

## **Rachel Jupp**

### **Editor, BBC Panorama**

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**Welcome to Media Masters, a series of one-to-one interviews with people at the top of the media game. Today I'm joined by Rachel Jupp, editor of BBC Panorama. Rachel joined Channel 4 News as producer in 2005, and became its head of home news seven years later. In 2013, she moved to the BBC as deputy editor of Newsnight, overseeing a number of high-profile stories, including the investigation into Kids Company. Appointed editor of Panorama in 2016, she was the second woman given the role in the show's 66-year history, and in her time running the programme, Rachel has overseen a diverse array of stories including Harvey Weinstein, Grenfell and Putin's Russia.**

**Rachel, thank you for joining me.**

Great to be here.

**So Rachel, Panorama is such a famous current affairs brand. It must be exciting to take the programme forward into this new era.**

Yes, it's an incredibly exciting programme to work on. You have an enormous amount of editorial freedom, and you have a brief, I suppose, on that programme, to think about the biggest and the most ambitious stories in journalism that you want to tackle, and the freedom to do so. I am so aware of the 65 years' worth of history that sits behind our programme, and for me, it's about maintaining the legacy. For me, the legacy is about trust really, and finding out the truth in the stories that have been really important for all of those 65 years. I genuinely believe Panorama is a really important institution for this country.

**Well, it is.**

I think it holds power to account, and takes on the really difficult, difficult subjects, but in the future it's also, for me, about thinking about how we use some of those values that have always sat at the heart of Panorama. Most importantly, the truth and integrity of the programme and thinking about how they work for now, and some of that is about looking at different types of stories. What are the investigations that we

can do that are relevant to young people? And some of it is about working out what Panorama means outside of just BBC1, which is digital or iPlayer. So there are some really exciting things happening on the programme, both in terms of the stories that we tackle and how we get the programme to resonate with a younger generation.

**Do you feel quite a sense of heavy responsibility in a sense given its history, given the power of it? It's one of the most important mainstream investigative journalism brands.**

Yes, and when I got the job actually, one of my friends said to me that it's a bit like an office of state.

**Don't cock it up.**

It does feel like that. It is a big responsibility, and it's easy to just put out a programme each week. The challenge is to do really difficult, really ambitious journalism, and still always get it right, if you see what I mean. So that's the challenge of Panorama, is to keep growing, to keep challenging yourself, keep doing more difficult subjects, and tackle difficult things. So yes, I take that responsibility really seriously. When you sit in this, the sort of editor's chair, one of the things I didn't realise before I got the job, is programmes at Panorama often have what I call a really long tail. So there are court cases that are going on about programmes that were done three or four years ago, and so the impact a programme can make can last a really, really long time, and way beyond just who watches it that week. You know, we recently had a serious case review on an undercover that we'd done in a G4S young offenders' institute.

**I remember the programme well.**

And yes, and it was only last week that 11 agencies were found to have made serious failings. So you kind of manage all of that as well as just the programme. And I also get like an enormous amount, it sounds ridiculous, but I get an enormous amount of archive requests as like, "Can we use this? Can we use that?" And you realise that actually Panorama is... it's not quite the first version of history, because we don't tend to do things really, really quickly, but it often is telling a very important part of our country's history, I think.

**And without any disrespect to say, The Graham Norton Show, which I love as well, it's an entertainment programme, but you're dealing with people that don't want to be featured. So you've got all of the safety of your undercover, all of that tension, dealing with lawyers, the pressure to get it right. Whereas, as I say, on Graham Norton, even though it's a very enjoyable show, it is effectively a Hollywood celebrity coming in and doing something they want to do, talk about their latest film. There must be an inherent tension and stress in what you're doing to get it right.**

Well, yes. As I say, the reputation is really important, and legally these things can be really, really fraught. When I used to work at Channel 4 News or at Newsnight, you'd phone up and say, "Do you want to come on the programme?" People would think

about it. Now, when you're at Panorama, you phone and say, "We're making a Panorama about you," people react rather differently, I think it'd be fair to say!

