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Summary

Lorna Clarke, interviewed by David Hendy, describes her upbringing in London, childhood and teenage years: parents having come from Jamaica, strict and ambitious for their children; and the importance of music.

Clarke talks about her experience of clubbing, having fully participated in London's Black music scenes in the late 1970s – early 1980s. She argues that the BBC and Radio 1 were of no direct interest at that time.

Clarke describes her journalistic training at Polytechnic of Central London, then freelance life, especially in commercial radio. She then talks about her role at Kiss FM and its transition from pirate to mainstream.

She describes the shooting of colleague Tim Westwood and the fall-out from this event. She talks about Radio 1's changing style and status and reflects on the changes under Matthew Bannister, commenting that these did not mark a new era because they were still concerned with presenters rather than music . She points to the music changes during Parfitt's regime as more important.

Clarke discusses 1Xtra, Asian Network and 6 Music, and speaks about the campaign to save 6 Music. She talks about recruitment and widening the talent pool and working with Alan Yentob on this. She assesses the optimistic, fun atmosphere under Greg Dyke. She notes that the Electric Proms was a creative highlight of her career. She talks about the crisis over Jonathan Ross and Russell Brand's behaviour on air and reflects on the current culture of compliance. She also comments on women's pay and equality issues, particularly in relation to the aftermath of Chris Evans at Radio 2.

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Transcript

Q: [0:00:15] So it's the 14 November 2018. And we're at the University of Sussex in Falmer. I want to ask you to introduce yourself.

A: [0:00:28] I'm Lorna Clarke. I work for the BBC as Head of Production for two radio networks, Radio 6 Music and Radio 2. So we have production teams based in London and Salford.

Q: [0:00:45] Okay. Well, I want to go right back in time [laughs]. And I just want to ask you to sort of think back to your childhood, really. I want to kind of get some sense of who you were before you joined the BBC. In fact even before you joined broadcasting.

A: [0:00:59] Wow!

Q: [0:01:00] So can you just tell us a little bit about where you grew up, where you spent your childhood?

A: [0:01:07] So I grew up in--, I was born in London. And, actually, it's quite a rare thing to meet people at the BBC who were born and brought up in London. But I was born in London, north London to parents who came from Jamaica. We started off life living in Wembley in a rented house, which I can see quite clearly. It was quite a leafy part of London. And then we stayed in Wembley but moved to a council house, a council flat. And this apartment was pretty luxurious. This was--, I mean, it was great, it was a four bedroomed, third floor council flat.

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We knew all our neighbours. There was no one, as far as I knew, neighbour or family, that had anything to do with broadcasting. It was a good, solid working-class, warm, friendly neighbourhood, certainly growing up. I had lots of friends. I have a brother who is three years younger than me and now lives in Huddersfield. I have an older sister who was born in Jamaica, and joined us in north London for a while. And I have a younger sister, who I'm very close to, and, yeah, we probably have the most in common. But it was--, I mean, family life was, I don't know, to me seemed pretty ordinary. I mean, we didn't have lots of money. We never, ever went on a foreign family holiday, never. Probably the most exotic thing that happened would have been, at about 16 I went to Jamaica on my own because I was a bridesmaid for [laughs] for someone in the family. And that kind of blew my mind, going back to Jamaica. This place that my parents had talked about a lot, really lovingly and a real yearning. They were in London, but they really, you know, even after 40, 50 years, missed this island, that I knew nothing about, really.

Q: [0:04:01] And just about your parents, when did they come to Britain from Jamaica?

A: [0:04:08] So my dad, who was actually my stepdad, he came over as a young man. I don't know the date exactly. He was a really smart man. He qualified as a maths teacher while he was in Jamaica. And his family were quite well thought of in Jamaica. They owned a petrol station and they owned the local like supermarket. And all of this didn't really make sense until I went back there, because often the petrol station, along with the church, was like the hub of--, everyone knew where it was. But he--, yeah, they weren't well off but they were real sticklers for discipline and education. He came over to this country

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and he tried very hard to find a similar job teaching maths. Impossible. He had some--, he had a little experience but it was not good. This was at the time when I just don't think expectations were right. And eventually, I mean, this really clever, charismatic man ended up working for the Post Office. And he worked for the Post Office for, wow, it must have been 30 years. So he came over as a, I think, 20 something year old man. I'm not sure. And, I mean, he died quite young. He died age 59. And so the last thing he did was work for the Post Office. But he always had like really high hopes for all his children, really. But, I mean, in our house it was really--, there weren't that many books around. There was always a bible. I mean, I'm not a church goer, but my mother is. But that, yeah, that kind of rigorous attention around discipline was there. My mother came over when she was about 19, I think. And she wasn't with the Windrush, she actually flew over. And was very proud of the fact that she came over with BOAC. And back then you would have a sponsor from your family, who would meet you. And her being so young and coming from a family where, you know, religion was such a big part, she had to have a chaperone and had to be looked after. So she lived with an aunt. And the same thing had happened to them. And only recently, I found out that my mother--, again, she was trained in Jamaica to be a quite top level secretary. So shorthand typing and all of that. She knew two types of shorthand, Teeline and another type of shorthand. And, you know, everyone who knew her in the village that she came from in Jamaica, it was Norma, or Vicky, her surname, her nickname, "She's going to do well. She's going to go to London. She's going to work for a big office and, you know, she's not going to do outside work, she's going to do inside work." And there were high expectations around her. And maybe she could be a teacher as well. She came over to London. In those early pictures of her, she looks really glamorous, because she paints a picture of--, I mean, this would have been '59 stroke 1960, so

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London wasn't quite swinging London, but it was quite conservative and very dark and quite traditional. And she came over from this amazing Caribbean island where everything was colour and life and music. And she found it quite difficult because the attitude to her wasn't what she expected. This is definitely at the time when there were signs on doors basically saying, "No Irish, no dogs, no black people." Or, "No blacks." And she found that difficult because she was, you know, part of the Commonwealth and kind of thought she was going home, really. I think they both found that difficult. But she did get secretarial work and, like I say, she was a really good looking, stylish woman. There are photos of her right at the beginning, very soon after her arrival, where she's wearing, you know, cigarette pants, smart shirts, with amazing hair, tiny. And she was very charismatic and everyone loved working with her. So she did well because she worked for--, I mean, quite stuffy but very traditional companies. I mean, she worked for Tiffany Lamps at one point. She worked for Rolls Royce. But she also worked for McVitie's biscuit factory, which I loved because we'd get all these biscuits when she came home. So she was a really hard working woman. Throughout her life, she usually had two or three jobs on the go. She was never proud of what she would do, so she would scrub up well and go and do a nine till five office job. But then would supplement that with either a cleaning job or an evening teaching job. She was always doing more than one job. And, actually, in our family hard work was the thing, you did that. I'd say for about 20 years, my dad, at the--, working for the Post Office, worked permanent nights. So we had this weird scenario where we'd all see each other at the weekend. But during the week it was shifts [laughs] you were lucky if you caught one or the other. And so I was kind of--, although I wasn't the oldest, because my older sister who was born in Jamaica was working before me, there was a good chunk of time when I was considered the oldest and the most sensible, really. And so

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whenever my mum or dad were out working, it was down to me to look after my older sister and my brother. And that meant properly looking after. So getting back from school and making sure dinner was ready, house was clean. So it was a proper, you know, it was pretty normal where we were to just get on with things. The idea of being able to daydream and bury your head in a book, that--, you kind of did that in your own time, not in the time when you were supposed to be doing stuff for the family. But now I think back, my parents, they were really hard workers. And most of the people who surrounded us on that estate, that council estate in Wembley, were the same. And I think--,

Q: [0:12:09] I was going to say, you mentioned about books, there weren't many books around.

A: [0:12:13] Not really.

Q: [0:12:15] Did you take a daily newspaper as a family?

A: [0:12:19] No. I mean, I used to buy a newspaper, which is interesting, so--,

Q: [0:12:26] What did you buy?

A: [0:12:26] I would just get all the Sundays. I mean, from--, I mean, I guess because my parents instilled this business of, if you want stuff you have to work for it. So we didn't get pocket money because there wasn't any. But if we did chores, if we did things, then we would get money.

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And so I ended up having quite--, I mean, for a kid I'd end up having quite a bit of money because I always worked. I had a paper round, which I loved doing, rain or shine or snow, I was out delivering. So I would have my own money. And I always had a Saturday job. Whether it was working in Habitat or Heal's or whatever. I'd have a job. And I think because both my parents said, and I believed them, they said, "You can do what you want." You know, when we came here to this country and to London, it was tough, but you would either get broken by that or do what you need to do. And, I mean, I always sensed some sort of regret with my dad in terms of it's not what he really wanted to do, but that's where he found himself. And my mum is a different personality. She would insist that she always ended up doing exactly what she wanted to do. But with me they were, "We can't help you in terms of being able to give you money and world experiences. But we won't stop you from doing it. You can do--, you can literally do what you want."

Q: [0:14:12] So as you were growing up, as you were a teenager, what was your sense of what you wanted to do?

A: [0:14:19] Oh, [sighs] I was just intent on really experiencing the world. So, I mean, now when I think about it, I mean, they let me do exactly what I wanted to do. So music was always a massive thing in our house. And you can understand why. You've come from the Caribbean, where some of the most exciting music is made and developed. Some of the most exciting genres have been created. And you come to London and it's your bond with other like-minded people. So there was always music in the house. And what was interesting for me, growing up, was the range of music. It could go from American gospel music to jazz to strange kind of beat poetry from

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New York or wherever, to Cream to The Beatles to The Rolling Stones. So, I mean, my dad was discovering all kinds of music while he was in Jamaica. It wasn't just local music. So there was everything there, you know. And that introduced me to all sorts of things. So if I--, you know, he had an amazing record collection, if I flicked through his music, I'd want to know, well, who's this guy, who's Miles Davis and who's that? And from that, you then go to exhibitions about photography about these amazing people, you then buy books about it, which I could because I had my own money. And then I, you know, I would just always--, I'd always be reading. So although it wasn't a house full of books, I was always encouraged to go and find out. I may not know, but you go and find out. So music was a--, it was a great way of just opening up the world. So I came from, you know, this tiny area, you know, Wembley, then we moved to Harlesden. Wembley was quite a, I would say a white area, and Harlesden was definitely a very black area. But the music was the thing that opened everything up for me. So, growing up, I mean, as a teenager I was always out. I mean, I lived through every single kind of scene. For me it was--, I remember at, yeah, I must have only been 15, blagging my way into clubs.

Q: [0:17:03] Can you just locate us in time now, roughly what date are we talking about?

A: [0:17:08] Oh, blimey. So if I'm 56 now. This is it, all my dates all merge together.

Q: [0:17:16] Okay, so, yeah, so we're talking late '70s if you were 15--,

A: [0:17:24] Very late, yeah, yeah.

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Q: [0:17:25] '77, thereabouts. I'm 56, so I can work this out [laughs].

A: [0:17:29] Good, we're the same age, good. Yeah, so late '70s is a chunk of time where I would easily blag into clubs. I wasn't old enough to go, but I had cousins and friends who were older and I, you know, I could just go with them. But I remember going to dance hall club nights in Bedford, in Luton. We didn't really always go out in London because it was quite aggressive. It was difficult. I mean, once we got about seven people in a tiny Mini, because we just piled in and we could get everywhere. So lots of sound systems, going to see things like that. But then, you know, seeing--, being influenced by lots of rock, whether it was The Clash or, you know, all of that. On the edges of Punk. Yeah, definitely on the edges of Punk, because I literally didn't like being spat at a club night [laughs] I didn't get it. But I loved the music and the energy. And then, yeah, Acid House and then a lot of--, a big chunk where it was all about recorded music and DJs. And, you know, I spent a lot of time swapping cassettes, you know, with other music fans, listening to recommendations of what I should buy, what I should get. I never DJ'd. I wasn't good enough to do that. But I was just really interested in holding this piece of plastic and, you know, the work that had gone into the artwork and all of that, you know, I was--, I had tons of it. And that was a way that I could bond with my dad as well, because he was into that. And so he was my stepdad. My actual birth father still lives in Jamaica. He--, I only knew this, I only met him when I was about 30, and I went and met him for the first time aged 30, in Jamaica. And it was amazing. He had a massive collection of music. And I thought, that's just a thing, you know, he had his own bar in his house and, yeah, he just had amazing music. So music has always been an amazing thing for me and the family. And I think

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music was definitely my way into the BBC. But, funnily enough, because of the time that we're talking about, '80s and then '90s, the BBC was way smaller. If I wanted to work in music radio when I started, I had very few choices. There just weren't as many radio stations. You either worked for Radio 1 if you wanted to work for a network that covered the whole country, you either worked for Radio 1 or you worked for Radio 2. And I was way too young to be working at Radio 2.

Q: [0:20:43] I want to come to trying to get into the BBC in a moment. But just before that, you've talked about going out to clubs and records and so on, were you listening to radio?

A: [0:20:54] No.

Q: [0:20:57] What was your--, so radio just wasn't part of--,

A: [0:21:00] So what's interesting is, people assume that I grew up with BBC Radio 1 because it's a youth network and it promotes, you know, discovering music. It was absolutely nothing to do with my childhood or growing up. The BBC was not--, I mean, in our house there was a lot of resentment, actually, about having to pay the licence fee. And I mean, it just--, there was no relationship. We didn't understand the purpose or role of the BBC. It didn't interfere in our world at all. Where we--, I did listen to radio, but I listened to a lot of pirate radio. Those are my people, because if I listen to Radio 1--, in fact the first job offer that I had from Radio 1 I turned down. I remember going to Egton House for an interview. I was terribly nervous. And I was really just put off by the whole size of everything. And I remember having the interview,

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answering the questions, and at no point did they ask me anything about music at all.

Q: [0:22:14] When was this? When was this particularly?

A: [0:22:18] So this would have been, if I started at Kiss at 1990, this must be…

Q: [0:22:24] '97, thereabouts?

A: [0:22:26] No, this would have been the first time round. So this would have been about 19, yeah, '87, about 1987. So it's pre, yeah. 1980, yeah about 19, no, in fact, '88, that's why. Because at around 1988, I remember going for my first interview at the BBC as a producer to work on a music programme. The interview went fine. But, I mean, this was the height of Acid House and all of that, and I just wasn't asked any question about kind of what I considered to be proper youth club music. They kept talking to me about Status Quo. And I, obviously I knew who they were, but I couldn't work out why that was relevant. And I was offered the job. And I thought, I can't work there because I'll be asked about a lot of music that is not really my thing. So Radio 1 just wasn't part of my world. And at home, if they listened to the radio, it would have been some amazingly important news thing was going to happen, and they would find any station and just listen to it. Much more likely to watch the TV. And if they wanted to listen to music, they listened to their own music, cassettes, CD er, albums. There was a lot of music on, but it wasn't from the radio. We listened to, me and my friends, we listened to lots of pirate radio. And it's incredible because the quality was--, the technical quality was terrible, you'd have to

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literally hang out of a window to get the right, you know, to get the frequency to work. But we'd rather that because we heard music that you didn't hear anywhere else, you know. I mean, we came from a group of people who--, we were recommending to each other, but the idea of the BBC recommending music to you was quite odd, really. That changed slightly when I went--, started going to college.

