

OH, CHRISTMAS TREE, NO, CHRISTMAS TREE!

By Andy Waters, Head of Studios

I love Christmas television. It's the time of the year when all of my favourite shows return with festive special editions that the whole family can settle down and enjoy. Morecombe and Wise still sets the standard and I'm sure their shows will continue to be broadcast for as long as we have televisions! Other favourites in our house include Doctor Who, Casualty, One Foot in the Grave, Call the Midwife, Only Fools and Horses... ah, the list could go on forever!

And at dock10 any day can be Christmas. We normally film all the episodes for a television series at the same time, so a Christmas special can be made on absolutely any day of the year. It's not unusual for festive decorations and jumpers to make an appearance in the middle of the summer, and it's always interesting to see the team dressed up for Christmas celebrations on a blistering hot day!

Even so, Christmas is a busy time for us and we have some absolutely brilliant television being made here over the festive season. Some of the nation's favourite quiz shows and big Saturday night entertainment shows are with us, along with some cracking comedy. And this year, changes to the way that television is made has brought an interesting new festive challenge in the shape of a virtual Christmas tree.

This week I was asked to approve a virtual Christmas tree for a Christmas special. Now call me an old-fashioned traditionalist, but I had to ask what was wrong with putting a nice big *real* Christmas tree in the studio? "Well, it's green ..." came the reply. The show was being filmed in a virtual studio that is entirely green because green is a colour people don't often wear -originally the studios were

blue, but jeans were a problem and so green became the standard.

So, putting a green Christmas tree in a virtual studio is a bad idea because the tree would simply disappear. But, with the magic of television, we can create a virtual Christmas tree that is photorealistic and decorate it to order - and even make it snow!

Now, with the tree on order (or is that on download?), we're all ready for Christmas! With thanks to the team and crews who have been with us this year making some amazing television, all that remains is to wish you a very Merry Christmas!