

# Broadcast

## BBC doesn't deserve award for Sir Cliff raid broadcast

Corporation is wrong to enter search of star's property for RTS, says **Dominic Crossley**

**O**h Auntie, have you really submitted your Sir Cliff Richard search exposé for the Royal Television Society journalism awards as 'Scoop of the Year'? What a shame.

Sir Cliff had not been interviewed by police, nor notified of the investigation, when he found out, like the rest of us, through live televised coverage of the police convoy arriving at his house; the BBC helicopter filming through his windows to show police rummaging through his property; and reading that he was being investigated for "historical sexual abuse". There has still been no arrest.

The Home Affairs Select Committee investigated and found that South Yorkshire Police's handling of the matter was "utterly inept", irreparably damaging Sir Cliff's reputation, and declared that "no British citizen should have to watch their home being raided by the police live on television".

The committee had no such strong words regarding the BBC, which said it was "well within its rights" to run the story. From being on the defensive, the BBC is now seeking congratulation. But was it really "well within its rights" – let alone worthy of accolade?

Sure, the police have a clear duty in respect of the subject of an

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investigation, but so too must the media. The Leveson Inquiry concluded that in all but exceptional circumstances, names of anyone arrested or suspected of a crime should not be released to the press.

What were the justifiable circumstances or public interest here? Yes, the police erred badly, but just because they disclosed the impending search (and with it, the investigation) to the BBC, it does not excuse the corporation's part in the piece.

My view is that this broadcast was unjustified and warrants a black mark, not a gold star. I am unclear what exactly the BBC claims to have done well here.

In all its self-satisfied excitement, the only significant consequence of the decision to broadcast has been to damage the reputation of a man who remains innocent until proven otherwise – but who will never be able to remove the stain of the worst of the allegations.

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Police raid: BBC coverage has been entered for an RTS journalism award



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