

Celina Hinchcliffe

Alumnus Drama and English (Joint Honours)

Year of study 1994-1997

Current employer BBC

Current position Sports presenter

What are your abiding memories of being a student at the University of Birmingham? What was it like reading your subject?

It was a very exciting faculty to be a member of, on minute there was intellectual debate about novels and poems in an English seminar and then you'd race along the corridor to rehearse a play.

With whom did you make particularly strong friendships?

Made friends for life. Still in touch and regularly see a gang of about 30 mates.

Who were your influential tutors?

Chris Banfield, Gerry McCarthy.

What are your memories of student social life?

Amazing social scene, brilliant clubs, pubs, lively music and theatre scene.

What particular events do you remember?

The Guild organised some good nights and the clubs in the city centre were great fun. Drama Ball. Drama Parties in general were so flamboyant and lively.

What were the best things about the education that you received at Birmingham?

The practical side of studying drama – the chance to work on plays in a company environment. The opportunity to work with outside directors. The support you received from tutors. They were friendly and helpful. The teaching was geared to the Finals Exams so you felt supported in your studies.

How did your time at Birmingham influence your career path? Did it do so directly or indirectly?

It did influence my career path. I went to drama school after University and worked in theatre for some years before working for the BBC. There is no way I would be able to do my job now if I hadn't had the training of a drama degree. It taught me to stay calm and feel at ease in a 'live' medium'. Studying English gave me the ability to write well and a journalistic nouse. The people that I met at Birmingham, the contacts I made helped when I left.

Other than your qualification in your subject area, what other skills do you think your time at Birmingham developed?

I learnt how to read and cut through a lot of material to get to the centre of an argument or a thesis – invaluable training. I developed confidence. I learnt how to balance my time. Doing a Joint honours degree, I had to juggle loads at the same time.

One valuable skill I got from my time at Birmingham was meeting people from all cross sections of society. I think some universities only attract a certain 'type' of person. Whereas at Birmingham you get a real mix of people. That has made me a much more open minded person and prepared me for the outside world.

What were your expectations of the City of Birmingham and how did your expectations of the City match your experience?

I thought Birmingham would be a real dump. How wrong I was. I loved my time in the City. You get the best of both worlds – a real collegiate/campus environment which has a safe student vibe but then 10 minutes away is Britain's second city. With it, lies all the attractions of a massive city. The thing I remember the most are the amazing nightclubs and having such fun with my mates dancing. There are also great galleries, lively theatres and cool bars.

Is there anything else you wish to add about your experience at the University of Birmingham and the city in general?

I wish I had lived on The Vale in my first year.

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