charts but gone viral online, with their signature choreographies regularly replicated by fellow K-pop idols and global fans in dance covers.

A large part of the group's appeal is their ferocity, created through a blend of bold rapping, powerful singing and chic styling. Although dark and edgy concepts are not a novelty in K-pop girl groups, Blackpink double down on these through the imagery in their music videos, such as the bejeweled tank in "Ddu-Du Ddu-Du."

Who are the members of Blackpink?

Jisoo (Full Name: Kim Jisoo), 24

The oldest member in the group, Jisoo is a singer, often referred to as Blackpink's mood-maker. She has a quirky sense of humor and a proclivity for generating on-the-spot songs about any topic — from the weather to a craving for chicken skewers. Jisoo acted in a number of music videos and

commercials in her pre-Blackpink years. Although she is the only member who does not speak English fluently, the vocalist is nevertheless trilingual, able to speak Korean, Japanese and Chinese.

Jennie (Full Name: Kim Jennie), 23

Blackpink's main rapper, who also sings, Jennie was a "trainee" for just shy of six years — the longest of the members. (Under the trainee system in South Korea, aspiring pop idols audition with entertainment agencies to become trainees with the hopes of one day debuting as an artist.) Jennie lived in New Zealand for a period before moving back to South Korea in 2010, and speaks fluent English in addition to Korean and Japanese. She was the first member of Blackpink to release an individual track, titled "SOLO." The music video showcased her versatility as both a rapper and singer, while further establishing her as a fashion icon through the more than 20 outfits worn within the three-minute clip.

Rosé (Full Name: Park Chaeyoung), 22

Born in New Zealand and raised in Australia — where she participated in YG Entertainment's auditions and placed first — Rosé is also fluent in English. She is the group's main singer, and her distinct voice is easy to recognize. Rosé plays the guitar and piano and frequently covers both English and Korean songs. She recently shared a cover of Halsey's "Eyes Closed" on her birthday as a gift to fans, writing, "This is such a deep song and I remember at the time when I recorded it, I was needing some of the healing that this song brings to me. I hope you enjoy it as much as I did singing it."

Lisa (Full Name: Lalisa/Pranpriya Manoban), 22

Lisa, the youngest member — known as "maknae" — is the main dancer in Blackpink. Born and raised in Thailand, Lisa was in a dance crew at a young age before she auditioned to become a K-pop idol trainee. Besides Thai, Lisa speaks Korean — which she started to learn after moving to South Korea in 2011 — English, Japanese, and basic Chinese. Although she raps and sings, it is the "focused camera" recordings of Lisa's dancing, a combination of smooth body rolls, sharp hits and captivating facial expressions, that often become the subject of Blackpink's viral videos.

How did Blackpink rise in popularity?

Blackpink officially debuted in 2016 with the single album Square One, which consisted of two songs — "Whistle" and "Boombayah." The debut was highly anticipated in the K-pop scene as Blackpink was the first girl group to come from YG Entertainment, the major company home to powerhouse groups like BIGBANG and 2NE1, in seven years. "Boombayah" made the group the fastest musical act, at the time, to hit No. 1 on Billboard's World Digital Songs chart, and their success continued with additional releases in the following year.

In 2018, Blackpink received a new level of international attention when they became the highest-charting K-pop girl group on Billboard with the single "Ddu-Du Ddu-Du" and the EP Square Up. "Ddu-Du Ddu Du" hit No. 55 on the Billboard Hot 100 — surpassing Wonder Girls' English version of the song "Nobody" which peaked at No. 76 in 2009 — while Square Up hit No. 40 on the Billboard 200. A few months later, the group collaborated with Dua Lipa on the track "Kiss and Make Up," reaching a new audience with a bilingual song that currently has more than 200 million streams on Spotify.

The potential for a more global footprint became apparent when Blackpink signed with Interscope Records and Universal Music Group last October. YG Entertainment partnered with the label with the goal of promoting the group internationally. Shortly after, Blackpink made their debut on U.S.

television with a performance on The Late Show with Stephen Colbert, then on Good Morning America.

Where should I start with their music?

For an introduction to Blackpink, start with "Ddu-Du Ddu-Du," the record-breaking anthem featuring hard-hitting rap verses and dynamic trap beats. The song takes its name from the sound of gunshots, and the most recognizable choreography includes shooting fingers matched with swaying hips. In the music video, vocalist Jisoo walks through a crowd that records her with phones in outstretched hands. She trips and falls, and the phones' orientation turns to simulate guns pointing at her. The scene appears to comment on how quickly attitudes toward celebrities can switch from admiration to aggression.