**I think if you were going to make a Panorama programme about me, I'd just absolutely, yes, I'd think, "Wow."**

Yes, but I suppose the first thing I'd say is I've got a really brilliant team, and particularly around undercover. I have really, really fantastic colleagues who handle the most difficult investigations, and they do it with the most extraordinary professionalism – and that will sometimes go all the way through to court cases. So obviously, it's the team that makes the programmes really. We have a lot of support from our lawyers. It's very important for Panorama to get it right.

**And yet you're intruding into the lives of lawbreakers, bullies, nasty people, violent people. There must be an inherent stressful situation there.**

I think investigative journalism is, by its nature, difficult – and that can mean different things for different stories, and genuinely there isn't an easy Panorama. Either you're trying to do something very, very quickly, but you're always trying to add something that's different from the news. Or you're doing social affairs for example, which involves access, but you've got enormous duty of care issues there. Or you're trying to do a very ambitious investigation, and lawyers now are used a lot, I think, to try and sort of challenge the programme.

**Put you off.**

Yes. And then at the sort of further spectrum, when you're dealing with criminals, there are safety issues as well. I think the climate for investigative journalism is getting more difficult actually, for all of those reasons. But that's why I think Panorama is so important, and sitting within the BBC as we do is so important, genuinely impartial and independent, and it means that we can pursue those stories without fear or favour. But for the teams involved, managing that stress is an important part of what we do.

**And how do you do that? I mean, what are the techniques?**

Talking about it within the team, I think we learn a lot from each other. We try and encourage a system where people can learn from each other's mistakes, and there are occasionally missteps because you're often taking on a subject for the first time. When you're making a programme, you can spend weeks just developing it to get to the point that you decide to make it, and then weeks making it, and then weeks dealing with it afterwards. So I think, wherever possible, working collaboratively is an important part of that, and also the nature of the programme is you balance, we balance different types of programmes over a year. So you try and space your biggest and most ambitious investigations out, and have different types of programmes in between which are, and you think a lot about the teams that are working on each programme and how you can get them a good range of stories over the course of the year.

**And obviously I wouldn't expect you to breach any confidences, or anything that's confidential, of course, but how do you get the inspiration for programmes? How does it come to you? Do you have people that come to you saying, "You should look into this, this funeral parlour's clearly robbing from graves," And you think, "Right, we'll look into that." But obviously you don't know whether that person's a vexatious person who's making it up. Or do you walk around the supermarket and you look at brands and you think, "I think they're up to no good." How does it actually work in terms of the inspiration for individual programmes?**

So sometimes people write into Panorama or give us a call with an idea for a story, and we'll start that conversation. It's very important for us obviously to always maintain really high editorial standards, but that could be the beginning of that process.

**It plants the seed of some wrongdoing, potentially.**

Yes, exactly. We don't have in-house reporters any more on Panorama, but I do get a lot of pitches from freelance reporters, or from reporters who work across BBC News, who will say, "You know what, I covered this story yesterday and I really think there's something more in it. If you could let me go and find out..." and often that works. A lot of stuff comes from stories that are being covered elsewhere, and I just think, "Actually there's more to that than just a three-minute news piece. There's something bigger going on." Or sometimes I feel that there's an interesting story that's not being covered by the news, because something happened today, and so we're going to tell you about it. So, for example, we recently did a programme about takeaways, because I think that the takeaway market has just totally changed, and it's a really, really interesting example of how technology has changed something we all do every day, eat our dinner. But nobody had really looked into it because it's not the kind of thing that's naturally covered by the news, even though it reflects how we live our lives. So we did an investigation into some of the biggest players in the takeaway market, but that's not the sort of story you'd normally see. So some of it is about trying to predict trends and think about where society is moving to as well.

