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The Lost Decade Season and other Autumn Highlights 2005

BBC

BBC FOUR

Contents

page 2 - Our Hidden Lives
page 3 - Little Kinsey
page 4 - Censored At The Seaside: The Postcards of Donald McGill
page 5 - Soho Boho
page 6 - The Improbable Mr Attlee
page 7 - When Britain went Bananas
page 8 - The Bad Food Guide
page 9 - The Third Programme: High Culture for All
page 10 - A Very British Olympics
page 11 - The Jitterbug Years
page 12 - John Wyndham: The Invisible Man of British Science Fiction
page 13 - Ronald Searle
page 14 - Dennis Wheatley: A Letter To Posterity
page 16 - Shakespeare's Happy Endings
page 17 - A Waste Of Shame
page 18 - Bob Dylan Season
page 19 - The Thick Of It
page 20 - Tales From The Palaces
page 21 - Storyville – A Very English Village
page 22- Asylum
page 23 - Quitters
page 24 - Afghanistan – The No. 1 Ladies' Driving School

BBC FOUR

Our Hidden Lives

Sarah Parish, Richard Briers, Ian McDiarmuid and Lesley Sharp star in the adaptation of award-winning writer Simon Garfield's best-selling book, in which he skilfully wove the diaries of ordinary people, confronting the uncertain years following the Second World War into a wonderful and evocative patchwork.

Four main stories emerge – Maggie Joy Blunt is a thoroughly modern young woman, a post war 'Bridget Jones', and a would-be writer. B Charles is a gay antiques dealer who lives in Edinburgh, an horrific snob who is terrified of being exposed. Herbert Brush is a retired engineer who tends his allotment and writes appalling poetry and Edie Rutherford is a Sheffield housewife, a forthright socialist but with some startling prejudices.

'I love these diaries. They are real stories, better than any novel.' Margaret Forster

Our Hidden Lives has been adapted for BBC Four by David Eldridge and is directed by Michael Samuels.

A Diverse production

Little Kinsey

Little Kinsey lifts the lid on the nation's first-ever sex survey, conducted by the Mass Observation project in 1949, following the controversial Kinsey Report in the US a year earlier. The findings of *Little Kinsey* were considered so outrageous and shocking that they have been buried in an archive in the University of Sussex. Until now.

Thousands of people were asked about their sexual attitudes and behaviour and most answered the intrusive, intimate questions. The results revealed a unique snapshot of the sexual lives of the British population.
One in four men admitted to having sex with prostitutes.
One in five women said they'd had an extra-marital affair.
One in five men said they'd had a homosexual experience, and women confessed to widespread disappointment in sex with their husbands.

A Testimony Films production

Censored At The Seaside: The Postcards of Donald McGill.

Donald McGill was a British institution whose saucy postcards became an integral part of the British seaside holiday, and at the height of his popularity were selling up to 16 million copies a year. The bawdy humour came straight out of the music hall and it's a British tradition that led on to the *Carry On* films, Benny Hill and Les Dawson.

McGill's humour was thought to be so representative of the British character that it was championed by George Orwell in a famous essay and Dennis Potter named him the 'Picasso of the Pier'.

Yet in the Fifties, with McGill almost in his eighties, he was prosecuted for obscenity. He pleaded guilty to avoid being imprisoned and continued to work for another eight years, but the demise of the saucy seaside postcard had begun.

Censored At The Seaside: The Postcards of Donald McGill includes interviews with McGill enthusiasts Roy Hudd, Roy Hattersley and Michael Winner.

A Firefly production

Soho Boho

Much of London was quiet and subdued after the war. Soho, in contrast, was a vibrant, buzzing magnet for artists, writers, poets, prostitutes, philosophers, crooks and misfits – an oasis of colour and energy in a drab and war-torn city.

Soho life followed no pattern, the only governance being the opening hours of the pubs, clubs and cafés, some of which – such as The Colony Rooms and The French House – still exist today. The 'cast', which included Dylan Thomas, Francis Bacon, Quentin Crisp and Jeffrey Bernard, had the freedom to behave as they saw fit. Bad behaviour was almost expected; people shared what they had, and weren't judged for drunken or promiscuous behaviour.

