

## YOUR SAY



### Sarah Mulvey's death is a huge loss to TV

As independent producers, we would like to express our great sadness at the untimely death of Channel 4 commissioning editor Sarah Mulvey.

Sarah was a talented commissioner and a delightful colleague, demanding of us but even more so of herself. She was curious, thoughtful and kind, and worked hard to help us all make the very best documentaries possible. Her death is a terrible tragedy for her family and friends, and a great loss to television. She will be missed. *Denman Rooke, Adam Bullmore – October Films; Dimitri Doganis, Lucy Willis, Benedict Gordon – Raw TV; Alex Fraser, Jim Sayer – Maverick TV; Alex Graham – Wall to Wall; Roger Graef – Films of Record; Brian Hill – Century Films; Patrick Holland – Ricochet*

### Lifting placement ban levels the playing field

Mark Murphy seems to have missed some of the key arguments when he says that the recent lift of the ban on product placement “puts UK indies at a significant disadvantage in the international

TV marketplace” (*Broadcast* letters, 19.2.10).

On the contrary, not allowing product placement puts us at a disadvantage internationally, because much of the world already has it in place. Allowing product placement is part of the Audiovisual Media Services (AVMS) Directive, which the vast majority of European countries have followed, along with a number of other countries in the world that allow it, such as Australia and the US.

Mr Murphy also states that this will not result in any extra revenue, yet research has shown that while traditional ad revenues have decreased over the years, TV sponsorship has increased, suggesting that having some integration with programmes is exactly what brands want.

Mr Murphy goes on to say that editorial independence by the producer is impossible to monitor. We disagree, and have a range of proposals we will be presenting to Ofcom that will do just that. But regardless of regulation, the most powerful check on product placement will be the viewer. If brands are too overt and distort the storyline, viewers will simply switch off. Ofcom research shows that audiences are quite happy with product placement as long as it's well managed. It will be.

Yes, Pact welcomes the introduction of product placement, because with the decline in production budgets and no other obvious means of stemming that, it is an opportunity to fill the gaps and thus maintain the high-quality telly we all enjoy. If Mr Murphy has some other ideas on how to do that then we'd love to hear from him. *John McVay, chief executive, Pact*

## TALKING POINT

Last week we asked:

### Is 3D the new HD?

**28%** said Yes **72%** said No

**This week we ask:** Should the BBC's size and scope review rein in TV as well as digital radio services?

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## IN MY VIEW

### Product placement: what UK can learn from the US

In-show advertising needn't be so blatant that it risks turning off viewers, says **Frank Zazza**



FRANK ZAZZA

As the CEO of iTVX, a firm that measures the exposure value of product placement, I've learned a lot since the early days of promoting Reese's Pieces with *E.T.* and working on *Seinfeld*. Regulation may be different in the US to what is likely to come into force in the UK – but the premise of successful product placement is the same.

It's a real world with real products in our refrigerators, on billboards or anything that touches our senses. We don't expect to open our refrigerator and only see Coke cans and bottles. The best placements are subtle: opening a refrigerator that is filled with many products and then choosing Coke is organic and seamless.

For viewers, less is more. The advertiser should provide the production with key words that are part of the brand's advertising campaign, and producers and broadcasters should try to incorporate these into scenes without the logo or a verbal mention for the product. On *American Idol*, for example, the Coke cup may not be in view, yet value is generated as Randy tells the contestants to “Keep it Real” – Coke's tagline.

If the placement is followed by a commercial, there is a 20% additional recall, according to a recent study by Nielsen. The advertiser should negotiate a “brought to you by...” message at the beginning of the programme. And as part of full-disclosure rules, advertisers should request end credits with other brands that participate in the programme. The best viewer recall is from placements that incorporate all these elements.

Product placement is not a silo; it should be part of an advertising campaign that includes the brand's marketing objectives – whether it's a new launch, repositioning or just

reinforcement. It's important to incorporate a single message across all media platforms including web, print and point-of-purchase. Brands can capitalise on the placement with social media and cross-promotions.

In this challenging media economy, there's a senior management refrain that goes: “only what gets measured gets bought”.

Product placement is evolving based on research data and insight into what has been done and how to do it better. Measurement should be applied along all touch-points of a brand's campaign. This insight

### ‘We don't expect to open our refrigerator and only see Coke cans and bottles’

helps generate a return on the marketer's objectives, up to and including the ultimate measure: sales.

Europe and other regions that are currently lifting the product-placement ban will be looking at the UK as the model to emulate – so the UK is in an excellent position to be a student teacher. As product placement progresses, use a bit of your Brit humour by making brands a character rather than a static prop. Jerry Seinfeld did it and it worked – everyone remembered the Junior Mints episode and no one was offended.

Product placement in itself is not a revenue-generator. However, it is a catalyst or centre hub that can generate new revenue for individuals and companies that become part of broader ad and marketing campaigns.

I applaud Ben Bradshaw's positive, yet cautious, position. By working together, the UK industry can set standards and best practices that will provide naysayers with optimism to overcome their unfounded fears.

► *Frank Zazza, chief exec, iTVX. See [broadcastnow.co.uk](http://broadcastnow.co.uk) for video*