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**Comparison of Original British TV Shows and American TV Shows**

(bakalářská práce)

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Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně a uvedla v ní předepsaným způsobem všechnu použitou literaturu.

V Olomouci

Podpis

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## Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Introduction.....  | 5  |
| 1. History.....  | 7  |
| 1.1. History of British television.....  | 8  |
| 1.1.1. BBC.....  | 8  |
| 1.1.2. ITV.....  | 12 |
| 1.1.3. Channel 4.....  | 14 |
| 1.2. History of American Television.....   | 16 |
| 1.2.1. NBC.....  | 17 |
| 1.2.2. CBS.....  | 18 |
| 1.2.3. ABC.....  | 20 |
| 2. TV Formats.....   | 21 |
| 2.1. Money.....  | 22 |
| 2.2. Effort.....   | 23 |
| 2.3. Cultural differences.....   | 24 |
| 3. Characteristics of Chosen TV Shows/ Comparison.....                                       | 27 |
| 3.1. The less successful TV programmes.....  | 27 |
| 3.1.1. Top Gear – an example of an unsuccessful remake (entertainment format).....           | 27 |
| 3.1.2. IT Crowd – an example of an unsuccessful remake (drama format).....                   | 32 |
| 3.2. The successful TV Programmes.....   | 35 |
| 3.2.1. Strictly come dancing – an example of a successful remake (entertainment format)..... | 35 |
| 3.2.2. Being Human – an example of a successful remake (drama format).....                   | 36 |
| Conclusion.....  | 39 |
| Resumé.....  | 41 |
| Bibliography.....  | 43 |
| Anotace.....   | 47 |
| Annotation.....  | 47 |

## **Introduction**

This thesis deals with the fact that there are many American television programmes based on original British TV programmes. They have been remade and broadcasted on American TVs and in numerous cases they were truly successful. Although some of them, especially sitcoms were the opposite of a blockbuster and they were cancelled after few episodes or after a few broadcasted seasons and my aim is to find why this happens.

In the first chapter of my thesis I focus on the history of television entertainment. This section is divided into two subparts – history of the British television and history of the American television. I will look closely on the main three television services in the UK, namely the BBC, ITV and Channel 4 and I will describe the evolution of all the televisions from the day they were established until these days, when they are not just radio stations or televisions, but all of them use other forms of broadcasting as well. Although the BBC does not produce many TV formats to be purchased in the United States, it is worth adding since the television was the first television established in the United Kingdom and it influenced the other two televisions as well.

In the second part of the first chapter, I will focus more on the American television services, the “Big Three” television network, NBC, CBS and ABC that produced a lot of TV shows that were bought by many countries, but they also bought TV formats from the British television networks.

In the second chapter I will describe what a TV format is in detail and I will try to find out why Americans purchase British TV formats and make their own versions, despite the fact that it seems to be necessary due to English - the language both nations use and know very well.

The last chapter will be more practical than theoretical since I will watch chosen episodes of chosen TV programmes in order to describe them, firstly the British originals and then the American remakes of the same programmes and in this chapter there will be also a comparison of both versions which should help me to answer the main question of this thesis thus I will try to figure out why some programmes are successful whereas some are not even though they are similar to the British originals. I will choose four different TV programmes, two

(successful vs. unsuccessful, according to ratings or the number of seasons made)  
of them will be based on entertainment formats and the second two will be based  
on drama production formats.

# 1. History

History was, is and always will be very important since people should learn something and once someone learns a bit about what happened in the past, it is easier to understand what is happening in these days. The very beginnings of television are closely related to radio broadcasting as radio was a predecessor of the television. Almost all of the most significant British and American TV channels started as radio stations, which was due to the absence of anything that could produce sound and vision at the same time. In the course of time, a few inventors came up with some ideas and prototypes, but the beginnings are never easy and it was a long way to go to fabricate television sets as we know them now.

People in the UK started to buy televisions in the 1950s and it continued to the 1970s. In the following table we can see the progress in buying televisions in three certain years.<sup>1</sup>

| Year | Number of homes | Number of TV owners |
|------|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1957 | 15.8 million    | 7 million           |
| 1978 | 20 million      | 19.5 million        |
| 2001 | 25 million      | 24.4 million        |

Table 1: source Michel Hilmes, *The Television History Book*, 60.

The history section is divided into two subparts; one is focusing on history of British television, the three main British TV channels and the other one on history of American television, the three main American TV channels.

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<sup>1</sup> Michele Hilmes, *The Television History Book: Television, Media & Cultural Studies* (London: British Film Institute, 2003), 60.

## 1.1. History of British television

One of the most important people who were in the beginning of broadcasting in Great Britain was a Scottish inventor John Logie Baird. From September 30<sup>th</sup> 1929 British citizens could watch only TV from 11am, the programme did not last longer than an hour and most importantly they could not watch the TV every day. John Logie Baird had a good idea and he invented something that worked, but he still faced a difficulty while he was trying to make an impression on the BBC, so they could allow the transmission of his pictures. However The BBC engineers thought that Baird's pictures were not good enough.<sup>2</sup> According to Internal Circulating Memo written by J. Whitehouse - a senior member of staff - he was not pleased at all after seeing the demonstration of Baird's system, he was disappointed by watching images that were not recognizable and by the quality of all images depending on the speed as with increasing speed, the images were getting blurry. Spectators shared a similar opinion with Whitehouse and they were leaving the room unsatisfied as well.<sup>3</sup> The BBC changed its mind eventually and after introducing National and Regional scheme for radio, John Braid gained an half an hour a day to broadcast synchronized sound and vision at the end of March 1930.<sup>4</sup>

One of the most significant developments in television technology was in 1940s and 1950s when televisions became able to record programmes, and transmit and record at the same time. Until that time, the television had almost all its material not recorded and almost all shows were live.<sup>5</sup>

### 1.1.1. BBC

British Broadcasting Company was formed in 1922 when the British government licensed a few manufacturers to create a single cartel. They tried to avoid commercialization by public taxation and they also tried to stay strictly

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<sup>2</sup> Tony Currie, *A Concise History of British Television 1930-2000* (Devon: Kelly Publications, 2000), 9.

<sup>3</sup> J. Whitehouse, "Internal Circulating Memo," accessed March 16, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc/resources/tvhistory/pdf/BairdImageDescription1928.pdf> (memo).

<sup>4</sup> Tony Currie, *A Concise History of British Television 1930-2000*, 10.

<sup>5</sup> Andrew Crisell, *An Introduction History of British Broadcasting* (London: Routledge, 2002), 94.



independent especially when they became an independent national organization and were renamed British Broadcasting Corporation in 1927.<sup>6</sup> The first BBC Director-General was John Charles Walsham Reith, a Scottish Free Church Minister who was firstly the General Manager of the British Broadcasting Company and the commercial progenitor of the BBC in 1922.<sup>7</sup> Although he did not know anything about broadcasting, he was innovative, he experimented and the BBC was getting more and more successful every day. At this time, General Strike of 1926 took place. This strike is considered to be the first serious confrontation with the Government over editorial independence.<sup>8</sup> John Reith left the organization in 1938 to run Imperial Airways.<sup>9</sup> Although the BBC was popular, it was still only the radio. The world's first regular service of high-definition television from Alexandra Palace in North London was opened in 1936.<sup>10</sup> First television viewers could watch King George VI's Coronation Procession, Wimbledon or FA Cup Final, unfortunately not all UK citizens were lucky to see it, because those shows could be broadcasted only from places near London moreover there was a need of sufficient resources.<sup>11</sup> Before they could improve their broadcasting facilities the Second World War began and transmission of the BBC television service was cut short in September 1939.<sup>12</sup>

Television services were closed during the war, but radio continued broadcasting, although it was full of news, public announcements and wartime speeches and the National and Regional programme service was replaced which made people start complaining. It was good to hear what was happening but they needed some kind of entertainment which could help them to survive difficult times. "It's That Man Again" a radio comedy programme was something that

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<sup>6</sup> Michele Hilmes, *The Television History Book*, 23.

<sup>7</sup> Asa Briggs, *Serious Pursuits: Communication & Education* (Great Britain: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 149.

<sup>8</sup> "The BBC Story 1920s factsheet," BBC, accessed March 14, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc/resources/factsheets/1920s.pdf>, 1-2.

<sup>9</sup> Michele Hilmes, *The Television History Book*, 23.

