



19 Dec, 2011

Press Announcement

Changes at Open Mind

Ahead of the company's 23rd anniversary, UK independent production company Open Mind have announced significant structural changes.

Founder and Managing Director, Roland Tongue will retire at the end of the year from the day-to-day management of the business he formed in 1989 with ex-BBC colleague Chris Ellis. Tongue, together with Ellis, remains a majority shareholder in Open Mind Productions, and will continue to work with Open Mind as a Consultant Producer on a project-by-project basis.

Speaking about his semi-retirement from a long and successful career in broadcast television, and on the changes to the company, Roland Tongue commented "Together, we have achieved a lot over the past 22 years or so and I look forward to seeing Open Mind moving on just as successfully over the years to come and, if possible, with me playing the role of one of the old men in the Muppet Box!"

Chris Ellis who, as co-founder and Creative Director, has been responsible for the creation and writing of many of Open Mind Productions' most successful series, including *The Number Crew*, *Maths Mansion*, *The Shiny Show*, and *Numberjacks*, will continue at Open Mind in a senior creative capacity whilst also continuing his career as a freelance writer.

Since delivering a second series of *Numberjacks* to CBeebies and a brace of DVD Specials for ITV Global Entertainment, Open Mind, and Ellis in particular, have concentrated heavily on the development of the *Numberjacks* brand in areas such as radio, music performance, live theatre and the development of the early years learning website *Numberjacks Mission to Learn*.

Prior to forming Open Mind Productions both Chris and Roland enjoyed long spells at the BBC, Roland as a Film Editor and Chris as a Producer/Director. Chris having begun his career as an English teacher, worked for the BBC on classic education shows such as *Zig Zag*, the *English File*, and *Scene*, working in parallel as a freelance writer on shows such as *The Biz* and *Grange Hill*.

Ellis commented: "Nick's creative commercial thinking, and wealth of UK and international connections, make him a great choice to take Open Mind forward, and I very much looking to forward to continuing working with him in this next stage of my career. Over the years I've enjoyed a rich mix of producing, directing, and writing, working across a wide range of genre including drama, documentary and animation, and I'm very much up for new challenges and opportunities, looking to find new ways of entertaining and educating children with Open Mind, as well as continuing to work with other companies as a writer."

Nick Underwood joined the company as a marketing consultant in 2005, having previously held senior management positions in both the licensing and children's entertainment sectors since 1994. Nick was elevated to the role of Commercial Director in 2007 and will now move into the position of Managing Director of Open Mind Ventures Ltd and will lead the new business strategy for the company, with Chris Ellis in the primary creative role.

“It's certainly a case of mixed emotions” commented Underwood. “Having worked alongside Roland for the past six or more years, and learned so much on the production side, it's naturally quite an emotional moment. But, we do know where he lives and he is remaining within the business as a consultant and major shareholder, of course. On the other hand, the chance to take the lead with such a well-known and highly respected brand as Open Mind is not one that I could ignore, and I'm extremely excited to have been given the opportunity” he said. “Open Mind has certainly lived up to its name over the years, and the company has moved with the times and reacted quickly to new platforms and innovative media technologies. We're perhaps best known for award-winning television projects, but we've also produced a lot of interactive, online and other new media content over the years and, having retained the commercial rights to our recent work, the company has also become a 'rights marketing' business alongside the long established production and creative operations”.

In advance of the management changes Open Mind has launched a re-vamped website at www.openmind.co.uk and is now actively seeking new partnerships and ventures that will move the business forward over the coming years.

Ends.

Notes to Editors:

Open Mind Productions Limited was set up in 1989 by Roland Tongue and Chris Ellis, and the company has gone on to make over 700 children's and educational programmes for clients such as the BBC, Channel 4 and Discovery Kids. Credits include Paz, Ratatat, the Number Crew, Maths Mansion, The Shiny Show, and The Numberjacks, which has been seen in over 50 countries around the world and translated into 15 languages.

Roland Tongue was a film editor in BBC Television for fifteen years editing many series including Horizon, Your Life in Their Hands, Ken Hom's Chinese Cookery and Citizen Smith. Since founding Open Mind Productions in 1989 Roland has produced more than five hundred and fifty programmes for BBC Television, Channel Four Television, Discovery Kids in New York and corporate clients including BP, Ofsted and SEAC. In the last seven years programmes produced by Roland have won two Royal Television Society and one BAFTA awards and nominated for a further two BAFTA and 3 Daytime Emmy awards.

Roland also specialises in new media production and has worked on major projects for Pearson Broadband and the “Homework” electronic classroom project with the University of Sussex School of Cognitive Science and Channel 4 Learning for the DTI & ESRC.

Chris Ellis was a teacher of English and Drama for ten years, where he started writing plays and musicals for young people. He then joined the BBC and produced and directed a wide range of programmes for children and teenagers, including Zig Zag, You and Me, Tales From Europe, and the History File. Chris was also writing as a freelance for shows such as Grange Hill, the Biz, and Fourways Farm.

In 1989 he set up Open Mind Productions with Roland Tongue, and has been Creative Director of the company since that time, devising and writing most of the companies shows. Chris has been nominated for a BAFTA, and he has won several Royal Television Society Awards, the Japan Prize, and a Peabody Award.

Nick Underwood had a successful career in hospitality and sports marketing before joining Ragdoll Productions in 1994 as Head of International Marketing. In 98 Nick moved to South Africa where he worked for Primedia SA on licensing and new media ventures before returning to the UK in 2000. Following a period at Just Group plc and then as CEO of the resurrected Newscreen Media Group plc, he joined Open Mind as a consultant in 2005. In 2007 Nick became a Director and permanent employee of Open Mind Productions and has worked across all of the company's commercial and new business matters during his period with the company.

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