

[GATEWAY \(/PAGES/DEFAULT.ASPX\)](#) > [WHAT'S HAPPENING \(/WHATSHAPPENING/PAGES/DEFAULT.ASPX\)](#)**Space cliffhangers draw in millions**

18.12.15



Duncan Williamson, Series Producer, Stargazing Live, Tim Peake Specials, reflects on a significant year:

With rocket launches and eclipses, it's been a big year for live TV events produced by BBC Science and the large audiences our programmes have attracted show there is a huge appetite for them.

In March, there was a solar eclipse which brought the country together for a moment of shared wonder, even if most of the country couldn't actually see the spectacle due to heavy cloud. For BBC One, we made "Eclipse Live: A Stargazing Special" featuring live pictures from around the UK of a partial eclipse.

We also had a tiny plane flying over the Faroe Islands to bring us live images above the clouds of a total eclipse.

That programme aired on Daytime BBC One and peaked at 4.7 million - it saw the highest audience share since the Royal Wedding. Many millions more saw the stunning highlights on YouTube and social media. But it nearly didn't happen as technical problems meant we didn't get any pictures from the plane until moments before we came on air.

It looked like we were facing disaster until, just like a Hollywood movie, it all came good at the last possible moment.

So how were we to top that? Fortunately along came Tim Peake, the first British astronaut in more than twenty years and the first ever British astronaut to go and live on the International Space Station. But the programmes we made last Tuesday, "Blast Off Live: A Stargazing Special" and "Stargazing Live: Brit In Space" were just as unpredictable as the eclipse.

Precarious

They were certainly loud. The roar of the rocket's engines, as they burned through 300 tonnes of fuel on launch that morning, was equalled by the 3000 children, surrounding Prof Brian Cox and Dara O' Briain at the Science Museum, who cheered Tim on not just at countdown but seemingly through every second of the broadcast.

What made the day feel precarious, however, were the dramatic moments that happened just after 17:00 in the afternoon.

[TPD]

Thanks for watching everyone! Stargazing Live

Tim's Soyuz vehicle was about to dock with the Space Station. In the OB truck we could see the approaching capsule in fabulous clarity thanks to a camera mounted outside the Space Station. We could hear mission control and we had the benefit of astronaut Chris Hadfield giving us a running commentary. As soon as we heard the word "abort" we knew we had a dramatic story but we were also praying for a happy ending.

The commander of Tim's capsule had to perform a manual docking procedure which added an exciting element of jeopardy to the show. But it also delayed what was to come next: Tim's actual arrival on board the ISS and then a press conference with earth, the first moment we would hear him speak from space.

For launch, the countdown clock was the focus of our attention. But in the evening it was the countdown to our programme coming off air that was the most important. We had no idea if we would get to see Tim live from space in our air time. Eventually the door of the Space Station opened and the delight on the face of Tim Peake was mirrored on the faces of the Stargazing team in the truck.

We still had to hear him speak of course, and since that happened after 20:00, we could only do that thanks to BBC Two delaying "Masterchef". Thank goodness they did, as the 3.8 million people who tuned for that moment would have been very upset indeed.

The question now is what "sciencey" live events are coming in 2016 to offer us more big challenges and more big audiences?

ARIEL

Author:

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Not a normal day in the office

17.12.15



When Jeremy Vine's voice finally gave way midway through his daily Radio 2 show, there was an unexpected role behind the mic for producer, Tim Johns, as he explains:

Jeremy arrived at work and had lost his voice somewhat. It wasn't too bad, but weakened shortly before the programme went out and it was too late to arrange cover. His first links were croaky but fine – his enormous energy kept things going. It got worse though – he'd really lost his voice.

Editor Phil Jones's phone was going off constantly. I knew he was consulting with management and Jeremy about continuing the programme but, with an hour gone and no replacement on the scene, I presumed Jeremy would carry on.

I was getting on with my usual job, filtering listener comments through to Phil, and lining guests and callers up on the phone to go on air.

The last time I'd been behind a mic on air was over three years ago, when I'd occasionally cover-present a thing or two at BBC Radio Lincolnshire so what happened next was something of a surprise.

At 12:57, I asked Jeremy if he wanted another cup of hot water to go with his honey, lemon and lemsip so I was just about to nip out to the coffee machine.

At 13:00, Radio 2's Head of Programmes, Lewis Carnie, turned up at the studio door and Phil nipped out for a quick chat. A minute later they were back, talking to Jeremy.

