

Jim Burge

producer/director

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Skills

I am a producer/director with a wide experience of factual programme-making. I see my job, above all, as that of a storyteller. I take human narratives as well as complex and subtle ideas and retell them clearly using moving pictures, words and music. I am used to working with celebrities as well as eminent artists and scientists but my overriding concern as a programme-maker is to maintain the interest of the audience. I relish the flexibility offered by new technology and work to make visually imaginative programmes with well constructed plots, frequently interleaving elements of humour with serious content.



Showreel available to view at http://bit.ly/JB_showreel (Link is clickable on-screen)

Qualifications

Degree: Mathematics and Philosophy
Bristol University

Professional:
BBC Film Directing course
BBC Drama course
BBC Safety course

Languages: fluent French, working German and Italian; I read Latin.

Subject Specialisms: My background in maths enables me quickly to come to grips with most scientific stories. In addition, the experience I have of writing books and making programmes about history, as well as my ability with narrative, qualifies me well for work on stories about the past.

I have a high level of computer literacy and can shoot sequences as well as edit on FCP.

Biography

After studying mathematics at university I was determined to work with moving pictures so I got a job with the BBC as a Floor Assistant. My first responsibility was to marshal the extras for the orgy scenes in **I Claudius**. I worked on **It Ain't Half Hot Mum**, **Are You Being Served?**, **The Good Life** and more **Top of the Pops** and **Playschools** than you would think possible. I also appeared inside one of the original Daleks. Eventually I became a producer with the **BBC Horizon** series. Later I went freelance and started to work on both science and history for **BBC**, **Channel 4** and **Discovery Channel**. Most recently I have worked on the **Starkey's Monarchy** series. I also spend some of my time writing and have published two popular history books about **Dante** and **Abelard and Heloise**.

References

Alex Gardiner, Controller ITV Factual 020 7156 6039
Denys Blakeway, Blakeway Productions 020 7248 5000

See below for a comprehensive list of my programmes.

Programmes

My most recent programmes, completed just before writing *Dante's Invention*, were for Channel Four's **Starkey's Monarchy** series:



The House of Windsor

Granada for Channel Four. **David Starkey's** epic series concluded on Boxing Day 2009 with a 90 minute special on the Royal Family in the 21st century. He does not pull his punches but also looks forward to the future.

You Tube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZvJJPkgyvU>



The Glorious Revolution

Granada for Channel Four. **David Starkey** continues his Monarchy series with the story of the cover-up of a military invasion of Britain in 1688.

The Times said "*Unfussy, thoughtful, superb television*".

You Tube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LuGOM7qdTlo>

This followed on the heels of another historian's view of the Decline of the West:



Dark Enlightenment

January 2006, Blakeway Productions for More Four. Historian, **Michael Burleigh** turns his attentions to what has been called the fatal wound that western culture has dealt itself - the rejection of religion. He finds a world that has lost its way, a tale of heroism and a warning for us all.

Before this I took time out to write a book about the medieval lovers **Heloise and Abelard**, preceded by programme for Channel Four's series about British India, **An Indian Affair**:



Rogue Trader: An Indian Affair, Episode 1

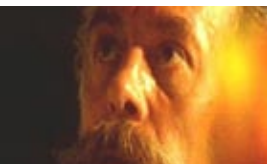
September 2003, Takeaway Media for Channel Four. Presenter-led series telling the story, through actuality and reconstruction, of the development of the British Empire in India. **Time Out** said "*.. intelligent and absorbing ... isn't afraid to dip into the prurient rumour box every now and again.*"

Before that two programmes for the Channel Four's acclaimed and genuinely innovative series about technology that shaped the world, **The Day The World Took Off**:



Wheeling and Dealing

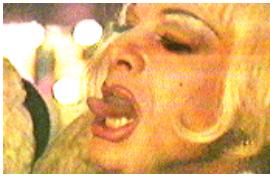
June 2000, Channel 4. A group of five different historians work as a team to give an account, on a range of timescales and locations, of how the world became modern. **The Observer** said "*.. one of those sexy, clever, well-made series which ratchets open the eyes and the mind ..*"



Ships of Fortune

The two programmes use a wide variety of techniques in a series of impressionistic sequences, reconstructions and dramatisations. In this film we meet a couple who are ruined by tulipmania, images of hell in a factory, a seventeenth century sailing ship, and an eighteenth-century chess-playing robot.

This was preceded by two films for **In Your Dreams**, the Channel 4 series about dreams and dreamers:



Inspiration

March 1998, Diverse Production for Channel Four. Californian literary critic, Bert States, takes us for a walk through the set of *Lethal Weapon 4* while he explains that dreams are personal acts of creativity ready to be used by all of us. Narrated by Robert Lindsay, this programme opened the series.



Changes

September 1998, Diverse Production for Channel Four. We meet a woman whose dream knight in armour turned out to be real; a holocaust survivor and a woman who, on the point of death, considers a recurring dream she has had all her life. Poet **Al Alvarez** called the film "a brilliant programme full of subtlety, feeling and restraint." Narrated by **Robert Lindsay**.

Before that I had the opportunity to write and direct a fictional yet prophetic film about Martin Luther King becoming President of the United States. At the time, interestingly, most Americans I met agreed that whilst a black president was unlikely, a woman president was even less likely.



What If?: President King


July 1997 for Discovery Channel through Barraclough Carey The film involves a mixture of dramatised scenes, interviews with real people who are role-playing and interviews with actors playing fictional people. It all adds up to a disturbingly convincing imitation of a genuine TV documentary which, claimed **Discovery**, was 'a haunting and thought-provoking film that ignited massive debate'.