<sup>10</sup> "The BBC Story 1930s factsheet," BBC, accessed March 14, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc/resources/factsheets/1930s.pdf>, 2.

<sup>11</sup> "The BBC Story 1930s factsheet," BBC, accessed March 14, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc/resources/factsheets/1930s.pdf>, 2.

<sup>12</sup> Michele Hilmes, *The Television History Book*, 30.

listeners liked and listened to every week. This programme was not just popular; it also sustained morale during the Second World War.<sup>13</sup>

Transmission of television service was recommenced in June 1946 and Maurice Gorham was the Head of the Television Service. He said that people's attitude towards television had changed and they had been more willing to watch rather than to listen which made television a big rival to the radio.<sup>14</sup>

Despite the fact that people started to like television better, not many of them were able to watch anything in reality, because they simply did not own a proper set. According to Gorham even if people had enough money to buy sets, they were not able to do it since there were no or very little sets. They had to wait when they wanted one. To express the situation in numbers, there were around 20 000 TV sets in March 1947 and since the broadcasting facilities were not improved yet, only people from London and surrounded areas could watch the TV. The best interest of every television corporation is to provide services to the biggest possible number of customers so that the corporation can earn money, so the progress was inevitable. However the progress and expansion to other regions were slow. There were also other factors that had effect, mostly negative effect, on the progress. The television still got less money than the radio, the difference between money allocated to TV and radio was enormous, for example in 1947 TV got £716,666 and radio £6.5 million. This was not the only reason why the television could not evolve, the Newspaper Society, British Film producers and distributors, and music hall and theatre managers were against it as well.<sup>15</sup>

A significant breakthrough in raising the popularity of the BBC was made in June 1953. It was the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II that figured prominently in this. Around 20 000 people watched the Coronation which was a huge success, because it was the first time the number of television viewers was higher than the number of radio listeners.<sup>16</sup> It can be also seen as the beginning of abroad trading as the event was recorded on a film and then send to the USA, Canada and other European countries.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>“The BBC Story 1940s factsheet,” BBC, accessed March 14, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc/resources/factsheets/1940s.pdf>, 1.

<sup>14</sup> Michele Hilmes, *The Television History Book*, 30.

<sup>15</sup> Michele Hilmes, *The Television History Book*, 31.

<sup>16</sup>“The BBC Story 1950s factsheet,” BBC, accessed March 14, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc/resources/factsheets/1950s.pdf>, 1.

<sup>17</sup> Michele Hilmes, *The Television History Book*, 71.

An important event of 1950s was that the biggest rival of the BBC, ITV (Independent Television) was established in 1955.<sup>18</sup> Before the birth of ITV, the BBC had no competition in the UK.<sup>19</sup>

The 1960s were important, there was a progress in technology as well as in programming, because the Wimbledon Championships in 1967 was broadcasted in colour and the BBC was the first television in Europe that broadcasted in colour on a regular basis. Also in 1964 the BBC2 was established and its programmes were broadcasted mainly in colour in 1968. Despite the fact, that BBC2 was a new channel and it was supposed to attract more people, BBC1 was still more popular and the TV had to deal with the problem by changing its programme scheduling.<sup>20</sup> There was a big change inside the BBC in 1990s. Operating costs and staff were reduced. The competition grew and it was necessary to do something about it to make the BBC competitive enough.<sup>21</sup> In November 1990 the Broadcasting Act took place and it meant that not only the BBC but also other TV channels in the UK had to have 25 per cent programming from independent producers.<sup>22</sup> 1990s is also era of increasing commercialization and globalization of the global market and there was increase of debates over quality of programming. New formats of shows could be seen on TVs, namely there was an increase of reality formats, lifestyle programmes, which included cookery, gardening, home improvements and fashion.<sup>23</sup>

With a new decade the TV audience became more demanding; the BBC noticed that and decided to do something about it. Life was faster, people were busier than in previous decades and they did not have so much time to watch their favourite programmes at the time of their proper airtime. Of course, the technology of video recorders or DVD recorders allowed them to record those shows, but the BBC came up with the idea of online broadcasting and then at the end of 2007 BBC iPlayer was firstly started. It gave them opportunity to watch programmes online whenever and wherever they wanted and they used it. In 2009

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<sup>18</sup> Michele Hilmes, *The Television History Book*, 32.

<sup>19</sup> Michele Hilmes, *The Television History Book*, 86.

<sup>20</sup> "The BBC Story 1960s factsheet," BBC, accessed March 14, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc/resources/factsheets/1960s.pdf>, 3.

<sup>21</sup> "The BBC Story 1990s factsheet," BBC, accessed March 14, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc/resources/factsheets/1990s.pdf>, 2.

<sup>22</sup> Julian Newby, *Inside Broadcasting* (London: Routledge, 1997), 6.

<sup>23</sup> Michele Hilmes, *The Television History Book*, 103-104.

the total number of BBC iPlayer users was more than 360 million.<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately for people from other countries than the UK, BBC iPlayer is only available for British people if you would like to watch programmes, but if you want to listen to the radio shows, it is perfectly possible. Nowadays there is not only BBC One and BBC Two, but many other channels including BBC Three and Four, BBC HD, CBBC, BBC News Channel and BBC Parliament, all aimed at different kind of audience.<sup>25</sup>

### 1.1.2. ITV

Independent Television was formed in 1955, after the Independent Television Authority (ITA) decided that it was time to establish commercial television in the UK by the Television Act of 1954.<sup>26</sup> ITV was the only BBC's great rival and in contrast with the publicly funded and publicly owned BBC, it is commercially funded and privately owned television.<sup>27</sup>

As well as the BBC in its infancy, ITV firstly broadcasted only in the London and surrounded areas, but the transmission spread faster than in the BBC's case, so people from the Midlands and north of the England were able to watch its programmes in 1956, Scottish people in 1957 and one year later, in 1958 the ITV expanded to some parts of Wales.<sup>28</sup> Although ITV was a brand new television, it took some time for it to become popular and a real competition to the BBC, but ITV was on the right track and the number of its viewers was around 50,000 per week in 1957. Not only common viewers noticed the success of ITV, but people also realized that commercial TV is a great place to broadcast commercials and commercials provide money and if you own a commercial TV franchise it is a very good business. Speaking of commercials, it is worth noting that the very first commercial broadcasted on ITV was for Gibbs SR toothpaste.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>“The BBC Story 2000s factsheet,” BBC, accessed March 14, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc/resources/factsheets/2000s.pdf>, 1.

<sup>25</sup> “Home page,” BBC, accessed March 14, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/tv/>.

<sup>26</sup> Michele Hilmes, *The Television History Book*, 33.

<sup>27</sup> Jeanette Steemers *Selling Television: British Television in the Global Marketplace* (London: British Film Institute, 2004), xiv.

<sup>28</sup> Rob Turnock, *Television and Consumer Culture: Britain and the Transformation of Modernity* (New York: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd., 2007), 1.

<sup>29</sup> Michele Hilmes, *The Television History Book*, 33.

ITV tried to be innovative as well, tried to come up with something new to be able to compete with the BBC, due to this fact they began to broadcast a new format of news – Independent Television News and they also focused on comedy and programmes originated in the USA, which was something that the BBC tried to avoid. Because of that ITV competed with the BBC successfully and by the end of 1950s it beat the BBC in the total number of viewers.<sup>30</sup> During the 1950s the ITV continued buying dramas that were made in the USA and it also started to create their own shows, influenced by American TV programmes, because such programmes could be easily sold to the US market as well.<sup>31</sup>

Although ITV was supposed to be the BBC's great rival and steal the BBC's viewers, it was not quite true. In the beginnings ITV was not able to steal the audience, because it was not spread all over the country, but people in London area and surroundings tend to be more willing to watch the new television. It was given by the fact that when they wanted to watch the new television, they had to buy a new television set or make some effort to update their current television which was not for free and it is natural that people do not spend money on something they do not want to use later. Another fact that might have an effect on the number of audience was that when ITV was established, its programming was not so much different from the BBC programming and many people including critics were not able to tell the difference between these two television services. There was a research done in October 1955, thus about 1 month after the establishment of ITV when only people from London could watch its programmes, the result was that 66 per cent of audience could not tell which programming is better, 11 per cent said that ITV was better, 11 per cent said that the BBC was better and 12 per cent said that there was no difference between them. Two years later, the situation had changed and ITV was seen as a better television by 29 per cent of viewers while the BBC was more popular amongst 19 per cent of people and the percentage of people who could not tell the difference rose as well up to 20 per cent.<sup>32</sup>

After five years of competing, both television services gained their own success, when the BBC was successful in the eyes of critics and ITV was more

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<sup>30</sup> Michele Hilmes, *The Television History Book*, 33.

