

## CAREER AND FILMS

James Burge is a maker of narrative factual television programmes and a writer (he divides his time roughly equally between the two). His programmes combine visual innovation with strong storylines and carefully conceived structure. His production methods are flexible and he makes programmes efficiently and to budget. He has just finished an episode of David Starkey's Monarchy series.



### **The Glorious Revolution: Monarchy, Series III**

November 2006, Granada for Channel Four. **David Starkey** continues his Monarchy series up to the present day. In this episode he tells the remarkable story of how the English became so disenchanted with King James II that they invited an armed invasion from Holland. The extraordinary thing about the idea is that it worked. "**Unfussy, thoughtful, superb television.**" (*The Times*).

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



### **Dark Enlightenment**

January 2006, Blakeway Productions for MoreFour. Historian, **Michael Burleigh**, who has won acclaim and awards for his analysis of the rise of the German Third Reich, turns his attentions now 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, an untold tale of heroism and a warning for us all.

Before writing his two books about **Heloise and Abelard** and **Dante** he had made two programmes for Channel Four's series about British India, **An Indian Affair:**



### **Rogue Trader: An Indian Affair, Episode 1**

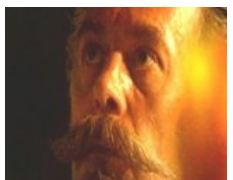
September 2003, Takeaway Media for Channel Four. Wrote screenplay and directed programme one; joined the production team of programme two about half way through. This series tells the story, through actuality and reconstruction, of the development of the British Empire in India. "**.. intelligent and absorbing ... isn't afraid to dip into the prurient rumour box every now and again.**" (*Time Out*)

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



### **Wheeling and Dealing: The Day the World .., Episode 2**

June 2000, Windfall Films for Channel 4. The series which, in a preview of one of his programmes, the Observer described as "**.. one of those sexy, clever, well-made series which ratchets open the eyes and the mind ..**" spans 10,000 years of the history of civilization. There is no single presenter, but 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. Narrated by **John Nettles**.



### **Ships of Fortune: The Day The World Took Off, Episode 3**

The two programmes tell the story of the development of industrial consumerism in Europe and the formation of global trade empires. They use a wide variety of techniques in a series of impressionistic sequences, reconstructions and dramatisations. We meet a couple who are ruined by tulipmania, images of hell in a factory, a seventeenth century sailing ship, and a chess-playing robot.

Before that he made two films for In Your Dreams, the Channel 4 series about dreams and dreamers:



### Changes

*September 1998, Diverse Production for Channel Four.* We meet a little girl plagued by nightmares; a woman whose dream knight in armour turned out to be real; a holocaust survivor who is haunted by the only dream she has had in fifty years; 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**.



### Inspiration

*March 1998, Diverse Production for Channel Four.* Freud thought that dreams were coded messages about hidden desires. But Freud was wrong, according to Californian literary critic **Bert States**. He 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.

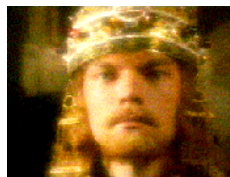
Before that he wrote and directed a fictional film about Martin Luther King becoming President of the United States:



### What If?: President King

*Completed in July 1996 for Discovery Channel through Barraclough Carey and first aired in February 1997.* The film, for which he wrote the screenplay and also directed, involves a mixture of dramatised scenes, including a super-8 footage sequence of the death of President King, interviews with real people who are role playing, and interviews with actors playing fictional people. The use of archive together with specially shot footage and the genuine feel of the interviews combine to make this a disturbingly convincing imitation of a genuine TV documentary.

Before starting on What If? he had realised a long term ambition and made a series about the Middle Ages, **Strange Landscape**, for BBC2. Presented by **Christopher Frayling**, it comprised five one hour programmes shown on BBC2 in May 1995. It was coproduced with *Süddeutscher Rundfunk* in Stuttgart and sold to *PBS* in the USA (where it was highest rated programme of the evening on WNET for each episode). As well as masterminding the series he directed two of the episodes:



### The Hammer of the World

*March 1995 for SDR, 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 tried to rule the world in alliance with Italy. Frederick was Dr. Goebbels' favourite historical character. Dramatisations shot in Italy and Germany using local people and actors.



### The Circles of Light

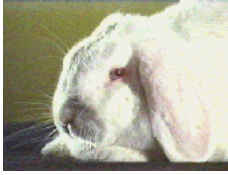
*May 1994, produced in London for BBC.* The story of The Divine Comedy, Dante's fictional journey through the medieval universe. The film is a celebration of the world created by one of the most visual writers of all time. It uses a variety of styles, from Italian 'B' Movie through Fellini pastiche to dramatic reconstruction. With the voice of **Robert Lindsay** as Dante, **Edmund Dehn** and **Sofia Hodges**. The film contains scenes from heaven and hell shot on location, and a disgusting scene of cannibalism.

