



**creative cities**  
convention

Liverpool 6-7 May

## Programme Summary

### Day 1 – Wednesday 6 May

13:00	<b>Welcome Address</b>  Host Mobeen Azhar, Creative Cities Convention Director Lisa Campbell and Liverpool's Director of Culture, Major Events & Tourism Culture, Claire McColgan CBE open CCC 2026.
13:06	<b>Liverpool: Centre of the Creative Universe</b>  <b>PJ Smith – Writer and Unprofessional Scouser</b>  Poet and performer PJ Smith brings Liverpool's creative spirit to the stage with a spoken word piece celebrating the city's imagination, humour and rebellious cultural energy.
13:10	<b>Sir Phil Redmond: The Future of Storytelling</b>  Few figures in British television have shaped the landscape quite like Sir Phil Redmond. In an era now defined by platforms, algorithms and global audiences, Sir Phil reflects on what's changed – and what hasn't. Has the digital revolution opened the door to bold new storytelling, or quietly narrowed the space for risk?
13:30	<b>Mainstream to Microdrama: What's the future for scripted?</b>

	<p><b>Paul Testar</b> (Channel 5) • <b>Louise Donald</b> (Channel 4) • <b>Megan Spanjian</b> (Sky) • <b>Angelo Abela</b> (Lime Pictures) • <b>Michelle Lin</b> (K7 Media)</p> <p><b>Host:</b> Marc Lorber (The Art of Co-Production)</p> <p>The scripted landscape is shifting fast. Budgets are tightening, audiences are fragmenting and platforms are redefining what success looks like. This session looks not just at what commissioners want, but how storytelling, business models and audience habits are evolving.</p>
<b>14:20</b>	<b>Refreshment break</b>
<b>14:40</b>	<p><b>This City Is Ours: Inside the “Scouse Sopranos”</b></p> <p><b>Stephen Butchard</b> (Writer) • <b>Rebecca Hodgson</b> (Exec Producer) • <b>Cast</b> • <b>Jo McClellan</b> (BBC)</p> <p><b>Host:</b> Mobeen Azhar</p> <p>Dubbed the “Scouse Sopranos” and hailed as one of the BBC’s standout recent dramas, This City Is Ours puts Liverpool front and centre with swagger, scale and critical acclaim. Writer, executive producer, commissioner and cast go behind the scenes of the hit show’s journey to screen, exploring how it was developed, cast and crafted and what it takes to return for a second series with confidence.</p>
<b>15:20</b>	<p><b>Skilling Up the North</b></p> <p><b>Screen Agency and Film Office Leaders:</b> <b>Lynn Saunders</b> • <b>Rob Page</b> • <b>Caroline Cooper Charles</b> • <b>Alison Gwynn</b></p> <p><b>Host:</b> <b>John Whittle</b> (Lime Pictures)</p> <p>With the collaborative effort of the four northern agencies to broaden the support they can offer, is the industry getting the skills it needs? Screen Alliance North evaluates its first three years.</p>

<p><b>16:00</b></p>	<p><b>Our Man In America</b></p> <p><b>Stuart Ford</b> (Chairman and CEO, AGC Studios)</p> <p><b>Host: Rebecca Cooney</b> (Insight Editor Broadcast)</p> <p>From Liverpool lad to LA studio boss, Stuart Ford has forged a career built on creative instinct and commercial strategy. Returning to his home city, he'll lift the lid on international dealmaking, the evolution of both film and TV independent financing and make the case for culturally specific storytelling as a driver of global success. Using examples including his recent return to British cinema with Giant, Ford will explore why distinctive stories often travel further than generic ones and what the streamer slowdown, AI and other market pressures mean for international production in the UK.</p>
<p><b>16:20</b>      <b>Comfort break</b></p>	
<p><b>16:30</b></p>	<p><b>TV, Brands and the Digital Shift</b></p> <p><b>Alex Morris</b> (Channel 4 Studios) • <b>Paula Thomas</b> (ITV Daytime and Ad-Funded Entertainment) • <b>Holly Graham</b> (Little Dot Studios)</p> <p><b>Host: Lucy Smith</b> (Fawkes Digital)</p> <p>The lines between television and digital are no longer blurring; they've collapsed. This session brings together leaders operating on both sides of that divide to explore how content is now conceived, funded and consumed in a world where audiences are moving faster than broadcasters.</p>
<p><b>17:00</b></p>	<p><b>Fireside Chat: C4 CEO Priya Dogra</b></p> <p><b>Priya Dogra</b> (CEO, C4)</p> <p><b>Host: Hannah Cheers</b> (Executive Producer, Hollyoaks)</p> <p>In a coup for the Creative Cities Convention, Channel 4 CEO Priya Dogra makes her first official industry appearance and shares her thoughts on the challenges ahead.</p>