<sup>31</sup> Michele Hilmes, *The Television History Book*, 78.

<sup>32</sup> Rob Turnock, *Television and Consumer Culture*, 26-27.

popular amongst ordinary viewers. ITV simply broadcasted programmes that were more appealing and people were then more willing to watch such programmes.<sup>33</sup> Despite this fact, Parliament, press and people in academia were not fans of programming of ITV and did not want to support it. They saw ITV as a television that broadcast commercials and game shows too often.<sup>34</sup> As time went by, ITV programming became similar to BBC programming. After the Television Act in 1964, ITV was supposed to broadcast not only amusing programmes, but also serious programmes (e.g. News at Ten) and there was a special time for them.<sup>35</sup> As said before the Broadcasting Act of 1990 naturally influenced ITV as well as the other UK television services.

There are a lot of ITV channels too, namely ITV 2, 3, 4 and Hi5. In these days ITV also offers ITV Player, a place where you can find and play your favourite programmes and watch them as many times as you wish, but again, unfortunately for people living outside the UK, the service is not available for them.<sup>36</sup>

### **1.1.3. Channel 4**

The 1980 Broadcasting Act planned to set up a new television therefore in 1982 Channel 4 was established. As ITV for the BBC, Channel 4 was a competition for all the three channels that were broadcasting at the time. The new channel was supposed to come up with new ideas, experiment, be appealing to new audience and also broadcast educational programmes at the same time.<sup>37</sup> According to Broadcasting Act the channel was charged to

- 1- appeal to tastes and interest not generally catered for ITV*
- 2- contain a suitable proportion of programmes of an education nature*
- 3- to encourage innovation and experiment in the form and content of programmes*

and it also contained

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<sup>33</sup> Andrew Crisell, *An Introduction History of British Broadcasting*, 104.

<sup>34</sup> Andrew Crisell, *An Introduction History of British Broadcasting*, 108.

<sup>35</sup> Andrew Crisell, *An Introduction History of British Broadcasting*, 118.

<sup>36</sup> "Home page," ITV, accessed March 15, 2012, <http://www.itv.com/>.

<sup>37</sup> Dorothy Hobson, *Channel 4: The Early Years and the Jeremy Isaac's Legacy* (New York: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd., 2008), preface.

*4- proper proportions of recorded and other matter included in the programmes are of the British origin and of British performance*<sup>38</sup>

The transmission itself began in the afternoon on November 2<sup>nd</sup> and the first thing appeared on the screen was a logo of Channel 4. The logo was colourful which reminds us, that Channel 4 did not have to deal with some technical issues as the BBC did for example in the early years. On the other hand people who saw adverts on ITV or in the national press and decided to watch the new channel had to adjust their television sets as well as they had to be lucky to be in the 82 per cent of people who were able to receive the transmission.<sup>39</sup>

Jeremy Isaacs was the first appointed chairman of Channel 4 and similarly to John Reith (who was not familiar with television and despite the fact he became the General Manager of the BBC), Isaac did not have a TV set at this time.<sup>40</sup> When Isaacs was no longer a chief executive of Channel 4, the television share of viewers neither rose nor declined and it was still around 10 per cent of total viewers.<sup>41</sup>

Naturally, Channel 4 was not the last television established in the UK, and it faced similar problems as the BBC and ITV in the past when it had to cope with satellite and cable that became increasingly popular, and also with new channels, for example with Channel 5 which was aimed at younger viewers.<sup>42</sup>

As the other TV channels, Channel 4 has also another channels, including Film4, More4, E4, 4Music and 4oD which means 4 on demand and it is basically the same kind of service as the BBC iPlayer and ITV Player which provides online watching whenever and wherever you please.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Dorothy Hobson, *Channel 4*, 14-15.

<sup>39</sup> Dorothy Hobson, *Channel 4*, 1.

<sup>40</sup> Peter Catterall, *The Making of Channel 4* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1999), 4-3.

<sup>41</sup> Jeremy Isaac Interview, "Channel 4 could still be a rather good delicatessen," The Independent Archive, accessed March 14, 2012, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/the-independent-archive-channel-4-could-still-be-a-rather-good-delicatessen-1120661.html>.

<sup>42</sup> Andrew Crisell, *An Introduction History of British Broadcasting*, 256.

<sup>43</sup> "4oD home" Channel 4, accessed March 16, 2012, <http://www.channel4.com/programmes/4od>.

## 1.2. History of American Television

There are three main television services in the United States that broadcast many kinds of TV shows, which includes dramatic production as well as entertainment shows and those are NBC, CBS and the youngest ABC. As in the UK, the three main televisions in the USA were firstly established as radio networks. There were operating some amateur stations before the WW1, and during this era, those stations were closed. People could not decide whether radio networks should be in army's hands or in private hands, so in 1919 it was reached a compromise. As the number of amateur stations increased, everything seemed to happen in a confused and unorganized way and on that account a few radio conferences took place between 1922 and 1925 and three main principles were approved. First principle was based on quantity and quality issues, which means that the total number of radio stations should be reduced and the remaining stations should be of higher quality. The second principle was concerning the "public interest." The last principle involved more points; government and private interest were not allowed to control radio and make decisions separately and the second point was that the radio should be a regulated medium and last but not least, radio was allowed to broadcast advertisements on air, although it had to be adverts cultivated. These principles were foundations for the Radio Act of 1927.<sup>44</sup> It is also worth mentioning that the person responsible for the television in the USA was a man born in Utah Philo Farnsworth, who made a contribution to society.<sup>45</sup> His first success came in 1927, when he was able to transmit several images, including a dollar sign and three years later, it was protected by his patent. Similarly to John Reith's case, RCA went to see it but did not need it according to their own words.<sup>46</sup>

Another significant person is Peter Goldmark, who helped to create a technology for coloured television, after seeing a four-hour long coloured movie.

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<sup>44</sup> Michele Hilmes, *The Television History Book*, 26-28.

<sup>45</sup> Stephanie Sammartino McPherson, *TV's Forgotten Hero: The Story of Philo Farnsworth* (Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books Inc., 1996), 11.

<sup>46</sup> Erik Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty: The Evolution of American Television* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 78.



Then he worked hard to make a hybrid television and he showed his new piece of work in 1940.<sup>47</sup>

After the WW2 there was an inevitable shift from radio to television broadcasting, when the main television services were NBC, CBS and ABC and it spread rapidly during the 1950s, although the television broadcasting was much more expensive than radio broadcasting and new studios had to be built and required equipment had to be bought.<sup>48</sup>

### 1.2.1. NBC

The National Broadcasting Company was formed by RCA (Radio Corporation of America) in 1926.<sup>49</sup> Like the BBC in the UK, NBC was the first and stated itself as “America’s network” but unlike the BBC, NBC stayed a private corporation.<sup>50</sup>

NBC had two networks in the beginning – The Red Network and the Blue Network. Both networks broadcasted different kinds of entertainment. The Red Network was focused mainly on music and the Blue Network on news.<sup>51</sup> NBC had to face some legal issues regarding the RCA split from GE (General Electric Corporation) in the early ages. The result of this split was that GE was still an owner of broadcasting stations, although NBC controlled them, NBC also became a wholly owned subsidiary of RCA and it moved to mid-Manhattan to Rockefeller Centre.<sup>52</sup>

In 1931 NBC tried transmitting via the Empire State Building antenna and eight years later NBC was broadcasting across the whole New York City on a regular basis. A significant change took place in 1943 when RCA decided to sell the Blue Network, which was the future place for American Broadcasting Company. Another significant event happened in 1954, NBC’s transmission began to be in colour, though many programmes were still in a gray scale.

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<sup>47</sup> Gary R. Edgerton, *The Columbia History of American Television* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 63.

<sup>48</sup> Michele Hilmes, *The Television History Book*, 35-36.

<sup>49</sup> Michele Hilmes, *NBC: America’s Network* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: California Press, 2007), 3.

<sup>50</sup> Michele Hilmes, *NBC*, 7.

<sup>51</sup> Dan Fletcher, “A Brief History of NBC,” Time Entertainment, accessed March 15, 2012, <http://www.time.com/time/arts/article/0,8599,1945408,00.html>.

