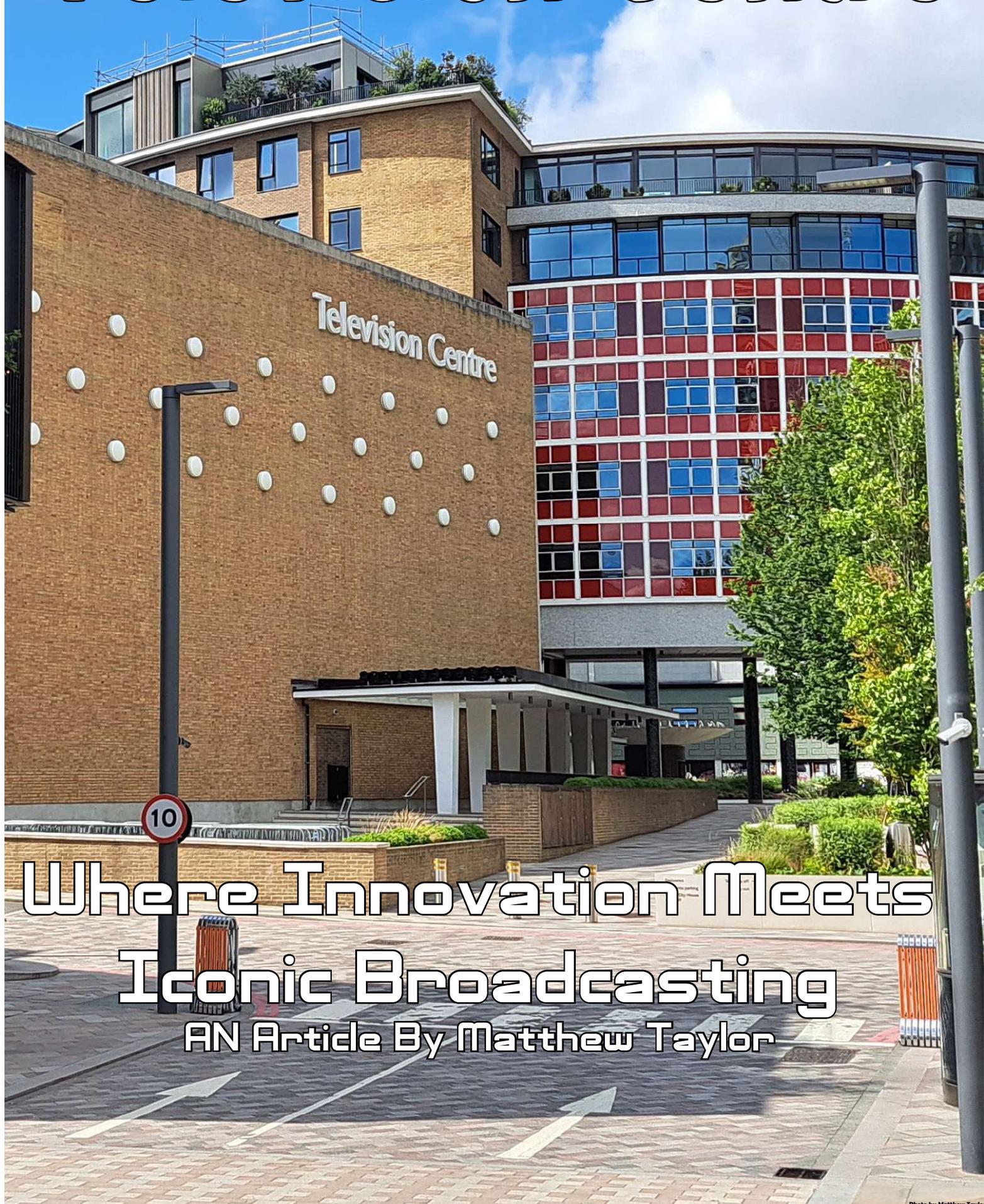


Television Centre



Where Innovation Meets
Iconic Broadcasting
AN Article By Matthew Taylor



Photo by BBC (The opening sequence of 'First Night' from June 1960.)

Nestled in White City, West London, BBC Television Centre stands as a testament to the evolution and history of British television. Since its inauguration on June 29, 1960, this iconic complex has borne witness to a plethora of ground-breaking moments that have defined the nation's broadcasting landscape.



