

DESIGN WEEK

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women wired into digital media

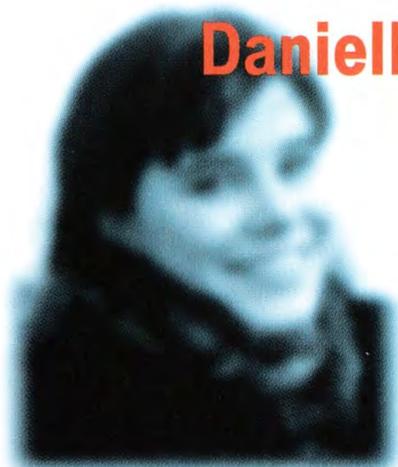


Electric ladyland

New media may be an exciting new field of design offering opportunities to all, but how well are women faring on its creative side? **Emma O'Kelly** asks five leading wired women

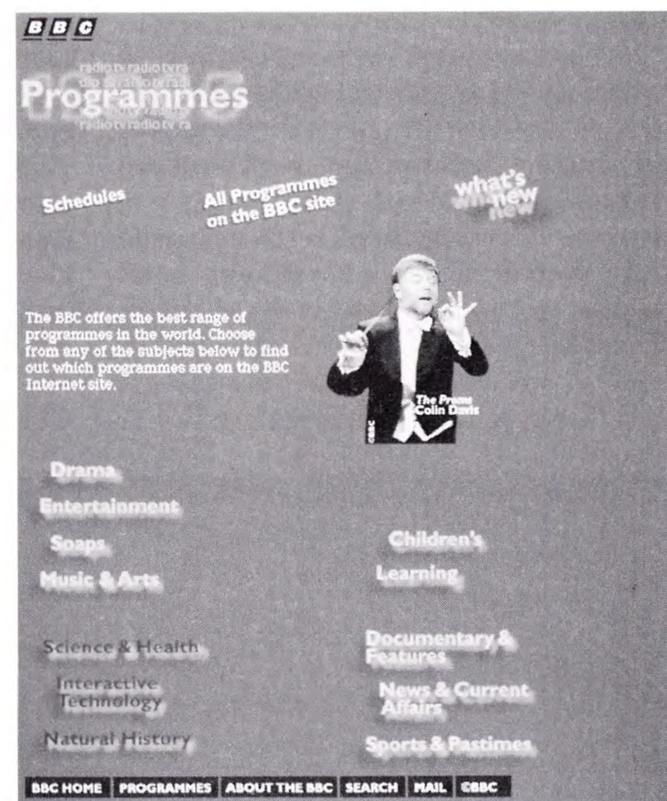
IF YOU'RE not a 22-year-old guy with a Britpop hair cut and don't stay up all night geeking around on your computer, you can't possibly be designing interfaces, CD-ROMS and delving into cyberworlds. Or can you? It seems that women are getting turned on by new media; applications from women to colleges to study digital arts courses and the like are on the up, and as the corporate structure changes from being face-to-face to working at home with e-mails, faxes and modems, even working mothers can keep that vital foot in the door.

But let's not get too excited; like design, the realm of new media still remains very male-dominated; and although a very young industry, it parallels other creative fields in that the women involved tend to be found in production, academia and sales rather than on the creative side. But here we look at some women who were on the frontline when new media was in its embryonic stages, and who have managed to stick to their creative guns.



Danielle Eubank
Head of projects and design,
BBC Multimedia Centre

Above left: Eubank's work on the Orange website at Wolff Olins; **Right:** BBC website



If you ever wondered where your TV license fees go, the multimedia centre at the BBC, opened in March 1996, provides part of the answer. Danielle Eubank and her team of seven designers receive funding to "develop new ways to deliver BBC content. We come up with concepts and ideas which are passed on to BBC Worldwide for commercial production". Although sworn to secrecy on current projects, she has recently finished a CD-ROM on Bach as part of The Great Composers series, but she is quick to point out that "CD-ROMS are on their way out, so we are concentrating on developing push technologies – where content is delivered to the users without them having to go and fetch it".

Prior to coming to Europe as a designer courtesy of Wolff Olins in Spain and then London, US-born Eubank worked back home at those new media meccas, multimedia publishing outfit Voyager in Santa Monica and then Microsoft,

(while doing a masters degree at UCLA in communication design). And if the BBC is afraid of being left behind in the scramble to take new media on board, then Eubank is the perfect evangelist of West Coast technologies and aesthetics. "Projects must have good content and design, and you must never forget the user," says Eubank, who identifies huge holes in the fabric of new media and is eager to fill them. "Multimedia is an incredibly young market and its products aren't engaging enough. I'm continually searching for the ultimate project."

Perhaps due to her absolute focus, or the fact that most of her working life has been spent in the US, Eubank is bemused by the notion that the industry may be male-dominated: "I think women are well represented in new media. Here at the BBC it's the first time I've had a male boss. There's no sign saying 'women go to the back of the bus'. It's damned hard work, that's all. But hey, I'm having a blast!"