Q: [0:24:40] So yes, so let's go back to that starting college. So I've got a good sense of your teenage years and listening to music and going to clubs and so on. So kind of what was next?

A: [0:24:54] So I did an arts foundation course, really because I wanted--,

Q: [0:24:59] Where was that?

A: [0:25:00] That was at Kilburn Polytechnic on Kilburn High Road. It was a great place. It was just full of really odd, exciting people. And really I did it because a lot of my best friends were fantastic artists and had already done an arts foundation course. And I wanted to stay close to them. I didn't really--, I certainly didn't understand what it meant in terms of what kind of careers could you have if you go down the arts route. And this is what I mean about my parents being quite relaxed. They were sort of, "Just do what you need to do, but just make sure that you're the best at it." I did the arts course, the foundation course, which was for one year. I wasn't very good. I still really love art. But I am not an artist. I can't draw. But it was a really exciting time, being in the heart of London with all these really interesting people. A couple of people who were on my course went off to form bands. And, interestingly, when I then worked at Kiss, they'd come in to be

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interviewed, and I'd go, "Don't I know you?" And you'd, you know, you'd trace yourself back to that. So it was a really exciting time but not necessarily very fruitful. And then after that, I think, yeah, parents were very kind of, "You kind of need to work, really, you need to earn something. And if you're going to stay at home, then you'll need to help us with some of the money." So that kind of luxurious year ended and I took a job with the Civil Service. I was still quite young. I must have been, I don't know, I must have been 20, maybe. I took a job with the Civil Service working in a dole office. And there were loads of people like me, who were working there, who loved music and don't quite understand how they got there. But it was, you know, more or less nine till five. And they all had separate lives, separate, you know. So outside of work they were musicians or artists or, just doing other things. And I did that for, I don't know, a couple of years, It was in Camden Town. It was a very lively office [laughs] very lively office. And it wasn't unusual for me see, yeah, claimants at club nights. So I'd be at the club night, on the dance floor, and I'd see someone who'd literally just signed on on the Friday. It was that kind of office. But I did that for a while, and there were people there who were studying in the evening. And I thought, really, I absolutely don't want to work here forever. It's definitely not for me. And certainly, I think, even then, my dad would say, "You know, you need to do what you want to do." I think my mum was different. She was sort of, "Well, it's steady money and it's regular and, you know, it's not that bad." But I--, after a few years I signed up to do erm, what did I do, I signed up to do a degree course over a long period of time with evenings, in sociology. I don't know why I picked sociology. I was quite keen on working out how the world worked.

Q: [0:28:47] And where was that?

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A: [0:28:49] That was London, Bedford. And, again, it was really good because it introduced me to a whole bunch of people who were really different to me and really different to people that I grew up with on the council estate in Wembley or where we lived in Harlesden. And I don't remember it being particularly hard work. I just remember it being a thing that I did. And, again, yeah, that would introduce you to different things. And while I was there, I had friends who were in a band. So we went to lots of gigs. And then somehow I ended up reviewing gigs for like fanzines or 'City Limits', as it was then. And that was quite good because it meant that I could go to a hell of a lot of gigs for free. I'm not even sure I really got paid, I mean, it didn't really matter. But that introduced me to the idea of journalism, really, and being able to tell stories. So, again, I'm sketchy on how old I was, but I know I had loads of energy to do all this stuff. And when we lived in--, in fact, yeah, when we lived in the council flat, my dad converted the utility room into a dark room for me. No one else was allowed to use it. And I did get a little bit of a reputation on the estate as someone, "She's got a dark room. She kind of makes her own photographs." But that was just him kind of, if you, you know, "I had a camera, if you wanted to take stuff, you could do that." The idea for that came from a quite distant relative who lived in Coventry, Ricky we called him, Uncle Ricky. He was a sports photographer. And I just thought this was so glamorous. I didn't know--, I was like, how does that work, like what do you do, you get paid to go to boxing matches and take photos, and like that's your job. He'd be like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah." And he'd spend a lot of time talking to me about it. And I think at one point he thought, oh, maybe I've got a little trainee here who'll be a photographer. But I think I went to one boxing match and I just found it horrific [laughs] I just thought, I can't do this. There was just like blood splattered everywhere. But it was exciting. And, again, that kind of

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introduced the idea of journalism. That's the closest, I'd say--, well, me or anyone in the family got to the idea of journalism or contributing to mass media, that's the closest bit. So there's all these little bits that sort of stick together, but still, the idea of working at the BBC was really for other people. That wasn't really--, just I didn't really know how you got into it. And then when I did have the interview, I thought, I don't know if I fit here and it's not really what I want to do. And then somehow I--, after doing--, yeah, I think after doing freelance journalism, I wrote a few articles, not many, but I wrote a few articles, but most of it was reviews. And I liked it. And then I applied for, I'm not sure what I was doing before, but I applied for a year-long PG diploma at the Polytechnic of London in Riding House Street. And that was specifically radio journalism. And I got in. I remember the interview, really clearly, actually. I remember the interview and I remember thinking, will I impress them even though I didn't go to Oxford or Cambridge and didn't really do a proper degree? You know, I didn't know what they wanted. And the course was very aimed at news. And, again, I thought, I don't really want to be a news reporter. But even then I knew that would furnish me with skills that I could transfer to practically any kind of job that I wanted to do. And they had an association with the BBC. So part of the course was hooking you up with an attachment to a BBC outlet for a couple of months, I think. So it wasn't just observing. You were properly doing stuff as a reporter. And I thought, well, that's good, that'll give me--, I'll know whether I want to do it or not. But I think the interview was a, it was kind of a masterclass, now I think back, on how do you really erm, make sure that you can talk to the outliers as well as the people who are, you know, grade A students. Because the interview wasn't really like an interview. There was a test. There was a practical test. But there was another bit which was just asking really interesting questions, you know. So putting you in scenarios, "You're on the top deck of a bus and X happens. What sort

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of story do you want to tell?" I thought this was great. It wasn't about which qualifications I had. Or they'd give you a load of facts and just say to you, "What's the story we should tell?" And that appealed to me a lot. And so when I got in I was really excited. And it was quite small, it was 12 people. And it was genuinely a mixture of erm, candidates, some, I mean, a lot had fantastic degrees, Oxford and Cambridge, it wasn't a general intake course. It was a specially designed one to try and find different types of people. And then a couple of us who'd worked, in the real world, with real jobs, and wanted to be on this course. So it was a really interesting mix and it probably prepared me for working at the BBC because there were lots of very, very, smart, pointy headed people on the course, as well as, you know, a mixture of people who'd never lived and worked in London. So that was a great introduction. And the attachment for me on that course was to BBC Radio Cornwall. So at the time--, so that must have been, oh, '86, maybe.

Q: [0:36:21] I've got notes here of '85 [Laughs].

A: [0:36:22] '85. So in or around '85 I, yeah, would have been certainly doing this attachment at BBC Radio Cornwall, which I then went onto work for for a short while. And oh, that was an eye opener.

Q: [0:36:41] Yeah, I mean, what was it like? Suddenly being in Truro and Cornwall, I mean, you know, given all the fun you'd been having in London [laughs].

A: [0:36:45] It was bizarre. Yeah, I was having loads of great fun and, okay, I'll paint you a picture. So this young, black woman from proper

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urban, gritty London, who had a kind of Grace Jones haircut, which is sort of really close shaven with a [makes noise] kind of haircut, and probably wearing DMs [Doctor Martens], but smartly dressed. You go to Truro--, I remember the first assignment that I was sent on in Cornwall was the cathedral. A bit of the cathedral was on fire, and they sent me down to do a quick vox pop. Vox pops were big then. And we were doing, you know, I was doing the vox pop and, honestly, all the people, because there wasn't any other black people, I don't think--, well, there must have been in Truro, but I didn't see any, but doing this vox pop in the middle of town, no one was listening to what I was asking them, they just were really, just really looking at me, you know. "You're not from round here, are you? What are you doing here?" I said, "I work for BBC Radio Cornwall." "Really?" [laughs]. It was just--, it wasn't aggressive, it wasn't cruel, I'd just never been asked that before. Because being born in London, you know, I was surrounded by lots of different people. That was kind of normal, really. So it was interesting. But [sighs], I mean, I then went on to work for BBC Radio Cornwall for a while. And all that kind of street savviness, it worked in my favour, it really--, it allowed me to just kind of cope with it all. But I worked there. I worked in Newcastle for a commercial radio station for Metro. I worked for a commercial station in Hull, Humberside, called Viking, which was a proper, gritty commercial radio station with a really thriving, tough newsroom. You know, you sank or swim, it was kind of, you were only as good as your last story. If not, you were just literally discarded.

Q: [0:39:19] And were these, I mean, in places like Metro and Viking and so on in this period, these newsrooms were kind of tough, but they had a particular culture, I would imagine, which was, I'm guessing, quite masculine.

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A: [0:39:36] Well, most places were masculine, to be honest.

Q: [0:39:38] But, I mean, did it sort of strike you at the time that--, did they feel like this is home, this is kind of where I want to be. Or did you feel slightly alienated by the kind of culture of these newsrooms?

A: [0:39:51] I think, if you are brought up the way I was brought up, so you can do what you--, you can do anything but you have to work for it. If you've got that attitude and you're a black woman in London, used to your parents working several jobs, not many things phase you. So I think if I had come from a very educated, black family in London and had gone to a very good university and then got onto somewhere like that, I would have been really phased by it because it would have been like just so tough. But I came from a tough council estate. So this was like no big deal. I found it quite funny because I could just give as good as I got, really. But I just found it quite funny and a bit--, I just couldn't understand why they weren't modern, you know. It was just quite old fashioned. Lots of smoking inside the office [laughs] which now just seems crazy. Lots of blokes, you know, blokey talk. But, you know, sports talk, I love sport, that was no big deal. It just wasn't modern. No one really was interested in music and it was just, you know, down the line news. And you learnt pretty quickly that you, to be heard, you had to try, as much as possible, to fit in. That didn't mean losing your identity, because I'm not interested in that, but if you wanted to know what was going on, you had to make sure that at least once a week you did go to the pub. Because there was a local pub where the editor, all of the key reporters would go, if you wanted to know what was going on, you had to go. You didn't have to drink, it didn't really matter. They already thought I was odd, so the fact that I

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didn't drink didn't matter, I didn't have to, you know, chase every pint that they drank. I just found it really not very modern, you know.

Q: [0:42:10] In the middle of this whole period you do spend some time at BBC London, was it GLR by this stage?

A: [0:42:18] No, I was with it for probably the last bit, the last year or two of it being Radio London. And they kept me on for when it was transformed into BBC GLR.

Q: [0:42:32] So tell us a little bit about that period and what it felt like working there having kind of worked in Cornwall and in Newcastle and...

A: [0:42:45] Yes, I mean, working outside of London was a big deal for me because I had to pay for myself. And so for part of the time I was living at home, but then I got my own place. So I had to keep paying my rent in London and pay for whatever digs I was paying for in all these different places, like Newcastle. So I never had any money. But it meant that I had to try and get a job in London. I couldn't be supported. I couldn't do it, otherwise. And then I took the decision, go back to London and freelance, see how long I could live on freelance work. That, yeah, the freelance experience was tough because I literally couldn't say no to anything, and I had to take everything. So at Radio London I got lots and lots and lots and lots of shifts working for the Black Londoners Programme, where lots of amazing programmes and great content was made. But you really got the impression that, you know, if you want to get in, if you're black, you will get your--, you will earn your stripes there. Which meant that it did have the feel of it

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being a bit ghettoised, because I'm not sure how many people from there broke out into the mainstream. People did, because, clearly, I did. But, yeah, I could get loads and loads of shifts doing that, whilst topping it up with shifts at the World Service. But the only time--, or my break, really, for getting mainstream work at Radio London was in the newsroom, when they suddenly just called me up to help out on a story when, you know, all hell was breaking loose in Tottenham, for the Tottenham riots. Now, they didn't even check whether--,

Q: [0:44:50] This was a Broadwater Farm--,

A: [0:44:51] Broadwater Farm, yeah.

Q: [0:44:52] October 1985?

A: [0:44:53] Yes, yes. So around that time, you know, it was a massive story. It's exciting. But I'm pretty sure that one of the reasons I was asked to do it was, "Well, you're black, you will blend in, you can go in." And that's true, to some extent. But, yeah, did that--, sort of got my foot in the door and then started getting more shifts from just general programmes. And then, because I always had my eye on trying to get into music programmes, doing the newsroom work was handy because it gave me a reason to then go and talk to the editor of the music programmes. And they were like, "Oh, wow, someone who's genuinely interested in music, who's from London, knows where all the, you know, venues are. Great." You know. So I could do the two. And that was heaven, that was great. And I ended up producing programmes there. But even there I didn't get a staff job. I worked there for, like I say, from, you know, whatever that is '85 to when GLR

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started. But, yeah, I had to leave at one point because loads of people around me were finally getting their staff jobs, and I just found it impossible. I was going from fixed term contracts to fixed term contracts, just rolling for ages--,

Q: [0:46:29] But you were after, if there were--, you were wanting a staff job?

A: [0:46:34] Oh yeah, I wanted--, I mean, I'd now gone through that transformation, that moment of saying, the BBC's amazing. I mean, I literally had this moment where I--, I discovered it from, not from listening as a punter, but from going in and going, "Right, so you can make all these programmes for like the World Service, where the programme will literally go round the world." Yeah, that, you know, working at Radio London and doing bits for World Service, was just amazing. Because radio was so instant. You get the idea, you get approval, you make it, it's on the air. That could sometimes be 30 minutes. It wasn't like TV, where there's a lot of setting up. This was very, very, quick. And I loved that. And you could hear the response to your work straight away because people would be--, there were loads of phone ins or whatever it was, or live radio. But it was--, I just found it really tough to actually get a job. And what that meant in BBC terms was, you could be doing the job that you're interviewing for, but you'd have to do an interview which they called a board, which was a panel of people interviewing for this job. Sometimes there'd be someone on that board who you worked with. So they knew you could do the job. But in this board they would ask you just a load of questions which had nothing to do with the job that you're doing. They were quite--, it's quite formal, very formal scenario. And I would--, I mean, I ended up going to lots and lots of these and not being able to

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crack, how do I be the best candidate? I'd always get great feedback, "We know you can do it, but, you know, we'll keep, you know, we'll always find work for you, Lorna, there'll always be work." I just couldn't get started.