Soho Boho brings to life this moment in Soho's glorious history with testimonies from those who socialised there and rarely seen archive footage, audio clips and photographs.

A BBC production

The Improbable Mr Attlee

Professor David Reynolds takes a fresh look at the dramatic achievements and failures of Clement Attlee's post-war Labour Government.

The Second World War had bankrupted Britain yet Attlee and his colleagues were not deterred. They took a huge gamble and pressed on with one of the most far-reaching reform programmes in British history which included creating a National Health Service and nationalising major industries, but they were unable to lift rationing and stumbled from one economic crisis to another.

At the heart of this remarkable story was a man caught between socialism, patriotism and Cabinet colleagues who craved his job. Labour's unlikely leader was terse and uncharismatic but very effective – the improbable Mr Attlee.

A Blakeway production

When Britain went Bananas

The humble banana stars in a story of false dawns, crude government control, spies, rebellion and law-abiding citizens turned criminal.

After a five-year absence, during which the banana achieved an almost mythical status, the first shipment of bananas arrived in Britain in December 1945. It was the ideal government propaganda tool, a convenient token of a brighter future.

With bananas restricted to children and pregnant women, the nation, oppressed under the controls of the State and desperate to taste that forbidden fruit, was all too willing to break the law.

As the Ministry fought hard to retain control with increasingly absurd measures, those flouting the law became more determined. Housewives took to the streets and a cycle of oppression and rebellion ensued, threatening to tip over into popular revolt.

At the heart of *When Britain went Bananas* is a comical fruit that perfectly captures the spirit of a post-war nation.

A Firefly production

The Bad Food Guide

The Second World War didn't only devastate the lives and homes of the British people – it was also a culinary disaster for Britain.

There was strict rationing and the government limited people to spending up to five shillings per meal. The Ministry of Food looked for cheap proteins, and meats like snoek and whale were served in the restaurants. The caterers weren't honest with their customers about the meat and the service was generally poor.

Raymond Postgate, left wing historian and author, was frustrated. He wrote articles criticising the caterers and set up the Good Food Club where anyone could write in with suggestions of good food places. In 1951 he published the first *Good Food Guide* with over 500 recommendations which marked a new era for British catering.

The Bad Food Guide features archive material, menus, and interviews including Sir Clement Freud, who opened his own restaurant after the war, Elizabeth Ray, one of the first Good Food Guide inspectors, and Oliver Postgate.

A BBC production

The Third Programme: High Culture for All

With war ending, 1945 was a triumph for the arts. Book sales boomed; audiences flocked to exhibitions, the theatre, opera and ballet. Culture was to be part of the reconstruction of Britain after six years of war. The Arts Council; the Institute of Contemporary Arts; the Aldeburgh Festival; the Cheltenham Festival; and the Edinburgh Festival were all created within a few years of the war. BBC Radio's *Third Programme* started in 1946 and captured the post-war mood in Britain. It was accessible to all and broadcast only the very best of elite culture.

Yet within a few years the *Third Programme* was in crisis. What happened to it reflected the profound changes in British society.

The Third Programme: High Culture for All charts the rise and fall of an idea: that high culture was good for everyone.

A BBC production

A Very British Olympics

As London looks forward to hosting the 2012 Olympics, the extraordinary spirit of the 1948 Olympics is captured with unique archive footage and interviews.

Athletes were housed in army camps. Rationing meant packed lunches and every nation was asked to bring its own food. The Paralympics were created so that the war-injured could compete.

Hungarian Karoly Takacs learned to use his left hand after his right was shattered by a grenade and won gold in pistol shooting. Emil Zatopek, a former Czech Army Colonel, trained in his army boots to win the 10,000m.

Crowds of 80,000 watched at Wembley, and the event was televised for the first time by the BBC. A record number of athletes (4,500) and nations (59) participated but neither Germany nor Japan were invited to take part and Stalin forbade Soviet athletes to compete for fear they'd be beaten by the US.

The very existence of the 1948 London games became an immense symbol of hope for the future.

A BBC production

The Jitterbug Years

Extraordinary BBC archive footage, highlighting some of the most important events from the post-war years of 1945-53, is set to the music of the time, heralding an era of enormous social and cultural change that would eventually explode into rock and roll and teenage rebellion.

