

**\*\*EMBARGOED 00:01 THURSDAY 15<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2024\*\***

## **JAMES MAY RETRACES THE LEGENDARY VOYAGES OF COLUMBUS, RALEIGH AND COOK FOR CHANNEL 5 DEBUT**

London: Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2024: Channel 5 has today greenlit brand new factual series ***The Great Explorers with James May (3x90")*** from Plum Pictures. Fronted by British television legend James May in his first Channel 5 series, it tells the stories of three of the World's most famous and infamous explorers – Christopher Columbus, Walter Raleigh and James Cook in an entertaining and innovative way that only James can deliver.

**Will Daws, Managing Director, Plum Pictures** will serve as Executive Producer with **Catrina Lear** on board as Series Producer and **Tom Whitter** as Series Director.

The series was ordered by **Guy Davies, Commissioning Editor, Factual, Channel 5.**

In this three-part series, James May will chart the journeys of three of the world's most famous - and infamous - explorers. He'll examine the scientific endeavours, political machinations, engineering innovations and culinary inventions that allowed their ships to set sail in the first place - and how these journeys changed the world forever.

There was a time, before football and rock'n'roll, when explorers were the A-listers of their day. Death-defying antics and tales of daring made them the stuff of legend: names like Columbus, Raleigh, and Cook, who sailed off over the horizon to discover new lands and bring home treasures unimaginable to those sitting at home in dark, damp Europe.

Intrepid explorers they may have been, but 'great' might be pushing it. Across the seven seas, they spilled blood and spread disease. They enabled the destruction of civilisations and the growth of slavery. And many of their 'discoveries' weren't quite what you'd think...

Christopher Columbus - who stumbled across the Americas, but insisted he was in Asia.

Sir Walter Raleigh - who didn't discover potatoes, tobacco, or El Dorado, but hustled his way into the history books.

Captain James Cook - who failed in his search for Antarctica but charted a third of the world map along the way.

James will discover what really happened - and how. There'll be hands-on experiments, technological wonders, and plenty of messing about in boats, as he explores the science, engineering, and sheer stubbornness that allowed these extraordinary explorers to sail to every corner of the earth.

**James May commented:** *"TV shows are often described as 'journeys' and 'explorations'; this one really is about journeys and exploration. We all think we know the basic pub facts about these three great men, but the reality may come as a bit of a surprise. It certainly was to me."*

**Guy Davies, Commissioning Editor, Factual, Channel 5 said:** *"We are absolutely thrilled to welcome James May to Channel 5 as he embarks on this extraordinary journey. His unique blend of wit, curiosity, and boundless enthusiasm and occasional mischief makes him the perfect guide to retrace the historic paths of Columbus, Raleigh, and Cook in an innovative, revisionist and entertaining way."*

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**Will Daws, Managing Director & Executive Producer, Plum Pictures added:** *"Behind every expedition are stories of courage, innovation and ingenuity along with mistakes, missteps and miscalculations. The stories of these famous explorers are bold, dramatic and not for the feint hearted."*

**ENDS**

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**About Channel 5:**

Channel 5 is a multi-award-winning public service broadcaster and the UK's third largest commercial TV station. Launched in March 1997, Channel 5 has been part of Paramount Global (formerly ViacomCBS) since its acquisition in September 2014. Its portfolio includes digital channels 5STAR, 5USA, 5SELECT, 5ACTION.

Channel 5 and on-demand platform My5 offer a diverse range of critically acclaimed, original programmes featuring well-known faces and fresh new talent – from issue-led documentaries, popular factual series and accessible history shows to premium drama and agenda-setting news & current affairs. Channel 5 is the only PSB to air children's content daily through its much-loved programming strand Milkshake!, home to some of the world's favourite pre-school characters. The free to air channel's distinctive British programming aims to tell the story of modern Britain by reflecting the lives of people across the UK.

This year Channel 5 has continued to attract industry acclaim for documentary *White Nanny Black Child*, winning both a BAFTA Television Award (specialist factual) and an RTS Award, whilst *Endurance Race to the Pole* received a BAFTA nomination in the factual entertainment category. In 2023, *Who Killed Billie Jo?* won best documentary series at the inaugural True Crime Awards and home-grown drama *All Creatures Great and Small* took home the Stress Buster Award at the Radio Times' Screen Test Awards.

**About Plum Pictures:**

Plum Pictures has been producing innovative, popular and critically acclaimed programming for the major networks in the UK and US since 2007.

We make returning formats including *Amazing Spaces* (Channel 4) and *Serial Killer with Piers Morgan* (ITV); talent-led epics like *James May: Our Man in Japan* (Amazon Prime) and *The Mafia with Sir Trevor McDonald* (ITV); access series including *Girls Incarcerated* (Netflix) and *Last Chance Lawyer* (BBC Two); as well as series that defy characterisation, including *Trainspotting Live* (BBC) and *Shed of the Year* (Channel 4).

Our shows are broadcast on BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Sky, Amazon Prime, Netflix, Nat Geo, Discovery ID, Oxygen and are sold to over 160 countries.

Plum has offices in London and Bristol.