<sup>52</sup> Erik Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty*, 70.

Two years later, the peacock logo which is NBC famous for was created and almost all programmes were broadcasted in colour in 1965.<sup>53</sup>

NBC had to compete with another television service as well as the BBC did, although NBC's rival was CBS and it started to broadcast almost at the same time as NBS. If NBC wanted to be more successful than CBS, it had to come up with something appealing to its audience, maybe with something shocking and NBC did that in when the radio station started to broadcast "War of the Worlds", which was about arrival of aliens from Mars and many people believed that it was true.<sup>54</sup>

Among firsts remakes made in the USA was *Sanford and Son* produced by Norman Lear and Bud Yorkin which NBC bought and which was broadcasted from 1972 to 1977. It was a remake of British *Steptoe and Son*, but the American version was a little bit different since the main characters were all Afro-Americans and the show was based on dealing with race-related issues.<sup>55</sup>

NBC owns various television channels and cable platforms. The main channels are NBC News, NBC Sports, and next CBNC which broadcasts business news and there are also channels focused on technology and gaming called G4, E! which is focused on celebrities or Cloo which broadcasts crime and mystery programmes.<sup>56</sup>

NBC as a modern television in a modern era offers its viewers the service called NBC Video Library, which is basically the same thing as BBC iPlayer or ITV Player, with the difference that NBC Video Library is available in the United States only.<sup>57</sup>

### 1.2.2. CBS

Columbia Broadcasting Company was established as a radio station in 1927. At first the channel was not very successful, but in 1928 William S. Paley appeared and he and his father Samuel bought a significant share of CPBS (the

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<sup>53</sup> Dan Fletcher, "A Brief History of NBC," Time Entertainment, accessed March 15, 2012, <http://www.time.com/time/arts/article/0,8599,1945408,00.html>.

<sup>54</sup> Erik Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty*, 89.

<sup>55</sup> Michele Hilmes, *The Television History Book*, 91.

<sup>56</sup> "Home page," NBC Universal, accessed March 16, 2012, <http://www.nbcuni.com/>.

<sup>57</sup> "NBC Video Library," NBC, accessed March 16, 2012, <http://www.nbc.com/video/library/full-episodes/>.

Columbia Phonograph Broadcasting System) in 1928. His father ran the Congress Cigar Company in Philadelphia and got rich, so he was able to help his son. Another reason why William decided to buy CPBS was that he tried advertising La Palina Cigars on WCAU, which was an affiliate of CPBS in Philadelphia. William was good at what he was doing and with his help CBS soon became more popular and it was able to compete with two existing NBC's networks. William wanted CBS to be that way and he was also interested in making CBS programming better, so that CBS could compete with NBC and maybe even overcome it. To achieve their goal, they tried to put a transmitter on the Chrysler Building. At the time, NBC had its own transmitter on the tallest building in the city.<sup>58</sup>

During the WW2, Paley proved to be a real patriot when he joined the army and he became a colonel in North Africa and Italy. After the war he came back to New York in 1945 and continued to struggle with NBC and he also had to decide what should be the next step, because there still were some things that hindered the development of CBS, e.g. CBS did not make its own television sets.<sup>59</sup>

NBC was not the only American television which bought a British format of a TV show. CBS did the same thing and make a remake of *Till Death Us do Part*, which was a sitcom. American version was called *All in Family* and it was broadcasted from 1971 to 1979.<sup>60</sup>

Like NBC, CBS also owns many different channels that are focused on different things. The main TV is called CBS Television and according to the official CBS website, the number of viewers weekly exceeds 100 million people. The other channels are CBS Entertainment, CBS News or CBS Sports.<sup>61</sup> CBS also has an online player, where you can watch episodes you might miss on TV, but it is not as friendly as the other online players. Some TV series can be watched in full length, but there are also short clips instead of whole episodes.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Gary R. Edgerton, *The Columbia History of American Television*, 62.

<sup>59</sup> Gary R. Edgerton, *The Columbia History of American Television*, 75.

<sup>60</sup> Michele Hilmes, *The Television History Book*, 90.

<sup>61</sup> "Our Portfolio," CBS Corporation, accessed March 17, 2012, <http://www.cbcorporation.com/portfolio.php>.

<sup>62</sup> "Video Player," CBS, accessed March 17, 2012, <http://www.cbs.com/video/>.

### 1.2.3. ABC

As said before, American Broadcasting Company (firstly called American Broadcasting System) was established in 1943 when NBC had to sell its Blue Network due to the fact that FCC (Federal Communications Commission) decided that every company was allowed to have only one radio therefore ABC was made out of the Network. NBC was bought by a man who earned his money in the cigar industry, ABC was bought by a man who got rich by making and selling Live Savers Candy and his name was Edward J. Noble. ABC was the youngest of the three leading television networks in the USA thus it had to put a great deal of effort into gaining its own audience and competing with NBC and CBS especially after launching of television in 1948 when they did not have a big success. They decided to start to cooperate with Hollywood producers. ABC is often associated with Walt Disney, which is because he was one of the first producers that start to cooperate with ABC and his programme helped ABC to earn more money. Another significant producer was Warner Brothers.<sup>63</sup>

At this time ABC mainly aimed at families and young people with programming consisting of films of Hollywood Studios production and other attractive programmes. Even though ABC was openly criticized by NBC and CBS for providing such a programming, it did not change the fact that it was a huge success for ABC.<sup>64</sup> This network also began to include sexually suggestive humour during the 1970s, when CBS was more oriented on social issues, although it might have provoked some controversy back then, it was not as explicit as in these days.<sup>65</sup>

ABC was no exception and it also bought some British formats, namely a quiz show *Who wants to be a millionaire* or a reality dance competition *Dancing with the Stars*.<sup>66</sup>

There is also ABC player, where American citizens can watch their favourite programmes online.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> “American Broadcasting Company (ABC),” Encyclopedia Britannica Online, accessed March 18, 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/19375/American-Broadcasting-Company-ABC>.

<sup>64</sup> Michele Hilmes, *The Television History Book*, 37.

<sup>65</sup> Michele Hilmes, *The Television History Book*, 93.

<sup>66</sup> “American Broadcasting Company (ABC),” Encyclopedia Britannica Online, accessed March 18, 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/19375/American-Broadcasting-Company-ABC>.

<sup>67</sup> “ABC Player,” ABC, accessed March 18, 2012, <http://abc.go.com/watch>.

## 2. TV Formats

The objective of this work is to find American remakes of popular TV shows of British origin and try to compare those shows. This is based on a TV formats trading, which means that if a person comes up with some interesting ideas of a TV show and the show then become popular in the country where it is broadcasted, another people from all over the world can notice the success and they may want to either buy broadcasting rights, thus the whole TV show, or they may be more interested in purchasing the TV format only and create their own version of the same TV show. In the following part of my thesis I would like to focus on specific types of TV programme formats and try to find an answer to a question that can appear in readers' minds. In order to fully understand the discussed issue it is important to figure out why Americans keep on buying buy whole TV series (originated in the UK in this case) and also why they buy TV formats.

Both questions are basic and as a result they tend to raise further questions about preference for certain types of TV programmes, purchasing of chosen programmes, the advantage of purchasing whole TV series, the advantage of purchasing TV formats, etc.

At the very beginning it would be useful to know what the TV format is. There are plenty of possible explanations of TV formats, but according to Albert Moran and Justin Malbon a TV format is “a total body of knowledge systematically and consciously assembled to facilitate the future adaptation under license of the programme.”<sup>68</sup>

Even though the United States appears to be one of the greatest exporters of TV programmes in the world, it is necessary to say that the BBC can be considered as the first such an exporter because of the fact that some of its programmes were borrowed or remade in many countries in the past.<sup>69</sup>

The term TV format can be applied to any kind of television entertainment. There are many formats, including entertainment formats which consist of quiz shows, drama formats, which consists of dramatic production,

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<sup>68</sup> Albert Moran and Justin Malbon, *Understanding the Global TV Format* (Portland: Intellect Books, 2006), glossary 7.

<sup>69</sup> Albert Moran and Justin Malbon, *Understanding the Global TV Format*, 14.

sitcoms etc., and reality formats which is along with quiz shows programmes the most common ones. As mentioned above, televisions can also buy whole TV programmes without having to do anything else than the purchasing itself. Documentary films/series and programmes for children are the most popular items to buy in this case, on the contrary, reality shows of any kind, game shows and quiz shows are often purchased as TV formats only. Sitcoms/Britcoms (situation comedies/ British situation comedies) and dramatic production are somewhere in between.

