

Five Top Tips for Tomorrow's Producers

dock10

by Karen Milligan, Creative Director

Karen Milligan, dock10 Creative Director, considers how TV has changed since she first visited the Edinburgh Television Festival.

I first came to the Edinburgh TV Festival in 1996 as a fresh-faced and eager 18-year old media student. I'd won a place on the Television and Young People scheme, now known as The Network, and was lucky enough to attend workshops led by Kate Adie, Jeremy Paxman, Davina McCall and a whole host of TV executives. The experience was designed to offer valuable insight into the industry: it worked a treat and I was hooked.

Since then, the technological side of the industry has changed beyond recognition. The topics that have dominated this week's debate, SVOD, Netflix and digital strategy, were undreamed of back in '96. These days we have to be creative in the way we reach our audiences as well as in the content we are producing. And yes, we now talk about making content rather than programmes because TV consumption now bypasses schedules and strict time slots. The way in which viewers binge watch vast quantities of content on streaming platforms and linear television channels creates a very exciting opportunity today and for future generations of producers.

This week I heard both Commissioners and film makers talk of changing technologies and platforms as "exciting developments" that are providing today's programme-makers with even more opportunities to unleash their creativity and tell their stories. What is reassuring is that while the platforms have changed, the mission to inform, educate and entertain - the traditional public service values I was taught as a media student - are as relevant today as ever.

This led me to reflect on my own experiences as I followed the relatively traditional path from production runner to producer and more recently creative director, and what advice I would pass on to the next generation of producers. With my fellow telly friends, we came up with the following:

PATIENCE:

In this fiercely competitive industry it can sometimes feel like a race to the top. But, there's no prize for being the youngest ever producer so, where possible, take your time. Seize every opportunity, commit 100%, master each role and make it your own. Long term

this will make you a far better producer and you'll have created some amazing career memories along the way.

BE A SPONGE:

Ask questions when there is something you don't understand, but even more importantly, listen and take it all in! The good (and bad!) experiences of working with senior TV colleagues will help establish the type of producer or future leader you aim to be.

YOU CAN DO ANYTHING, BUT YOU CAN'T DO EVERYTHING:

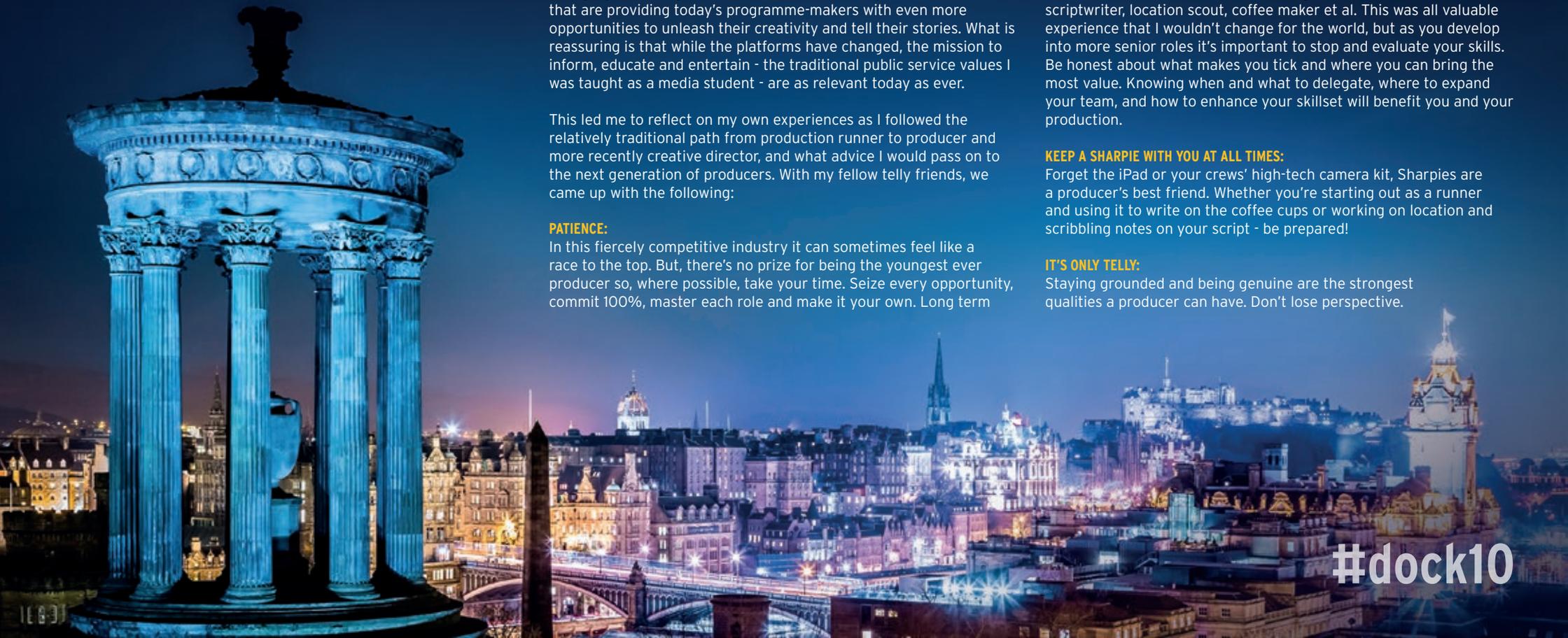
This has been a very important lesson for me! I'm from the TV generation that saw a boom in reality shows and ob-doc formats where we were trained as self-shooting AP, P/D, researcher, scriptwriter, location scout, coffee maker et al. This was all valuable experience that I wouldn't change for the world, but as you develop into more senior roles it's important to stop and evaluate your skills. Be honest about what makes you tick and where you can bring the most value. Knowing when and what to delegate, where to expand your team, and how to enhance your skillset will benefit you and your production.

KEEP A SHARPIE WITH YOU AT ALL TIMES:

Forget the iPad or your crews' high-tech camera kit, Sharpies are a producer's best friend. Whether you're starting out as a runner and using it to write on the coffee cups or working on location and scribbling notes on your script - be prepared!

IT'S ONLY TELLY:

Staying grounded and being genuine are the strongest qualities a producer can have. Don't lose perspective.



#dock10