Before **What If?** I had realised a long-term ambition and made a series about the Middle Ages, **Strange Landscape**, for BBC2. Presented by **Christopher Frayling**, it was coproduced with **Süddeutscher Rundfunk** and sold to **PBS** in the USA where it achieved top ratings. As well as masterminding the series I directed two episodes:



The Circles of Light

May 1994, BBC. The story of Dante's fictional journey through the medieval universe. Styles range from Italian 'B' Movie through Fellini pastiche to dramatic reconstruction. With the voice of **Robert Lindsay** as Dante. Contains scenes from heaven and hell shot on location and a disgusting scene of cannibalism.

 This film, now placed on YouTube in three parts (not by me) has had an amazing 140,000 hits <http://bit.ly/DanteMovie02>



The Hammer of the World

March 1995, produced at SDR in Stuttgart, in coproduction with BBC Worldwide. This is the story of the cruel but brilliant German Medieval Emperor, Frederick II who was Dr. Goebbels' favourite historical character. Dramatisations shot in Italy and Germany using local people and actors.

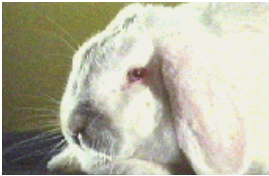
Before **Strange Landscape** I produced and directed a series of documentaries and drama documentaries in various areas, mostly for the BBC:



Taking the Credit

May 1993, Box Productions for BBC Horizon. The story of the row between the USA and France and the alleged skulduggery over the discovery of the AIDS virus in the mid 1980's. Documentary and reconstructed scenes. Narrated by **Janet Suzman** with the music of **Michael Nyman**.

 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQ4i7LE1AUA>



The Evolving Soul

September 1992, for BBC Religion. **Anthony Clare** introduces and narrates this film about evil, God, theology, chaos and a new understanding of nature. Filmed in Europe and America with rebel friar, **Matthew Fox**, and Nobel laureate, **Ilya Prigogine**.

Earlier I had made an attempt to escape from science with a medieval drama.



The Transmission of Roger Bacon

March 1992 BBC Timewatch. **Michael Culver** plays the irascible thirteenth-century monk, Roger Bacon, in a desperate appeal for assistance in the development of military technology for the fight against the Antichrist.

Before that it had been science again with what I believe to be one of the funniest Horizons ever made.



Cold Fusion

May 1991 for BBC Horizon, coproduced with **NOVA**, WGBH Boston. The story of the two scientists who, in 1990, claimed to have discovered a way to produce free energy by creating nuclear fusion in a glass of water. Narrated by **Peter Jones** with the music of **Philip Glass**. **Daily Mail** said, "James Burge has taken the concept of cold fusion and made it pulse with excitement".

This had been preceded by a successful holiday from science.



Democracy

June 1990 for BBC Documentary Features. The introductory film for a BBC2 season on democracy, the film consisted of a quick fire series of vignettes about the erosion of civil liberties in Britain. Introduced by **Jonathan Dimbleby**, Interviews with **Lord Soper**, **Ken Livingstone**, **Tony Benn**, and others.

Before that:



Greek Fire

1989, Transatlantic Films for Channel 4. Series about the legacy of ancient Greek culture. Made programmes about Drama, Politics, Sex, Philosophy and Science. Included dramatisations from **Euripides' The Bacchae** as well as a unique realisation of one of the oldest film scenarios ever written: **Plato's image of the cave**.



The Hope of Progress

May 1988 for BBC Horizon. A biography of **Sir Peter Medawar**, charismatically charming pioneering immunologist. Uniquely for a Horizon, the film had no commentary using instead the words of Medawar's autobiography, read by **Alan Howard**. Music by **Carl Davis**. This programme won the **British Association for the Advancement of Science Television Award**.



Thinking

March 1988 for BBC Horizon. A film about consciousness; includes a dramatisation in Cantonese of **John Searle's** famous philosophical parable of the Chinese Room. It was also **Juliet Stevenson's** debut as a television narrator. Selected by **The Observer** as the best example of the television of ideas of the year.

In the prehistory of my career — before I was freelance — my degree in maths, combined with a knowledge of television, brought me from floor assistant at the TV Centre to producer at the BBC's Open University Production Centre at Alexandra Palace. While there I made programmes about maths, education, arts, technology and science.

A science project at CERN in Geneva led to two programmes made 'on attachment' to Horizon.



What Einstein Never Knew

March 1987 for BBC Horizon, coproduced with NOVA, WGBH Boston. Visual and imaginative review of the search for a unified theory of physics. Produced and directed jointly with Andrew Millington. American TV host, **David Letterman**, said that it must have been about hair care.

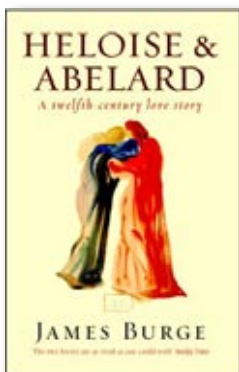


The Geneva Event

June 1986 for BBC OUP and Horizon. An observational film about an experiment at the predecessor of the **Large Hadron Collider** at CERN. Produced and directed jointly with Andrew Millington, John Stratford and Barrie Whatley.

Finally

I would just like to mention my two books of popular history. They were written with the same intention as the programmes — to produce clear, entertaining and informative narrative. Reviewers have tended to agree.



Heloise and Abelard

(Profile Books, 2005)

*"Intelligent, clearly written
... lucid and perceptive"*
(A C Grayling)

*"Forget Romeo and Juliet,
this is the real deal"*
(Megan Buhr)



Dante's Invention

(The History Press, 2011)

*"The book wears its
considerable scholarship
lightly. Written in a no-
nonsense, attractive style
it combines seriousness
with wry humor"*
(Christopher Frayling)

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Showreel available to view at
http://bit.ly/JB_showreel