



**CHANNEL 4: 40 YEARS OF REVOLUTION**

# Out and Proud

These screenings will be introduced by original Channel 4 Commissioner Caroline Spry

Channel 4's groundbreaking commissioning of programmes catering to the interests of gay men and lesbians was a significant part of the revolution that took place within British television in the 1980s and early 90s. Programmes made for this audience appeared in the schedule very soon after the Channel went on air in November 1982. They caused considerable controversy, particularly within tabloid newspapers and on government benches. In December 1982 Conservative MP John Carlisle demanded that the Independent Broadcasting Authority, which regulated Channel 4, tell Channel 4 to 'clean up or get out' in a Commons debate largely initiated by an as yet to be broadcast late night gay and lesbian entertainment programme, *One in Five*.

This broadcast was followed within a couple of weeks by the transmission of Melanie Chait's *Veronica 4 Rose* in *The Eleventh Hour* and over the next few years sporadic gay and lesbian programming was commissioned across documentary, light entertainment and film genres. In the mid 80s the calls from gay men and lesbians for access to the airwaves were becoming increasingly vocal. The demands were for more positive representation across the broad span of the schedule, and also specific gay slots. High profile campaigns targeted all four national broadcasters.

After prolonged discussion and scheduling of seasons of programmes without specific gay and lesbian labelling the magazine series *Out on Tuesday* was launched on Channel 4 in February 1989. Made largely by lesbian and gay production teams and addressing a lesbian and gay audience, the series broke the mould of interest-based programming and attracted significant and wide-ranging audiences. *The Listener* magazine described it as '...compulsive viewing... probably the most stylish programme currently on British television.'

The series ran from 1989 to 1994, changing its title to *OUT* in 1991. Over that period it covered a diversity of subjects including then controversial stories such as gays in Nazi Germany; gay club drug culture; lesbian mothers; and the sometimes antagonistic relationship between gay men and lesbians. It ranged across international stories, experimental formats, debates and just plain gay trivia. Many of the stories were being aired on TV for the first time.

## **Veronica 4 Rose (1982)**

Transmitted on Channel 4 on 17 January 1983

Director Melanie Chait filmed a group of young lesbians from Newcastle, Liverpool and London over a period of two years. In a collaborative approach to documentary, Chait taped interviews with the women, aged 16-23, and then worked with them to produce scripts which they then perform on screen. They talk confidently about being lesbian in a heterosexist society.

In 1982 the newly launched Channel Four commissioned the completion of the film, which was transmitted in the Independent Film & Video Department's *Eleventh Hour* slot.

It was the first UK TV documentary focussing on young lesbians and filmed by an all women, and largely lesbian, production team. The participants share their experiences and discuss the difficulties they face. These include a lack of positive

images and in particular the negative reaction of family and friends. They are constantly told that their feelings are 'a passing phase'. As one participant says, *'If you can go out with boys at 14 and that's OK, why can't you go out with someone of your own sex without it being "a crush?"'*

Interwoven with the explorations of being young and lesbian is a celebration of the importance of music and fashion in their lives. Newcastle band Friggin Little Bits is featured performing at the feminist magazine *Spare Rib's* 10th Anniversary celebration. The sound assistant on film, Elaine Drainville, was one of the band members. She describes her experience of working collaboratively with Melanie Chait to develop the stories that would be told, this involved 'representation of northern, working class lesbians; anonymity for lesbians not out to their family; and ways to represent individual as well as group diverse opinions and experiences.'

## **Out on Tuesday – Series 1 Episode 7**

Transmitted on Channel 4 on 28 March 1989

*Out on Tuesday* was a magazine style series, introduced each week by a celebrity presenter. This was a challenging approach at a time when very few celebrities, in particular lesbians, were openly gay. Presenters across the first series included Ian McKellen, Richard Coles, Beatrix Campbell and Audre Lorde. The presenter for episode 7 was Club DJ, Ritu.

The episode features three items, starting with *Lust and Liberation* directed by Clare Beavan, who was also the series producer alongside Susan Ardill. Feminists who were part of the lesbian liberation of the 70's and younger women, some of whom describe themselves as gay rather than lesbian, discuss sex and politics.

The second item, *Empire of the Senses*, directed by Karen Alexander, explores inter-racial lesbian and gay relationships; asking how the history of colonialism and white superiority impacts on relationships in which both partners understand their oppression as same sex attracted people but have different cultural experiences and understandings.