**But it's also going some way to fulfil the BBC's remit about distinctiveness, because you can do investigative pieces to newspaper ownership, and all of these great and important things that need to be looked into, but on the other hand, normal regular viewers eat takeaways. They're going to be more interested in that because it's more relevant to their day-to-day lives.**

Yes, and I think that being on BBC1 is something I think a lot about for Panorama, because we want to tackle big mainstream subjects. We really need to be part of the kind of national conversation on BBC1. So you want to take stories that are relevant to people's lives. And some of that is also about how you tell stories, and sometimes you can tap people on the shoulder and say, "This is a story you really should know about," but often you want to also reflect people's own experiences and say, "We're going to have a look into that. We're going to do some journalism. We're going to tell you something you didn't know about that subject and we're going to tell you in a way that's really engaging," I hope. So there's a kind of, we're on nearly every week

of the year. So within that, there's always going to be a mix of investigation, social affairs, consumer, international current affairs as well, and I hope that across the year, and across the range of programmes, it gives a sort of a bit of a pick and mix something for everybody, but it also tells a kind of national story, I suppose.

**And investigative journalism by its very nature is investigative. If you get a sniff of some potential wrongdoing, how often do you look into it and then you think, "Well, actually there isn't any wrongdoing"? If you could have 10 ideas for a programme, how many of them come to air overall?**

Probably about one, somewhere between none and one.

**Right, so that's a pretty high success rate rather than a figure though, isn't it?**

I don't know.

**And what are the reasons then, again without going into any specific details?**

Well, the most important question you always have to ask is, is it true? And you have to look at that and interrogate, whatever the story is, for a whole number of ways – and you have to be really careful not to bring any kind of biases you have to a story and not leap to, "Well, it sounds right, doesn't it?" Because there's a really high evidential bar, and we are always measured against the law in that way, and that's absolutely right that we are. So on investigation, you look at lots of different sides, but then there are other stories that you just think, "That's a great story," or an important story to tell, and to tell properly. So for example, we did a programme towards the end of last year about the poisonings in Salisbury, and we had that commissioned by BBC1 because they commission our hour-long programmes, which we make a number of through the course of the year. And we recognised it immediately as a story which was going to have ramifications, and there were definitely areas that we could work on, and more that could emerge. And I think those sorts of programmes, where you are telling a really difficult but important story, but with it there will be news. You are showing the audience for the first time or interviews or footage is a really important way of presenting journalism, I suppose.

**Do you have any kind of memorable programmes that you've made recently? I mean, I remember the, some incredible episodes like the one about the contaminated blood scandal and the faulty medical implants exposés. Do you have any kind of favourite stories over your tenure?**

So... the programmes that you invest the most time in are the big investigations.

**I mean, "favourite" is probably the wrong word, isn't it? It's most memorable, most impactful I suppose, for you personally.**

Yes. I mean, I kind of think success can mean different things in Panorama, but...

**Oh, that's a great question. What does success mean then? Please, carry on.**

Well, some of it is obviously about the audience that are watching it. Some of it is about how big the story is that you break and how much sort of impact that has. Some of it is about the kind of audience that you're reaching.

**Exposing wrongdoing.**

Exposing wrongdoing.

**Holding wrongdoers to account.**

Yes, yes, exactly.

**I love it when you kind of, you have a programme, and there's clearly a set of wrong 'uns, and then you've got them bang to rights at the end. It's great, and you think, "Well, they can't get out of that." Plus, they've said it on air, so it's obviously been lawyered, so it's obviously true. That's what I think as a viewer. I think if they've said it, it's almost certainly true. I'd bet my life on it.**

So I suppose I think there's four programmes that stand out, I suppose. All our programmes are really good, genuinely I think that, but in terms of our sort of biggest stories, one was about an undercover in an immigration detention centre called Brook House.

**I remember watching it. It was horrendous, in a good way. You know, in an impactful way.**

I was on maternity leave when that actually went out, and the brilliant team behind it did an amazing job. But taking you into a place you would never otherwise see, and holding power to account in the most sort of stark and clearest way...

**It was just hidden camera footage.**

Yes. Hidden camera footage of this is what it really looks like, and it was really, really shocking.

**It didn't need any narration.**

It had a huge impact. It's very difficult to pull those things off.