To answer both questions stated above it is necessary to look closely at the advantages of television formats and compare them with the advantages of buying a complete TV series.

Both have their own advantages and disadvantages, there is no doubt about it. Common sense tells us that if there were no advantages, no one would really be interested in buying TV formats or complete TV series. People who pay for something in order to get it expect something in return, so the first possible answer is money.

## **2.1.Money**

Televisions provide their services and as any other services they earn money by broadcasting their programmes and also by broadcasting TV commercials. First they have to gain the right amount of audience, because it basically means – no audience, no money. To attract the audience they have to come up with something that make people sit, turn on the TV, stay until the end of a programme watched and mainly in case of TV series, come back and watch a next episode at the original air date. However, they have to own such TV series in the first place. Televisions have three options.

- 1) hire employees whose main responsibility in the company is creating such programmes (a case of creating a TV format)
- 2) buy a programme that was already broadcasted (a case of a complete TV series)
- 3) buy an already existed TV format (a case of buying TV formats)

Point 1 suggests that recruitment of personnel responsible for this kind of work means that their work shall be rewarded, in other words they shall receive a proper wage. On the other hand, when the employees do a good job and a TV show based on this format meet with success, they can sell it and gain their money back.

The point 2 saves money of televisions, because they do not have to hire the employees mentioned in the point 1, but they have to buy it, thus give money to the original owner of a TV programme, on the other hand they only have rights to broadcast it on their TV, not to sell it to the competition.

The point 3 is similar to the point 2 with the difference that they have to spend their money twice – firstly because they have to buy the TV format, secondly because they have to create their own version of the TV programme, which means another costs connected with the creation itself.

According to Dočekalová, a creation of a brand new TV format is an expensive process and it is easier and mainly cheaper to buy a foreign TV format in order to make a remake. Although she talks about situation in the Czech Republic there is also a question of risk, because no one can be certain that the programme can be as successful as it was in the country where it was made up. A program director is responsible for choosing and buying TV formats and if the programme is not successful enough, the loss is not as big as it would be in case of creating their own TV format.<sup>70</sup>

In reality, every television service has its own strategy, the way they spend their money and it usually combines all the points mentioned.

## **2.2.Effort**

Another reason why to buy TV formats is that it is an easier way to make profit. They can buy something which was or still is successful and they do not have to put effort into creating something new. It is also connected with the fact, that when you try to create something new, you have to make an effort and make it as much appealing as possible, because your goal is to create a successful TV show which shall be loved by many people. As mentioned before, it is true that even if you buy a TV format which has high ratings in one country, it does not

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<sup>70</sup> Markéta Dočekalová, *Tvůrčí psaní pro každého 3* (Praha: Grada Publishing, 2010), 160.

necessarily mean that it is going to be a smash hit in another country too, but such TV shows are more likely to meet with success. I am going to deal with the success/failure issue later on in my thesis, because American remakes of British TV shows have been made and there were made just a few episodes or pilots in many cases.

### **2.3.Cultural differences**

Cultural differences are probably the most important reasons to buy TV formats and not TV series. This category is wide, because it can involve languages, stereotypes, kind of humour and even particular genres.

In all cases when someone decides to buy a TV format, they do it because of one thing. They have to adapt it and it is common that the television that bought such a TV format adds something which is typical for the country or nation. It is interesting to watch programmes that originated in foreign countries from time to time, they can learn something more about different cultures, but many people would prefer to watch something they know very well and the United States is no exception.

According to Steemers Americans do not really want to watch something which is not American or at least “Americanized.” It is believed that American audience is not willing or able to understand a different culture and its typical features.<sup>71</sup>

Speaking of typical features, it can involve dry and black British humour which may also have an impact on the popularity and success of British sitcoms in the United States. It can also involve typical “Britishness” in British dramas which explains why American market does not offer many British dramas for watching on the TV.

Steemers claims that the question of “Britishness” plays a crucial role, because when the typical British features were removed and replaced with more American features, the TV show became more successful amongst people. The great example is the once mentioned remake of *Steptoe and Son*, American *Sanford and Son*. The TV show was remade, Americans added racial issue, which

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<sup>71</sup> Jeanette Steemers, *Selling Television*, 111.



was something that occupied minds of many people in the US in the 1970s, and therefore there was a relocation of some places.<sup>72</sup>

Languages play another significant role in this matter. Both, Americans and the British speak English, even though there are some differences between the two languages, they understand each other very well. Despite this fact, there are some TV programmes which are over-voiced or dubbed.

Programmes for children are usually re-voiced in order to attract more people (children in this case).<sup>73</sup> Children are young and it may be more difficult for them to fully understand, although such shows are usually simple enough. If you think of programmes such as *Teletubbies*, the four colourful creatures or the vacuum cleaner do not speak much. However, it may happen that there is used a word which is purely British and small children would not be able to understand properly, which may cause decrease in ratings, which would not be good for companies because they bought the programme and expected to earn money.

There are also programmes for children where no one speaks and those can be bought in the US as well as in the rest of the world and televisions do not have to take care of re-voicing, although a setting for some programmes can be easily recognizable as the British one, which on the other hand, can be seen as an educational element. Nevertheless the imperfection of young children due to their young age and inexperience can be another reason why televisions decide to replace an original sound with a new sound typical for a country.

The previous four pages give us an explanation why some kinds of programmes are more popular and some are not. As I said before, there are programmes which are better to buy as a whole TV series – programmes for children, documentary movies/series and there are also programmes, when it is better to buy a TV format and make a remake – quiz shows, reality shows, game shows, etc. If you think of such shows as *Pop Idol* or *Who wants to be a Millionaire*, firstly these programmes give a chance to local people to take part in and win something, which helps increase viewership or at least the possibility of participation and winning make people more interested in such programmes, they are surely more interested in watching in/taking part in the show, rather than just in watching strange people from a foreign country. The second reason which is

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<sup>72</sup> Jeanette Steemers, *Selling Television*, 109-110.

<sup>73</sup> Jeanette Steemers, *Selling Television*, 136.

closely connected with the first reason is that when a local person participates, he or she added something American. They behave like Americans, their thinking is American, and it does not mean, that all Americans are the same, but there are some features which are typical American (stereotypes) and those are seen mainly by foreigners.

### **3. Characteristics of Chosen TV Shows/ Comparison**

There are many TV shows that are of British origin and American production seized the opportunity to create their own TV shows based on them. These tries of American televisions were productive and successful in a large number of cases, however sometimes it led to cancelled pilots and episodes of series even before their original air date. This happened especially to numerous sitcoms. In this section I am going to talk about both – successful and unsuccessful TV Shows. I will try to describe in detail the original British Shows which were inspiration, sometimes more than inspiration to the American ones.

#### **3.1.The less successful TV programmes**

##### **3.1.1. Top Gear – an example of an unsuccessful remake (entertainment format)**

It is a well-known, widely spread and last but not least very popular TV show and one of the most watched TV shows on BBC iPlayer when episode 1 of series 13 was streamed an impressive 1.6 million times and episode 1 of series 14 managing 1.3 million streams.<sup>74</sup> “It is licensed to 117 countries via BBC World and BBC Prime...More than 1.3 million hotel rooms have access to the show, 37 airlines use it and you can watch it on 29 mobile phone platforms...It is licensed to 48 cruise ships.” A September 2008 search of YouTube yielded 52,000 *Top Gear* videos, headed by Jeremy Clarksons test drive on the Ariel Atom, with nearly 4 millions views, 8000 ratings, 20 video responses and 4000 text comments.<sup>75</sup>

*Top Gear* is a television show primarily focused on cars (and other motor vehicles), cars reviews, other car related issues and driving.

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<sup>74</sup> “BBC iPlayer Stats,” WebTVWire, accessed February 25,2012, <http://www.webtvwire.com/bbc-iplayer-stats-top-gear-most-watched-show-iphone-wii-providing-non-pc-use/>

<sup>75</sup> Greame Turner, *Television studies After TV: Understanding Television in Post-Broadcast Era* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 24.