Q: [0:48:34] I mean, it's an obvious question to ask, but do you think there was any element of racism in that?

A: [0:48:38] I don't think I was--, I don't think I was subject to blatant racism at the BBC, given my long, you know, however it is, it must be over 25 years, I don't think I was a victim of blatant racism at the BBC. What I think, though, is that a lot of managers back then were lazy. They really--, you know, they had so many people beating down the door to try and work with this amazingly, huge, wonderful, complex organisation, they just didn't have to work very hard. And there wasn't a lot of--, I don't know, then the BBC was very siloed. It wasn't about, how do we properly represent the people who were paying for it, there was almost a sense of entitlement back then. And I remember saying to loads of people all the time, "You do realise it's really important to get working class people working at the BBC, because--, and young people, because that's the future?" You can't take a licence from everybody and only talk to the top 10%. This is not going to work. But I just think people weren't rigorous enough about believing that. And so people like me, who, sometimes, naively thought, well isn't it just about being able to do to the job? That didn't--, it didn't happen, until I got a lot more savvy about separating out, there are tactics you take to get a job, and there's doing the job and getting on with people. And it requires two different approaches. Once I'd worked that out--,

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Q: [0:50:34] So at the BBC what are the tactics to kind of get through a board and get that [laughs]?

A: [0:50:40] Well, having now interviewed so many people for jobs, so many people, I realise that--, well, for me it's about er, understanding the protocol of why it has to be the way it is. So in a board, it's scored, your questions are scored. And that means that you have to say, particularly--, you cannot make assumptions that this person on the board knows I can do the job, they know I can edit, they know I understand the challenges around editorial policy. They know that because I'm doing it every day. The BBC board works when you say it. So you have to say these things. You cannot make assumptions, because they have to say, you know, "She's said that, tick." And the whole point is to get top marks for every question, because if you get top marks for every question, then you might have--, you might have as little as six questions, and, you know, top marks of four per question. So you've got to get 24 points because if you get 24 points and there are two of you, both with 24 points, and just say, I'm not the preferred candidate, the BBC has a thing where they can say, "You're not the preferred candidate, but you are an also suitable." So you are also suitable for this role. And sometimes that means that if the winning candidate cannot agree to take the job, you will get the job. And it took me a while to realise this. That you--, rather than just going for all or nothing, sometimes you have to go for the job, but also bear in mind that there might be a chance that you could be an also suitable. And it means that you either get it because the person didn't take it, or, I think, for a period of four months, also suitable stays on your record and it means that if another job, exactly the same role, same values, same whatever it is, exactly the same comes up, so another assistant producer job comes up, I won't have to interview because I have been deemed also suitable for that role. And you can just go, "You have to

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give me the job." So I would say the way to get on is--, and that's a technicality, but sometimes it's useful, if you've got lazy managers who can't see in front of you that you ought to be doing it, but the way to get on is to remember that you have to say it. And with every question, once you've answered it, then provide evidence, give an example. And it works. I know it works [laughs].

Q: [0:53:40] Just going to come onto Kiss in a second, but when you were doing work for the World Service, part of that, or all of it was for Caribbean News?

A: [0:53:53] Yes, there was a period when I worked there just on that programme. And it's amazing that I got it, really, because, yes, I was black, born to Caribbean parents, but I didn't really know anything about the Caribbean, and I certainly didn't know anything about, not really, about Caribbean politics. But it was a really--, the reason I was desperate to work on it was, it was a live programme, fantastic. It was current affairs and news. And there were some fantastic people that worked there. In particular the Head and occasional presenter, Hugh Crosskill. He was an amazing journalist. And the Caribbean is just rich with stories. It's either, you know, amazing economic stories, lots of arts and culture stories, you know, coups. I mean, you had everything. And I thought, if I'm going to be a better producer, then working on something like this which I could get on if I, you know, stuck with it, it would give me all sorts of experience. And, you know, being in that live studio in the wonderful, wonderful Bush House, which is just a lovely building--,

Q: [0:55:24] So I was going to ask about Bush House. So this is--, so you've

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been in various other places, you've been in Truro and Newcastle and you've been at Radio London and so on--,

A: [0:55:34] Yes, in Marylebone High Street, now no longer there, Bush House.

Q: [0:55:37] But Bush House is a place in itself. Just tell us a little bit about--, you call it wonderful, what is it that was wonderful about it?

A: [0:55:44] Well, it's just a strange place. I mean, it's impressive in size and architecture, anyway. But, you know, being on the Strand, it literally, it's so impressive, it took up this whole block. And you couldn't believe that all of this, and it went back and back and back, was all BBC. The reason it was wonderful, and I sort of say that in a kind of quaint way, almost a folkloric kind of way, is because it's how I imagine the UN to be. You go in and there are all these nationalities represented. And it's a building of a different era, you know, marble floors everywhere, huge lifts with gilt edged, you know, frames everywhere, concierge and commissioners and security guards in pristine uniforms. Everyone was really polite. You'd be walking along endless corridors, which you could hear your feet going click, click, click. And everyone looks really important, with clipboards. And you would hear all these languages. So you'd be walking along and it would just be every sort of language, and all these people working on lots of different--, and they were all really respectful of each other. When I was there it didn't feel uber competitive, as news can sometimes be really just dog eat dog. It wasn't like that. It was a real respectful, you've got a story to tell and you're going to be able to be broadcasting it back to this far off land. It was just really strange. I loved it, and I loved the old fashioned-ness

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of it, you know. So, coming from this, in my head, me thinking that I was uber hip and uber modern, actually, I really yearned for this traditional, really, because it's probably the closest I got to, I don't know, being in a proper university, almost, because you're surrounded by very clever, lovely, warm, smart people. And being in the studio, the live studio, where you had your studio manager, the SM , massive reels of tape [laughs] that were playing out, on tape. And, you know, your producer, your researcher, the red light goes on, it was just so magical, it was like a little mini drama. Which I didn't want to do forever, but I really loved doing it. I mean, one of the highlights would have been, working on that programme, I think there was a coup in the Caribbean, and suddenly Newsnight, you know, the six, the nine, all these people, journalists and very important editors, were beating down our door to get all of our contacts, all of our stringers, all of that. And suddenly for like a nanosecond we were the centre of the world, you know. Our little tiny office was supplying all, you know. I mean, we knew that they'd just take it, eat it up and then just splurge it out, it didn't matter, really. And that was exciting, because there was definitely a pecking order, you know, and obviously we weren't [laughs] we weren't a big news programme. But I enjoyed it. It's a side of the BBC that just felt so traditional.

Q: [0:59:26] But your next career move was completely away from the BBC, wasn't it? It was Kiss. And so what was it that took you there?

A: [0:59:38] Well, I was still the same person. So I was still Lorna who loved music, loved knowing what was going on. I still felt I was still learning. And I knew I wasn't going to retire at the World Service. I knew that wasn't going to happen. And I knew lots of people, even when I was working at the World Service, I knew lots of people from my clubbing

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days who were involved in some way with pirate radio stations. I didn't really know how pirate radio stations worked. I didn't have anything to do with them, I wasn't hip enough. But I listened and I knew people who were part of it, because some of those radio stations, like Kiss FM, used to organise club nights. And they were the best club nights. So there was a crossover of people and scenes and friends. And I can't remember who, but someone came up to me and said, "Kiss are going to apply for a legal licence." And I was like, "Well, why do they want to do that? They're making piles of money now and they've got listeners." And they were like, "No, they want to go legit, if you're interested." And I thought, er, why would I leave a staff contract? I've got a mortgage and I know what it's like to be properly skint, like why would I leave to go and work for a pirate, and they may not get the licence? And this all seemed really risky. And I wasn't part of the team that won the licence. There was a really smart set of people who did that. But then, I think the first time round they tried they didn't get the licence at--, I think that went to Jazz. But the second time round they did get the licence. And not long after winning the licence I was approached to be--, did I want to go for an interview? I thought, well, I've got nothing to lose because I've got a job, and it would be interesting to see whose behind this thing, how are they going to make it work? And it was the biggest buzz. Everyone was talking about it, it was really exciting. I remember it being, it might even have been on the front of the 'Evening Standard', it was like a really--, it was a big thing. It was like this minnow, they'd won. And I went to have--, yeah, I had this interview, which was in Finsbury Park. It was in a little news office which was packed with just music and vinyl and stuff. And everyone was really mega busy. And I had the interview, and they said, "Well, you know, if you want to come and work with us, you could be with us as a producer." So I started as a producer there. And at the beginning--, I mean, they had ambitions, they had big ideas. So, for a commercial

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radio station, they wanted to have a weekly documentary slot. This is when virtually no other commercial radio station at the time invested in speech other than the three minute IRN bulletin that they had on the hour. But Kiss wanted to tell the stories of musicians and they wanted a weekly music documentary. And I was like, "Yeah, great." Not realising I would be the department. There's no one else. It was so difficult. I tried to keep--, you know, because I had to do that and general production, and liaise with the IRN news team to make sure that it was covered on the station. And it was really--, you know, and produce, you know, breakfast show. It was really hard. But a documentary went out every Sunday night. Many a time I'd basically produce the show in two halves. So I'd have two reels of tape, as it was then. And while reel one was going out I'd be quickly editing and mixing part two. And basically I'd have a 30 second trailer in the middle of the programme. While that was going out, quickly lace up the other programme, press play, nearly every Sunday. It was heart-attack inducing, you know. It was really tough. But I enjoyed that and I--, and, again, that was sort of proof that I really enjoyed the managing creative people bit and producing people, rather than having any aspirations to be a presenter, which I did for a tiny nanosecond when I was at Radio London, on the Black Londoners Programme. I was determined not to be a presenter, because I just--, I didn't think that was where the power was, anyway. And I--, what did I do? I think, yeah, the only reason I did that presenting was, literally someone fell ill and I was in the office, and they said, "Well, you're going to have to do it, live." And it was a live arts programme, or the live arts edition of Black Londoners. So lots of arts and culture that was about, and about black life, really. And I was just thrown in and done it, and I hated it [laughs]. I did it for a few weeks. And I knew then that that's not what I want to do.

Q: [1:05:46] So you've got a taste, a sense of a skill managing creative

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people and you become Programme Director. What's was the process of becoming--,

A: [1:05:56] How did that happen [laughs]?

Q: [1:05:57] Yes.

A: [1:05:57] How did that happen? So I joined Kiss in 1990, just ahead of its launch. One of the most exciting things you can do is launch a brand new radio station. And I joined as one of the producers. And basically, it was a kind of place where you could dream up loads of crazy ideas. If you could find the money to fund it, you could do it. And my experience there was entirely different to the BBC. So at the BBC every job you went for would either be, do not apply unless you have three years' experience. How do you get three years' experience if you don't get--, you know, it's very chicken and egg. But at the BBC you either had to do the leg work and know people and, you know, hope someone would sponsor you and be able to say, "No, no, no, they're really good." Or have been hanging around for three years. Working for Kiss was entirely different. It was all about looking you in the eye, and, "Can you do it, Lorna?" And then you go and do it. And so I started as a producer. One of the highlights was--, or two highlights, actually, one was Pepsi Cola came on board as a sponsor. Hugely important for a new radio station. And they said, "We want to give you loads of money, because you feel like you're the heartbeat of youth in London. But we need an idea, we're not just going to give you the money." And this was at a time when sponsorship as opposed to spot advertising was more interesting. Your mark-up could be quite healthy. And so the idea we came up with was, we're going to come up with a

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promotion called Kiss across America. And it's going to go to five music cities, LA for LA hip hop, New York for New York hip hop, Detroit for Motown and soul, Philly, I mean, Chicago for House. So we had this, you know, ambitious idea, which was you would hop to these different American cities at breakfast time. And we'd get loads of different interviewees and we'd do features showcasing, you know, I don't know. Oh, we went to Washington, actually, because I remember we did a feature on the birth of Go-go music. It was fantastically ambitious for what was then a local commercial radio station. And Pepsi were amazing and paid for this whole thing. But we didn't have an engineer. The station literally didn't employ an engineer. So I came up with this whole idea of how we were going to do these transatlantic [OBs 01:08:54]. And we had to have two teams and do it in a relay because, obviously, the time difference between LA and New York, you couldn't do programme one from LA and programme two from New York. So we figured out all the logistics. We got all--, you know, we had a company that--, Pepsi provided that, helped us with the logistics of tickets and all of that. But we didn't have an engineer [laughs]. And it's the audacity of this company to say, you know, Kiss actually saying to me, "Yes, you can do it. Yes, I trust you that it's going to work. We're not going to come off the air. And, actually, we need to get an engineer, anyway, so, you know, we'll get one on board." And then we got an engineer on board, like full-time. We had people who were almost like consultants, but we didn't have an engineering team. So different to being at the World Service, where you had a studio manager who moved all the buttons for you. At commercial radio the presenter did the whole thing. And so, you know, they employed their second full-time engineer. And it was amazing. There's so many stories that, I could tell you, about being in the middle of nowhere doing these programmes. But that was great, the real can-do, trust, you know, being a little bit hands-off so that you could do it.

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On the flipside, you were encouraged to take risk, you were encouraged to make decisions quickly, fast, but you lived or died by your last project. But that didn't--, I mean, most people weren't worried about that. They wanted the opportunity to do it. There was no fear of failure. If something did fail, you were properly called out, which doesn't quite happen at the BBC. It's just not--, it's like the elephant in the room, it's just not really said. But at Kiss, if something didn't work there would be, you know, a proper discussion, open and frank, in front of everybody else. And it was like, "Okay, it didn't work, you're never going to be able to do that again." And then move on. But I--, you know, making documentaries, doing that OB, I've never done, I don't think, another OB as complex as that since, really, which is incredible [laughs].

Q: [1:11:39] So what are the steps between doing all this and becoming Programme Director?

A: [1:11:45] You don't notice. It's the trust thing, you know. They didn't--,

Q: [1:11:49] So there was a vacancy and you applied for it, or you were invited?