**You watched it as the viewer and think, how can we treat other human beings this way? I mean, it was that profound.**

Yes. Yes. I'm very, incredibly proud of the team that worked on that. The Paradise Papers, a very different type of investigation. And also, one of those subjects, which isn't an easy sell for the audience, actually. Do you know how many businesses are offshore and aren't paying tax any more in this country? And do you know what impact that has on our public services, as a question?

**Yes, frontline workers having to pay more tax, for one.**

So, it's a really, really difficult story to get over the line, a really important one.

**Because again, even with the might of the BBC's lawyers, by virtue of the fact they're in the Paradise Papers, they can afford bigger lawyers than you've got.**

Yes, but we've got fantastic lawyers, who I'm lucky enough to spend a lot of time with. And then, a very, very different sort of tonally, but a programme that we did last year called Murder on the Streets, which was a story about a young boy, Rhyhiem Barton, who was killed in South London last Summer. And we were privileged enough to be allowed to follow his friends and his family and spend some time with them in the wake of his murder. And it was just, you know, obviously one boy's story, that I think tells a bigger national picture, and I think there's a really important role for Panorama there just looking at some subjects in depth, rather than everything having to be quick. Twitter-style news. And then the last one, which again is really different, but last year we broadcast a programme, a Panorama that was made in 1979 about Jeremy Thorpe, and as a sort of example of a fantastic Panorama where power was held to account, on a programme that could never have been broadcast before. I just thought it was a great example of how relevant the legacy of the programme is.

**Do you have a formula, or a kind of ratio in mind of a whole year's worth of Panoramas in terms of what you might cover? We had Steve Crabtree in the chair last year and he's the BBC's editor of Horizon's science strand, and he said he would want a quarter of the year to be about physics and science, the rest of it might be about health and then something to do with space. And he kind of... he knows what a year of programmes will look like overall, and he wants to make sure that nothing falls through the cracks. Do you have that in terms of like one might be social affairs, or might be politics? You know, you have to touch Brexit. One might be a mad axeman on the loose that the police haven't caught.**

Well, there's a balance there because, when you're doing a weekly programme there needs to be some planning, I think it's fair to say. There's a certain number that you need to plan ahead. But you also need to stay really relevant and sort of reactive. And you want to tell the stories that matter to people's lives. And you never quite know what they're going to be. And you are dealing with very different types of programmes. So we had a programme about Brexit with Adrian Chiles, and we made that in three weeks.

**I watched that. Was it shot in his flat? It seemed to be...**

Some of it.

**Thought it was. Yes. Thought it was.**

Some of it.

**It seemed quite an authentic flat actually rather than a recreation of one. That was one of the things visually that I remember from the programme.**

So that's actually a very sort of quick programme to make and there are... like Grenfell, we did a week after Grenfell, we made a programme. Others take years. That's not an exaggeration. They can take years. So you have to get the sort of balance of that. There are some quite practical things in there as well. But broadly about a quarter of our programmes are social affairs, about a quarter should be consumer, they should mainly all be about this country, I think. We tend to have four or five foreign films over the course of a year. And you can't do investigations every week, but I have a rule that if anybody brings me a good story, I'll always try and do it. Because ultimately, that's what we're there for. We're there for journalism, and we're there to break stories.

**One of the amazing things about the BBC's journalism and its commitment to truth is whenever the BBC itself is under fire and is in trouble over various things – I'm thinking of Hutton and all of these – I trust the BBC's coverage of its own problems more than actually other broadcasters. I know Panorama's had to cover some tricky issues within the BBC. How do you manage the Chinese walls? Are you currently investigating Tony Hall, is my real question?**

I never comment on ongoing investigations! I suppose my starting point is that Panorama needs to investigate without fear or favour.

**I mean, that's incredible as well, isn't it?**

Yes.

**That even your own bosses, if they need investigation, will be investigated.**

Yes. And you know there's a recognition that that is at the heart of Panorama's integrity. And if we didn't do that, then there would be some really important questions about the programme I think. So you sometimes have to tackle difficult subjects. And actually, I did do a programme last year about the gender pay gap at the BBC. And in terms of Chinese walls, it was actually really straightforward. I didn't find it that bit of it difficult. I talked to my bosses in current affairs, and that was it. And a corporate bit of the BBC dealt with the response to our programme. So actually it was... I think there's a recognition across the BBC, that we will investigate the BBC occasionally, and it's an important part of the programme.

