



imagine...

imagine... BBC One, from 11 June 2003

"I've always been passionate about the arts so this opportunity to present a major new strand on BBC One was irresistible. The brief for *Imagine* is simple. To be bold. To address a diverse range of subjects with intelligence and flair. We aim to be inclusive but we hope to inspire and surprise too. And, incidentally, there will be no crude demarcation between popular culture and 'high art'. *Imagine* will have a healthy appetite for both. The BBC is in earnest about raising its game with arts coverage on television. Don't take my word for it though. Watch the programmes.

I believe this diversity of approach in both subject matter and treatment is evident in the first series – from the amazing tale of Cuban ballet dancer Carlos Acosta, to Stella McCartney's personal story about her determination to succeed creatively. We celebrate the remarkable lives of sculptor Barbara Hepworth and writer John Mortimer as he turns 80. We look at the phenomenon that is Charles Saatchi. We pursue the rise and rise of hip hop. And we tell the intriguing story behind the controversial portrait of the 18th-century 'noble savage' Omai.

Imagine aims to capture the life of the imagination – which is, after all, what the arts are about."

Alan Yentob
Presenter, *Imagine*

Alan Yentob was appointed director of BBC Drama, Entertainment and CBBC in April 2000. In 1978, he created the mould-breaking arts series Arena and was editor until 1985. During this time he produced influential programmes including The Orson Welles Story, The Private Life of the Ford Cortina and My Way. His influential roles at the BBC have included Head of Music and Arts, Controller of BBC One and of BBC Two and Director of Television. His outside responsibilities include sitting on the South Bank Board and Chairmanship of the Institute of Contemporary Art.



barbara hepworth

shapes out of feelings

imagine... *barbara hepworth* shapes out of feelings

In Barbara Hepworth's centenary year, marked by nationwide exhibitions, *Imagine* takes a fresh look at the life and work of this major British artist and political activist. This is the story of a determined female artist in a man's world, a wife and mother, who became a leading 20th-century sculptor of immense renown.

The film explores the huge effect Hepworth's personal relationships and family had on her work, how she struggled, virtually penniless, with a young son and triplets, and how, together with her second husband, the painter Ben Nicholson, she pioneered a wholly abstract art in the years before the Second World War.

In 1939, to escape London's bombs, Hepworth took her young family to St Ives in Cornwall. There she rediscovered the emotional pull of landscape, and this inspired the great majority of her post-war work. She really believed that abstract art was a universal language capable of helping to heal the divisions of a world shattered by war.

Having overcome deep problems in her private life, Hepworth herself died tragically in a fire in 1975.

Imagine looks at the artist – in many ways a woman ahead of her time – and at the enduring power of her art today.



carlos acosta

the reluctant ballet dancer

imagine... *carlos acosta* the reluctant ballet dancer

The son of a Cuban truck-driver, Carlos Acosta has leapt into the heart of the classical ballet world and has been hailed as the next Nureyev. *Imagine* follows the 29 year old back to his roots in Havana where he is preparing his first choreographed show, based on his own life story. The film travels from the scene of Carlos's troubled childhood to his triumphant emergence as the first black principal dancer at the Royal Ballet.

The film culminates in the show's glittering Havana premiere, attended by Fidel Castro, who seeks out Carlos backstage to congratulate him.

One of 11 children, Carlos grew up in a cramped Havana apartment, played truant from school and became a champion break-dancer. The fear of his wayward son becoming a delinquent prompted his father to send him off to ballet school. But Carlos had always dreamed of becoming a footballer and hated ballet. Despite this, his extraordinary natural talent as a dancer was quickly recognised, and by the age of 17 he was achieving world acclaim.

Carlos has recently been receiving rave reviews performing with Darcey Bussell in *Apollo* and starring in the *Nureyev Tribute* season. He is currently performing in *Manon* at The Royal Opera House. His new show, *Tocororo – A Cuban Tale*, opens at Sadlers Wells in July.

Award winning film-maker Lucy Blakstad captures the inspirational rags-to-riches tale of the charming, determined young Cuban who defied the expectations of the conservative world of ballet.

Carlos Acosta – The Reluctant Ballet Dancer is a Lucy Blakstad Films / Horsepower production for the *Imagine* strand on BBC One.



the hip hop
generation

imagine... *the hip hop generation*

Why have our nation's kids become the hip hop generation? What is it about rap music – the street language of African America – that has Britain's children enthralled? And what do parents think of it?

Hip hop today *is* youth culture. Eminem is a worldwide superstar and hip hop now blares out of teenagers bedrooms all around the world. So how does black American youth speak to teenagers in Hackney's high-rises and Surbiton's semis? And what is it saying?

To find some of the answers, Alan Yentob takes us on a journey of discovery to the heart of black America. The starting point is on Detroit's Eight Mile Road, now the current capital of hip hop, where Eminem began his musical life. Next stop is New York where Yentob retraces his steps of 20 years ago when he made an *Arena* film called *Beat This*, about a then fresh, new sound coming from the streets of Brooklyn and Harlem called hip hop. His trip ends in south central Los Angeles, the birthplace of gangsta rap, the form of hip hop that gives UK parents the most headaches with its X-rated lyrics and fixation with the gun.