A: [1:11:53] Well, there definitely was a vacancy, because there was a really talented man called Grant Goddard, who basically helped secure the--, he did all the plans, you know, a lot of the plans, with a team of others, to secure the licence for Kiss to go legal. And he then became the Programme Director. And a really smart individual. But he fell out with Kiss. Not entirely sure why. But history will tell you that all--, most people connected to a brand new thing right at the

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beginning, especially when they've lived with it, don't always last to the end. It will sometimes take someone else to come in and--, who's less close to it, and say, "This is the next situation." And unless you're really extraordinary, as in you can do the creation, the nurturing and the people stuff and the technical and the business, not many people are made like that. Unless you can do all of that and at the same time be really strict with yourself and say, "Every year, this is how we take it to the next level, to the next level." Because most people can't do that. Most people create something new and then sit back and go, "It's amazing. It's now real and it's happened." But to keep reviewing yourself is quite hard. So it's often the case that the creator isn't always there. And I think, yeah, after, I forget how many years, if I was there from--, so I was there from 1990, but after a few years he left. Then I was made erm, Head of Speech because, again, another really talented person was there, went on maternity leave, didn't come back. And then, I didn't realise it, but the board of the company who report to the City, they had a conversation, and said we need an actual, proper Programme Director. And a couple of the other directors, basically, suggested me. I had no idea this was happening. And then I was called into a board room, and they just said, "You need to say yes, but we've decided we want you to be Programme Director." There's no programme director school. There's no training. You don't really--, it's a bit like being a controller at the BBC, there is no training for it or manual. So, when they said, "You be the Programme Director." I immediately thought, er what does that involve, you know? Actually, yeah, I didn't know what it really meant, I thought it meant you are responsible for the team that gets the output out on the air. So you will have a Head of Music, who selects the music, and you'll have one or two producers, who manage the programmes, and the buck stops with you if you go off air. And that's kind of the job description. At Kiss it was complicated because to begin with we had about 42 on-

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air presenters, many of whom were at the illegal pirate station. And so a lot of my job was making sure that people stuck to the necessary governance and compliance that you have to follow, you know, running a legal station. So you can't play what you want, the language is important, but we need to keep the edge, so, you know, how do you do that and how do you succession plan, where do you get your new DJs and when do you decide to move people on? So that's how I got it, that the business, for whatever reason, thought it would be a good thing to do. There was a real freshness about working at Kiss, because I don't think I was ever, ever, ever brought into a discussion or debate about diversity or where I came from or anything like that. It was never--, it never seemed an issue. It was so simple. It was always, "Can you do it? And if I trust what you're saying, as in you're not just blagging, then you can do it." And it was only when I received an award from the industry, from the commercial radio industry for, I don't know, Programme Director of the Year or something, and that was voted for by other programme directors. And it's only when I got that--, and then you have to do like industry interviews, that people were making a really big thing of the fact that, really unusual to be a woman programme director of a commercial station. I just never, ever really thought of it. It's kind of--, it's a job that I'm interested in doing, and I can do it, that's it. And I think that's because there were no--, there wasn't any heavy barriers whilst at Kiss to do with me being a women, certainly not do with me being black. A lot of black people work there, presenters and in the team. So it felt like a real, almost like a microcosm of London, it really felt representative. And there were a couple of very posh, well educated people there who just loved the music. But there were lots of people who came from working class, proper working class stock. It was just a real mixture. So, yeah, I did that for a while. And then I was made an actual director sitting on the board of the company, which is--, I

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wouldn't have planned because I didn't really know what did that mean? But it more or less meant that, certainly twice a year we had to, you know, you had a legally binding reporting that you had to do, which was about the progress, or not, of the station. And when I moved to that position, I mean, that was proper growing up because there were money people who needed you to mystically predict what is going to be the audience size of our business next year. Because with that audience size we can advertise at this rate, and if we do it at this rate, next year we'll make X amount of money, which will allow you to spend X amount. So it was real life. It was--, yeah, and making those predictions, because that's what they were, became a real art. You know, we--, I mean, there was a time near the end of my time at Kiss when it became impossible because there was a waking up of BBC Radio 1, really, of realising that if you're going to be the youth music network for the BBC, you cannot ignore club culture. You certainly can't have DJs who are older than my dad, older than my granddad, or people who never bought music or never went to gigs or didn't know what Acid House is. I mean, you can't--, it wasn't representative.

Q: [1:20:30] So, from your position at Kiss, were you conscious of what was happening at Radio 1? I mean, this is--,

A: [1:20:35] I never thought of it.

Q: [1:20:36] So what Matthew Bannister was doing and the arrival of Chris Evans and--,

A: [1:20:39] No, God. Chris Evans, it didn't matter. It really--, because that wasn't our currency. Our currency wasn't entertainment and the cult

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of the entertainment DJ. Our currency was, can we get the best music as quickly as possible to this youth audience. Because when you're a specialist music station, often your audience is way more informed than you are. It's a bit like a sports programme. A sports programme will be watched or listened to by loads of fanatics, who know all the results and all the heroes because they're really passionate about that sport. So as a presenter or as a team, you have to be quick and you have to be more expert if you're in sport or in music. That's just how it is.

Q: [1:21:33] So that particular, as it were, reinvention of Radio 1 wasn't the kind of reinvention that yet made it interesting or relevant to you?

A: [1:21:43] Later.

Q: [1:21:44] It was a later thing, okay.

A: [1:21:45] Later it happened. I mean, I was aware of Chris Evans from GLR because when I worked there he was a producer as well. And, you know, we'd bump into--, so we knew each other from there. And I saw the transformation of this really--, he was a really talented producer, become a presenter.

Q: [1:22:09] Did you like what you saw in that transformation?

A: [1:22:10] He was a really smart producer. He was--, everyone thought that, whether he was specialist or mainstream, he--, and that's good for everyone because he's just fantastic with audio. But you did see the

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difference. There was absolutely a hierarchy. And it wasn't to do with him. There was something going on in radio which was, you know, we were creating big personalities. There was a time in, I'd say, UK radio where we were still a bit in love with US kind of personality DJs. The Rick Dees, the--, you know, there was this real kind of mystic thing about, if you get the right presenter nothing else matters. Whereas, although I'd heard that sort of way of thinking, I never really believed it. I kind of thought you could almost put anyone in front of the mic if you had the right music on music radio. So there was a split. But then we started to lose, almost on a weekly basis, all of our presenters. Trevor Nelson, Judge Jules, Dave Pearce. So many presenters, that had really developed and become a real voice in youth music radio, were poached by BBC Radio 1. It was endless. I just spent all my time looking for new people all the time. Then they started poaching producers, and, you know, literally every week there'd be a knock on the door, and it's like, "I don't really want to go, but they're paying me and it's like a chance to broadcast to the whole nation."

Q: [1:24:01] But apart from your frustration as a programme director of losing those staff and those presenters, was that process telling you something about Radio 1 changing in a way that somehow made it possibly more interesting?

A: [1:24:20] Oh, definitely. I mean, I was approached endlessly to go and work at Radio 1, because then it became very public what Matthew [Bannister] was doing. Bearing in mind that Matthew and Trevor Dann both hired me at Radio London and GLR. So there was a small group of people who'd somehow managed to have worked with Matthew several times. So he certainly knew of me, and was like, you know, "You need to come over at Radio 1 because we're doing loads of

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amazing things. We've realised we need to reflect what young people are really [inaudible 1:24:56]. I'm going to get rid of all of this." And I thought, no, you won't. But he did.

Q: [1:24:59] Yeah, so what sort of stopped you from jumping at the first sort of invitation?

A: [1:25:04] Because I erm, well, for a start, I didn't need to be there first, because if I went there first I would be doing it all. I didn't need to do that. I wanted to see how they'd get on. And I didn't actually realise that they weren't going to find their own talent, it was literally just picking lots of people from wherever they wanted it. That's what a big network does. You know, they'll see that someone has earned, you know, got their air miles, and then pick them off. And it got to the point where I lost my breakfast presenter. And it was a double headed show, which we'd spent quite a bit of advertising on, which, you know, for a commercial radio station is quite a big deal. And it was Sarah HB and Dave Pearce. And I remember Dave coming to see me, and he said, "I'm another one. I'm going over to Radio 1." I mean, for him Radio 1 had always been his dream. And I also--, I used to produce him at Radio London. So we knew each other very well. He said, "I'm going." I went, "Right, I thought this would happen." He's like, "Yeah, but I've got to go now." [Laughs]. I thought, you're kidding me. And that was kind of the moment when I thought, right, we've lost all these people, erm, and it's--, and also I was at that stage where I'd worked at Kiss for many years, and I knew at some point I would work at Radio 1, but I just didn't know when. And that was really hard because we had to basically find someone, like really quickly. At the same time, I didn't want to get further and further up the--, I mean, I didn't want to be a managing director because that meant literally not really doing the

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editorial and just doing the money side, really. And I thought, right, I'm going to take a break. And I was lucky that the board allowed me to work with Emap developing radio stations in South Africa, even though they knew I was going to leave. We'd agreed I was going to leave. But, I mean, they were generous. They said, "You can do this project." Which meant--, in total it was just under a year, but it was six months in South Africa, which was a fascinating country for me. And I did that, and then from there I went to India for a month. And while I was there I, yeah, I got a message saying, "You need to apply for this job at Radio 1." As, I think it was Editor of Production, for BBC production at Radio 1, so in-house production. And, yeah, I got back, did the interview, which was with--, actually, it was with Trevor Dann and Andy Parfitt. And, yeah, it was a different place and it certainly felt--, this time round I said yes [laughs] and I worked there for, hmm, eight years, maybe, six or eight years. And I loved it. I loved being at Radio 1 this time round because--, well, for a start I was lucky in that in Andy Parfitt, he was a senior manager who almost sometimes acted the way senior managers at Kiss did. He would say, "Well, you know about X amount of music, you know, I'm interested in..." He would actively want to talk to me about strategy, not just what I--, what they think I know, as in, "Let's go to Lorna to talk about black music." That's just too easy. He was actively interested in me being a part of the strategy setting. So how are we going to shift, again, a youth network that has to work within the BBC, from the position that it's in to a position where it will be taken seriously as a youth station. And I was lucky because he actively wanted to do that, and I think sometimes you need that. You need a senior person who sometimes sees what you don't see, really. Because I would never have described myself previously as someone with a good strategic mind, but he did. I mean, you know, all of the schedule changes that we had to make, I mean, it was a lot of change. I remember, yeah, we would--, we both liked running. We would run

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around [laughs] Regent's Park, which is a walk from where Yalding House used to be then. Because Yalding House now is a restaurant on Great Portland Street, but Yalding House, where Radio 1 was, you could basically quickly get your kit on and run around Regent's Park. And we'd run around and I'd have him asking me really complicated questions while we were running. And we'd come back, and he'd go, "Right, that's it. We've got a strategy." And he'd be off and write it up. But it was great, it was a really--, and then Radio 1 didn't feel like the rest of BBC, either. It felt like--,

Q: [1:31:29] It still felt like a place to itself?

A: [1:31:33] It felt like--,

Q: [1:31:34] And do you think that was partly because of Yalding House, that it was--,

A: [1:31:36] It was because it was in Yalding. It was in a different building, it wasn't in the old Broadcasting House. It was in a different building. And you were almost encouraged to be the truculent teenager of all the brands. And I think, certainly Andy used to think of it in that way. It's like you need to be respectful to your parent, the BBC, but you must be true and authentic to what it means to be a youth brand. And he really developed that, he did that.

Q: [1:32:10] So what were the key--, so having developed the strategy while out running in Regent's Park a few times [laughs]--,

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A: [1:32:16] [Laughs] Exactly, he killed me.

Q: [1:32:17] What were the key elements of that strategy? Given the fact that there'd been some changes under Matthew Bannister and Andy Parfitt had already--, and they were--, so what, in the period that you were there, what were the things that stand out in your memory as the key achievements, changes that you were involved in?

A: [1:32:36] So we had inherited a staff, a team, that were at Radio 1 from the crazy roadshows, you know, from Diddy Hamilton--, there were teams of people that still worked there from that period. So there had to be a restructure, not many were there, but there were a few, and we had to simplify the way that the department worked, the whole of Radio 1. So things like why is the live music team putting out a roadshow which is basically a giant truck going to different locations. Why is it doing that every summer? Is that the face of, you know, what young music lovers want? So that was changed, and One Big Weekend came in. We had to--, we split our schedule so that you basically had a person responsible for mainstream daytime, and then another person responsible for the specialist output. And that was specifically around specialist shows do not need to be on air forever. So this is almost an opposite way to how the BBC--, how BBC Radio thinks. It's like if you've got a programme, you book someone, and basically that presenter, a bit like John Peel, can literally be there until they're no longer there. Our idea was that new scenes, new genres, new things, new interests come up all the time and you need to be able to change and move that. But you've got to get the right person to represent that scene. So--,

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Q: [1:34:37] And so you need the music, really, is driving--,

A: [1:34:41] The schedule.

Q: [1:34:42] The schedule more than before?

A: [1:34:44] Yes, and previously, from Tony Blackburn's day, the presenter would drive the schedule and then the music would be slotted in. Now, it's--, and even--, everyone understands this now, even Radio 2 today, in 2018, would have a large part of their schedule which is absolutely driven by the genre. So you start by saying, "I want a reggae show. Right, who's the best person to get that? David Rodigan. I want a modern, contemporary jazz programme. Jamie Cullum." So it's done in a different way, rather than having lots of general presenters who might happen to like jazz, and then the producer puts the jazzness into the show. It can work but it's not as authentic.

Q: [1:35:42] Where does this sort of--, this really important shift, and of course things don't happen just because of one person or one moment--,

A: [1:35:52] No, no, no.

Q: [1:35:53] But I wonder if it is possible to sort of pin where this comes from? Andy Parfitt clearly was important.

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A: [1:35:59] Yes.

Q: [1:36:00] I mean, there might be some people who argue that John Birt might have been important in one sense, because he created this document called Extending Choice, which actually says some really interesting things about Radio 1. And then Matthew Bannister, as it were, becomes, in one sense, he introduces the Birtean sort of regime.

A: [1:36:19] Oh, Matthew had to do the--, he had to do the--,

Q: [1:36:22] But then there's you and your knowledge of music.

A: [1:36:22] He had to--,

Q: [1:36:25] I mean, is this something which is just coming from lots of different directions, the shift towards kind of putting music--,

A: [1:36:29] It's such a huge shift that it is about almost a pincer movement from lots of different areas. But also, as soon as you get a big, complex organisation like the BBC reacting to what's actually going on outside its walls, it becomes much more interesting. And this is why the future of the BBC is absolutely about who it employs, because otherwise it will just keep talking to itself. So Radio 1 was a fantastic example of a different range of people coming in to work there, together with an acknowledgement that when you define yourself as a youth network, you've got to talk to all youth. It's not talking to young people who

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went to university only. You have to talk to young people who have no idea what the BBC is. And that is hard, that is very tough. You're the BBC and yet you're talking to people who have no relationship with the BBC. And if you don't get those people you will not have licence fee funds, because they won't see why they're paying it. So there was definitely, I'm sure you can trace it from Birt, Bannister, Parfitt, all of them know that this was sort of about the survival of the BBC. It's, yes, it was great to have a groovy, young youth network, but if you don't engage young people with content that they want and they feel is relevant, there's a big chunk of the BBC that they won't be able to engage with. Because they ain't going to suddenly at age 55 say, "Ooh, I quite rather like listening to Radio 4." They won't have a clue what it is. It doesn't happen like that. If you don't get them in with some relationship with the BBC, it'll never happen. Now, of course, there are loads of other forces where young people literally don't need the BBC. And we're doing extra effort to be able to talk to them. But they can get--, they can discover music from anywhere. It doesn't have to be Radio 1.