**I had Torin Douglas on many years ago. He was then the BBC's media correspondent and he said that when he was covering BBC issues, he would just go straight to the BBC press office, just like any other press office.**

Yes.

**And sometimes he'd get fobbed off.**

Yes. Yes. You put in the right to reply, as you would put in a right to reply to anybody else that you're investigating, and see what the response is that you get back.

**Other than managing the day-to-day programme flow, where do you want to take the programme more generally in the medium to long term. What will Panorama look like four or five years from now?**

Well, I try to approach that in a similar way to I approach the subject about what should we be doing next week and next year. So I think, broadly, you want to make a programme that is relevant to people's lives and has at its heart, investigative skills, investigative journalism, telling people new things. I've already talked about... we've done a programme about takeaways. We've got a programme about social media influencers. We did a programme last year, Addicted to my Smartphone. We're living through a moment where technology is changing our lives, and there are some parts of regulation that are struggling to keep up with that. And I think that's emerged over the last two or three years as quite a strong theme. And so I hope that we will always continue to recognise that our society is changing, the way we live our lives is changing, and Panorama will stay relevant to that. But beyond that, I suppose it's always about taking on the biggest targets, identifying the stories that I think really matter to our audience, and finding out the truth about them. And how we deliver that programme, I suppose and that journalism to people, is changing already. You know, we live outside of our 8:30pm BBC1 slot, we've got a really big social media presence, we're on iPlayer, we're on YouTube. So I think taking our journalism and our material to where our audiences go is really important, but I think the values that have been central to Panorama for the last 65 years will continue to be relevant, because we're holding power to account. And I hope that we are always finding out truth about the stories that matter to people. Those stories will change over time I'm sure, but as long as Panorama is reactive and responsive, then I think it will stay relevant.

**Because the values stay the same.**

Because the values stay the same. Exactly. And I think that there's the shift to how we're all consuming TV differently and watching things online. There's still a lot of value in, "I'm going to tell you the truth. I'm going to tell you what really happened with this story or that story." Or, "I'm going to tell you something you've never heard before and it's going to blow your mind." The storytelling might change, but not the values that sit behind it.

**It's quite a thrilling form of journalism actually.**

Yes. I mean, it really is. It's really exciting, and it's a real privilege to just be able to focus on those areas.

**Do you have like a procedure where, if something huge happens, like Grenfell, where you go to it that the BBC1 controller and say, "I need you to clear an hour of the schedule on Wednesday to run this big ad-hoc programme," how**

**does that work? Or do they come to you and say, “You need to do something on Grenfell, and you’ve got three days to put a programme together”?**

We’ve got a brilliant relationship with BBC1 and they’re very supportive of Panorama, and I think BBC1 wants to be, and is, a channel that is reactive and reflects what’s happening in the country. So there is always an expectation that if there is a very big news event, the Manchester terror attacks, the Westminster terror attacks, the fire at Grenfell, also the general election... that was all within a short period of time, we would be in a position to cover them, and provide the audiences with more depth than they’re just getting from the news. And we know that people really come and watch those programmes. They really engage with it, and they really want more information about whatever important news event is happening. So it tends to be a conversation. But they’re always open to ideas and discussion around the stories that we think matter, and scheduling and slots is all part of that conversation.

**I mean, clearly the schedule is commitment to Panorama now feels secure, but there was a period of time where it was bounding around the schedules quite a bit. Was that a period where it was kind of unloved by BBC management? Or that’s how it felt as a viewer.**

I feel that Panorama’s got an important place on BBC1 now, and we have a really great slot on Monday night. So my experience of that I suppose has been, Panorama sits somewhere between, usually current affairs on television and it’s an interesting space. But my experience with that has always been that the work that we have done has been supported and promoted by news, and by BBC1.