From break-dancing and graffiti art to its presence today in movies, fashion, advertising and on TV, hip hop has become a multi billion dollar business. *Imagine* goes beyond the beats and the bling and talks to the artists, the moguls, the fans and their parents in the USA and the UK.



john mortimer

owning up at 80

imagine... *john mortimer* *owning up at 80*

In the year he celebrates his 80th birthday, John Mortimer, the barrister turned author who became a household name with the creation of his popular drama *Rumpole of the Bailey*, is about to publish his latest book, *Where There's a Will*. *Imagine* captures him pondering on life and offering advice to his children, grandchildren and in his own words "anyone who'll listen".

John Mortimer's wit and love of life shines through in this reflection on his life and career. The film eavesdrops on his 80th birthday celebrations, visits his childhood home – where he still lives today – and goes to his old law chambers. There are interviews with the people who know him best, including Richard Eyre, Jeremy Paxman, Kathy Lette, Leslie Phillips and Geoffrey Robertson QC.

Imagine looks at the extraordinary influence Mortimer has had on the legal system in the UK. As a civil rights campaigner and defender par excellence in some of the most high-profile, inflammatory trials ever in the UK – such as the *Oz* trial and the *Gay News* case – he brought about fundamental changes at the heart of British law.

His experience in the courts informs all of Mortimer's writing, from plays, novels and articles to the infamous *Rumpole of the Bailey*, whose central character became a compelling mouthpiece for Mortimer's liberal political views.

Imagine looks at the great man of law, political campaigner, wit, gentleman, actor, ladies' man and champagne socialist who captured the hearts of the British public.



who is Omai?

imagine... who is Omai?

Imagine tells the fascinating story behind Sir Joshua Reynolds' portrait of Britain's first non-white celebrity, Omai. We look at the extraordinary tale of the first 'noble savage', who was plucked from obscurity in Tahiti and became an overnight sensation in 18th-century London and a subject for controversy right up to the present day.

The Tate, together with Sir David Attenborough, is currently fighting hard to keep Reynolds' portrait of Omai in the country after the Castle Howard estate sold it to a private collector. The Government has put a holding order on the painting while the Tate, which has received a private donation of £12.5 million to buy it, tries desperately to persuade the owner not to take it out of the UK. But why is this painting so important?

Omai was brought back to London as a 'souvenir' from Tahiti by Captain Cook's support ship during the 18th century's voyages of discovery. On his arrival he was greeted by the A-list celebrities of the day and fashioned in their image. Within days he was taken to meet the King. History was made when he was painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds, the leading British painter of his day. The result was perhaps Reynolds' greatest work – and the first ever grand portrait of a non-white subject. But just as with modern-day celebrities, people eventually tired of Omai and he was to meet a tragic end.

Imagine looks at the intriguing story behind one of the great masterpieces of British portraiture and the struggle to keep this slice of British history in the UK.



the saatchi
phenomenon

imagine... the saatchi phenomenon

No single person has done more to shape contemporary British art than Charles Saatchi. As he launches his new gallery in London's former County Hall, the film considers the enigma that is the man – famous for never giving interviews, supercollector of controversial artworks, partner to Nigella Lawson and advertising mogul behind the Tory party in the 1980s.

Imagine goes behind the scenes to explore the opening of the County Hall gallery – from the installation of Damien Hirst's infamous shark to the unforgettable opening party featuring 200 nude models. Saatchi's passion for art and his hands-on involvement in the presentation of his collection are revealed in unprecedented footage. The film follows him, often with partner Nigella, personally overseeing the preparations for his new gallery.

Contributors include friends Stephen Fry and AA Gill as well as colleagues from the world of advertising Lord Tim Bell and John Hegarty. Also interviewed are the artists whose futures he shaped, from Tracy Emin, the Chapman brothers and Paula Rego to Sandro Chia whose work Saatchi famously dumped.

Contemporary British art, love it or hate it, this is a must-see for anyone wanting to find out more about the fascinating and elusive Charles Saatchi – the man with an unrivalled collection of contemporary British art.

Photograph by Mary McCartney Donald



Stella's story

imagine... stella's story

Stella McCartney is undoubtedly every inch a star, but what about the creative mind behind her rise to celebrity fashion designer? *Imagine* examines the creativity and sheer determination that has catapulted her into the fashion elite.

With unique, exclusive footage dating back to 1985 and shot by Stella herself, along with probing interviews and family archives, *Stella's Story* is a portrait of the designer through her own eyes in a captivating video-diary style.

Daughter of Beatle Paul McCartney and photographer and opinion-former Linda McCartney, Stella looks back on her family and childhood and the influence they have had on her artistry. The film follows Stella's career from the early days. She talks about the "most creative period in my life" studying fashion at Central St Martins in London and reveals how periods of work experience with Christian Lacroix and Savile Row tailors influenced her future collections.

Imagine goes behind the scenes at Stella's fashion shows to take a unique look at her hands-on approach to her collections and the painstaking detail of her design work. We hear direct from models, friends and fashion figures about Stella's talent. We see her successes with Chloe and her anguish at her first badly reviewed show. Contributors include Kate Moss, Gwyneth Paltrow and Anna Wintour of *American Vogue*. The film captures the sassy personality and intimate story of the famous daughter who forged her own artistic path with the McCartney legend towering over her.

Stella's Story has been directed by Geoff Wonfor in association with Liberty Bell for the *Imagine* strand on BBC One.