

Journalism fails as draft of history

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Journalists like to think they are writing the first draft of history but we find it much harder to do the second re-write. [The Blair Years](#) on BBC TV is the first on-screen interview of any substance with the former Prime Minister since he left office, looking back at his decade in power. It's always fun to watch the body-language but it was remarkably un insightful, not because of a failure of the journalism but simply because it is too early.

It's not new territory. The BBC has already done the [Inside Story](#) and the Campbell [Diaries](#) while Channel 4 has done the Blair [Decade](#) and even put him on [trial](#). These programmes showed us the archive and we have heard from all the friends and foes alike. So there was very little left for former BBC executive and Times columnist [David Aaronovitch](#) apart from the words of the great man himself.

Sadly, these were circumspect. He refused to say anything about Gordon Brown except to admit that they had had rows occasionally. This was not new. And while the Blair/Brown relationship is key to understanding New Labour (and the current administration of course), the arguments over 'the deal' and the minutiae of who said what when are becoming tedious.

Aaronovitch was a curious choice for interviewer as he is an arch-Blairite. He is also a hugely intelligent and insightful journalist so I don't doubt that he was tough and clever in his questioning. But why wasn't he allowed to commentate the film and turn it in to more of an essay? In the end we had his disembodied voice and some oddly-filmed additional interviews from the usual cast of ex-Ministers and even some pointless clips from former Conservative leaders. I liked the way the programme tackled themes instead of timelines, but it all felt too early and too close to events for any new perspective to emerge.

Of course, the one person you really wanted to hear talking with candour was Gordon. And he is rather busy now. When he chooses to put his version of events down for the journalist historians then we will really have something worth watching.

The Blair Years, BBC1, Sunday, 10.15pm

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