## History

*Top gear* started on the BBC in 1977 as a car safety programme. The first presenters were Angela Rippon and Noel Edmonds. There were various presenters, but one of the most popular presenters – Jeremy Clarkson- joined the team in the mid-1980s. The Channel 4 began to broadcast *Driven* which was a similar programme presented by three presenters including James May. *Top Gear* had to change its strategy and it started to involve the comic component because of other similar programme –*Fifth Gear*. After the makeover in 2002 the presenters were Jeremy Clarkson and Richard Hammond, who was better known for his work on radio, and Jason Dawe. It did not feel right, so Jason Dawe was replaced with James May. At first Jason Dawe should be replaced with a female presenter to make it more similar to other presenting combinations, but Clakson and Willman resisted and won. Despite the fact that Top Gear’s presenters are all men nowadays, there were successful female presenters in the history of this TV show as well.<sup>76</sup>

## Presenters

Speaking of presenters, this is a very important part of Top Gear’s success. This is what makes Top Gear special. You can see a similar combination of presenters in other programmes focused on cars, but these three men are somewhat different. All of them have their typical personality traits. The tallest, Jeremy Clarkson is aware of his height and he is also aware of Richard Hammond’s height, which is according to imdb.com 170 cm, and he keeps on reminding it to him. He likes to make fun of his colleagues often. He made up a nickname for Richard Hammond, which is “Hamster” and a nickname for his other colleague James May “Captain Slow.” Jeremy Clarkson is a special persona, people either love him or hate him. The latest Clarkson’s incident could have a negative impact on his popularity, because he said that striking workers “should be shot.” British television BBC received over 21 000 complaints then, but more

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<sup>76</sup> Frances Bonner, “*Top Gear: Why Does the World’s Most Popular Programme Not Deserve Scrutiny*,” (Manchester University Press, 2010), 3-4.

than 17 000 people had voted on the Telegraph website saying Clarkson had not gone too far with his comments.<sup>77</sup>

Richard Hammond, the smallest of the team, usually does not make insulting remarks addressing to James May, but he often joins Clarkson. The television broadcaster is the most productive of the trio in terms of the number of TV Shows that participates or participated in. For example he presents *Total Wipeout*, which is a licensed version of American Wipeout. This show has its origin in the United States and it is one of the very few cases when the British television bought rights and created their own TV Show based on it.<sup>78</sup> Hammond is also popular; he won television Personality of the Year in the 2007 GQ “Man of the Year Awards.”<sup>79</sup> He is known for his car accident when he was badly injured and survived as well.

The last but not least is James May. He likes to drive carefully and slowly, that is why his colleagues call him “Captain Slow.”

There is no doubt about the popularity of *Top Gear*. The question is why this show is so popular. Frances Bonner conducted a survey of Australian women aged 35 and more asked them why they liked it. He found out that those women used the programme in a family context for bonding with partners and/or children, and that their favourite sections were those they called “stunts” but which are sold on compilation DVDs as “Challenges.”<sup>80</sup>

The show does not only consist of challenges, which means that presenters get certain amount of money, usually a small amount of money, they have to buy a used car and they have to accomplish the given task. It also consists of races, Christmas specials and Power laps. Races means that one of the hosts drives a car in order to get from point A to point B and the other two try to defeat him by using different means of transport. Christmas specials means that all the three presenters go abroad, they have to buy vehicles there and drive across the country. These specials are more focused on the interaction between presenters than on the cars themselves in contrast with Power laps. Power laps are only focused on cars,

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<sup>77</sup> Murray Wardrop, “Jeremy Clarkson’s execute strikers joke sparks 21,000 complaints to BBC,” *The Telegraph*, accessed March 2, 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/bbc/8930717/Jeremy-Clarksons-execute-strikers-joke-sparks-21000-complaints-to-BBC.html>.

<sup>78</sup> “Wipeout (UK game show),” Wikipedia, last modified February 11, 2011, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wipeout\\_\(UK\\_game\\_show\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wipeout_(UK_game_show)).

<sup>79</sup> France Bonner, *Top Gear*, 5.

<sup>80</sup> Frances Bonner, *Top Gear*, 6.

because the driver is Stig, a man who never shows you his face, so people can concentrate on the outcomes of all laps. In every episode there is a celebrity to be interviewed. This interview mostly includes questions about cars. Celebrities such as Rowan Atkinson, Tom Cruise, Simon Pegg, Gordon Ramsay or Sienna Miller are also asked to drive their fastest lap and then they are compared with each other.<sup>81</sup>

#### Comparison – UK vs. US<sup>82</sup>

First of all I would like to say that I am going to talk about *Top Gear* season 8, episode 7 (UK) and about *Top Gear* season 1, episode 7 (US). The reasons why I chose these episodes are simple. Firstly, American *Top Gear* only has 3 seasons, thus it is impossible to compare episodes of the same season if you have already chosen British *Top Gear* season 7. Secondly, British *Top Gear* started to broadcast in 1977, therefore it would not be appropriate to compare an actual first episode of each version, and moreover American *Top Gear* is primarily based on the newer version of British *Top Gear*, which has developed and changed over past few years. Then both versions also include a similar pattern, which I am going to talk about later on in my thesis.

According to the users of IMDb.com, American version is less popular than the original one, because if we compare ratings, we can see that it only has 4.8 points<sup>83</sup> whereas British *Top Gear* gets 9.0 points, which is a significant difference.<sup>84</sup> Of course, those ratings can be easily changed since it is a dynamic process, which means that everyone can vote and change the results, although British version has a lead over the American one. This is due to the fact that viewers tend to compare the two versions and the IMDb.com users think that the American version is boring, they talk about the show being a copycat and they also are not satisfied with the presenters.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> *Top Gear*, season 8, episode 7, directed by Phil Churchward, aired July 23, 2006 on BBC.

<sup>82</sup> “Used Car Salesmen,” *Top Gear*, season 1, episode 7, produced by Tabitha Lentle, aired January 2, 2011 on History Channel.

<sup>83</sup> “Top Gear USA,” IMDb, accessed March 25, 2012, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1657260/>.

<sup>84</sup> “Top Gear,” IMDb, accessed March 25, 2012, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1628033/>.

<sup>85</sup> “Top Gear USA reviews & ratings,” IMDb, accessed May 10, 2012, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1657260/reviews>.

## Presenters

Adam Ferrara, Tanner Foust and Rutledge Wood are presenter of the American version. To understand why British version is more popular we shall take a closer look at the three presenters.

There are three presenters in both versions. The choice of the presenters was similar as well. We can see three common men who are interested in cars and things connected to it. *Top Gear* as well as the other formats is a brand and it should not be change much, so their style of talking and presenting is similar. Their looks are similar too, they wear similar kind of clothes; jeans, shirts and jackets. Presenters of any show are supposed to be attractive, so people like watching them and enjoying the show, however American presenters appear to be more attractive then the British ones mainly because of the age of the main protagonist, although this is highly subjective as all people in the world might have different preferences. Their dialogs are also similar, although they tend to have a different kind of humour, which reminds us of the typical British humour, which is something no one is able to find in the American version. Next difference is that the American presenters seem to be less excited about what they do. Although all the three presenters are men, we can speak about a certain “bond” between the British presenters, their friendship is more believable in this case even though Clarkson and Hammond are used to making fun of May.

## Structure of the show

The American version of the show is shorter. The duration of the show is 43 minutes and 59 seconds whereas the British version lasts 59 minutes and 36 seconds. The signature tune sounds the same.

When the show starts the three presenters stand there side by side and only one of them speaks at the very beginning. He introduces the whole crew and then the other two join him. When the British version starts, there is only Jeremy Clarkson standing and welcoming viewers. He does not introduce himself or any of his colleagues. On the other hand, I am speaking about the 7<sup>th</sup> season; therefore a regular viewer is already aware of their names.

As mentioned before, TV formats should not be changed, therefore the studio looks very similar and the structure of challenges, reviews and other parts of the original show are there too. Because of the length, the British version is

able to do more reviews than the American one, so there are three car reviews in the British episode and they also includes news about cars. The last reason why I chose these two episodes is that in both versions, there is a race when one or two presenters compete with two men in order to get to a place faster than the competition – Parkour runners (UK) and cyclist (US) – both are seen as extreme sports, which is a similar pattern in this case. Speaking of similar things, the presenters lose the race in both versions.

#### Cultural issues

The British original is popular and despite the fact, American producers decided to create their own version. Top Gear is a programme about cars and therefore a man can expect to hear information about the fuel consumption, the speed etc. The interesting thing about Great Britain and the United States is that they use the same yet different metric system. During my research I found out that some people might find it a little bit confusing since they are not certain if units that are used in the UK are the same as they use in the USA.