This unique footage shows how the Brits enjoyed themselves in the aftermath of the war, despite rationing, deprivation and the big freeze of 1947. Events include the birth of the NHS, the baby boom and soaring divorce rate, the influence of American music and dance, the empire dissolving, Britain entering the jet and atomic age, Attlee's socialist government taking over major industries, Churchill's second term as PM, the Festival of Britain, the discovery of DNA and the Queen's Coronation.

The evocative soundtrack includes *How Lucky You Are* from Vera Lynn, *Isn't Life Wonderful* by Alma Cogan and Les Howard, *GI Jive* by Tony Bennett, *Jezebel* by Frankie Laine and *I've Got My Love To Keep Me Warm* from Les Brown and his orchestra.

A BBC production

John Wyndham: The Invisible Man of British Science Fiction

John Wyndham hated the term 'science fiction', yet the author of *The Day of The Triffids* and *The Midwich Cuckoos* remains one of Britain's most influential sci-fi writers. In the Fifties his books dominated the bestseller lists and, decades later, they are all still in print and still seem just as relevant. This dramatised documentary, starring Chris Langham, explores the science behind his fiction and uncovers for the first time the strange private life of this unique writer.

Drawing on the painstaking research of Wyndham's biographer, Dr. David Ketterer, it includes interviews with personal friends including sci-fi writers Brian Aldiss and Sam Youd, and scientists Steve Jones and Armand Le Roi. Wyndham's private photo album, and the only television interview he ever gave, feature alongside clips from the movie and TV adaptations of *The Day of The Triffids*.

A BBC production

Ronald Searle

Haunted by the success of his most famous creation, the girls of St Trinian's and the boys of St Custard's (notably Molesworth) but also haunted by his own wartime experiences as a Japanese prisoner of war, Ronald Searle left his wife, his family and his country in 1961. Searle has since lived and worked from his home in the South of France and this is the first film for 30 years to consider his life and work.

Extensive examples drawn specially for the programme by *Times* and *Guardian* cartoonist Martin Rowson, explore what constitutes the unmistakable "Searle line" and how his work developed in the crucial years immediately following the end of the Second World War, moving from the merely decorative and amusing to the penetrating and disturbing.

Contributions include specially commissioned portraits from Gerald Scarfe, Posy Simmonds, Steve Bell and Michael Heath, as well as Alan Coren and Russell Davies.

A Lion TV (Scotland) production

Dennis Wheatley: A Letter To Posterity

Dennis Wheatley wrote over 70 books, selling an incredible 50 million copies. Labelled the 'Prince of Thriller Writers' by critics, he served his country with distinction in both wars and sold fine wines to the crowned heads of Europe, but he counted a con-man and a murderer among his closest friends and was a keen student of the occult and black arts.

Less than 30 years since his death, this once hugely popular writer is now rather forgotten. Here, he is summoned back to life and his legacy re-examined. With previously unseen archive footage, the documentary features interviews with his friends, including actor Christopher Lee, and experts including his biographer Phil Baker and leading authority on British popular fiction, Clive Bloom.

Unearthing the contents of an extraordinary letter addressed to 'Posterity', written by Wheatley in 1947 and buried in a subsequently recovered time capsule, the film reveals his fears for the future and his contempt for the present. It seeks to discover just how representative Wheatley was of a slice of British society which found post-war austerity and Labour government reforms almost as bad as the war itself; and what he would make of the world today if he really were to return.

A Lion TV (Scotland) production

Other Autumn Highlights 2005

SHAKESPEARE'S HAPPY ENDINGS

This comic genealogy of rewritten Shakespeare is penned, presented and performed by Patrick Barlow, who stars as Professor Simon Starkman: academic, amateur thespian and novice documentary presenter.