Q: [1:38:40] Well, I want to come--, there's a really--, that's sort of, as it were, the social media period I want to come to. But just want to stay, just a moment--,

A: [1:38:49] Can I just get a glass of water, not a glass, a sip?

Q: [1:38:50] Yeah. I just wanted to stay for a moment longer with this period, when you're working with Andy Parfitt and you're restructuring, new programmes, new production staff, new presenters. What was the--, well we know that when Matthew, a few years earlier when

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Matthew Bannister kind of cleared out, you know--,

A: [1:39:12] Everyone [laughs].

Q: [1:39:13] DLT and so on, there was a lot of stuff in the press about, you know, the old guard being very unhappy.

A: [1:39:19] Oh, it was front page. I mean, there was literally a graphic of a banister on the front page of the Sun, with, yeah, Matthew's head going up and down the banister according to whether he was on target or not. I mean, this was massive news [laughs].

Q: [1:39:38] But then--, so in your period, so going just a few years later, we're in a slightly different phase of the sort of revolution, as it were. What was the atmosphere--, were you--, inside Yalding House on a sort of daily basis, was it an atmosphere of fun and optimism and pioneering or was it actually quite stressful?

A: [1:39:59] No, I'd say it was hard work because, and that's all relative, because we weren't digging holes for a living, it was a great job, but it was hard work because it took much from you. You could be working from early morning to late, literally because to get an authentic, you know, you might have to go to a club, not because you're going to have a great time but because you needed to meet someone or whatever. But it was long days and you, you know, you had to authentically get into it. But it was fun, it was--, I don't remember us being particularly erm, worried about the weight of the BBC. I think now there really is this weight that you carry, which is this sort of, it's not

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quite daily, but it's like a monthly dance you do around avoiding the landmines because you're the BBC, because people are so invested in it that everyone's entitled to an opinion. And it can sometimes feel like you're swimming in treacle because you just can't get where you need to get to because you're trying to do the checks and balance, checks and balances all the time. Rather than saying, "We've thought about it, we're going this way, and not all of you will like it." We don't really act like that. But when we--, certainly when I was at Radio 1, it felt very much like that. It really did. I mean, even, you know--, I mean, the BBC's always been quite pioneering, you know, you think about the development of all the digital radio stations. So I left Radio 1 just before 1Xtra, Asian Network, they were all launched. I went, again I'll get things mixed up, but I think I went and worked in television for--, yeah, I think I went and worked in television for a bit. But this was quite bold. We're going to create a brand new radio station which is targeting, primarily, British Asians or black Britons. That's a bold thing to do. And that was all under--, I mean, the 1Xtra, which was an offshoot to Radio 1, that was all under Andy in terms of the launch. Excuse me [coughs]. It didn't--, I mean, yeah, it was exciting. It didn't feel difficult or anything like that. If you ask people at Radio 1 now, they may have a different view, people who are still at Radio 1 now. I think it's really, really tough, you know, because Radio 1 has to behave differently. But it's got those three BBC blocks. So it can't be as edgy or as challenging as maybe a youth audience wants it to be. And that, yeah, that just creates a bit of a tension.

Q: [1:43:38] Well, I want to talk just a little bit more about 1Xtra in a moment. But before we forget, in, it was July 1999 Tim Westwood is shot.

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A: [1:43:53] Ah, yes, yes.

Q: [1:43:56] And just I wondered if you could just take us back to that event.

A: [1:44:00] So this--, I mean, thankfully he was fine. But the idea that you could be working at the BBC in, largely, an office job and get a phone call that said one of your colleagues has been shot, with a proper gun, in London, and is in hospital, that's kind of scary.

Q: [1:44:26] So who--, so take me back to that phone call. So you were working--, it was a working day, or in the evening, or you were at home?

A: [1:44:32] No, no, it was the middle of the day. And I--, my recollection is that he was--, there's an annual, like a fair that happens in a London park, and he always appears at that. And I don't think it was a gang, but someone who was unhappy with him shot him. And my colleague Ian Parkinson, who's responsible for specialist output at Radio 1, he got the phone call, and he just looked really ashen, and said, "Tim's been shot. We've got to go and see him." And I went with him and saw Tim in hospital. I mean, he'd been shot in the arm. But it was just really--, well, it was really sad, but it was just really shocking, because this quest to authentically reflect, you know, the music that young people are actually listening to takes you to different places. Because this is a thing that, you know, when our competitor--, our sort of, yeah, our competitors around live music say, "Well, why is the BBC putting on events? Why are you doing live music concerts and festivals." And it's because those rites of passage, those moments where you say, "The

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first time I saw Kanye or Beyoncé or Taylor Swift--," Or whoever it is, "--it was at a Radio 1 event." Their experience is going to be safe, they're not going to be ripped off. And it allows fans of recorded music--, so when they hear recorded music on the radio, it gives them a deeper appreciation of how that music is made. Because it's no secret that music lessons in schools, the ability to be able to chop and change from one instrument to the next, this is all becoming a myth. You can't--, this doesn't really happen for most people unless you're privileged enough to come from a family where they can make that happen for you. So to be able to appreciate how is music made, you have to see it live. And so there's this real--, it's simple but it's just being able to hear your favourite pop song performed in front of you. And you can see that that sound is made from a keyboard, or whatever it is. This is a really important role that music radio, and commercials do it as well, but I happen to think that the BBC do it the best, this is a really important role that music radio plays. Helping fans of music, music that they often only hear as a recorded product or on a video or on the radio, that they get a deeper appreciation and understanding of how is this made.

Q: [1:48:00] I might want to talk a bit more about that in the context of the Electric Proms shortly.

A: [1:48:03] Yes.

Q: [1:48:04] But just to come back to Tim Westwood, just in terms of what the immediate fallout of that was, you know, for you personally, but also within Radio 1. I mean, is there--, just, again, take us back to sort of the aftermath, really, the sort of immediate and perhaps the longer-

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term.

A: [1:48:24] Well, this is where working at somewhere like Radio 1, it's properly challenging. Because someone like--, well, the core team, myself, Ian Parkinson, the press manager and the actual controller, Andy Parfitt, this is no longer about just managing a group of creatives and making some very lovely radio programmes. This is where he has to be a politician. He has to understand the news cycle. He has to understand his responsibilities to the presenter. He has to understand how to speak to the various groups that hear the news. This is a complex thing. And that's where we all have to--, I mean, we all just work very quickly together. So it's kind of, what statement are you going to put out and how is it going to affect, you know, the ambition for Radio 1 to keep on putting on live events. Because, although it had nothing to do with a BBC radio event, it was our DJ. And the press will always take shortcuts and just say, you know, "BBC Radio 1 presenter shot." Immediately it looks like it's got something to do with our event. It hasn't. But it means that you can't do a knee jerk and say, "That's it, we can't have rap on the station anymore because the rap presenter will be targeted by, you know, really unsavoury people who've got guns." That's like a completely unrealistic reaction. But what you have to do is, you have to say, if we are ever, you know, obviously you work hand-in-hand with the police, you work with the security, but if we are ever in a scenario where we are with a live audience and we're doing a rap music event with this DJ, it's particular planning and preparation. You couldn't just treat it like a roadshow because it's not. And that's what I mean about it being a really expert team. It's kind of myself, the specialist Head, Ian Parkinson, we've been to those clubs. So it wasn't like we were going to turn up at a rap event in deepest Hackney dressed in a suit and looking like a plain clothes police officer, you know, where everyone's going, "What are they doing here?" We've

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been to those places. We know what it's like. So we know that, yeah, if--, you could be, at that time you could be in certain erm, events, club nights, rap events, rap nights, where it wasn't unusual for the event to be shut down because someone had got a bit too boisterous and, you know, knifed someone. I mean, that did happen, not often, but it did happen. But there was a way of getting out of that and there was a way of making it way, way worse, you know. It was--, I've been to loads and loads and loads of events like that, whether I like the music or not, it was just to understand it. And it would be packed, heaving, really kind of boisterous group, and I'd be lucky, I'd be in the DJ box. And I could look out and see them. And you'd have to know, when is that a problem and when is someone actually in danger. And it took a while, but after a while, you know, I could just see, there used to be this mad dance that they'd do which literally meant throwing yourself on someone. If you're just looking at that, you're like [laughs] that looks really violent. But it's not, you know, people were frisked, they didn't have knives, and it was just they were getting into the music. But if you knew that, then it was fine. So it was kind of--, at Radio 1, after Tim got shot, it was a reassurance that we had the right people around us, you know, the person who was producing the rap show really knew about rap. It wasn't that they were producing that show and really wanted to do a punk show, they really knew that. They knew all the key players in that scene, they knew all the club owners, they knew all the promoters, they knew the people that did the fliers. They were in that scene. But they were pretty special people because they understood the BBC editorial guidelines. They knew what it meant to broadcast safely on the BBC, and you need the two. Sometimes you have to teach the BBC bit, because you find these extraordinary people who really know all there is to know about Chicago House, and you can make them into a BBC producer. And that's what I think is really exciting. To be able to find people who are authentically dipped, find people who are

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authentically dipped in these genres and scenes and make them into BBC producers, because often they don't come ready made.

Q: [1:54:04] And you don't think that anything is lost in that process, or if something is lost it's worthwhile because something else is gained, I mean...?

A: [1:54:13] Well, if I thought it was lost I wouldn't be here, because I was helped massively by people who helped make me benefit from the BBC. There are amazing things that the BBC can give you as a programme maker or as a programme manager. But, you know, really creative people come in all sorts of shapes and sizes and they're a bit rough round the edges. But it's kind of--, we call it editorial guidance and it's in a thick book, but a lot of that is experience. It's a short-cut to saying, "What would you do in this scenario? How would you make a programme about the history of profanity in hip hop without us being fined? How do you do that? And how do you do it in an authentic way?" And therefore you've got to have expert ways of weaving your way round it. So, no, I don't think being made into a producer is bad or kind of makes you less authentic. I think what's really not authentic is having someone who is incredibly academically smart, but hasn't lived life. Because if you're in an area where you are making programmes, you're essentially telling stories, it's got to be relatable. And that applies to all of our networks, I think, Radio 4, 3, 2, 1, 5, 1Xtra, 6 Music, Asian Network. Is it authentic to the audience that you're trying to talk to and are you meeting their expectations? And we don't always get it right, but it has to be about that.

Q: [1:56:21] Okay, just one last question about Tim Westwood, and it's a bit

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of a crass question and it's a bit provocative.

A: [1:56:28] Right.

Q: [1:56:29] But, I mean, [sighs] horrible though it would have been for Tim Westwood to have been shot, and difficult though it would be to anticipate in the sense that, you know, there might be a risk that Aunty Beeb might be nervous about the road that Radio 1 is on--,

A: [1:56:43] And knee jerk to, yeah.

Q: [1:56:49] It must in some really crude way have kind of done wonders for credibility, actually.

A: [1:56:53] For who?

Q: [1:56:55] Well, I mean, I don't know, I mean, a Radio 1 that's--, no, you don't think, was that never a consideration?

A: [1:57:00] No, no, no. Because what you're saying is it would have done, for example, potentially, credibility for Tim. He didn't need credibility. He--,

Q: [1:57:07] But for Radio 1, did it, that was never any…?

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A: [1:57:10] No. Because don't forget, Radio 1 was pretty schizophrenic then, even then. So, although it was going through the transformation of having, you know, the right specialist DJs, who were at the height of their game, they could command thousands, you know, tens of thousands in big festivals around the globe. They could do that. Whilst for a very modest BBC specialist music fee, broadcast to, you know, millions in some cases, on Radio 1. They lived this dual life. So they weren't like mainstream presenters who had a career broadcasting. Their off-air career was bigger. That's why Radio 1 went to them. So Tim Westwood was a star before he got shot. It didn't enhance it at all. In fact it probably really damaged him because, you know, really hard nuts in that scene don't get shot [laughs]. So no, I don't think it--, it didn't do anything for his credibility. And for Radio 1, it wasn't a Radio 1 event and he--, like I said, they brought him in when he was already at the top of his game. It didn't change the perception of, oh, Radio 1 are really down with these things, he was already there for several years.

Q: [1:58:44] Okay, right [laughs] you've been very clear about that, that's fine. But I just thought it was a question that I had to ask, I thought.

A: [1:58:49] No, fine, yeah.

Q: [1:58:52] So there was a question, really, about the relationship between mainstream and specialist, daytime and specialist. How did that work in the period where you were at Radio 1, because I sort of get the impression looking back at that period that something interesting was going on here, which was that that rigid boundary was becoming more permeable, in a way. The kind of--, the expertise and

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some of the music that was in specialist was starting to filter into the daytime a little bit more. Was that kind of a process that you were aware of or driving?

Q: [1:59:27] So one of the ways that we wanted to modernise and make more contemporary Radio 1 as a music network for young people, from the BBC, was to make the line between specialist and mainstream less solid. So I worked really closely with my colleague Ian Parkinson, who was responsible for managing the specialist shows. And what that meant on a practical level was, for example, Ibiza, home of House music and all things wonderful, why should that only be celebrated in Pete Tong's show? We're going to take the breakfast show from Ibiza, and Zoë Ball is going to come live from the White Isle with Fatboy Slim. That's what we did. So it wasn't expecting Chris Moyles to suddenly, you know, be Dave Double Decks and be doing a hip hop show. But he certainly had to know why, you know, Judge Jules or Pete Tong were absolutely at the height of their game. So with outside broadcasts, where we had a chance, you know, if it was relevant, we would have mainstream and specialists to do it together.

Q: [2:00:57] I want to just go back to the launch of 1Xtra, which is August 2002--,

A: [2:01:04] Wow!

Q: [2:01:05] [Laughs] Can you just sort of fill us in on how that was sort of planned and--,

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A: [2:01:11] How it happened?