At 13:03 Phil popped his head round the studio door and said: "Tim – can you come in here? You're doing the next hour." Right.

7.1m listeners

I had not been in the morning meeting that day or read any of the scripts or briefings. And I hadn't even produced an item because I'd been working on a programme for the festive period. The Jeremy Vine Show gets 7.1m listeners a week. So I took a very, very, deep breath and grabbed my bottle of water.

Jeremy pointed me to the presenter's chair and showed me the main faders I'd need (fortunately our superb studio manager [TPD] took care of the music and jingles).

1/27/2016

Not a normal day in the office

At 13:05 Jeremy started a song out of the news and left the studio. That moment was like being strapped into a rollercoaster - and I don't like rollercoasters - with no way of stopping it. Then, after a bit of music... I was on!

The hour was surreal. It flew by. The first item involved speaking to listeners who had recently been bereaved and how they would get through Christmas. So not exactly simple. Thankfully, I had a wonderful guest in the studio, Barbara Want, who did most of the talking to callers. Then there was a fairly straightforward story about the UK's butterfly population so I guess I had a relatively easy ride. As ever, Phil was superb at keeping me straight and producing it every step of the way.

By the end of the hour I'd relaxed and was able to fully enjoy introducing the news jingle: "This is BBC Radio 2". I got out of the studio, instantly exhausted, to find my phone and Twitter feed had pretty much exploded. My colleagues were very nice about it all. I guess the only thing you don't want to do on your Radio 2 mainstream presenting debut is to cock it up. Which I think I avoided.

It was not a typical day in the office.

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SPOTY heads to Belfast

15 12 15

[TPD]

For a relatively small country, Northern Ireland has punched above its weight with regards to producing successful sportsmen and women.

Which makes it wholly appropriate that this year's Sports Personality of the Year (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/sports-personality>) – universally referred to in BBC parlance as SPOTY – comes from Belfast's SSE Arena.

From recent world beaters like Rory McIlroy and AP McCoy (SPOTY 2010) to stars of yesteryear like George Best, Mary Peters (1972), Dennis Taylor and Barry McGuigan (1985), the country has an extremely proud sporting heritage.

Executive Editor Carl Doran, who is overseeing the event, told Ariel: "Since we started taking the event on the road in 2006, we've wanted to take it to Northern Ireland which has a huge sporting tradition."

The event is run by a team based at Salford and Carl says the excellence of this team and the fine working relationship with BBC Northern Ireland has been instrumental in the extensive planning and preparations required for an event of this magnitude.

Carl and production executive Debbie Dubois have been travelling from their Salford base to Northern Ireland on a regular basis.

"The enthusiasm for the event over there has been unbelievable," says Carl. "BBC Northern Ireland has been magnificent, really enthusiastic and totally supportive."

Eagerly-anticipated

SPOTY is now one of the biggest and most eagerly-anticipated events on the TV calendar. It comes under intense media scrutiny, the list of nominees is pored over the press and, with that, comes pressure and occasional criticism.

"It's a massive event now," says Carl. "Editorially, there was a big change when we took it on the road and it went from being basically a TV studio-based show to a major event."

"It is one of the most scrutinised programmes and events on television, not just in sport. There are a handful of major events every year that have become institutions and carry a huge weight of expectation. SPOTY is one of them and there is pressure on us to deliver and not let people down.

"The fact we take it on the road and get as close to the audience as possible makes it special. SPOTY is probably the only place where you can see all those stars from so many different sports in one place."

In the build up to the event, the SPOTY team and its publicity arm, has had to deal with a major controversy around one of the nominees, Tyson Fury, for comments he made about homosexuality, women and abortion.

The scale of the controversy is indicative of the stature of the event and its importance to the public.

"It shows just how important this accolade is to the sports world," says Carl. "The fact people care so much about that list says it all really. I have spoken to people like David Beckham (2001) and Bradley Wiggins (2012) and they have told me the award is right up there as one of the finest moments of their career. I think this is because it is voted for by the public."

Collaboration and teamwork

An event of this size and scope takes an immense amount of planning and Carl and Debbie have had to oversee everything from security, ticket sales and cleaning.

Debbie says: "Good collaboration is vital and we have worked closely with BBC Northern Ireland who have established relationships with key stakeholders there, in particular both the local council and the tourist board. There is a lengthy lead time and a tremendous amount of work to get through in terms of liaising with the venue and meeting the key people.

"The core team came on board in September but the work started much earlier than that. We have a superb team of people who have all been working hard to ensure the event is a success."