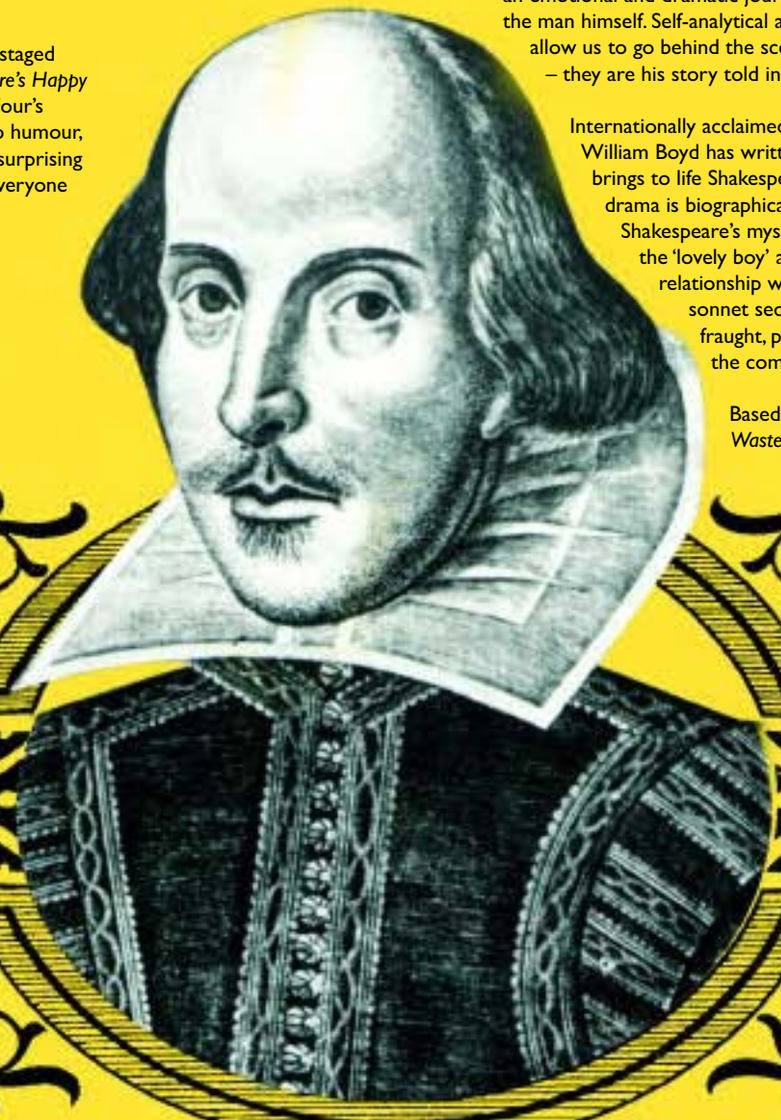
Romeo And Juliet, *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead* and *West Side Story* are just some of the many classic reworkings of Shakespearean text, paying due homage to his work, the apotheosis of the art of the dramaturge. Barlow embarks on a whistle-stop tour of some of the most interesting and ludicrous bowdlerisations of Shakespeare throughout the history of theatre.

Some theatrical howlers from this litany of shame include: *The History Of Richard II* (1680), making Richard sympathetic … withdrawn after one performance; *The History Of King Lear* (1681), in which the Fool is removed, Cordelia is married off to Edgar, and which concludes with Lear being restored to two thirds of his kingdom; and a *Romeo And Juliet* (1597) in which, surprisingly, the young couple live together happily ever after, which played on alternate nights with the original tragedy. One stood the test of time; the other…

Patrick scrutinises the lunatic scribblings of Nahum Tate, Kemble and Dryden, the bombast of Garrick, the entrepreneurial Victorian actor-manager Henry Irving and the ludicrously camp 20th-century player Wolfit, among others.

Part documentary, part staged performance, *Shakespeare's Happy Endings* builds on BBC Four's reputation for grown-up humour, candid biography and a surprising take on a subject that everyone thinks they know.

A BBC production



A WASTE OF SHAME

An intense drama about the passionate and destructive love triangle that consumed Shakespeare in his troubled middle years, *A Waste of Shame* adapts some of the most celebrated, sexual, raw, bitter and vitriolic love poems ever written.

Shakespeare's *Sonnets* are the most compelling source for an emotional and dramatic journey into the psychology of the man himself. Self-analytical and brutally honest, they allow us to go behind the scenes of this complex genius – they are his story told in his very own words.

Internationally acclaimed novelist and screenwriter William Boyd has written *A Waste of Shame* and brings to life Shakespeare's inner thoughts. The drama is biographical; it focuses on Shakespeare's mysterious relationships with the 'lovely boy' and his extra-marital relationship with the 'dark lady' of his sonnet sequence. The film tells the fraught, passionate love story behind the composition of the *Sonnets*.