Q: [2:01:12] Yeah, tell us what happened and--,

A: [2:01:15] So I didn't launch 1Xtra. It's interesting how often at the BBC, even now, people just assume, and I can guess why, but they just assume that somehow I was something to do with the launch of 1Xtra. I wasn't. What happened was it was an absolutely key project for the Controller of Radio 1, Andy Parfitt, and he had a sort of inner core team who would brainstorm what it could or couldn't be and how we're going to do this and who's it for. Basically there were two camps. There was one camp which was, Radio 1 is getting older and older, because there was this ongoing debate about, well why do 50 year olds or 60 year olds still listen to Radio 1, surely it's for 16 year olds? How are you going to bring it down? So should 1Xtra be an ultra young network? And then you say, well, when does ultra young start? Is it a bit like, you know, CBeebies and CBBC? You could have--, you know, there are plenty of 11 year olds who, they are children and they haven't made their mind up about music or anything yet. So how are you going to do that? And the governance and compliance around keeping an 11 year old safe is entirely different to keeping a 15 year old safe, and that's really tricky. So there was that argument. And then it was should 1Xtra be genre-driven. So a bit like some of those very exciting radio stations across America, that you go to LA or New York and you find fantastic single genre radio stations. So you find a blues radio station or a jazz radio station, should it be like that? And then you get into a debate of, well, it's a black music station, well, what does that mean? Is that only playing music made by black people? Does that mean that this radio station is only for black people then? So it's a black music station for black people, made by black people. Well, we

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don't really have that many black people at the BBC. There was--, I mean, it was fascinating, there was a lot of debate. But people were very passionate about the idea of creating something of quality, because at the same time, black music, or certainly black music of origin or popular music influenced by black culture, was in the charts, it was everywhere. And it was either pop, R&B or House driven chart music, and, you know, as always, and this is nothing new, but the whole culture was, you know, very youth-driven. So I was involved in those sorts of conversations. And, I would say, that my--, well, my real thing was, as one of the few black, experienced, managers at the BBC, I had no intention of running this. But also because I was too old, I mean, really, I was kind of--, it's obviously going to be young and it's got to be quite hip and it's got to be really on the money with the music. That's not me any more. It may have been, but it's not any more. So way too convenient, and I was quite vocal about that. And also said that it needed to be a network that, a bit like Black Londoners was for me many moons ago, it needed to be a gateway for getting in different types of people who would get an experience of what it meant to be at the BBC.

Q: [2:05:03] And you or Andy Parfitt or any of these discussions, there wasn't anxiety that a silo was being created? I mean, that was a phrase that was used, in fact more recently, by [inaudible 2:05:13] I think, you make--, you know, that--,

A: [2:05:17] Well, I don't think back then they'd really explored what that meant. But I'd certainly said this can't be sort of a music ghetto where people go, and they go to planet 1Xtra and never leave. That can't happen. So it was good that there were good, authentic voices there explaining what it could be. I left, but--, I'll be diplomatic, what--, so the

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launch images for 1Xtra, and you can look these up and find them, because they're online, but the marketing campaign for 1Xtra was very hard hitting. The marketing manager, the lead, was someone I worked with, a young black woman, really on the money in terms of authentically understanding black music. But you look up this marketing campaign, it's properly hard, I mean, it's black and white, from memory, I think it's, the backdrop or the location is what looks like public housing. And it's, I don't think it's really making anything of being from the BBC. So it's almost as if the brief was, make this look as if it's a pirate, make it not look corporate. You can't do that, you know, it's [pause]--,, you know, whatever, that's what it looked like, but you can't be pirate. You either are or you're not. Now, 1Xtra is very much the sister brand of Radio 1. And I think its average age is really young. The average age is something like 16 or 17, so you've got a lot of people younger. But it's properly connected itself to, you know, who are the key people from Grime, who are, and they authentically can, you know, when a newspaper wants to run a scare piece on, why are we promoting this particular genre of music, which seems to be associated with, you know, crime and this and that. This is--, again, this is not new, you can go back to Rockabilly, this has always happened. The 1Xtra team, I mean, led by its controller, Ben Cooper, they can articulate very clearly why they need to be associated with a particular music, or not. And it's the same arguments that come round. So, I mean, 1Xtra, if I was being really ruthless, I'd say, after all this time why do you need a 1Xtra? Because, surely, if it's the music of youth, which it really clearly is, it should be incorporated somehow into Radio 1. I think there's too much music to be incorporated into Radio 1. You kind of think--, you could say the same thing about Asian Network. But if you just leave it to market forces, if you just leave it to somehow find black people, find Asian, you know, fans of music, will it happen? Will they find the BBC? I don't know.

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Q: [2:09:17] So you used the phrase gateway a little bit, I mean, is that, do you think, above all else, that's one of the kind of functions of 1Xtra, as it were, for the BBC?

A: [2:09:29] It has to be. It has to be because there are staff, there are presenters, there are experts brought into the BBC family who simply would not have been found otherwise. There are examples of people that have come through 1Xtra, and they're now making a name for them elsewhere. Not enough as far as I'm concerned, but there are. But there's such a wealth of music. But also the pressures of just the digital discovery of music now means that--, well, we know most of that audience, they're on their phones, they're getting music for free elsewhere. Will Radio 1 or 1Xtra ever crack it? I mean, the majority of who's listening to them are listening on third party platforms, not just through Radio 1. Does Radio 1 get all the credit it should? Not really, because if they're listening to something that was basically recorded via 1Xtra, but they're listening and watching it on YouTube, are they bothered about the 1Xtra brand? Probably not. They just want to get the content, they just want to get the stuff. So it's a really tricky job. I think you--, yeah, I think it's an ongoing conversation. I think you need those extra brands to be able to tap into lots of different types of people. Because, even as we sit here, there's no one single brand that represents me or you, you know, you'd listen to and read and watch a range of things, and that's what makes your consumption of media interesting. There's no one brand, it can't possibly do that. So--,

Q: [2:11:23] So obviously there's an element of thinking about the audiences and a kind of, that sense of gateway, but there's also, you talked about the talent of people who've been brought into the BBC

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family, as kind of BBC employees, as producers and so on. I mean, do you think that the kind of places like 1Xtra and so on have been important in terms of changing internal culture within the BBC?

A: [2:11:50] The short answer is, having the Asian Network, having 1Xtra has, absolutely, directly, positively affected parts of the culture of the BBC. Because I'm someone who believes there are many cultures at the BBC. There isn't just one, there are many cultures. So it's definitely impacted it. The fact that you can be--, I can be in a senior management meeting today, and around that table will be people who have a range of experiences. You know, they are from different religions, different cultures, speak different languages. That's important because that's what it's like out there, in the real world, outside of the BBC. So it has had an impact. I mean, for a short period of about two, two or three years, Asian Network was one of the radio stations that I looked after. I am not Asian, but what was really just exciting was to be able to share my experience of what it means to make a good programme or run a good team, and really listen to, you know, the differences and what you have to take into account. Because someone may have religious or cultural reasons why they can or can't do something. But just that richness that you can get. I mean, Asian Network is one of the areas in the BBC that delivers high, it doesn't matter how you measure it, but high stats around comedy. Which you wouldn't automatically think. They do filmed red button specials around comedy, and they get phenomenal audience stats, it's not lip service, it's not, you know, let's do it because we want to keep the Asians happy. It's not like that at all. It's really, really good stuff. And I think, also, with Asian Network and 1Xtra, you have that opportunity to collaborate. And this is where you get real, you know, creative sparks. If you say to a Radio 4 drama team, 1Xtra music team, "Go and make something." This is likely to be a much more interesting, genuine

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collaboration than just saying to one of each of those teams, "Go off and do it separately." So it definitely has a place and it's--, each of them have a place, but it's interesting that when 6 Music was under threat and, you know, seriously, this was like such a massive thing, front of all the newspapers, you know, talked about in Parliament. It's a radio station! On Newsnight. This radio station wasn't the only one under threat. It was two radio stations put forward. It was Asian Network and 6 Music, and everyone talked about 6 Music.

Q: [2:15:08] Okay, so let's just talk a bit about that moment, then, because this is, so 6 Music had launched in 2002, and it was the BBC's own plan to close 6 Music and the Asian Network?

A: [2:15:19] Yes. Yes, it was part of a cost cutting exercise, yeah.

Q: [2:15:24] Cost cutting, spending review, and they are eventually rejected by the Trust in July 2010?

A: [2:15:32] Yeah.

Q: [2:15:32] So first question, it's an interesting question about why it was saved and that campaign. Why were they under threat in the first place? Why do you think that the BBC, this is now the Mark Thompson era, why did the BBC focus on those as the areas to close, do you think? Was it sort of--,

A: [2:15:55] I don't know, word for word, why. But I think once you go

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down the route of saying, we only have X amount of money to spend on all our services - every year we have to find an efficiency. So you're basically slicing thinner and thinner salamis to try and find the money. And there must have been a conversation at some point that said, "We can't keep doing this." Because if you keep taking money out of the services that you're committed to, the service will be poorer. You'll have less money to spend on it. So have we got too much? And two of the things put forward were 6 Music, which is an alternative music station, I mean, it's one of the stations I look after, its average age is mid-50s. It's a successful station, it's, you know, two and a half million now. That campaign kick-started its growth. Within 18 months it doubled in size. It was a massive marketing campaign, it was fantastic for 6 Music. But I think some of the argument to cut it was, okay, aren't we super serving some of the audience that tune into 6 Music? I think, crudely, there must have been a conversation that said, so your average licence fee payer, who knows about the BBC, who's listening to 6 Music, is also listening to lots of other things at the BBC. They're super served by the BBC, so maybe it should go. They weren't prepared for the very articulate and loud and relentless scream from people who said, "Don't you dare touch my favourite station. This is, you know, this is the reason I pay my licence fee, so if you cut this station, there's nothing that I will listen to." So I think they were surprised. But with the Asian Network, I think at the time Asian Network was probably, I'd be talking from memory, but probably about 200,000. I mean, the cost per listener was ridiculous because everyone felt it should reach more. Everyone felt, actually, that 6 Music should reach more. So, as digital services from the BBC, spending all this money when, actually, you could probably get a load of fivers and go out and give it to everyone individually, it was--, they were simply not reaching enough people. The argument, though, was won by 6 Music, even though it wasn't reaching enough people at the time, the argument

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was won because it had a lot of famous listeners, from David Bowie to, you know, music journalists and lots of people in management around the BBC who didn't agree with Mark Thompson's original idea, you know, it was just a mistake. The only argument you can use for cutting a service, I think, is have you already done a market evaluation to say we actually still need it? Have we exhausted everything to grow it? If you've done all that, then, yes, you can cut it. But you can't go into it saying, "Well, we've got to cut something and, you know, these two seem to be the two that could go." Because why wasn't 1Xtra on the list? And I assume, politically the scream would have been so enormous. But, regardless of all that, as a BBC manager I would absolutely support an argument that says, are you reaching enough people? And after the launch of 1Xtra a couple of years later, I was actually asked to go back and work there and lead it, specifically with the brief to grow it. And so I was happy to do that, because I'd always said, publicly, it has a place, it's earned its place, but it simply isn't big enough. How can you have a national DAB service, which at the time was about, was 300,000 or less, it's, you know, so my thing was always, it needs to be there but it's got to punch--, it's got to be bigger. And that means the content's got to be better so that more people hear it. And we--, I mean, I did a whole, I mean, it took a couple of months because I was doing it while I was doing the Electric Proms, which was not wise, but I didn't want to be pushed into 1Xtra and left there [laughs]. I thought, I've earned my role at Electric Proms, I'm going to keep that, I'll do both. But went in and we restructured and we completely reformatted and made it simpler, a much simpler offer. And so it was less about black and white, quite aggressive images, and it was much more about, anyone can join this, because we really know our music. So it doesn't matter what your background or where you've come from, this was not--, it was moving it from--, I'm not sure the BBC ever said this, but my perception on the outside looking in was that

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early 1Xtra was black music for black people, by black people. I was moving it from that to the best black music you've ever heard for anyone, and it was colourful, it was not [laughs]. So it was just a different approach, really. So we created whole programmes which were months of celebration. And it was quite, you know, it was very confident, but it was, you know, a whole month celebrating the absolute best of hip hop. So that meant that if you were a, you know, an Indie kid who's a student from Brighton, and knew nothing really about hip hop but kind of liked it a bit, that might appeal to you. As well as a young black kid from Hackney who did know everything about it. It was all about celebrating the music rather than automatically putting up barriers to say, "This isn't for you." Which didn't always--, yeah, that's just not a helpful way to grow audience, really.

Q: [2:22:52] I'm going to jump to a couple of other things slightly away from radio for a moment. First of all the New Talent campaign.

A: [2:23:05] Yes.

Q: [2:23:08] So this is 2003, 2005, thereabouts, and you're working with Alan Yentob. I just wonder if you could just take it--, so what was the origin of this new role, this campaign? I mean, and I, I mean, consciously, of course, I'm thinking at the back of my head, 2001 Greg Dyke famously, says, "The BBC is hideously white and middle class." And so on. And I'm just wondering, is it within that context this is launched, or something else, or--,

A: [2:23:40] Well, there have always been talent initiatives at the BBC to bring in the next generation of, you know, young news reporter, arts

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reporter. But it was usually a bit sort of sporadic and happened because someone championed the idea and that department would go and develop it. And, if you asked people outside the BBC if we did it, they wouldn't often know. There were always, you know, theatre awards and things that they supported, but we didn't really shout about it. So there was a general wave, and it was definitely around Dyke, where it was kind of, you know, tub thumping sort of, BBC needs to get credit for what we're actually doing. We're supporting the development and nurturing of new talent, why aren't we telling people? And so there was this department, which was called BBC New Talent, or actually it was called BBC Talent at the time, and it was run by Alan Yentob. And it was run by Alan Yentob because at the time he was a director of drama, all TV entertainment and TV comedy and children's. So a big chunk of stuff. And, yeah, I had the interview with him, and he said, "Yeah, we've done..." I think they did two campaigns before, which I wasn't that aware of, and then I came on and I did two. And I changed it from being a bit Blue Petery, sort of, you know, "Do you want to be a presenter of children's programmes?" I mean, that was still part of it because it was still quite a good thing to do. But we just broadened it, so we had, you know, how do you become a weather presenter? How do you find new factual presenters for a range of subjects? If you want to find people who are mathematics experts but they don't happen to be men, or if you want to find experts on food technology, you know, it was a way of unearthing a range of new voices. As well as actors for big dramas, Casualty, Holby, Eastenders, just where do you--, and not the stars because they're capable, you know, they do that, anyway, but how do find other types of people. So, yeah, it was an initiative that ran once a year and my job was to confirm and find the initiatives that we were going to support, whether they were music or speech or filmmakers or animators. There was all sorts that we did. And make

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sure that the search worked, that you found someone and that they went into something meaningful afterwards. And there was a big BBC campaign on television, you know, all the channels, that happened for about a two week period. So you were working with the marketing team. So, for me, it was--, I'd always been a radio person, I'd made one other--, I'd worked in TV for one series once before. I didn't think I was a TV person, but I thought, if I worked for BBC Talent, I'd get an introduction to BBC marketing, because I didn't know how it worked. And I'd get this instant introduction to, well, drama, entertainment, children's. Because Alan would have a board meeting weekly and, you know, you'd have the Head of Comedy there, you know, Jon Plowman, you'd have Head of Drama, Head of, you know. So there are all these really impressively talented people. And I could literally be in that room and I was well supported by Alan, he's good at supporting new talent, and just eavesdrop on all the things that they were doing. I mean, it wasn't easy, but I would have to try and persuade people to, if we run a scheme on drama, would you take the actor and would they have a speaking part? And, you know, most people in [inaudible 2:28:19], "No, we're going to choose the actor." You know, so it's quite a--,

Q: [2:28:25] But, over time, do you feel it worked? Did it deliver something meaningful?