**And investigative journalism by its very nature is going to be a hard slog, it’s going to be expensive, you know given – and I’m paraphrasing W1A here – but the kind of ‘more for less’ type thing, it is something that could suffer under future cuts.**

Yes. The hit rate that we were talking about before is indicative of the fact that you will probably end up having a lot more misses than hits on investigations. And you never know at the beginning of one, where it’s going to end. And if it’s even going to end in a programme. And it can be difficult to juggle that, which is why we make different types of programmes, not just big investigations. I think that Panorama’s had to keep up with the way that the industry’s changed and I think we work really efficiently within that. So we use producers that can shoot more now and there are lots of different changes we’ve made to make sure that we’re a really efficient programme. But we will always prioritise the big stories and the most ambitious investigations, because that’s what we’re there for. That’s our job at the end of the day.

**Is there something that a viewer would see that’s changed in Panorama that’s been a result of you taking on the editorship? For example, for me as a viewer, there seems to be a more diverse range of onscreen reporters, that I would say is one of your personal achievements as editor.**

One of my priorities, when I came to Panorama was to bring a range of reporters and presenters. I think that reporters are a really important part of the programme actually helping tell the story of the journalism. So for example, we've used Tina Daheley to do the takeaways programme, we've used Ben Zand, we've used Catrin Nye. But of course it's also important to work with the reporters who've been associated with Panorama for a longer time like John Sweeney and Jane Corbin. So I'd say that's one part of it. I'd say I think I have slightly shifted the subject matter a bit. Having a background in news means I'm really motivated by wanting to generate new stories. And feeling like we're telling the audience something new, where I feel we can, is an important part of the programme to me.

**Do you think of how the programme's going to go out visually when you're in the concept stage of planning an episode, as it were? Are there certain subjects that are just physically difficult to put to air in terms of television, because they might be predominantly text-based and hundreds of documents? Is that where you have to get the creativity flowing, how to get it to a television screen?**

Yes. I think that storytelling in journalism is really difficult, if I'm honest. And when you get something like the Paradise Papers and you have a huge data dump, the first stage is always, stand behind the journalism. And then, how are we going to put this together and tell this story, is a real challenge. And I think that as documentaries have got better and better, and as there's more competition for people's time, as we know, that challenge has come into sharp relief for current affairs, I would say. And I think we have a rising to the challenge of that. And sometimes that's about finding really great characters and using them to help you tell a story. And sometimes it's about feeling like you're really on that journey with that journalist. But each programme brings its own challenges, I suppose. I would never not do a story because it's difficult television.

**You agree to do it in your mind. You decide to do it and then you think, "Right, now we're doing it, how do we visualise it?"**

Yes. I mean, usually those two processes go alongside each other. But you can't sort of set the bar at, "We can't do that really important piece of journalism because I'm not sure how good it's going to look on telly." It's usually the journalism that comes first and then you think about the storytelling after that.

**Because if you think about the Panama Papers, it's an incredibly important subject. But it essentially, if I was producing it now, what are the visuals, a USB drive? Some bloke thumbing through a dossier of papers? A lady looking at a screen scrolling through? So, I think it's not exactly exciting. And a few shots of Belize beaches, of course. But other than that, what else could you do?**

Yes, yes. And actually it's interesting because there's so many stories associated with technology now and they all suffer from a similar challenge. And yes, similarly you're trying to think about social media and actually just shots of people watching

phones, they can't last that long. So yes, I think that's one of the challenges that we're facing.

**If we can, let's walk through your career and start at the beginning. What did you study at university? Did you always want to be a journalist? Was it television journalism that you wanted to do? Did you always wanted to be an editor? How ambitious were you?**

I've always been really, really interested in the news, and I've always really, really loved watching television. And I think you have to really love watching television to work in it.

**I'm still a news junkie now!**

Yes. So, I think that being a news junkie was my starting point, because it didn't feel like work, just reading the papers or watching the evening news. And even as a teenager I used to just watch an enormous amount of news every night, without thinking that much about what that meant I wanted to do. I studied politics, and worked in politics actually, briefly, but then decided to go and study in America. And I studied journalism and politics there, and that coincided with a presidential election. And that's really where I got my break because I went to work for ITN as kind of intern and that's how I started at Channel 4 News then as well. I never set out to be an editor. I've always just tried to do whatever job I am doing at that time as well as I could.