Another significant difference referring to cars is that people in Britain drive cars on the left side on the road and they have a steering wheel on the right side. Americans are viewed as a gun happy nation and in the episode Adam Ferrara is happy that he finds a car without bullet holes, which is a joke based on a cultural difference between the two nations.

### **3.1.2. IT Crowd – an example of an unsuccessful remake (drama format)**

The British *IT Crowd*, a popular sitcom about two computer geeks Roy and Moss, relationship manager Jen and their eccentric boss Douglas, firstly released in 2006 is considered to be a perfect TV show. It has very good reviews and gets 8.7, when 10 means excellent.<sup>86</sup> American NBC noticed the huge success and decided to create their own version of the TV series with the same storyline although there are some differences in names of the main characters. We can see

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<sup>86</sup> “The IT Crowd,” IMDb, accessed March 25, 2012, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0487831/>.



Roy, Moss, Jen, but their boss is called Denham whereas the same character in the British version is Denholm. Richard Ayoade (Moss) appears in both versions so there was an attempt to include a British actor to the American remake.<sup>87</sup> According to imdb.com, the pilot of the US version was never released as well as the rest of the series, although there is a 7 minute and 49 seconds long video on YouTube showing the differences and similarities between these two versions.<sup>88</sup>

#### Comparison – UK vs. US

The main differences are faces of the main protagonists, except for Moss, American English, slightly different dialogues, when Roy tries to make a good impression on Jen by saying that he read Tolstoy meanwhile American Roy does the same thing by saying that he killed an alligator with his bare hands. It seems that Americans like to impress women by telling them how strong and manly they are and the British men do it in cleverer and more sophisticated way. This somehow shows the difference between British and American mentalities and supports certain stereotypes about British people. The scene carries on and in the UK version Moss obviously does not understand why Roy says such a thing and lies about reading Tolstoy in order to impress Jen and he does not help him at all. American Moss seems to be more aware of Roy's strategy and he cooperates, supports him, and even tries to make an impression on Jen too. The scene is shorter as well as the other scenes in the American version. Many jokes were omitted in the scene which makes it less funny. This may have an impact on popularity of the American version.

The TV series begins with the scene where Jen sits in her future boss office and talks about her experience with computers. Before that, the boss stares at her purposely and we can see that the British stare is a little bit longer and makes Jen more uncomfortable. Then when he asks her about her computer skills, British Jen appears to be more "shy," showing that she does not know much about this thing, but carries on talking adding more information. American Jen smiles and even though she lies as well, she appears to be more self confident showing an American smile.

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<sup>87</sup> "The IT Crowd," IMDb, accessed March 25, 2012, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0944954/>.

<sup>88</sup> "The IT Crowd: Season 1, Episode 1- Yesterday's Jam/ Part 1 of 2," YouTube video, 12:09, posted by "TheITCrowdHQ," December 13, 2011, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xqOf1\\_a5Z2w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xqOf1_a5Z2w).

The difference between British and American Roy is that British Roy is more annoyed. He looks like he actually hates all people, because they do not know that he exists. There is a scene where both Roys sit at a desk and the phone started to ring. The difference between the UK and the US version is that British Roy sits and does other things in order to avoid picking up the phone, meanwhile American Roy picks up and asks if they can wait and then does other things, which again, makes the scene less amusing. British Roy is still annoyed by his tedious job and answers questions with a bored face, because people keep asking him the same questions about basic computer things all the time. American Roy says basically the same thing but we can see that he does not appear to be as much annoyed by his tedious job as British Roy. On the other hand, American Roy answers questions in a more ironic or sarcastic way, it seems that he still cannot believe that people who do not understand computers on a basic level exists. British Roy is aware of this fact and that is why he speaks like a robot.

In the very last scene of the short video posted on YouTube is Jen telling Roy and Moss in both versions that she is the new head of the IT department. British Jen does it quickly; she wants to disappear as fast as possible in order to avoid hearing any response from her new co-workers, because they (in both versions) are not very pleased about the new situation and neither is Jen. American Jen enters the room, informs them and she looks very excited about her new office, so even though she does it quickly as well, she does not appear to be aware of the possible negative response.

There are also other things that can be compared. If we have a look at the members of the cast, Moss is the same person, but Jen is blonde in this case. The choice of a blonde and blue-eyed woman can be seen as another stereotype brought into the American version as the typical American woman is often defined as blonde-haired and blue-eyed by media. The American version deals with racial issues too, since Denham; the boss of the whole company is African-American. It reminds us of the *Sanford and Son* remake which also included racial issues into the series.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> “How a US version to a UK great turned out to be such crap,” YouTube video, 7:49, posted by “warhawkBL187,” February 1, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7vg1i83yek>.

## 3.2. The successful TV Programmes

### 3.2.1. Strictly come dancing – an example of a successful remake (entertainment format)

*Strictly come dancing* is a representative of the “entertaining format” category and this TV show has been successful in both countries. When we look at the ratings, those are not very high, however many seasons were made, which is a proof of popularity of this kind of entertainment. The TV show is about famous and not famous people (professional dancers) making pairs and dancing together while competing against each other in order to win. Every week, pairs dance a different kind of dance and at the end of each episode (or the episode day after) one pair is eliminated.<sup>90</sup>

Comparison – UK vs. US<sup>91</sup>

The same show is called *Dancing with the stars* in the United States, which is a better name for the show because it leaves no question. It is a good choice, because a person who does not know anything about the show knows what it is all about instantly. *Strictly come dancing* has the word dancing in it too, but there is no mention of celebrities who play a significant role in the show.

Presenters/judges

In both versions there is a duo of presenters consisting of an older honourable man and a beautiful young woman. They stand side by side at the beginning, and then the man says which pair is next, and the woman talks to them after their performance.

There are also judges who criticize performances of contestants and we can see the first difference here. In the British version, there are 4 judges, including Craig Revel Horwood; when he speaks the audience usually starts booing. Other 3 judges consist of a woman and 2 men. One of these two men – Italian Bruno Tonioli – appears in the American version as well.

The American version only has 3 judges – a woman and two men.

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<sup>90</sup>*Strictly Come Dancing*, season 7, episode 4, directed by Nikki Parson, September 26, 2009.

<sup>91</sup>*Dancing with the Stars*, season 14, episode 4, produced by Keith Taber, April 2, 2012.

### Structure of the show

The American version is based on the British one; therefore the signature tune sounds the same and the studio where the show takes place is similar too. The structure of the shows is the same – firstly they show what happened last week, they introduce all contestants and then the contestant start to dance and after their performance they get their points. The only notable difference is that in the American version people send twitter messages that show their support for the contestants and we can see them after the performance of each pair.

### Cultural issues

As mentioned above, this kind of entertainment is popular irrespective of the country of origin. Even though the shows are basically the same shows, if you mute the TV, you probably would not be able to tell what version you are watching at the moment. Popularity is based on something else in this case. You buy a format of such a show and you replace all people involved with people from your country, which makes the show less recognizable and more adaptable. Moreover, many people are not aware of the original; therefore they might think that the show has its origin in the state they live in.

### **3.2.2. Being Human – an example of a successful remake (drama format)**

The British TV series *Being Human* was broadcasted on BBC in 2008. There are three main characters, they seem to be normal, but they are not. All of them are special in some way; Annie is a ghost stuck in this world, George is a werewolf dealing with his issues and Mitchell is a vampire. They all live together in a house in the UK. George and Mitchell work in a hospital whereas Annie tries to figure out how she died. It is a fantastic series with the elements of comedy as well as with the elements of drama. We can see blood and violence as well as we can hear jokes.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Toby Whithouse, "Flotsam and Jetsam," *Being Human*, season 1, episode 1, directed by Colin Teague, January 25, 2008.

## Comparison – UK vs. US

*Being Human* is another example of an American remake; however, this is an example of a successful remake. The American version was firstly broadcasted on SyFy in 2011 and it is worth noting, that the series is not purely American since it is a co production USA-Canada.<sup>93</sup>

Before I start comparing, I would like to say that I have not seen the whole series, but the fact can help me remain impartial. I am going to compare the very first episodes of both versions.<sup>94</sup>

## Technical issues

The first difference concerning technical issue is that the British version lasts almost an hour whereas the American one lasts only 43 minutes. On the other hand, first season of the British version consists of 6 episodes, the American of 13, therefore some scenes are moved to the second episode in this case.