A: [2:28:29] Well, I think the test has to be in how many people got placed and how many people are still with the BBC. So I know, well, not necessarily still with the BBC, but got a career going. So one of our sports-casters that we found, ended up getting a contract with BBC Radio as a proper sports, you know, part of the sports team. I think they're now at Sky. There are actors, certainly, who, you know, got that

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part, and that meant that they got other parts. There are regional news, or weather people that are still working. So it worked. Whether it was the best use of money, debatable because it was as much a marketing job as it was an initiative to get people into new positions. There are lots of other ways you can do it. They don't do that now [laughs]. We don't do it. Erm, yeah.

Q: [2:29:39] And this was under the--, Greg Dyke, this was Greg Dyke moving into the Mark Thompson era?

A: [2:29:41] Yeah, I think it was, yeah, yeah. I think there was a whole--,

Q: [2:29:46] Was there--, can you just sort of, from where you were, what did the Greg Dyke sort of era mean? I mean, was it noticeable as--,

A: [2:29:55] Yes, absolutely. So when Greg Dyke was DG, for someone like me there are very many steps between DG, top of the organisation and what I do, lots of levels between. Well, yeah, enough levels to count. But he's probably the only DG that I had several conversations with, because he talked to everyone. And, yes, there was a noticeable difference. It went from feeling, I guess quite chilly and corporate, to just very warm. I mean, he was a real can-do kind of person. He was probably the DG that cost the BBC the most, I guess, because he, you know, if it felt right, he'd say, "Well, just do it." Initiatives that came from him, I think, were things like, we have this arrangement at the BBC where you can be on, you know, never ending, fixed term contracts, and it would just roll and roll and roll, but you'd never actually get a forever staff job. And I think he came in and said, "Well, if someone's been doing it for two or three years, give them

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the job." And, of course, the head count at the BBC went up. Because if you've been freelancing forever in the same job, this doesn't seem right, you need to have the job. So he was very sort of, do it and ask permission later, don't--, you know, just get on. He had this yellow card erm--, oh, how did it work? But he basically, he encouraged, and I can't believe--, I mean, this, you know, you think about the W1A programme, and this really is, but he had a system where he encouraged people to carry these yellow cards, and you have it in your pocket. And if something like a meeting was going too long or someone was saying something that was blocking or there was someone who was just very negative, he'd say, "Pull out your yellow card." And you just think, really. But, but what he did do is he had this ability to really energise a giant, complex organisation, because a bit like the NHS, you can decide as the Head of the NHS to do something in January 2018. It might, realistically, take you till January 2019 for it to get to the shop floor, never mind doing it, it could take that long. And it just means that as soon as you've created an initiative, by the time it's actually been implemented you've got to do another one because the world's changed. But he seemed to give the impression of being fleet of foot and quick and there was a lot of energy. And the day that he had to leave the BBC, we all saw the TV news, I mean, I couldn't believe it, but there were loads of people at the BBC crying, you know, and they were outside the BBC, really totally upset about the fact that he had to go. I think--, he was very popular. We'll never really know how effective he was, because I, you know, I'm not privvy to all of that, but he felt really effective and he felt quite non-BBC. But he--, it was short, but I enjoyed the time that he was there. It did impact the whole culture.

Q: [2:33:32] I want to ask about two or three other people, actually, I've got a few names that I wanted to ask you about in a few moments.

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But mustn't forget about Electric Proms.

A: [2:33:42] Okay.

Q: [2:33:42] And, I mean, just sort of reading a little bit about it, and I remember it--,

A: [2:33:47] Still?

Q: [2:33:47] I remember it, yeah.

A: [2:33:48] It's a few years ago now, isn't it, about ten years or something.

Q: [2:33:50] And it sort of struck me, and I don't know whether or not this was the main intention of it, but it struck me as a kind of, a moment in a sort of cross platform kind of approach.

A: [2:33:59] Yes, yes.

Q: [2:34:00] So I wondered whether you could just sort of explain, you know, what was the point of the Electric Proms and what did you want to get out of it? What did you feel you got out of it?

A: [2:34:11] Yes. So the Electric Proms is probably one of the most exciting things I've done.

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Q: [2:34:16] And this was sort of 2005 or thereabouts?

A: [2:34:22] Yes, yes. So one of the most exciting things I've done. And it came about because there were quite a few reports that, you know, senior managers had been poring over, which basically said, on the one hand BBC Radio is spending X amount of millions on broadcasting live music, supporting live music. But over here, when we check your credit score, you ask an audience, which of these organisations supports live music, BBC Radio was coming really low down, below Channel 4, which, I think, only ever had one programme. And you think about all, you know, all of the live sessions that have ever been done at Maida Vale, all of the festivals in a field, all of the Glastonburys that we'd broadcast, all of that stuff. And yet people weren't giving credit back to BBC Radio. So, because of that, it was decided, and Mark Thompson released the money to let it happen, and it was also at a time, crucially, that we were in these cost cutting, this cost cutting world where we're trying to shave off bits of money, they decided they would save a little bit extra and reinvest in a brand, we need a brand new thing. A brand new thing that is going to bring credit back to the BBC and explain why and how the BBC supports live music. And then there was an argument that says why do you have to do that? Because you have eight weeks or more a year where the greatest classical festival happens in the Albert Hall, called the Proms, and it's owned by Radio 3. And that's when it became clear that if you ask any classical enthusiast, what does BBC do for live music, they'll say the Proms. But that was not happening with popular music. And so Jenny Abramsky, I mean, there were endless, endless conversations of how this should work and what it should be, and in the end it was landed on, we're going to create a pop festival. And it's a festival that's going

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to promote the best that you can have in pop music. And then we're going to hire someone, and the ideal is that this will be broadcast on BBC television and BBC Radio. Now, this was at a time when, it seems normal now, but they never spoke to each other. And the idea that someone from Radio could curate a live event and put it on BBC One or BBC Two, was just never, it just--, because the BBC don't talk to each other. But I remember going for the interview, which was scary. It was a board panel of about four different people on there, and they were, you know, controllers in telly and Controller of Radio 2, Controller of Radio 1. And I got the job. And it was a blank piece of paper. So how are you going to create the thing in order to get credit back to the BBC around pop? And, I think, because I was slightly naive, I wasn't terrified about it. I thought, great, it's all we do [inaudible 2:38:10] do it, and then as you got into it, and the weight of BBC Radio and people, you know, I remember Tim Davie, who was then the new director of marketing, calling me all the way over to White City. We didn't know each other, but he said, "We're about to spend a lot of money marketing the event that you are creating, and there will be trails everywhere, on TV everywhere. The only thing I want to say to you is, you'd better make it good." And, I mean, I was terr--, I thought, right okay, like why wouldn't I? But then I really thought about it, I thought, there's a lot at stake here, there's a lot of money. And the best thing was, we had a blank piece of paper, so we came up with a name. We had to--, I mean, there was a long debate. The Proms team were not entirely sold on the idea of us having proms in the title. They thought, well, that's somehow going to look as if it's coming from us. And I went, "You've got decades of credit and experience, why wouldn't I at the BBC use proms? If I was working for Classic FM and I was part of a big radio crew, I guarantee I would milk the most successful brand that we have." So, you know, I had to have those internal little battles and, "We are going to use it." And then it was,

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"What name are you going to come up with?" And I had a marketing manager who's brilliant, and she was just inspired one day sitting in the bath by the moment that Dillon went electric. And so they just went, "That's it, it's Electric Proms, then, it's not the classical Proms, Electric Proms." So we got the name. We were already committed to doing the shows in the Roundhouse. And the first one that I put on was James Brown, you know, Godfather of Soul. I was absolutely determined it should be--, it should make a statement, it would be him. And it was him with an orchestra and guest performances and getting him to--, I mean, he did all the, you know, the classic tracks he wanted to do, and we wanted him to do. But he also did Georgia on my Mind, which is, you know, tracks that he doesn't really do. But I think, two weeks before he had to have an operation on his jaw, and we really didn't think he was going to make it. That was scary times because this was the first event from the BBC where I sold tickets. This was not free. And so, you know, over a decade ago, you can't believe the amount of just soul searching and meetings that we had to go into and say, "Now, this must be ticketed because I'm going to put on events that are going to be very, very popular. The whole point of me doing them is that I want them to be seen as, you know, once in a lifetime chance to see artists you know but in a--, performing shows in a way that you've never seen before." And so, yes, they'll be on TV, but to actually be in the room is not like a regular TV recording. So your licence fee doesn't actually cover it. It's a really extraordinary moment. And the Roundhouse is quite small, so if you're lucky enough to get a ticket, you do need to pay for it. Plus, we needed that additional revenue because it wasn't profitable, that additional revenue helped stage it. And this is a format, a revenue format that we use now. But I was one of the first to do it on that scale, confidently without sort of apologising, "Oh, we're sorry, we're the BBC, we're going to have to charge you." But doing it in that way in the popular world, the only people who did it was classical.

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And it was so reduced and subsidised, it didn't really compare to the rest of the market. And my argument was, well, if the classical Proms can charge a ticket with a proper box office, then the Electric Proms can, and we did. And we did a lot of work with promoters to make sure that the promoters, non-BBC, were not indirectly affected by us with this big footprint going in and affecting, you know, their enterprise. So it took a lot of work, but we did it and it worked, and it had amazing critical acclaim. Partly, to begin with, because it was new. Things that are new from the BBC get good will. But after you do it for the second and then the third time, it's not about that, it's is it good enough? And we were very lucky, we had--, you know, we brought people in, I mean, everyone knows who Paul McCartney is, but have you seen him do a show that intimately, televised, with a whole, you know, visualised--, he used films from his own personal collection that he was making, you know, from the '60s and '70s. And, yes, we've all heard him do Blackbird, but in this very stripped-down way. So, you know, McCartney, Shirley Bassey, James Brown, The Who, Paul Weller, he had a guest performer, who was Amy Winehouse, was his guest singer on one of the tracks. This is before it completely blew up with her. And we had Burt Bacharach. I remember going to pick up Burt Bacharach from the airport. It was the most surreal thing, because this little old man came out in tracksuit bottoms, and I thought, isn't that the genius called Burt Bacharach? So it was really great, really great. But it was the BBC, for me, at its most powerful, where it could create stories, add value, do it in a quality way and leave this legacy and enrich the archive. Because that's the thing I was really conscious of, it's like, we've had Paul McCartney on the telly loads of times, we've had Shirley Bassey on the telly loads of times, you know, we've had them do all these things, but are we able to enrich the archive in some way? Which was why it was all--, I mean, talk about putting pressure on yourself, the marketing campaign was all about unique moments. So I

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was going out to the audience, going, "Yeah, we're going to create unique moments then." So I really had to have unique moments. It wasn't just booking them, you know, or having Oasis with a choir. Now, that sounds easy, but if you've ever been to an Oasis gig, Oasis do Oasis, that's what they do, but when you're trying to get Noel and Liam, and it's like, "Well, why have I got all these people on the stage?" You know, that's a long chunk of work to do. But it was--, I did--, I was Festival Director for all of them apart from the final one, which was with Elton John. I didn't make that. And I basically stepped back from it because more and more money was sliced out of it, even though it was successful, it took money more and more. And I couldn't do the unique thing. I couldn't make it the way I wanted to make it. So it then got moved to sit within Radio 2. When I did it I had to have a show that pointed to a different radio network. So there was a Radio 1 Electric Proms, so we had people like Dizzee Rascal. Which was an interesting show because that was the BBC saying, there's Dizzee Rascal, you know, top of the charts with pop grime hits. People would think that, how do you make Grime music, are they actual musicians, you know, or is it all just, you know, wizardry with computers. We put him with a punk rock band, and his band was all musicians, all playing, and it was a collaboration, and it was Dizzee Rascal doing Dizzee Rascal. So for fans of Dizzee Rascal, this comes back to this business of a deeper appreciation of what he's doing. They could see people playing guitars to grime or punk, and that was a tough show. But that's why we did it. It wasn't just Dizzee going and doing Dizzee, it was, you know--, and that for, I think that was for 1Xtra.

Q: [2:47:43] I think we've got, I'm slightly conscious of time--,

A: [2:47:44] Yes, yes.

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Q: [2:47:46] And so what I'm going to do is try and lump together into three--,

A: [2:47:49] Just jump in if I keep talking, because I never know when to stop [laughs].

Q: [2:47:51] Yeah, no, no, that's fine. But three sort of final questions, all of which are kind of quite broad. So one is about kind of, sort of an overall evaluation of kind of the most important trends in radio, that have changed the way in which radio's done.

A: [2:48:07] Wow!

Q: [2:48:09] The second is about kind of events. And I've got a kind of list of, as it were, major crises over the recent years at the BBC, and I wanted to kind of run through them and ask if there were any that stood out for you as a moment that you witnessed or you saw what was going on.

A: [2:48:24] Thought, wow, what's happening, okay.

Q: [2:48:25] And the last one is just a kind of cluster of names, really, and ask you about kind of the stand-out figures or the people who you think have been influential.

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A: [2:48:32] Okay.

Q: [2:48:34] So it's those three that I want to try and kind of get in, and then if we've still got a bit more--,

A: [2:48:37] Okay, that's a lot.

Q: [2:48:39] Yeah [laughs]. So, the first one, I suppose it comes back to--, I mean, you know, for a year or so, you've got a title which is Head of Production, is that right?

A: [2:48:50] Now?

Q: [2:48:51] Now.

A: [2:48:51] Yes, Head of Production.

Q: [2:48:53] So that's a kind of, erm, you know, that's a--, from that position is it possible to kind of reflect, really, I suppose over the last, let's just say the last decade or so, in terms of how radio has changed, and I'm kind of thinking more internally than externally. So, in other words, there have been some external changes in terms of things like social media and so on. But how have they impacted inside the BBC and the way in which it does radio?