Before spending two years as series producer and fundraiser for **Strange Landscape** he had written and directed documentaries and drama documentaries in various areas, mostly for the BBC:



### Taking the Credit

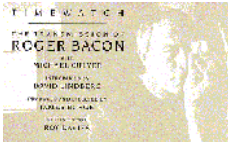
*May 1993, Box Productions for BBC Horizon, Science and Features.* The story of the row between the USA and France and the alleged skulduggery over the discovery of the AIDS virus in the mid 1980's. Documentary and reconstructed scenes. Narrated by **Janet Suzman** with the music of **Michael Nyman**.



### 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, **Illya Prigogine**.

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



### The Transmission of Roger Bacon

March 1992 written (using Bacon's original writings) and directed for BBC Timewatch. **Michael Culver** plays the irascible thirteenth century monk, Roger Bacon, who spends a day packing his life's work. He is dispatching it to the Pope 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 Horizon, but probably one of the funniest Horizons ever made.



### Cold Fusion

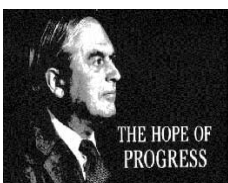
May 1991 for BBC Horizon, coproduced with NOVA, WGBH Boston. The story of the two scientists who, in 1990, claimed to have discovered a way to produce free energy by creating nuclear fusion in a glass of water. "**James Burge has taken the concept of cold fusion and made it pulse with excitement**",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

This had been preceded by a successful holiday from science.



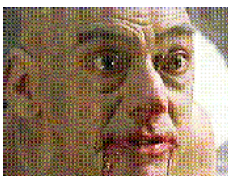
### Democracy

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.



### The Hope of Progress

May 1988 for BBC Horizon. A biography of **Sir Peter Medawar**, a scientist of great charismatic charm who rose to the heights of British society. The film had no commentary apart from the words of Medawar's autobiography, read by **Alan Howard**, with music by **Carl Davis**. This programme was given the **British Association for the Advancement of Science** television award in February 1989.



### Greek Fire

1990, Transatlantic Films for Channel 4. Series of ten half hours about the legacy of ancient Greek culture. Worked on programmes about Drama, Politics, Sex, Philosophy, and (of course) 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 in The Republic.

And before that:



### Thinking

March 1988 for BBC Horizon. With Reith Lecturer, American Philosopher **John Searle**, this film was about consciousness. It contains a dramatisation in Cantonese of Searle's philosophical parable of the **Chinese Room**. It is also **Juliet Stevenson's** debut as a television narrator. Selected by **John Wakefield** in **The Observer: "Expert's Expert"** as the best example of the television of ideas in 1988.

In 1987 he had left the staff of the BBC to go freelance. He had been a producer with the BBC's Open University Production Centre where he made films about Science, Technology, Education, and Mathematics, as well as being a reader of physics texts. In addition to that he had also made a film 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.

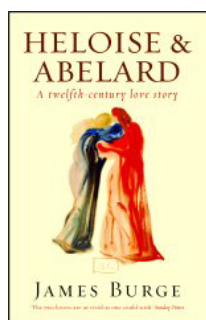
A degree in mathematics combined with a knowledge of television had brought him to the BBC's Open University Production Centre. While there he made about thirty programmes on Maths, Education, Arts, Technology and Science, among which were:

**A Life Of Their Own:** An award winning series of films about mentally handicapped adults and children — **What Do I Do?** Two dramas about philosophy, specially written by Roy Kift — **The Geneva Event:** An observational film about an experiment at **CERN**. It was also shown in the **Horizon** series and on **WGBH's NOVA** — **Space and Time:** A series involving science fiction stories and effects, also won awards — **Quest for Knowledge:** An impressionistic trip around a square mile of London narrated by **Michael Aspel** and **Valentine Dyall**. Starting in the British Museum it ended with an interview with a prostitute at King's Cross. Music of **The Penguin Café Orchestra**.

He had joined the BBC as a Floor Assistant where his first job was to marshal the extras for the orgy scenes in **I Claudius**. He worked on two series of **It Ain't Half Hot Mum**, two of **Are You Being Served?**, two series of **The Good Life** and more **Top of the Pops** and **Playschools** than you would think possible. He was later to appear inside a Dalek in an episode of **Crackerjack**.

Before starting at the BBC he had prepared himself for a career in the media by taking a degree in **Mathematics and Philosophy**. At school, at Elizabeth College in Guernsey in the Channel Islands, he was very good at mathematics but also took the time to prepare for his career by dreaming and making films.

Finally, he would just like to mention his latest book which was published last year (this year in the US) to good reviews and reasonable sales:



### **Heloise and Abelard: A Twelfth Century Love Story**

**Heloise and Abelard** (Profile Books, November 2003; Harper Collins San Francisco, December 2004) is about the medieval lovers whose letters, preserved for 900 years, not only tell their story but open a miraculous window onto their thoughts and feelings. **"Intelligent, clearly written ... lucid and perceptive"** (Independent) **"James Burge opens up this tale with sympathy and directness ... beautifully explained"** (Daily Mail). **"The two lovers are as vivid as one could wish ... He reminds us that, for Abelard and Heloise, their world was as new, risky and unpredictable as ours"** (Sunday Times)

This CV can be seen in full colour, along with additional information, at my website: [www.jamesburge.co.uk](http://www.jamesburge.co.uk)

[jburge@cabdan.co.uk](mailto:jburge@cabdan.co.uk)