The final item is *After Stonewall* directed by Frances Dickenson. 1989 marked the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the origin of the modern gay movement – the riots against police raids at a bar in New York's Greenwich Village. The item examines the context of that event – the rise of Gay Liberation in the early 70s; the communes; bearded nuns and surprise sit-ins or 'zaps' of that decade. The realisation that gay men and lesbians are not a homogenous community but have very different experiences and interests emerged – feminism, political parties, disco parties, the 'Pink Pound' and the New Realism claimed their adherents. In considering how gays can best pursue their political interests, the item contrasts US-style political lobbying, the 'positive policies' of UK Labour councils, and the rise in direct action against AIDS apathy in America and Clause 28 in Britain.

Featured are the gay male nuns who crashed the Festival of Light, the Labour peer who escorted lesbian protestors into the House of Lords to abseil into history, the American founders of ACT UP (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power), gay Tory and ex-MP Matthew Parris, and beleaguered newscaster Sue Lawley. Also, how the BBC's security staff were trained to recognise 'spikey haired lesbians', the real meaning of 'affinity group', and how to hide several feet of clothesline in your 501s.

**Caroline Spry**

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**VERONICA 4 ROSE**

*Director:* Melanie Chait  
*Production Company:* Lusia Films  
*For:* Channel Four  
*Producer:* Melanie Chait  
*Production Manager:* Sue Clayton  
*Production Assistant:* Clare Beavan  
*Researcher:* Melanie Chait  
*Assistant Director:* Mandy Rose  
*Photography:* Belinda Parsons  
*Additional Camera:* Felicity Oppé, Caroline Laidler  
*Assistant Photographer:* Caroline Spry  
*Stills:* Sally McLeay, Melanie Aldridge  
*Editor:* Ellin Hare  
*Additional Music:* Lindsay Cooper  
*Live Music Performed by:* Mistakes, Friggin Little Bits  
*Sound:* Diana Ruston  
*Assistant Sound:* Elaine Drainville  
*With:*  
Barbara Schulz, Linda Gardener, Judith Jones, Rose Finley, Rebecca North, Michele Golaz, Lesley Nicholson, Ange Walters, Angi Friday, Fingers Ferguson, Julia Defferary, Michele Saunders, Paula Frampton, Veronica Wilson, Rose Hickman

C4 tx 17.1.1983  
50 mins

**OUT ON TUESDAY: AFTER STONEWALL,  
EMPIRE OF THE SENSES, LUST AND LIBERATION**

*Series Director:* Phil Woodward  
*Director (Lust and Liberation):* Clare Beavan  
*Director (Empire of the Senses):* Karen Alexander  
*Director (After Stonewall):* Frances Dickenson  
*Production Company:* Abseil  
*In Association with:* Fulcrum Productions  
*For:* Channel Four  
*C4 Independent Programmes Assistant Commissioning Editor:*  
Caroline Spry  
*Series Editor:* Mandy Merck  
*Series Producers:* Susan Ardill, Clare Beavan

C4 tx 28.3.1989  
50 mins

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**CHANNEL 4: 40 YEARS OF REVOLUTION****Music & Youth: The Tube + Discussion & Q&A**

Fri 2 Sep 18:20

**Comedy: Discussion & Q&A****+ The Comic Strip Presents: Five Go Mad in Dorset**

Tue 6 Sep 18:15

**Channel 4's TV Drama Revolution: Discussion + Q&A**

Sun 11 Sep 14:15

**A Very British Coup + intro by author Chris Mullin**

Sun 11 Sep 16:30

**Diversity: Handsworth Songs + Q&A with  
John Akomfrah + Panel Discussion & Q&A**

Mon 12 Sep 18:15

**Out and Proud: Veronica 4 Rose****+ Out on Tuesday + intro by original****Channel 4 Commissioner Caroline Spry**

Thu 15 Sep 18:15

**Access / Direct Speech: The Work They Say Is Mine  
+ Women of the Rhondda + Face of Our Fear**

Tue 20 Sep 18:15

**Channel 4: The Television Revolution**

Fri 23 Sep 18:20

**Controversy: Jesus the Evidence + V + Mother Ireland**

Sat 24 Sep 18:00

**Who Needs Channel 4?**

Wed 28 Sep 18:20

**Channel 4 Then and Now conference**

Fri 23 Sep 10:00–17:00 and Sat 24 Sep 10:00–17:00

Regional screenings and events will be taking place at these venues across the UK (please go to [bfi.org.uk/whatson](http://bfi.org.uk/whatson) for links): Arnolfini, Bristol; Filmhouse Edinburgh; Queen's Film Theatre, Belfast; Y Drwm, National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth

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