

Brief History of Channel Four Television Corporation



Pre 1982

The 1980 Broadcast Act outlined the formation of a new public service Broadcaster. Channel Four was established as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Independent Broadcasting Authority. Jeremy Isaacs was appointed as the Channel's first Chief Executive. The first Channel Controller was Paul Bonner and its Chairman was Edmund Dell.

1982

Channel Four goes on air 2nd November. The original on air logo was an animated multi-coloured Four. The first programme was *Countdown* with Richard Whitely presenting. Early programmes included: *Brookside* and *Comic Strip Presents*. *The Snowman* premiered on December 26th. *Right to Reply* gave viewers the chance to take the broadcasters to task. Later the Video Box would allow them to do so on air in booths all over the UK.

1983

Audience share of 4.4 percent. Programmes included Friday evening music programme *The Tube* and *No Problem!* which was the first black produced comedy sitcom created for British Television. Controversy surrounded *Eleventh Hour: Veronica 4 Rose* which featured two schoolgirls discussing lesbianism. US comedy drama *St Elsewhere* was aired.

1984

Channel Four took over coverage of Horse Racing from ITV. Programme output increased by 25 percent. C4 won 2 International Emmys. *Diverse Reports* was aired for the first time.

1985

Woman of Substance gained a new audience high of 13.8 Million. Other significant programmes included *Saturday Live*, *Bandung File*, *The Max Headroom Show* and the film *My Beautiful Laundrette*. US series *Hill Street Blues* was aired.

1986

Peacock Report recommended that Channel Four should sell its own airtime. Audience share hit 10.7 percent. Channel's turnover reached £131 Million. Programmes included *Club Mix* and the acclaimed drama by Anthony Minghella *What If It's Raining*

1987

Richard Attenborough became the new Chairman. For the first time advertising revenue exceeded costs providing a £20m profit. Channel Four International and Film Four International were established. Significant programmes and films included *Porterhouse Blue*, *The Last Resort*, *Equinox*, *Dispatches*, *Letter to Brezhnev*, *Hope and Glory* and *Baka: People of the Rainforest*. US childrens' series *Sesame Street* debuted.

1988

Michael Grade replaced Jeremy Isaacs as Chief Executive. Liz Forgan became Director of Programmes. Notable programmes and films included *A Very British Coup*, *Mona Lisa*. The long running US *Oprah Winfrey Show* went on air.

1989

Turnover £192 Million. Programmes include *Traffik*, *The Crystal Maze*, *Out on Tuesday*, *Big World Café*. American imports *Thirtysomething* and *Roseanne* began.

1990

The 1990 Broadcasting Act preserves Channel Four as publicly owned. The Channel Four Television Corporation is founded, to be established in 1993. Programmes include *Drop the Dead Donkey*, *Cutting Edge*, *Hollywood Legends* and a new youth programme *The Word*.

1991

Controversy surrounded the programme *Dispatches: The Committee*. Other programmes included *Secret History* (part of the *Banned* season and Alan Bleasdale's *GBH*). There were special late night editions of *Channel Four News* scheduled to cover the Gulf War. Turnover reaches £268 Million. Audience share 9.6 percent.

1992

The Big Breakfast went on air. Significant programmes included *The Camomile Lawn* and *Football Italia* and films *The Crying Game* and *Howard's End*. Channel Four was fined £75000 for refusing to name the source of allegations made against the RUC in *The Committee*. Michael Bishop was appointed the new Chairman.

1993

Channel Four Corporation started to operate and sold its own airtime for the first time. *Howard's End* won 5 Oscars. Programmes include *Eurotrash*, *Tales of the City* and Denis Potter's *Lipstick on Your Collar*. Derek Jarman's *Blue* was premiered without commercial breaks.