Any thoughts that people would not be prepared to travel across the Irish Sea, were quickly extinguished when tickets sold out in record time.

Carl said: "We want it to be a really enjoyable experience for everyone. There is a red carpet show presented by Colin Murray which BBC Northern Ireland are producing and we also have the Stephen Nolan show on 5 live."

As a broader element of SPOTY travelling to Northern Ireland, BBC Get Inspired in partnership with Belfast City Council and Tourism Northern Ireland will be bringing the 'BBC Get Inspired Active Academy,' which will consist of two days of free sport and fitness taster-sessions in two different Belfast leisure centres.

Carl promises a couple of surprises – a hallmark of SPOTY going back many years – and there will be a distinct Northern Irish flavour to proceedings.

"We have a couple of things up our sleeve," he says intriguingly.

So, everything is set up for a great night: "Our aim is for a great night that does justice to an excellent sporting year," says Carl.

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WHAT'S HAPPENING

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Birmingham plays host to the BBC Music Awards 2015

11.12.15



On Thursday 10 December the BBC Music Awards 2015 rolled into Birmingham, with a star-studded show in front of a live audience at the Genting Arena, Birmingham.

Jammed with breath-taking performances from some of the biggest names in the international music scene and hosted by Chris Evans and Fearne Cotton, the BBC Music Awards were broadcast to millions across the country on BBC One, Radio 2 and at bbc.co.uk/music with Radio 1 bringing music lovers all the backstage action during the show.

Five awards were handed out on the night with Adele crowned 'British Artist of the Year' and also picking up 'BBC Live Performance of the Year' for Adele at the BBC, A BBC One Special.

Taylor Swift scooped 'International Artist of the Year', Jack Garratt won 'BBC Music Introducing Artist of the Year' and the fifth and final award of the evening was presented to Hozier, whose Take Me To Church was crowned by public vote as 'Song of the Year'.

Celebration of an amazing year in music

The glittering event saw some fantastic live performances from an array of internationally recognised names including Ellie Goulding, Faithless, Hozier, James Bay, Jess Glynne, Little Mix, OMI, One Direction, Rod Stewart, Paul Heaton and Jacqui Abbott, Stereophonics, The Shires, Years & Years and Jack Garratt.

Now in its second year, the awards are a celebration of an amazing year in music with spectacular performances and surprising collaborations from some of the biggest names in the business.

Wrapping up the event, hosts Chris Evans and Fearne Cotton also announced that the BBC Music Awards will return to Birmingham's Genting Arena next December for the 2016 BBC Music Awards.

Joe Godwin, Director BBC Academy and BBC Birmingham said: "The BBC Music Awards from the Genting Arena was a moment we've all been working towards for so long. All the effort paid off, it was an incredible production that showcased the city and BBC Birmingham as the energetic

place it is.

As Chris Evans said last night – same place, same time, next year."

In the build up to this year's awards, stars of BBC Radio 1, 1Xtra, Radio 2, Radio 3, 6 Music and Asian Network, along with industry experts and local bands, took centre stage for BBC Music: Live in Birmingham – a week of outreach programming and live events.

One of these special events saw Radio 1's Annie Mac in conversation with Head of Programmes for BBC Radio 1 and 1Xtra, Rhys Hughes, the person who gave Annie her first big break at Radio 1.



Dublin-born Annie Mac has spent the last decade carving out a career as broadcaster, talent-finder and international DJ.

Radio 1's champion of new music, the successor to Zane Lowe and John Peel, Annie Mac now presents the primetime weekday evening show from Monday to Thursday at 7pm, as well as her primetime specialist Friday night Dance Show, while maintaining huge success as a live DJ in demand from stadiums to superclubs.

A packed out audience at Birmingham's CBSO Centre hung off every word as Annie waxed lyrical about some of the memorable moments of her career at Radio 1, her adventures DJing across the globe and sharing some top tips on how to get started in radio.

Terrified

When asked what her first impressions of Radio 1 were, Annie remembered how terrified she was; being such a huge fan of the station. Recalling how the legendary John Peel was always such a presence in the Radio 1 offices, Annie remembered how she was too scared to even look in his direction...a legend she is now following in the footsteps of.

Wrapping up the event, Annie spoke about how one of the reasons why she was where she was today was down to hearing Marie Ann Hobbs on Radio 1. It was about having someone relatable to look up to.

In Annie Mac, the next generation of budding Radio 1 presenters have their own DJ to relate to.

