**Programme outline**

18.00  **Drinks and networking**

19.00 **Opening**

Phil Chamberlain, Head of Department, School of Film and Journalism

19.05 **Background to the event and Crispin Aubrey Legacy Fund**

Meg, Kate, Rosie Aubrey, Crispin Aubrey’s Daughters

19.10 **Panel Discussion One – Reflections from the trial and campaign**

ABC defendant, John Berry  
                      Sue Aubrey, wife of ABC defendant, Crispin Aubrey

Legal Representative, TBC

Chaired by Andrew Kelly, Bristol Festival of Ideas

19.50 **Panel Discussion Two – Lessons from the trial and legacy today**

Duncan Campbell, ABC Defendant

Tony Bunyan, ABC campaigner and Statewatch Director

Chaired and contributions by Sarah Kavanagh, NUJ Senior Campaigns and communication officer

20.30 **Q and A – chaired by Andrew Kelly and Phil Chamberlin**

21.00 **Close**

There is a suggested donation of £5 towards the Crispin Aubrey Legacy Fund supporting inspiring journalists. More info at: crispinaubrey.org

**ABC Secrecy Trial 40 year on**

*Friday 3rd November 2017 - Arnolfini, Bristol*

Every post-war generation has had its own whistleblower who has tried to expose the extent to which governments monitor public communications. For the 1970s it was the ABC trial. This shone a light on the darker corners of state surveillance and sparked a ferocious attempt by the government to criminalise journalists. At this special event, hear from those involved and the contemporary relevance in our post-Snowden world. This unique panel discussion will look at the events from those involved and consider how much has really changed and the threats to journalists and whistleblowers today.

In 2012, Crispin Aubrey sadly passed away and this event has been organised by his family as part of the Crispin Aubrey Legacy Fund set up to support aspiring journalists and in conjunction with ﻿﻿[the University of West of England's Film and Journalism Department](http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/cahe/filmandjournalism)﻿﻿ and [Bristol Festival of Ideas](https://www.ideasfestival.co.uk/).

**Background to the Event**

This event marks 40 years since the joint arrests of Crispin Aubrey, John Berry and Duncan Campbell in what became known as the ABC trial (an acronym of their surnames). In February 1977, two journalists Crispin Aubrey of Time Out and Duncan Campbell a Freelance investigative journalist, interviewed John Berry, a former signals intelligence operator. On leaving the interview all three were arrested and subsequently charged, first under Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act, this included crimes of collecting and receiving classified information and later under Section 1 of the Official Secrets Act, usually used for Spies and carrying a maximum sentence of 14 years imprisonment.

The arrest of Aubrey, Berry and Campbell in the first instance was the direct result of surveillance by MI5, of the Agee Hosenball Defence Committee. The defence committee was formed in 1976 to fight the deportation order of two Americans – CIA Case Office Phillip Agee and Time Out journalist Mark Hosenball - in the interest of ‘national security’. All three men became concerned about the deportations. Crispin Aubrey became a leading figure in the defence campaign, Berry wrote a letter offering his support and Hosenball and Campbell co-wrote the *‘the Eavesdroppers’ the* first ever article on the GCHQ intelligence agency.

In September 1978, Crispin Aubrey, John Berry and Duncan Campbell went on trial at the Old Bailey. During the 21 months of the ABC case the full weight of the national security service descended on the three of them. All the so-called secret information shared during the interview with John Berry was found to already be within the public domain and this largely led to the failed prosecution’s case and non-custodial sentencing.

The ABC case attracted huge public interest as the government mounted a prosecution by turns farcical and ferocious. The case became notorious for a number of reasons, including jury vetting after the defence discovered that the jury foreman was a former SAS officer and that two other jurors had signed the official secrets act, as well as the prosecution of journalists under section 1 of the Official Secrets Act. The trial revealed much about government surveillance and the lengths it would go to keep its activities secret. Following the trial, Crispin wrote the book Who’s Watching You: Britain's Security Service and the Official Secrets Act (1981).

**ABC Trial - Chronology of Events**

30th Jan 1975 ‘Inside the Company’ by Philip Agee published in UK by Penguin

21st May 1976 ‘Eavesdroppers’ article by Mark Hosenball and Duncan Campbell, about Signals Intelligence, published in Time Out.

16th Nov 1976 American writers Phillip Agee and Mark Hosenball served deportation orders on grounds of national security.

Jan-Feb 1977 Suspected surveillance of Agee-Hosenball Defence Committee.

4th Feb 1977 John Berry writes to Defence Committee.

16th Feb 1977 Home Secretary confirms deportations.

18th Feb 1977 Crispin Aubrey and Duncan Campbell interview John Berry. All three arrested and charged under Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act.

24th May 1977 Further charges added under Section 1, the ‘spying’ clause.

9th Aug 1977 Additional charge against Duncan Campbell of ‘collecting information’, also under Section 1.

18th Nov 1977 Aubrey, Berry and Campbell committed to Old Bailey for Trial. Colonel B appears as main prosecution witness, protests at his anonymity.

Dec-Jan 1977 Colonel B named as Colonel H.A. Johnstone in Peace News, the Leveller and later in the Journalist (the NUJ Newspaper).

20th Apr 1978 Colonel B identified by four MPs in the House of Commons, his name broadcast on TV and printed in the national press.

May 1978 High Court action against the three publications originally naming Colonel, imposing fines totaling £1,200.

5th Sept 1978 ABC trial opens at the Old Bailey.

18th Sept 1978 Trial stopped as jury member’s background revealed as Special Air Services officer.

3rd Oct 1978 Second trial opens. Additional charge against Campbell dropped.

24th Oct 1978 All section 1 charges dropped after judge describes them as ‘oppressive’.

17th Nov 1978 Trial ends. Aubrey, Berry, Campbell receive minor, non-custodial sentences under Section ii, a part of the law the government was committed to repeal.

Feb 1979 House of Lords overturns High Court judgement on naming of Colonel B. Fines and cost repaid to three magazines.