A: [2:49:23] Right, so to try and do it briefly. In my time at radio I've seen

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the way we make radio change dramatically. I can talk to junior assistants now and say that we used to edit with an actual razor blade and ribbon, and they literally don't understand what I mean. Now, you are editing at your desk, on a desktop screen. So that's like a real change. We can record on a mobile phone broadcast quality. I can edit at home. I have--, the way I manage my team is, I trust them, so I don't really care, I'm not clock watching, this is a difference. When I used to work it would be like, "You need to be in the news room at X amount of time." And now it's kind of, you do what you need to do, but if that work could be done somewhere else, I'm fine about that. If you've got a reading day or a writing day or an editing day, this is new. I think the other thing that is a massive impact is what constitutes content. So in the old days, mainstream radio, or your breakfast show, might be about the occasional guest, and they'd either be live in the studio or, at a push, they'd be on the phone. And lots of interaction with your audience on the phone, into your show. That audience would, for breakfast, primarily be at home calling the show, on a massive, giant phone. Now, I can have an audience who could literally be anywhere because they're on their mobile. So it changes the nature of the content, you know, "I'm just about to walk into my office. I'm on the Underground, I may lose it soon. I'm--." Whatever, you know. Or, "I'm a mother on the sidelines watching my kid play football. Hang on a minute, I'll take a photo. And I will post this photo to you, Chris, and you will see my kid in his--." So we're in 3D radio now and the content can come from anywhere. So a producer now, it's a minefield because it's, how do you verify fact from fiction? How do you know that that Instagram account that you're so impressed by hasn't bought all its followers? How do you know that? How do you know--, why is this person an influencer and that person's not? Now, if you run a book club, your book club, which you might be promoting, so a BBC book club on the popular music station, so on a station like Radio 2, will

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have authors, who are learned authors, with a publisher and an actual book. But you might also have an author who has written a book only after they've become famous on Instagram. And it might be a wellbeing book. It's still a book. So you're parameters around entertainment are massively wide. And, I mean, this makes it interesting, but it means that the life of my producers and my editors, they really have to think in a different way now. So, if we were going to run some--, I mean, radio is so visual now. It's, you know, what are my measurements for success for any piece of content? I will have a radio programme listened to, in real time, live, and we have RAJAR which measures how many people listen to it in any quarter, for every 15 minutes, that is still king. But I'm also interested in how many people went to my YouTube channel and saw the programme going out. So they saw Chris Evans broadcasting his breakfast show from Paul Weller's studio last month. They saw it. I need those figures as well. They also saw because it came into their pocket, on their mobile, the clips from that. So they saw a 30 second clip of that on our, not only YouTube, but our Facebook channel and Instagram. So we're now able to build a whole picture of what does a piece of content mean in terms of it being successful. It's not just who listened to it live. Because a lot of our audience actually have other things to do at that time. So they call up when they want to listen to me. So they will listen to BBC Sounds, previously BBC Radio iPlayer. But they will listen on demand when it's right for them. And so there are all these different things that I have to take into account. It's no longer about making the appointment to listen at the time that it's been advertised in the Radio Times, sitting down and listening to it and then it's gone. It's now, that moment, if it's a moment you're trying to create, but also all of these other bits. And I know that I can draw in people to my live listening who suddenly have something pop up on their stream, their social media stream, because it might be a funny or it might be a quote from someone who's famous

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or one of our presenters talking. That might be the trigger to say, "I might try that show." And we need to do all of that because there are so many reasons not to listen. There are so many competing things. So, I mean, that's quite a long answer but it's because it is such a fundamental shift. It's not just about live listening. And also, the demand for so much to be visualised.

Q: [2:55:37] Okay, so here's a completely different [laughs] question, which is about--, for anyone who's just looking at the BBC as the BBC, there have been sort of flashpoints, there are always flashpoints in the BBC history, there are, you know, there are always crises. And I just wanted to kind of list some of the ones, you know, the more recent ones, and ask whether or not there are any that had a particular impact or you kind of noticed more than any others.

A: [2:56:05] Okay.

Q: [2:56:06] So first of all, in rough chronological order, as it were, there was the Iraq and Andrew Gilligan and kind of Greg--, well, you know, the fallout of Gavyn Davies and Greg Dyke and so on, so there was that. October 2008, Russell Brand, Jonathan Ross--,

A: [2:56:22] So do you want me--, so if you say them, I'll--,

Q: [2:56:23] Well, can I mention them and then perhaps, if I sort of run--,

A: [2:56:25] Yeah, because I won't remember them.

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Q: [2:56:25] So there's the Iraq and Gilligan, there's Russell Brand and Jonathan Ross, there's Savile and, perhaps more recently, women's pay equality. So if I just pick out those, I mean, you don't have to comment on all of them, but it's really a case of, which you felt--, you noticed more?

A: [2:56:49] Well, the ones I noticed more are the ones that are most recent. But erm...

Q: [2:56:56] It's really a case of getting a sense of how they sort of filtered through and what--,

A: [2:56:59] Well, it filters through because Gilligan, people lost their jobs. A person outside the BBC lost their life. So, even if you don't work in news, I'm a person who's interested in news, you know, just as a grown-up. These are massive corporation-shaking moments. But not being in the newsroom you don't feel the heat, but you certainly feel the gravity of it. Ross, Brand, I was working at the Electric Proms at the time, which happened to be in the same building as Radio 2. And so I was aware of it, first of all front page of the newspapers. And the difficulty with that incident was that it dragged on for so long. When you look back and you count up how long the press were actually talking about this, you know, you would say, "Hmm, this is a failure of managing the news or of managing a crisis." I think it could be a case study that you could pull apart, and say, "Why did it take them so long to manage this? Why was there such a lack of clarity about--," Because the issue, you know, there was a language and compliance issue, which in live radio, this happens all the time. But it was made worse by the fact that--, yeah,

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the BBC was just getting itself into a real tizz about, "Well, when are you going to act?" So I believe there were complaints from a handful of people, which just snowballed because there was no response from the BBC about why what was broadcast was broadcast. And then they dug down into, well, what are the processes? How do you sign off something to be broadcast? Who's actually responsible here? And in the end, you know, I'm working with some people at the moment at Radio 2 who were working there at the time, and I know now that it absolutely affected the way they operate. There are a group of people who, they're very, very cautious, they will write down things three times, four times, always email you back to say, "So what we said was--," There's a real clunkiness around being uber sure about what is and what isn't, because--,

Q: [2:59:46] And is that a moment where compliance, more generally, seemed to take off?

A: [2:59:50] It kicked in absolutely massively. So, yeah, there was a--, it was just, you know, the amount of forms and, you know, training around compliance became mandatory. And so what that means, in effect, is that you literally won't be allowed to do your job unless you do this training. And so the whole operation became, you know, really big.

Q: [3:00:17] So do you think it was--, there was a high price--, I mean, the BBC paid a high price?

A: [3:00:23] Massively, absolutely, and it still, I would say there are still, you know, there's still a leftover to that, people are terrified of making a

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mistake.

Q: [3:00:28] Was it--, I mean, was the original thing a mistake, do you think?

A: [3:00:34] Yes, it should not have happened. There's no question. But my point is, it was made way worse by a lack of process and--, yeah, it should not have happened. I think, in those--, you can always--, I mean, lots of people lost their jobs, the controller of the station, a very talented woman, Lesley Douglas, lost her job a while into it. But it then became this frenzy of, you know, literally it became so bad that everyone was kind of, "Well, someone's head has got to roll." I think, was it the first day, or certainly the first--, it was the beginning of Tim Davie being Director of Radio, and I think he had to--, actually, I'm pretty sure that was--, I might have got that wrong, it might still have been Jenny, but, you know, whoever was in charge of radio was very conscious that the rest of the BBC was being brought into disrepute because of this story, so how are you going to sort it out? So, you know, you have to go all the way down. There was a producer of the show, there was obviously the presenter. The presenter in the end, you could argue, you could look at Jonathan Ross's career, is it the same? He doesn't have a key, flagship programme on the BBC. He doesn't have one. So the producer was affected, high profile presenter was affected, the Head of, I think he was called Specialist Editor, something like that, was not there, the Controller, all these people. So, and the culture of radio changed overnight. It was belt and braces, "We're going to investigate the processes now about what gets complied to be broadcast or not, and it starts now." So, no question, that's a line the sand.

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Q: [3:02:40] So, obviously there's a lot that's happening at the political level. To some extent it has a relationship with kind of popular--, you know, because it was another case, I suppose, of a celebrity or a sort of veneration of a kind of, you know, the DJ or something. I don't know. Anyway, I just put it there as a major crisis in the BBC and, again, I wondered whether or not there were any sort of ripples that reached you other than that sense of [inaudible 3:03:08]

A: [3:03:11] No, I don't know. I mean, I can't--, I don't think there's anyone who is not--, has not been impacted by the horror of what was Savile. The truth is, though, my generation can't really understand how that happened, that's what I would say. It is truly horrific--, yeah, I don't know what else.

Q: [3:03:41] Okay, so one of the more recent ones is about women's pay and equality, and, you know, we have the sort of sense in which the BBC is consciously trying, but a large number of people, prominent presenters and reporters at the BBC, who are making it very clear that it's not trying hard enough or fast enough and this is still a problem. I wondered what your sense of how important this is as a moment in the BBC.

A: [3:04:11] It's definitely very important and, yes, it is difficult, because if you're cash strapped and you need to pay people more, how are you going to do it? Are you literally going to take money from one person and give it to another? How will you do it and how does that work when, for example, you're Radio 2 and you have very well paid, established presenters, who are male, already employed and delivering big audiences? How do you--, how can you pay an equally

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experienced female presenter less? How can you do that? So it's a very live--, it's a really live issue. And it's interesting at Radio 2, in particular, how for a long time, beyond, you know, the equality conversations, but for a long time it was questioned, how can you still not have a woman in a mainstream show on such a big, popular station? And the replies would usually be, you know, from senior staff, will you--, because I don't hire presenters, I run production, I run all the people who make the programmes. The network will hire the presenter and then tell me, "Right you're working with these shows." It's been very difficult, because one of the shows that I've been making has been Simon Mayo, male, on his own, and then Simon Mayo was asked to present, with an equally experienced presenter, Jo Whiley, who is also one of my presenters, and they were co-presenting. So how do you make that programme without making Jo Whiley suddenly seem like a sidekick or demeaning what Simon does? How do you do that? You have to come up with a brand new format. And then, as we now know, he's now leaving and Jo's not doing drive. So it's--, that's how it's been, that's the fallout for me. And then I'm--, I will be making Zoë Ball's breakfast show on Radio 2, which follows the departure of Chris Evans, one of the most successful entertainment broadcasters of his generation. So it's like, how do I protect this talent so that lazy journalists, when they're launched, don't just rerun the story of thinking that these people are there because they're women. They're not. Zoë Ball used to present the breakfast show on Radio 1, I know that because I worked there. Suddenly they've forgotten that. Or Jo Whiley, why--, you know, she couldn't do a mainstream show? Not true. She had a mainstream show on Radio 1 for years, mid-morning, where she had the live lounge. So the whole gender conversation can be irritating for me because of lazy journalism. I think it's great, personally, that the BBC, it's one of those organisations where it can literally beat itself in public. You won't get ITV or Channel 4 doing that,

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they will literally go, "Yeah, you're right." and they'll do it. And this is what's happening. What will be the legacy and the lasting sort of effect? Well, I mean, the DG is--, Tony Hall is determined to shift it in a real way. Whether he's moving quickly enough for the really vocal voices, we'll see. But it's totally made a difference. Totally made a difference, the fact that there are experienced female broadcasters now, there is no question, they will be paid the right market value. The idea that you can't now and couldn't voice it, that's never going to return, I don't think. A more interesting question is what does it feel like to be male at the BBC, I would argue, but I'm not male [laughs].

Q: [3:08:51] [Laughs] Okay, so it's the last question, and it's relatively short answers, if that's okay.

A: [3:08:56] Yes, just jump in and tell me to stop.

Q: [3:08:58] Yes [laughs]. Is it possible to kind of recall, maybe, what you think the highlight of your BBC career has been, and maybe what the worst point of your BBC career, worst moment, best moment, worst moment, is that a possible--, is it possible to...?

A: [3:09:16] Worst, worst, worst, worst, worst, what would be worst? Erm, [sighs] what would be worst? Oh God, what would be worst? Well, I'll pick that--,

Q: [3:09:29] You don't have to if one doesn't come to mind [laughs].

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A: [3:09:32] Well, I just--, yeah, I mean, worst, yeah, I don't really...

Q: [3:09:37] What about best, then?

A: [3:09:48] Best is easy. My best career moment would have been creating, devising and delivering the Electric Proms, absolutely, no question.

Q: [3:09:51] Great. Is there any--, there's lots that we've had to kind of jump over and so on, we could go on for hours.

A: [3:09:56] We can't [laughs].

Q: [3:09:57] We can't. But is there anything that you kind of think now, you know, in the last two minutes, that you wish we'd discussed and we haven't, that you wanted--,

A: [3:10:04] So, very quickly, I'll take a minute. I took on the role of Head of Production, it's coming up to two years ago now, and that was when Compete or Compare was introduced to BBC Radio. It was just after BBC Studios was created, which is a separate entity and can commercially compete with everyone. Compete or Compare is different. But what it means is that, as Head of Production I have to pitch for business. So on 6 Music, 100% of its output is up for competition. So it could either be made by me, which is BBC Production, or it could be made by external suppliers. This has completely changed the way we work. So if you're employed by the

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BBC as a young producer or editor and you work on 6 Music, every year some of the programmes that you have been making you will have to pitch for. And it's a very formal process. And you either win it or you don't. We've just come out of a round where we--, well, we won everything, plus we won something from an indie, but our last round at Radio 2, we pitched for five and lost five. What that means is I have to make people redundant and I have to keep reshaping the business. This is an entirely new way of working for the BBC, and I don't know how sustainable it is. But it's trying to react to the voices around Government and around the commercial market that says, surely lots of people should have the opportunity to make BBC output. I agree, but there are no quotas now. So the idea before was you used to have, you know, a quota, of which you might say, there's 20% up for grabs, 10% is guaranteed to go to commercial, and the other 10% is competed for. We don't have that. No quotas, and I'm pitching twice a year for strands. So I've just won the right to make the 6 Music breakfast show with Lauren Laverne. That could have been made by an indie. I will now make all of daytime for 6 Music, as, I think, I should be. But I'm losing and winning things all the time. It's a different culture for a BBC producer now.

[END OF RECORDING –3:13:01]

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