Speaking after the event, Rhys, said: "It was evident that there was a huge amount of enthusiasm amongst the young people, who were eager to learn about ways they can make it into the music and broadcasting world."

With the BBC Music Awards in Birmingham, it's been a great opportunity to run informative sessions with BBC DJs to pass on their experiences and advice to people."

Other sessions taking place in venues across the city this week included 1Xtra's Charlie Sloth talking about how to make money in music, song writer Terry Hall from The Specials coaching how to write a hit song and Radio 2's Sara Cox talking with Solihull star Lady Leshurr about the role of women

in the music industry.

'Brummieoke' comes to Birmingham

As part of the week leading up to the main event of the BBC Music Awards 2015 in Birmingham, employees at the city's BBC base at The Mailbox, had the opportunity to show off their vocal range with the first ever 'Brummieoke' video booth.

[TPD]

[TPD] "It's a tune!"

TPD

] chose to perform 'Black Magic' by Little Mix because "quite simply,

[TPD] "I think the 'Brummieoke' booth is great; it should be a regular feature with more songs to choose from. Have you ever heard a proper Brummie sing Bruno Mars' 'Just the Way You Are'? It's amazing!"

The 'Brummieoke' video booth made its debut over the preceding weekend at Birmingham's brand new Grand Central train station, where audiences were able to perform their own renditions of songs by artists performing at the BBC Music Awards 2015.

All eyes were on BBC One on Thursday evening when the BBC Music Awards 2015 were televised live, with 'Brummieoke' participants eager to see if their performances made it onto the screens at the event.

You can watch a highlights compilation of some of the performances from the 'Brummieoke' booth here (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQu949WqKUL>).

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BBC Cumbria rises to the challenge

09.12.15



The scene in Carlisle city centre

BBC Radio Cumbria suspended its scheduled programming to bring its listeners emergency information and live updates as the county faced flooding on an unprecedented scale.

The station has been broadcasting live throughout the day and night since Saturday when the scale of the flooding became clear.

[TPD] was presenting his regular sports show live on Saturday when he switched to covering the escalating situation. At the same time, [] became aware that the rising waters were endangering [] own home [TPD] completed his show and then went home to help [TPD]

Other presenters and staff were also directly affected including breakfast show presenter [TPD] whose home in [TPD] was flooded. Mike had to be rescued by boat on Sunday but was back in work later the same day.

[] = TPD



Breakfast show presenter Mike Zeller who had to be rescued from his house by boat

Many of his BBC Radio Cumbria colleagues cancelled leave and worked over the weekend to keep listeners informed about the unfolding crisis.

The station's Carlisle studio also provided refuge for broadcast journalist Tom Burrows' mum who had to come to visit her son for the weekend. After being rescued from his home, she came into BBC Radio Cumbria where she was interviewed about her experience. And the station's Kendal studio was flooded – with water inside at one point ten inches deep.

The station stayed on air throughout the floods – giving regular updates from Cumbria Police, who urged the public to listen to BBC Radio Cumbria for the latest travel advice.

The station also provided advice and information from the emergency services on a dedicated live website which was constantly updated with pictures, information and advice.

BBC Look North reporter Megan Paterson, reporting for Radio Cumbria in Carlisle, described how the water level had reached the top of the traffic lights outside the civic centre.

Graham Moss, BBC Radio Cumbria Assistant Editor, who managed the news coverage over the weekend had also covered the previous floods in 2005 and 2009 and having so many experienced members of staff really helped.

He said: "The BBC Radio Cumbria staff have done a fantastic job and I am incredibly proud of them. The station has such an important role to play at times like this, keeping the people across the county up to date with the news as it happens. We have also been supplying content to Radio Lancashire who lost a transmitter due to the floods in Lancaster."

The station's reporters have also had to juggle the demands of both their website and social media. [Their Twitter page \(https://twitter.com/BBC_Cumbria\)](https://twitter.com/BBC_Cumbria) in particular, has seen an increase of 2,500 followers.

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Email the Ariel Team (<mailto:ArielTeam@bbc.co.uk>)

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A life reporting from the lakes

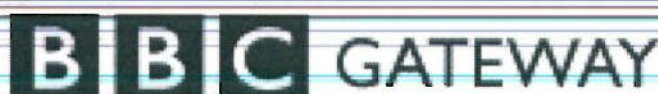
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As he comes off the road to be a digital writer for BBC Cumbria's Local Live pages, Martin Lewes...

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DaVinci Social September update

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Many programmes in Radio and some in TV make use of systems to manage audience interactions (such...

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