Scan the QR Code to watch the opening Titles of First Night at TVC.

In 1949, the BBC acquired the site that would soon give rise to Television Centre. Renowned architect Graham Dawbarn envisaged a ring of studios encircling a central courtyard, a design that would later be unmistakably represented by the centre's iconic question mark-shaped structure added in 1966. Over the years, Television Centre has adapted and expanded, tirelessly meeting the ever-growing demands of the television industry.

Television Centre's grand opening was celebrated with "First Night," a special program broadcast from TC3 – a studio that today hosts beloved shows such as "Good Morning Britain" and "This Morning." The program, presented by David Nixon, featured performances by iconic entertainers Arthur Askey and Richard Hearne.

In 2012, the BBC bid farewell to Television Centre, concluding an era of ownership. This marked a significant turning point as most of the complex underwent a remarkable transformation into a hotel and apartment complex. However, the BBC retained ownership of TC1, TC2, and TC3 studios, offering them for rent and operation under the name BBC Studioworks.

While the majority of Television Centre was reimagined as a commercial and residential complex, the remaining studios, now under the banner of BBC Studioworks, have been reborn to cater to a diverse array of broadcasting needs. This transformation has ensured that the legacy of Television Centre continues to thrive in the modern era.



Did You Know?

The BBC's first ever programme was a news bulletin, consisting of an odd assortment of items (a robbery, a Shakespeare folio and fog), and read twice – once at normal speed, once twice as slowly – and listeners were asked to say which speed they preferred.

Source BBC

Blue Peter Presenters



(1) Christopher Trace



(25) Richard Bacon



(28) Matt Baker



(40) Adam Beales

One of the pivotal milestones in Television Centre's history was the introduction of colour television on July 1, 1967, during the Wimbledon tennis championships. This bold move made Television Centre one of the pioneers in colour broadcasting, setting new horizons for the industry despite the technical challenges.

Before the birth of Television Centre, the area served as the heart of British broadcasting excellence. It paved the way for iconic shows and news programs that became staples of television screens across the nation.

Over the years, Television Centre underwent expansions, including the addition of "spurs" or extensions. The most significant of these extensions took place in three stages, resulting in the construction of TC8 and a new news centre. These evolutions reflected the dynamic needs of the broadcasting industry.



Photo from www.tvcentre.org.uk

BBC Studioworks, the operator of the remaining studios at Television Centre, played a pivotal role in preserving the spirit of creativity and entertainment within this iconic institution. This ensured that, despite the sale and transformation of most of the site, a part of Television Centre would continue to be a vibrant hub for television production and creativity.

One of the incredible moments at Television Centre was when Roy Castle, a talented tap dancer, set a world record. He did the fastest tap dance ever recorded on January 14, 1973. He managed to tap his feet a whopping 1,440 times in just one minute! That is like twenty-four taps every single second. What makes this even more amazing is that he was not alone; he had five hundred tap dancers joining him. It was a remarkable achievement and a memorable moment in the history of Television Centre.

BBC Television Centre, although primarily known for television production, also had a role in radio broadcasting. While it was not the primary location for radio broadcasts, some radio programs and studios were housed within the Television Centre complex. The facility included a few radio studios, and they were often used for recording and broadcasting radio shows. These studios were equipped with state-of-the-art audio equipment to ensure high-quality radio broadcasts. Radio programs, including interviews, music performances, and talk shows, were recorded, and sometimes broadcast from these studios. Additionally, Television Centre was home to the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, a pioneering electronic music, and sound effects unit. This workshop played a crucial role in creating innovative soundscapes and music for both television and radio programs. While Television Centre was primarily associated with television production, its radio facilities and the BBC Radiophonic Workshop added to the rich history of creative audio content produced within its iconic walls.

