



# Creative Forward Look

# Ian Katz

## Annual Report 2020

### Creative Forward Look

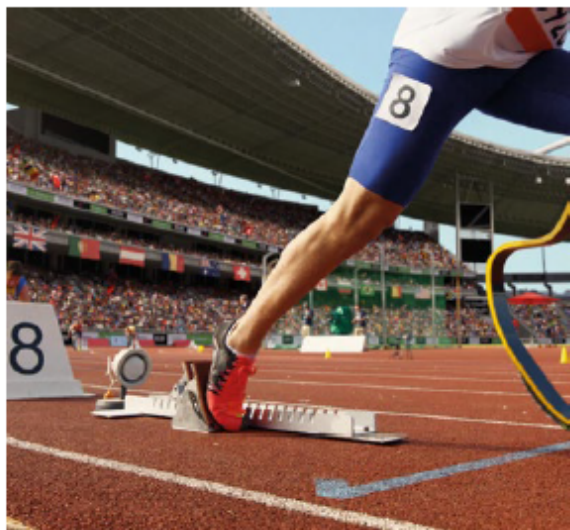


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**Ian Katz**

Chief Content Officer

First Dates Hotel



Paralympic Games



2020 delivered a vivid reminder of the value of public service media. When Covid-19 hit the UK last year, Channel 4 had two clear roles as a public service broadcaster: to tell our audiences what they needed to know, and to help people through a difficult time. In 2021, we've also put our minds to cheering people up.

# Annual Report 2020 Creative Forward Look continued

Channel 4 has never been more buoyant, noisy and relevant than in 2021, and we are delivering our remit through a slew of programmes that viewers would not find elsewhere. The year will see our slate of programmes realigned with our Future4 strategy (see page 22), working towards doubling All 4 views by 2023. We saw strong growth in streaming last year – at +26% year on year on All 4 – and 2021 is starting even bigger, up 130% so far. We will continue to be as noisy and unruly as ever, while finding new and inventive ways of engaging people with the most important issues.



The Great Pottery Throw Down

## Representing unheard voices

At the heart of Channel 4 is the concept of representing unheard voices. From diversity of thought and opinion, through to elevating voices from diverse communities, our programmes tell stories that no other streamer or broadcaster would.

2021 is already seeing record-breaking success in drama through Russell T Davies' five-part *It's A Sin*, which tells the story of five friends living and loving in the shadow of AIDS. It has become All 4's biggest instant boxset to date and 63% of viewers agree that this is the sort of drama that you wouldn't find on any other channel but Channel 4. It is exactly the type of programme that we exist to make and that only we would commission.

Two flagship moments will punctuate the Channel 4 year. First, the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, which were postponed to summer 2021. We will use the Games to build upon the ground-breaking impact we have had in disability sport, featuring the highest level of disabled presenting talent of any Paralympic Games yet.

Second, as part of our ongoing commitment to improve black representation on and off screen, we are working with our production partners to create career enhancing opportunities and amplify black talent, stories and voices through *Black To Front*. This an ambitious day of new and returning programmes in the autumn that will see our entire programming schedule fronted by black talent. This will be much more than a day of eye-catching programming, providing a focal point for our efforts to drive up on- and off-screen representation and leaving a lasting legacy on the channel and beyond.

Throughout the year, we will continue to invest in a mix of shows and genres that represent unheard voices, be it through comedy – such as Nida Manzoor's *We Are Lady Parts*, which tells the story of a geeky student who is recruited to join a Muslim female punk band – or hard-hitting films such as Britain's *Destitute Kids*, a follow up film to Britain's *Breadline Kids*, filmed two years ago. *Ackley Bridge* is also returning in 2021 for another series, as is Rosie Jones in *Trip Hazard*. Rosie Jones, following her success in 2020's travelogue *Mission: Accessible*.

We are as committed to diversity of thought as other forms of diversity so will air a wide range of views and opinions through regular programming such as *Steph's Packed Lunch* and Channel 4 News, as well as major commissions such as *The World According to Paul Dacre*.



## Challenging with purpose

At our best, our shows drive the national conversation. As ever, in News and Current Affairs, we can expect a slate of polemical current affairs programmes that address challenging themes. Channel 4 News will also continue to lead investigations and hold power to account through its daily hour-long news, which will be co-hosted from Leeds later in the year.

Aligned with the COP-26 international climate conference in November, we will be tackling the climate emergency from different angles in the second half of the year through a range of genres and programmes.

The searing series *Rape: Behind the Headlines* (w/t) will look at the policing of rape in the UK. Filmed, produced and directed by an all-female team with exclusive access to Avon & Somerset Police, the series will examine the complex reasons why conviction rates for these appalling crimes are so low. A new Specialist Factual title, *Grenfell* (w/t), will explore life in London's Grenfell Tower before the fire, looking at who should be held to account.

We will continue to explore pertinent themes in our dramas, for example through Jack Thorne's newest film, *Help* (w/t), which will star Jodie Comer and Stephen Graham. This will shine an unflinching light on the Covid-19 crisis and tell a compelling, heart-wrenching relationship story set in a Liverpool care home.

And we will explore Britain's bedroom habits in Alice Levine's *Sex Odyssey*, a documentary produced by Louis Theroux that asks whether there is any such thing as 'normal' when it comes to sex and sexuality in the 2020s.

## Dead Pixels

## The Circle



## Reinventing entertainment

Channel 4 will continue to take creative risks throughout the year, finding new ways to tell stories and to reach audiences through highly distinctive commissions.

We will keep exploring innovative new formats, such as the genre-bending immersive competition format *Murder Island*, in which members of the public will have one nail-biting week to compete to find out whether they have what it takes to solve a murder; or the new irreverent quiz show *Literally Just Told You*.

Throughout the year, we are exploring new potential returning formats, such as the nature documentary *Secret Safari: in the Wild*, woodwork competition fronted by Mel Giedroyc: *Good With Wood*, daytime restoration show *Mend It for Money* and, of course, the delayed return of *The Circle* following its Covid-19 postponement in 2020.

And we'll continue to do our best to bring a bit of joy to a joyless world in 2021 through feelgood programmes and returning hits such as *The Great Pottery Throwdown*, *Taskmaster*, *Groson's Art Club*, *The Great British Bake Off*, *Junior Bake Off* plus many others, including the return of BAFTA award-winning *Stath Lets Gets Flats*.

Driving digital growth while maintaining our linear schedule is a priority and we will continue to release instant box sets for key titles (including *It's A Sin*, new comedy *Frank of Ireland*, plus returning hits such as *The Dog House*, *Back*, *Dead Pixels* and others) and exclusives (such as *The Tudors* and *The O.C.*). And, working in partnership with the BFF's Young Audiences Content Fund, we have also expanded our *First Dates* franchise with *Teen First Dates*.

We will also continue to invest in All 4's platforms and technology to enhance functionality and usability, acquire wider VoD content rights and ensure that our platforms can be played across all of our platforms – as well as expanding our reach on social platforms through key partnerships with Snapchat and TikTok, to give audiences what they want, where they want.