Based on academic sources, *A Waste of Shame* delves into the mystery of the identity of who these people really were, and how they influenced and affected the greatest writer in our literary canon. They didn't just tug at his heartstrings: they also changed the direction of his play-writing.

Shakespeare is presented as a corpulent, middle-aged writer and businessman, separated from his wife Anne Hathaway and grieving for the death of his son Hamnet. Plague has sprung up again in London, and the theatres have all been closed as a result. Desperate for work, Shakespeare takes a commission to write 17 sonnets for an androgynous young lord, William Herbert, soon-to-be Earl of Pembroke. This young man gives one half of the inspiration to Shakespeare for the most celebrated love poems ever written.

The second half is given by the 'dark lady' Lucy, an exotic courtesan who sells sexual favours to the literati of Elizabethan London. *A Waste of Shame* is the story of how these two liaisons dangerously intersect in Shakespeare's life.

A BBC production

BOB DYLAN SEASON

Bob Dylan, unquestionably one of the most revered and influential musicians of the past century, is celebrated this autumn on BBC Four with a season of new and archive films exploring his life and work. Programming accompanies the Martin Scorsese two-part film *No Direction Home – Bob Dylan* airing as an *Arena* special on BBC Two on 26th and 27th September.

Dylan in the Madhouse

Remarkably, Dylan's first ever televised performance of his seminal hit *Blowin' in the Wind* was on a BBC play called *Madhouse on Castle Street. Dylan in the Madhouse* tracks 21-year-old Dylan's first ever visit to London in 1962 to take part in the BBC play as the young anti-hero.

The play has been wiped but his song recordings have been discovered by detective collectors who have dedicated their lives to the recovery of Dylan material. Although they exist only in crude audio, these are the rarest Dylan recordings that exist. *Arena* brings them back to the BBC after 43 years of lying in an attic.

Dylan in the Madhouse also features members of the production team vividly recalling the making of the play and its impact, plus contributions from folk singers Peggy Seeger and Martin Carthy.

Dylan's Legends

From the American folk singer Woody Guthrie to boxer Rubin 'Hurricane' Carter, several of Dylan's songs capture his fascination with the stories and lives of great American characters. *Dylan's Legends* uses specially shot material and archive to re-create the events that inspired Dylan to write the songs *Hurricane* for the boxing hero, *Lenny Bruce* for the pioneering comic, *Blind Willie McTell* for Blues legend Willie McTell, and *Song for Woody* for his folk idol.

Talking Bob Dylan Blues

A tribute concert co-produced with the Barbican, *Talking Bob Dylan Blues* features a broad array of singer-songwriters, bands and artists from the UK and the US inspired by the writing of Dylan. The show celebrates Dylan's songs, his influence, his guitar playing and his delivery. Artists performing include Billy Bragg, Martin Carthy, Liam Clancy, Robyn Hitchcock, K T Tunstall, Odetta, Willy Mason and Razorlight.

Accompanying archive films include Pennebaker's 1967 portrait of Bob Dylan *Don't Look Back*; *The Last Waltz*, Scorsese's film about Dylan's band; and *Highway 61 Revisited* from *Arena's Tales of Rock and Roll* series in 1993.

BBC productions

THE THICK OF IT

The caustic comedy from the award-winning Armando Iannucci makes an eagerly-awaited return for a second series on BBC Four.

Peter Capaldi reprises his role as the bullying, foul-mouthed No 10 Chief Political Advisor (Malcolm Tucker) alongside Chris Langham as his unfortunate Minister of Social Affairs (Hugh Abbot) in this sharp satire of the world of British politics.

The new series sees the team adding more paranoia, back-stabbing and power games to the day to day running of the department, while trying to deal with a ministerial visit to a factory that goes horribly wrong, a Prime Minister's blue-skies thinker who's gone out of control, an abusive email that shouldn't have been sent and a minister caught lying to a Parliamentary Select Committee – all this and a cabinet reshuffle just around the corner.