## Characters

There are the same three main characters as in the British version, although they have different names – Sally (ghost), Josh (werewolf) and Aidan (vampire). They all look alike, but not the same. The vampire is a dark type, the ghost is a black woman with curly hair wearing similar clothes, and the only difference is that American werewolf looks less like an outsider.

The relations between the three roommates are also a little bit different as in the British version they are already friends, whereas in the American version they get to know each other slowly.

Another difference is that in the American version there is a nurse, who is new; in the British version the nurse is already their acquaintance. Americans also added a new character, Josh's gay sister, which changes the plot a little bit.

## Storyline

One of the reasons why the show is popular is that the main characters and the storyline are similar, not the same. A few scenes are different, added and scrambled, a monologue can be heard at the beginning of the show, the British

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<sup>93</sup> "Being Human," IMDb, accessed March 26, 2012, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1595680/>.

<sup>94</sup> Jeremy Carver, "There Goes the Neighborhood: Part I," *Being Human*, season 1, episode 1, directed by Paolo Barzman, aired January 17, 2011.

version monologue is said by Annie, and American monologue is said by Aidan. Dialogs are not the same either. The American version starts when Aidan and Josh are not roommates yet, however George and Mitchell already are. Basically, the American version explains everything from the beginning; the British version throws us right into the thick of things, when we do not understand why and how Annie can materialize again for example. In fact, the British episode 1 is the American episode 2 when the American episode 1 explains all the things mentioned.

#### Cultural issues

The British version is recognizably British since we can see typical British things, a red double-decker for example. Milk tea is also characteristic for the British and Annie keeps making cup of teas in the first episode, which is something that cannot be found in the American version. The choice of music is also different; we can hear the British band Arctic Monkeys in one scene. I have mentioned racial issues a few times in my thesis and we can find it in the American version of the series as well. Americans changed the “white” patient in the hospital and made him “black”. Americans omitted a few typical British things, added some new scenes, characters and other issues, they tried to make it a little bit different from the original and they met with success. Last but not least, they took the advantage of the popularity of vampires and werewolves, which has been on the rise lately.

## **Conclusion**

The main aim of this bachelor thesis was to find out why some American remakes of British TV shows are more successful than the others. To be able to answer this question I had to look more closely on the TV format issue, realize how it is made and most importantly why it is made and sold to different countries.

Especially in these days money is one of the most powerful weapons and as the result people tend to create and sell TV formats because when a person has an idea and put some effort into making it, he or she wants to make a profit on it which is one of the basic laws of trading, not just in the case of TV format trading.

In a further course of my thesis it was found that even though money is a powerful thing and it plays a significant role, there are also other reasons why people keep purchasing TV formats. We can say that people who buy a TV format have a rather lackadaisical approach, because if you would like to create a new TV format it takes some time to do so. On the other hand when you buy a TV format, you also have to put some effort into making the TV programmes based on the TV format a smash hit. You have to make your own version, spend money on creating such a TV show and make it as much adaptable as you can, which means adding something typical for the audience.

Speaking of adaptability, this is the last thing I assume to be responsible for an establishment of TV format trading. As I have mention in my thesis several times, cultural differences play a crucial role, since not all the people in the world are interested in learning about new cultures, therefore we can speak about lackadaisical approach again. Of course there are people who are keen to watch TV programmes that are not produced by the country they live in, nevertheless it is natural that the rest would like to watch programmes that include elements of their own culture and as a result they can easily identify with it. They can also identify with the environment (or the set) which is something they know as well as the language. Despite the fact that both nations speak English, there is number of differences between the British and American English and some people, especially young children may find it confusing. However the language issue

cannot be seen as a negative element, because watching such programmes can broaden young viewer's horizons and not only theirs.

Adaptability and cultural differences also appeared in the last chapter of my thesis. I found out that drama production formats are more likely to be unsuccessful which may be influenced by the lack of opportunity to take part in. When you think about quiz and talent shows, those are designed for people. They can participate and win a prize, but in case of sitcoms or dramas the same people can only sit and watch; therefore I had to choose four different episodes of four different TV programmes, two of drama production formats and two of entertainment formats. Despite the fact that drama production formats are less popular after creating TV programmes based on them, I managed to find a good example of a TV series that met with success after all, although not purely American production, I assume that this is not the true reason why the TV series has been successful, because someone who is not aware of the fact that the TV series is co production USA- Canada would not be able to tell the difference.



## Resumé

Předmětem této práce bylo pochopení základních pojmů týkajících se televizní zábavy ve Velké Británii a Spojených státech amerických, dále se snažila nahlédnout na problematiku vzniku televizních formátů, na obchodování s televizními formáty a jejich následnou adaptaci v konečném prostředí. Cílem práce pak bylo zjistit proč k obchodování a přetváření už jednou fungujících televizních pořadů dochází a jaké jsou důvody jejich úspěchu či neúspěchu.

Práce byla rozdělena do několika kapitol a podkapitol, první kapitola byla zaměřena na historii tří důležitých britských televizních stanic, od jejich počátku až do dnešní doby, krátce jsem se zmínila i o vzniku samotné televize, tedy přístroje, který umožnil mnoho lidem na celém světě sledovat mimo jiné i pořady, o kterých tato práce také pojednávala. Vzhledem k tématu bakalářské práce bylo vhodné popsat historii nejen britských televizních stanic, ale i těch amerických, protože právě ony byly ty subjekty, které televizní formáty nakupovaly a posléze vytvářely jejich remaky.

Druhá kapitola pojednávala o televizních formátech, byl vysvětlen termín „televizní formát“ a dále pak byly popisovány důvody, které ovlivňují vznik, výběr a nákup televizních formátů a jejich následná adaptace v novém prostředí, v tomto případě ve Spojených státech amerických.

Poslední kapitola obsahovala popis vybraných televizních pořadů, původně britských televizních pořadů a amerických remaků, na kterou úzce navazovala jejich vzájemná komparace, ve které docházelo k postupnému objasňování a vysvětlování rozdílů mezi zvolenými pořady. Záměrně jsem vybrala vždy dva zástupce z dramatické produkce, do které se dají zařadit sitcomy, ale i dramata a dva zástupce zábavních pořadů. Jmenovitě jsem porovnávala *IT Crowd*, což je sitcom a *Being Human*, což sitcom není, nicméně komediální prvky jsou součástí pořadu a některé vtipy jsou založeny právě na situačním humoru.

Mezi pořady ve druhé skupině zábavních pořadů se objevily *Top Gear* a *Strictly Come Dancing* (*Dancing with the Stars* v americké verzi), tedy pořady nezaložené na fiktivním světě. Přestože jsem zjistila, že adaptace tohoto

televizního formátu bývají zpravidla úspěšnější i zde jsem byla schopna najít příklad ne zrovna úspěšné americké verze. Neúspěch americké verze spočíval v „geniálně“ sestavené hlavní trojici moderátorů, kteří svým jednáním a způsobem uvádění programu nedávají šanci nikomu, kdo by se snažil jít v jejich stopách a právě napodobování byl jeden z hlavních důvodů neúspěchu pořadu.

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## **Anotace**

Tématem této bakalářské práce je srovnávání původně britských televizních pořadů s americkým zpracováním stejných pořadů. Práce je rozčleněna do tří kapitol. První kapitola se krátce zabývá vznikem samotné televize a dále pak historií televizního vysílání v obou již zmíněných zemích. Druhá kapitola pojednává o televizních formátech a snaží se vysvětlit proč k obchodování s televizními formáty dochází. Poslední kapitola zahrnuje charakteristiku vybraných televizních pořadů; nejdříve těch více úspěšných a také pořadů, které se úspěchu nedočkaly. Poslední kapitola se pak dále dělí ještě na srovnání pořadů, které byly popsány, a snaží se objasnit, proč se z některých pořadů staly hity a z těch zbylých ne.

## **Annotation**

The theme of this bachelor thesis is a comparison of original British TV shows and American remakes of the same TV shows. The thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter briefly deals with creation of television sets and with the history of television broadcasting in both countries that had been mentioned above. The second chapter explores TV formats and tries to explain why there is such a thing as TV format trading. The last chapter includes characteristics of chosen TV shows; the more popular ones and also those that did not meet with success. The last chapter is subdivided further on into the comparison of the TV shows that had been described before and tries to clarify why some of them became blockbusters and the rest did not.