**Sometimes the best plan is to not actually have a plan.**

Yes! And I learned a huge amount at Channel 4 News. I started as an intern there, and then became a producer. I was a producer for many years there.

**It's a great programme.**

Yes, it's a brilliant programme.

**It could almost be on the BBC, it's that good. It's great, it's public service journalism with a couple of quick advert breaks in the middle.**

Yes, and a great, really fantastic team. And I learned a huge amount from people like Jon Snow and Krishnan, and just really, really enjoyed it, and I really enjoyed the kind of creativity of putting TV and live TV together, and took that obviously with me to Newsnight. And when I was at Newsnight I did do a certain amount of investigations there. But Panorama is really a kind of next level in terms of investigative journalism, partly because it's so pure when you're at somewhere like Newsnight or Channel 4, you have a mix of sort of reportage, what's happened that day.

**Stuff.**

Some arts, some culture. And whereas at Panorama, you're really focused on breaking a story, and that's an enormous challenge and an amazing privilege.

### **What was Newsnight like?**

Late! It was on late, so it was quite tiring.

### **So, you have to literally take it to air and then you only went home after you came off air.**

Yes, and I thought, "Oh, well it finishes about half eleven, so that's okay. That's not too late." But that's surprisingly difficult to switch off after you been making live TV.

### **Because you've got all the adrenaline flowing around.**

All the adrenaline. So it was really, I really enjoyed working on Newsnight. It's a brilliant format where you do three or four subjects over 40 minutes and you really have the depth, and daily news can't do that in the same way. And just so much happened while I was there. General elections and referendums, and it was an incredibly busy time politically.

### **Jeremy Paxman was the main presenter at this point, wasn't he?**

Yes, Jeremy was there when I arrived.

### **He's a legend.**

And yes, he's absolutely brilliant and brought a sort of forensic analysis to whatever subject or interview we did. And I learned a huge amount from him. He was great, so yes.

### **He was always respectful of his interviewees, but there was always what I would consider to be a healthy amount of cynicism. He wasn't there to ridicule or humiliate them, but he would say, "Come on, Minister!" I think that's healthy.**

Yes, I think he would hold people to account, definitely. And I've actually, Jeremy's made a couple of Panoramas as well for me since Newsnight. And he brings an argument, and he brings a sort of strength of character to whatever story it is he's covering, which is incredibly impressive.

### **I mean, you're in the editor's chair at the moment on Panorama, but there will be a time when your successor is appointed. What advice would you give to someone who aspires to be the next editor of Panorama? What qualities do they need to kind of succeed in the chair?**

The reality is, in Panorama I am just one of a really brilliant team, and supporting that team and guiding that team is a huge part of the job, actually. I think that you need to

be quite clear-sighted about what you want to achieve and try and carve out the subjects that are important to you, and hit the biggest stories. A certain amount when you're sitting in the chair it comes to you, you see what I mean? And it's about how you respond and how you deal with that.

### **Stuff happens.**

Stuff happens, and a certain amount you drive. And I suppose depending on who you are is the sort of, is the balance of that.

### **What are the stressful aspects of the job? I mean really, is it that bad?**

It's difficult, because you...

**Because there's good stress and there's bad stress, isn't there? I think my job has both. There's certain stressful things about my job that I actually enjoy, even in the moment. That gets the adrenaline going. Then there's other things where you're actually worried about things or you're trying to reconcile conflicting priorities. It's difficult.**

Yes, that's a good way of characterising it, of good stress and bad stress. The kind of big picture stress is just doing the right thing by this programme. By Panorama. I think it's a really sort of vital programme.

### **You don't want to be the editor that cocks the job up.**

You are looking after a legacy of 65 years, and I think about the people that have sort of grafted, the lawyers, the hours of meetings. And over that time to get it right and to earn our reputation. Every programme is hard fought on some level. And so, the sort of big picture stresses you want to maintain the importance and the pride in that programme. The sort of low level stress is, aside from getting it right week in, week out, the low level stresses, always thinking about what the audience are going to want to watch, what they're going to be interested in. Have you got the right mix of programmes? But usually I would characterise it as good stress, big decisions.