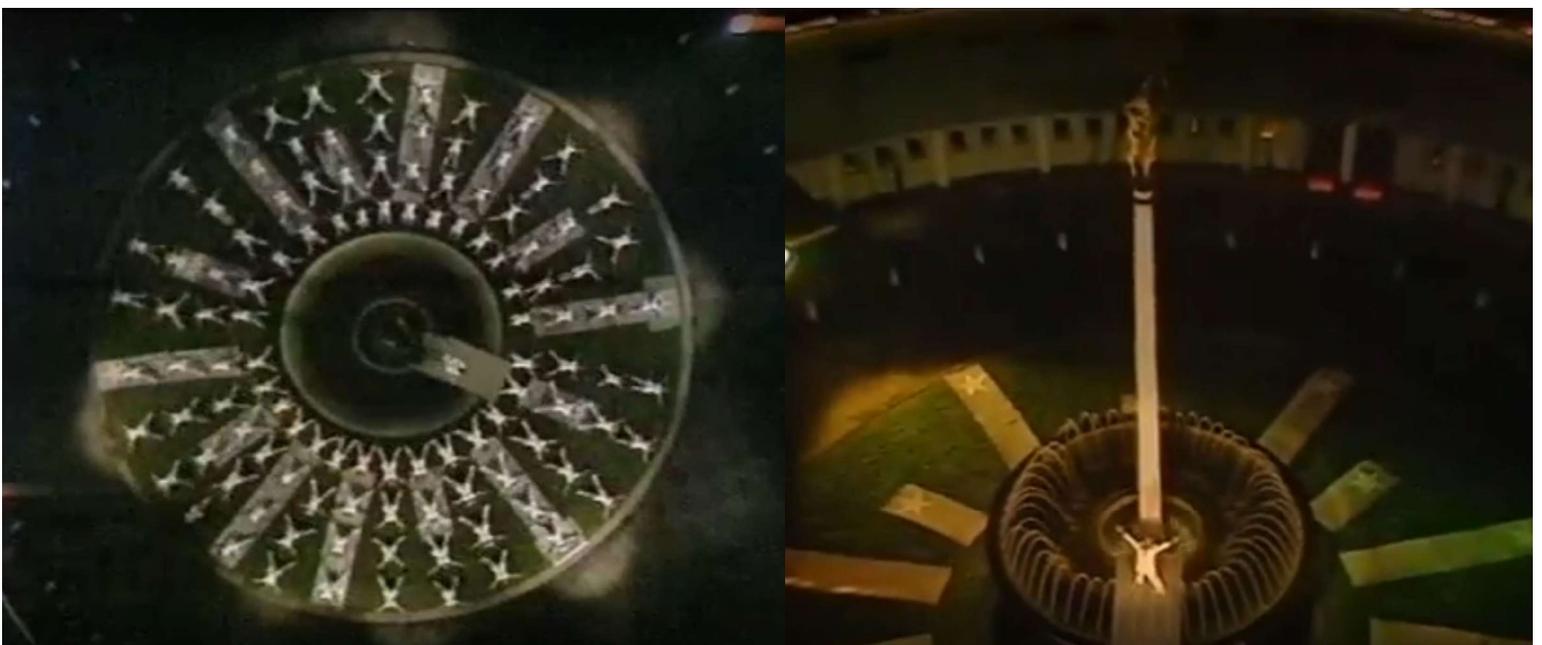


Photo from Roy Castle Recordbreakers (BBC)



Photo from televisioncentre.com

The iconic BBC letters coming down from Television Centre marked a poignant moment in the history of this iconic broadcasting institution. The removal of these letters symbolized a significant transition, signifying the end of an era. The prominent BBC letters, perched on top of Television Centre, had become an emblem of British broadcasting. They were not just letters; they were a visual representation of the trust, credibility, and familiarity that the BBC had cultivated over the years. As they were carefully taken down from their lofty position, it was a moment of reflection for many who had grown up with the BBC as a constant presence in their lives. The letters had witnessed countless historic events, groundbreaking programs, and the evolution of television in the United Kingdom. The removal of the BBC letters was a visual reminder that, while the physical structure of Television Centre was changing, the spirit of innovation and creativity that had thrived within its walls would continue in new forms. It marked the end of one chapter and the beginning of another as the broadcasting landscape adapted to the digital age. The letters may have come down, but the legacy of the BBC and Television Centre endures, not just in bricks and mortar, but in the hearts and memories of those who have been captivated by the magic of British broadcasting.

BBC Television Centre's illustrious history, marked by numerous accomplishments and transformations, stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of British television. While it has adapted to the changing broadcasting landscape, the spirit of innovation and creativity that was nurtured within its walls lives on through the studios that continue to operate today. Television Centre holds a special place in the hearts of those who have been captivated by the magic of the small screen, embodying the essence of British broadcasting excellence. It is not just a physical structure but a living, breathing symbol of the ever-evolving television industry in the United Kingdom.



Photo by Matthew Taylor