1994

Channel Four relocated to 124 Horseferry Road into a purpose built building designed by Richard Rogers. *Time Team* and *Don't Forget Your Tooth Brush* were aired for the first time. A documentary highlight was Phil Agland's acclaimed *Life in China: Beyond the Clouds*. Turnover was £408.4 Million. The biggest British film export *Four Weddings and a Funeral* was released. *NYPD Blue*, *Frasier* and *Ellen* made their debut.

1995

Brookside figures reached a peak of 9 million with the story of the Jordash family. Launch of *Hollyoaks*, *Red Light Zone*, *Father Ted*. *The Last Temptation of Christ* attracted the largest number of complaints ever. Oscars were received for the *Madness of King George*. *Friends* and *ER* were launched.

1996

Programmes include return to the *Dying Rooms*, and Potter's last screen plays *Cold Lazarus* and *Karaoke*. Films include *Trainspotting* and *Secrets and Lies*. After 14 years the Channel changed its logo. The multi coloured 4 became plain white in a changeable scheme including circles.

1997

The abolition of the funding formula payable to ITV was announced. Channel Four began broadcasting 24 hours a day. Programmes and films included *Thatcher's Children* and *A Dance to the Music of Time*, *Brassed Off*, *Fever Pitch* and *Welcome to Sarajavo*. Turnover was £552.7 million. Michael Grade resigned as Chief Executive. Michael Jackson is appointed as his successor.

1998

First pay TV venture FilmFour Limited is launched. Channel Four acquires rights to Test Match Cricket. Programmes included *So Graham Norton*, *Nigel Slater's Real Food*, *Trigger Happy TV*. The MOBO Awards were networked for the first time. *Ally McBeal* began.

1999

Turnover was £600 million. Notable programmes were *Queer as Folk*, *Spaced*, *Smack the Pony*, *Ali G*, *Tina Goes Shopping*, *Grand Designs*,

Psychos, Cricket Roadshow, The 1900 House. First British screening of *Sex In The City*.

2000

The first season of *Big Brother* was transmitted - the first interactive, cross media concept with mass appeal. 4 Ventures was established. Some notable programmes were *Longitude, North Square, Richard Starkie's series Elizabeth* and *Meet Ricky Gervais*.

2001

The impending General Election was marked by a season of programmes arguing *Politics Isn't Working*. Film Four Limited released *Sexy Beast*. E4 was launched in January. Richard and Judy leave ITV for Channel 4. Michael Jackson announced his departure to work for USA networks and left in November. Other programmes were *Phoenix Nights, Teachers, Celebrity Big Brother, Hell in the Pacific*. A month long daily report was made from the Kumbh Mela .

2002

Mark Thompson took up his job as Chief Executive in March. Brookside was moved to a single Saturday omnibus show. The Channel announced a loss of £28m and 200 jobs were cut. Film Four Limited was wound up. Notable programmes included *Shackleton, White Teeth, The Art Show, The Osbournes, The Book Group*. The first live autopsy since 1830 is transmitted on Channel Four.

2003

Tim Gardam resigned as Director of Programmes to be replaced by Kevin Lygo. Gianni Treves stepped down as chairman. Programmes included *The Deal, Operatunity, The Salon, How Clean is Your House?*

2004

New Chairman Luke Johnson appointed. Paul Abbot's *Shameless* transmitted. Channel Four appoints fifth new Chief Executive - Andy Duncan. Channel Four awarded a news coverage Emmy for the report on the Madrid bombing. Channel Four withdrawals from merger talks with Five. New Channel Four identity seen on the screen for the first time.

2005

FILMFOUR productions nominated in 9 BAFTA categories. 4Ventures reintegrated back into the core Channel. The MOTOCYCLE DIARIES collected two awards for Best Foreign Language Film and Film Music at the BAFTA awards and Best Song Award at the OSCAR awards. Best Live Action Short Film award for WASP directed by Andrea

Arnold for FilmFour. IDEAS FACTORY - C4's on-line new talent initiative to help young creatives get into the industry has been awarded a BAFTA. RTS Programme Awards – Channel Four picks up 9 awards