**You've got to get the judgement right as well. I mean, and that's another thing. It's almost an existential issue, and you could write a PhD on this, but how do you continue to innovate, and therefore take real risks, without obviously getting it wrong?**

Well, I suppose there's different types of risk-taking within Panorama. You do not take risks on facts. You do not broadcast hunches.

### **I would. That's why I'd only last about three weeks in the job.**

There's just, the team bring just an incredibly impressive rigour. They really do. Every line of the scripts, everything is carefully thought about and analysed. We get a lot of support from lawyers and we get a lot of support from this department within

the BBC that's called editorial policy. And just having those complicated editorial conversations about what can you say, what can't you say, what's balance, what's independence, what's straying over the line? Where does our duty of care begin and end? All of those are areas where you don't want to take any risks. The kind of interesting risks, or the innovations, I'd say, are more around the subjects that you take on. So taking on subjects that are relevant to young people's lives, for example, like social media influencers or smartphone addiction. So that's where I think you can begin to find out where your audience is and what they're interested in. And the other risks are how programmes get to people. So saying we're going to really invest heavily in what we're doing with Facebook or what we're doing on YouTube. Those are sort of interesting areas to take risks around, but like truth and facts, there's no risk-taking.

**And is that how it works? Like some people don't want to watch the whole half an hour on BBC1, but they will watch the kind of six-minute summary of it on YouTube.**

Yes, we do.

**I'd rather have that six-minute attention than not at all.**

Yes. Yes. For me, it's just people will come to Panorama and they'll hear about Panorama in lots of different ways. And we have an enormous amount of brand recognition. But some people might have just heard about something we'd done on the news, or some people might have just seen the video that we put out on Facebook. And that's fine. I think it's about reaching people in whatever platforms they're using.

**What about the risks to life and limb? If you're doing a long term, deep undercover investigation at a detention centre, for example, I'm sure you'd have a willing reporter that wants to do it. But on the other hand, they could get stabbed in a prison fight. I mean, you've got to expose the wrongdoing and cover the story, but on the other hand, you can't mitigate the risk completely. Ultimately there's going to be some danger there.**

We think a huge amount about that, and how to support the journalists that we work with, and in some cases the subjects of our investigations. And it's always a balance. Really what we want to do at Panorama is expose sort of systemic and institutional wrongdoing. And that there's always a balance there then with how long you stay on an undercover investigation, or when you approach the subject of your investigation. But we are extremely proud of our record, I think I would say. And I don't want to talk about ongoing investigations obviously, but we're extremely proud of all of our record in terms of safety and in terms of duty of care. And one of the things that's extraordinary about Panorama, and the people who work on Panorama, is how long those relationships last. You stay in touch with the people that you have worked with, people who've appeared on our programmes, often for years. So those relationships are real, and the impact of those programmes are real. And similarly, it can last for years. You can have court cases, government reviews. And it's an important part of the responsibility of our programme I think, to stay across all of that.

**If you were investigating me, I think one of the things I'd want to do is offer you a lot of cash in a brown envelope. Have you ever investigated a dodgy market trader who said, "Come on love, here's £500, go away." Have there been any interesting sort of attempts to bribe you beyond the standard lawyer's letter?**

Not that I'd admit that, to taking a bribe! I've done my BBC anti-bribery course, of course. No, I haven't actually. It's not to say that there aren't attempts to influence.

**To improperly influence.**

To just, yes, improperly influence, or influence in any way a programme. But, that's the easy stuff, if I'm honest. Like when somebody makes an effort to influence the programme you're going to make, that's quite clear. You're independent. Of course you're not going to be influenced by them. But you only get to that point once you've got a lot of evidence, I suppose.

**Rachel, it's been a hugely interesting conversation. I've been looking forward to having you on the podcast for so long, I'm a massive fan of Panorama. Please keep up the great work and thank you for your time.**

Thanks so much for having me.