The series also stars James Smith as Glenn Cullen, the Senior Special Advisor; Chris Addison as Oliver Reeder, the Junior Policy Advisor; Jo Scanlan as Terri Coverley, the Press Officer; and introduces Polly Kemp as Robyn Murdoch, Junior Press Officer. The series is written by Jesse Armstrong, Simon Blackwell, Armando Iannucci and Tony Roche.

A BBC production

TALES FROM THE PALACES

Britain's historic royal palaces are lovingly cared for by a dedicated staff. All their hard work is funded by tourism so the more visitors they get the better – or is it? Often the presence of tourists creates some of the problems that conservationists have to tackle.

Tales From The Palaces takes a peek behind the public displays and pageantry to reveal what really goes on to preserve the traditions, heritage and fabric of the buildings so that future generations can enjoy them.

Narrated by Robert Lindsay, this warm, funny and sometimes moving series tells the story of a year in the life of the conservation teams at the Tower of London, Hampton Court, Kew Palace, Kensington Palace and the Banqueting House.

Join staff as they conserve buildings, artworks and costumes, devise centuries-old recipes for one of today's Michelin-starred chefs and dress up as kings and queens in painstakingly researched costumes. It's a tough job enticing people through the door…

A BBC production

STORYVILLE – A VERY ENGLISH VILLAGE

Ditchling is an archetypal English village. With a population of just 1,600, the village boasts 44 village societies, including Britain's leading village film society, the oldest village horticultural society and a feisty local hunt opposed to the new law. Unsurprisingly, with so much to offer, the village has several celebrity residents, including Dame Vera Lynn, and was previously the home of HRH The Duchess of Cornwall.

Filmmaker and resident Luke Holland has been recording life in the village over the last decade. This series depicts life in the contemporary English countryside and asks how the village can retain its rural character with an ever-encroaching metropolis.

A Zef production

ASYLUM

'Scroungers' and 'layabouts' are words often used to describe asylum-seekers.

For three years *Asylum* has followed the fortunes of three newly arrived families from Algeria, Somalia and Afghanistan as they struggle to build new lives for themselves and their children.

The emotional journey they make is a rollercoaster of contrasting moods, affected by their feelings of isolation, homesickness and hopes for the future.

This multi-layered documentary uses news and observational footage, telling personal and developing stories that are as much about us as a nation as they are about the families.

A BBC production

QUITTERS

Should serially offending drug addicts be locked up or given the chance to change? By significantly increasing funding over the next three years the government has given a clear signal it believes rehabilitation is the answer.

Phoenix House treatment centres offer addicts the chance to change their lives through a six-month residential programme. Some arrive voluntarily, destitute and at the end of their tether; others have been sent by the courts and face lengthy prison sentences should they fail the programme.

With unique and intimate access to the therapeutic process, this moving, observational film follows a number of residents on an intensely personal journey that could literally save their lives.

Rehab has been made by the same team behind the acclaimed *Care House* documentary shown on BBC Four last year.

A Century Films production

AFGHANISTAN – THE NO. 1 LADIES' DRIVING SCHOOL

Four years after the collapse of the Taliban regime, life is changing in Kabul. Women walk the streets in western clothes, men talk on mobile phones and children cram into ice-cream parlours to watch the latest pop videos. And thanks to the first ever 'Ladies and Gentlemen's Driving Course' in Kabul, women are now also learning to drive.

Sean Langan, journalist and documentary maker, returns to Afghanistan to witness the changes taking place following the end of the Taliban's power.

The female learners are from all walks of life – from students and mothers, to politicians and doctors. As they climb in behind the wheel they tell their stories of life under Taliban rule. Whilst some managed to flee to Pakistan, those who remained were often beaten for minor infractions of the strict laws. But despite this, all have hopes and dreams for the new Afghanistan.

Their instructors are male, ex-Taliban fighters and aren't happy with women drivers but in spite of this the school has over 200 female graduates. Most admit that whilst the state may now allow female drivers they wouldn't allow their wives or daughters to learn to drive. And some of the families of the female students feel ashamed and refuse to let their daughters appear on television.

Meanwhile, tension is mounting with the approach of the elections.

Sean Langan's previous work includes the celebrated film for BBC Four *Mission Accomplished: Langan in Iraq* and the BBC Two series *Langan Behind The Lines*.

A BBC production

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