<p><b>17:30</b></p>	<p><b>Liverpool Legends: No Place Like Home</b></p> <p><b>Speakers:</b> Jimmy McGovern (Writer) • Jimmy Mulville (Producer) • Sue Johnston (Actor)</p> <p><b>Host:</b> Mobeen Azhar</p> <p>Three of the industry’s most entertaining and remarkable storytellers come together to celebrate the role that place plays in shaping great work. Between them, they’ve changed how Britain sees itself on screen – drawing on voices, communities and identities far beyond London. A conversation from some of the people behind <i>Cracker</i>, <i>Corrie</i>, <i>Brookside</i>, <i>Hillsborough</i>, <i>The Royle Family</i>, and <i>Derry Girls</i> about why sense of place matters.</p>
<p><b>18:10</b></p>	<p><b>CREATIVE CITIES CHAMPION AWARDS</b></p>
<p><b>18:25</b></p>	<p><b>END OF DAY 1</b></p> <p><b>NETWORKING PARTY BEGINS</b></p>

## Day 2 – Thursday 7 May

<p><b>09:00</b></p>	<p><b>The Wake Up Address: Wayne Garvie</b></p> <p><b>Speaker:</b> Wayne Garvie (Sony Pictures Television)</p> <p><b>Host:</b> Jane Millichip (BAFTA)</p>
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	<p>Wayne Garvie, President, International Production, Sony Pictures Television, will deliver the inaugural Wake Up Address, launching a new annual Creative Cities Convention keynote designed to challenge assumptions, take stock of a fast-changing industry and spark debate about what comes next. BAFTA CEO Jane Millichip will pick up his main points and host a Q&amp;A.</p>
<p><b>09:40</b></p>	<p><b>G'WED: How A Breakout Comedy Found Its Audience</b></p> <p><b>Speakers:</b> Nana Hughes (ITV) • Mario Stylianides (Exec Producer) • Dylan Thomas-Smith (Cast) • Gemma Barraclough (Cast) • Chloe English (Director)</p> <p><b>Host:</b> Mobeen Azhar</p> <p>New comedy is one of the hardest things to land but G'WED proved it can still be done. With its unapologetically Liverpudlian voice, standout cast and sharp take on grief, sex, class and teenage life, the show connected with audiences and built real buzz. The creative team and cast share insights on how they made it work and how word of mouth and social media helped turn a fresh comedy into a breakout success.</p>
<p><b>10:20</b></p>	<p><b>ZIG A ZIG AH! : What the Factual Commissioners Really, Really Want</b></p> <p><b>Jo Clinton-Davis</b> (ITV) • <b>Harjeet Chhokar</b> (Amazon MGM Studios) • <b>Emma Loach</b> (BBC Factual ) • <b>Helen Nightingale</b> (UKTV) • <b>Laura Marks</b> (C4 Digital)</p> <p><b>Host:</b> Kit Morey (C5)</p> <p>Designed to cut through industry noise and get to the reality of what broadcasters and platforms are actually looking for right now. With budgets tightening, risk tolerance shrinking and audiences fragmenting across platforms, the gap between what producers are pitching and what commissioners are buying has never felt wider. This session puts leading UK and global commissioners on the spot to unpack their current priorities – editorially, commercially and strategically.</p>