Besides "Ddu-Du Ddu-Du," singles like "As If It's Your Last" and "Playing With Fire" have energetic melodies with lyrics expressing love and passion. The track "Stay," on the other hand, is a rare ballad from the group, showcasing Jennie and Lisa's softer rapping along with Jisoo and Rosé's voices layered atop acoustic melodies.

How did Blackpink become so popular on social media?

With every new release, Blackpink's following on social media has grown. Not only is Lisa the most-followed K-pop female idol on Instagram, but Blackpink has the most-followed K-pop group account on the platform with 16.4 million followers, as of April 2019. Leading up to the release of "Kill This Love," the teaser photos of the individual members sporting new hair colors and serving sinister looks each received more than two million likes on the official account. On Twitter, the signature phrase from the group's debut song "Boombayah" — "Blackpink in your area" — is regularly trending as Blackpink announces new plans to, quite literally, enter the areas of international fans.

The Roots of…Arctic Monkeys

- Rob Fitzpatrick, 22/08/13

In the later winter of 2005 a 19-year-old Alex Turner told an American journalist, "We don't have influences." This quote is remarkable for two things: one is it's both true and untrue at the same time. Arctic Monkeys don't sound like anybody else, but without a few important cultural sign posts they may never have formed in the first place. Secondly, why would an American journalist even care what music some teenager from Sheffield listened to in his bedroom anyway? After all, they'd only released one single. Although, to be fair, that single had been the riotous UK Number One I Bet You Look Good On The Dancefloor.

In actual fact, this moment had been coming for four years, ever since Alex and his school friends Andy Nicholson and Jamie Cook woke up on Christmas morning 2001 to find new guitars under the tree. A few months later another friend, Matt Helders (who, like Alex, would go on to date a girl called Lauren Bradwell – the inspiration for the song) bought a cheap drum kit and the band were born. True children of the 90s, they liked hip-hop (Alex had tried his hand at beatmaking and sequencing), Britpop and garage-rock, but the way they put it all together was quite unlike anyone else. From the choice of name – a deliberately un-cool sounding mix of jungle heat and polar freeze – to the lyrical emphasis on observation and colloquial language aligned with a focus (picked up from watching how people reacted to big records at local clubs like The Leadmill) on making every second

of music work as hard as possible, Arctic Monkeys set out to be different in every way they could and it was in June 2003, after more than a year of rehearsals, they felt ready to play their songs to people. Two years later, after releasing a string of songs on the internet and playing to increasingly delirious crowds, they signed to Domino Recordings – on a Sunday night four months after that they four were all sat in the Pack Horse Inn in High Green listening to the chart rundown, not quite believing their debut single had gone straight in at One.

“When we started the band none of us played anything,” recalled Matt. “We just put it together.” But put what together, exactly?

IN THE BEGINNING

Let’s begin with Alex’s parents who, between them, taught German, Linguistics and Music – that’s a good start. Unlike almost every one of his contemporaries, there’s no stories of Dylan, Joni Mitchell or Simon & Garfunkel tapes on long summer holiday car journeys, Alex’s musical life begins with Oasis, Pulp and Blur, while his first gig was The Vines in Manchester, he later named their singer Craig Nicholls as a powerful early inspiration.

WHO ARE THEY, ANYWAY?

As teenagers the whole band liked psychedelic scousers The Coral, while ideas about structure and form came from The Strokes and The Libertines – and through them, The Clash and The Jam. UK hip-hop legend Roots Manuva was a big inspiration, as was North London’s Braintax. Elsewhere Queens of the Stone Age, System Of A Down and even John Barry and Shirley Bassey’s 1971 Bond theme Diamonds Are Forever were claiming their share of headphone time.

COMING TOGETHER

There is a line that runs from Yorkshire poet and songwriters like Jake Thackray and Jarvis Cocker, through Lancashire writers like John Cooper Clarke and Stephen Patrick Morrissey right up to West Midlands-born Mike Skinner. Somewhere metaphorically – and geographically – in the middle of all of that is Alex Turner whose eye for revealing minutiae rivals any one of them.

FLOURESCENT ADOLESCENTS

As the band began to spend more time on the road their musical world began to spread wide enough to pull in Nick Cave, The Prodigy (particularly Music For The Jilted Generation), The Velvet Underground (and the solo words of their own John Cale) and Leonard Cohen. As the four move ever further from Sheffield, country music stars like George Jones (the band like Relief Is Just A Swallow Away), Johnny Cash, Patsy Cline and Hank Williams have all begun to make their mark, hardly surprising as America’s endless spooling highway meets the band’s own love of poignant, personal drama and words.