<p><b>11:10</b></p>	<p><b>Refreshment break</b></p>
<p><b>11:30</b></p>	<p><b>Working-Class Stories; Middle-Class Gatekeepers</b></p> <p><b>Natasha Haythornthwaite</b> (Doc North) • <b>Laurence Clark</b> (Screenwriter &amp; Access Roles Project Champion) • <b>Beth Johnson</b> (Professor of Television and Media Studies, University of Leeds)</p> <p><b>Host: David Leach</b> (Climate Spring)</p> <p>We celebrate working-class stories more than ever but are we actually letting working-class people tell them? With growing recognition that diversity must also mean class diversity, this session asks a blunt question: is access to the industry stalling, or even reversing? As costs rise and pathways narrow, who's getting the best jobs? What are the invisible barriers still shaping careers?</p>
<p><b>12:00</b></p>	<p><b>Whose Voice Is It Anyway?</b></p> <p><b>Speakers: Andrea Arnold</b> (Oscar-Winning Filmmaker/Screenwriter) • <b>Tony Schumacher</b> (Writer)</p> <p><b>HOST: Ruth Pitt</b> (Chair, Creative Cities Convention)</p> <p>Two of the UK's strongest voices sit down to discuss their own personal journeys to success - for Andrea (Cow, American Honey, Fish Tank, Bird) from a council house in Dartford and for Tony Schumacher (Responder, The Cage) via policing, taxi-driving and hard graft in Liverpool. Both bring hard-won, personal perspectives on class, access and authenticity and offer their advice to upcoming generations of content creators.</p>
<p><b>12:25</b></p>	<p><b>Help? Finding Your Way in Digi-land</b></p> <p><b>Speakers: Ade Shannon</b> (WeDio) • <b>Jonny McCausland</b> (Hat Trick Productions) • <b>Graham Gallery</b> (Lime Pictures) • <b>Jade Beason</b> (Creator &amp; CEO of Social People)</p> <p><b>HOST: Mobeen Azhar</b></p>

	<p>A lively session exploring how artificial intelligence and audience analytics are influencing pitching, development and writing. How are algorithms changing how shows are created, tested and commissioned? This session tracks the new journey, with creators building audiences first, shaping content through data and using platforms and AI to bypass traditional gatekeepers.</p>
<b>13:00</b>	<b>Lunch</b>
<b>14:00</b>	<p><b>Question Time</b></p> <p><b>Speakers:</b> Nicola Shindler (Quay Street Productions) • Nigel Warner (PACT) • Mairi Brewis (YouTube) • Heidi Dawson (BBC)</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Hilary Rosen (UKTV)</p> <p>A fast-moving Question Time-style debate on the future of British TV and digital platforms. With funding pressure, Charter review questions, platform competition and regional growth all in play, this session asks what kind of UK screen sector we want to build next and who gets to shape it.</p>
<b>14:50</b>	<p><b>Podcasts: Where Audio Goes Next</b></p> <p><b>Speakers:</b> Lizzi Doyle (BBC Radio 5 Live/BBC Sounds ) • Stella Binns (YouTube)</p> <p><b>Host:</b> Mobeen Azhar</p> <p>For producers looking beyond traditional formats, podcasts offer new routes to audiences, talent and ideas. BBC and YouTube executives discuss the creative and commercial potential of audio storytelling and share where they see the space heading next.</p>
<b>15:15</b>	<p><b>Asif Kapadia: The Art of Documentary</b></p> <p><b>Host:</b> Harjeet Chhokar</p> <p>Oscar-winning filmmaker Asif Kapadia, acclaimed director of Amy, Senna, Diego Maradona and Liverpool legend Kenny Dalglish, discusses the craft and evolution of documentary storytelling. From</p>

his groundbreaking use of archive to the challenge of making distinctive films for a global audience, Kapadia reflects on the creative decisions, narrative instincts and industry shifts that have shaped his work. An opportunity to hear from one of the most innovative voices in contemporary doc-making.

**16:00**

**DAY 2 ENDS**

End time may vary slightly