



Chaired by **Liveryman Professor Linda Drew**, a champion and mentor of creative business leaders and start-ups and current Chair of the Social Enterprise Mark. Linda is the former Vice Chancellor of Ravensbourne University London.

Carolyn Dailey, Founder of Creative Entrepreneurs



Carolyn Dailey, Founder, Creative Entrepreneurs launched this membership-based movement at No. 10 Downing Street in 2016. Its mission is to empower creative people to transform their lives by turning their creative ideas into successful businesses. Previously, Carolyn spent over 20 years with entertainment leader Time Warner (now Warner Media), helping HBO, CNN, Warner Bros. and Time Inc. expand their reach in Europe. She has been named by Creative Review as one of the Top 50 Creative Leaders, by BIMA as one of the Top 10 Entrepreneurs progressing the creative industries and by WIRED as one of the Top 10 Women Digital Powerbrokers, alongside Natalie Massenet and Martha Lane Fox.

She has lectured and presented on creative entrepreneurship at institutions including Central St Martins, London College of Communications, Ravensbourne University, the Design Museum, the V&A, the Whitechapel Gallery, D&AD, the London Design Festival, Cambridge University and No. 10 Downing Street.

Farid Haque, Founder of Erly Stage Studios and Erly Stage News



A small British publisher of graphic novels might not be the most obvious first port of call for those charged with combatting fake news about the US election. But when the U.S. Government's Cyber Infrastructure and Security Agency needed help in the run-up to the Presidential election, it turned to London-based [Erly Stage Studios](#), a gaming and innovation studio that is in the business of creating technology that helps drive educational outcomes and the result is [Real Fake](#), an online graphic novel which is the first in a series of publications that will highlight the threat posed by online disinformation. In this environment, anyone who consumes content online needs to be ready to question what they see, but most of us are ill-equipped to do so. "We have to find new ways to engage with

people through mediums that use soft power and creative messaging, rather than being seen to preach,” he argues.

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A small British publisher of graphic novels might not be the most obvious first port of call for those charged with combatting fake news about the US election. But when the U.S. Government’s Cyber Infrastructure and Security Agency (CISA) needed help in the run-up to the Presidential election, it turned to London-based Erly Stage Studios, which believes this form of media can play a crucial role in raising awareness about a range of important topics.

The result is Real Fake, an online graphic novel just published by Erly Stage, which is the first in a series of publications that CISA hopes will highlight the threat posed by online disinformation – particularly for a young adult audience who may be voting for the first time in this year’s election, or becoming more politically aware and preparing to vote in future polls.

Real Fake tells the fictional story of Rachel O’Sullivan – “a gamer, patriot and member of Symous - a group fighting disinformation and foreign interference in elections as polling day approaches.” Farid Haque, the founder and CEO of Erly Stage, explains: “Our stories are always grounded in reality but told through fiction; this is how we entertain as well as inform our readers.”

Erly Stage has certainly come a long way since Haque set up the business seven years ago. He was convinced serious graphic novels offered a fantastic opportunity to engage and inspire young audiences. Working with educators, artists and storytellers, Haque began with a series of publications focused on history and then expanded the range with a series on the economy, including a popular guide to the global financial crisis.

However, it was a chance meeting in a bookshop that saw Erly Stage begin to build an international business. “I’m a big fan of the work of Max Brooks [the U.S. actor son of Hollywood legend Mel Brooks who has written several graphic novels] so when *he published The Harlem Hellfighters* on the first Black regiment in World War One, I rushed out to buy a copy,” Haque recalls. “I hadn’t even realised Brooks was in the shop at the time, but when the assistant introduced me, he was incredibly generous with his time and I started showing him our history titles.”

Brooks would go on to become a member of Erly Stage’s advisory board and has introduced the company to a number of useful U.S. contacts – including the former FBI agent Clint Watts, one of the leading American advisers on cyber security and combatting disinformation and misinformation. Watts has played a crucial role in helping Erly Stage to develop Fake News.

Publication could hardly be more timely, Haque argues. “We’re focusing on the bad actors who are persistently and continuously bombarding us with disinformation, using industrial production techniques such as troll farms and bots,” he says. “They have become more sophisticated than ever before.”

In this environment, anyone who consumes content online needs to be ready to question what they see, but most of us are ill-equipped to do so. “We have to find new ways to engage with people through mediums that use soft power and creative messaging, rather than being seen to preach,” Haque argues.

Graphic novels are one such medium, Erly Stage believes, particularly where publishers work with educators who know how to build understanding and awareness constructively. In this regard, Haque singles out the

contribution to *Real Fake* – and the broader forthcoming *Resilience Series* – made by Michael Gianfrancesco, an American teacher known for his advocacy for more use of graphic novels in education, who worked with Erly Stage on the script.

Ensuring the next generation of voters understand how a range of bad actors seek to manipulate them online is crucial for democracy and societal good, Haque believes. “There is now a real need for schools and public authorities to educate young people on how much fake news there is across all forms of media,” he says. “People don’t know what fake news really is.”

That imperative is global, of course, but as a British company, Erly Stage is naturally keen to work with policymakers in the U.K. “We would love to get in front of the government here and talk to them about how we can help them build engagement,” Haque says. “Every government in the world now has to face this challenge.”

[Forbes.com 28.10.2020](https://www.forbes.com/2020/10/28/erly-stage-fake-news/)

Tim West, founder of Pioneers Post



Tim is the founder editor and CEO of [Pioneers Post](#), the online newspaper and learning platform connecting social innovators across the globe, and mission-focused marketing and social innovation company [Fable Bureau](#). He also founded the [Good Deals](#) social investment conference and the NatWest [SE100 Index](#).

Through these platforms and initiatives, he works with corporates, social entrepreneurs, private businesses, civil society organisations and government bodies to promote the fusion of brilliant business and social values, helping to tell compelling stories, build great brands and generate sustainable business around social impact and social responsibility.

Tim is a director of [Big Issue Invest](#), The Big Issue's social investment arm, and a trustee with [ECT Charity](#), one of the UK's leading social enterprises. He has served on a number of national programmes, advisory groups and awards panels – including the [Deloitte Social Innovation Pioneers](#), the awards panel for [UnLtd](#) and the UK social enterprise awards.

Tim was an undergraduate at Oxford University, where he gained a degree in music and was a 'choral scholar'.

Having begun a career as a professional opera singer, he discovered a passion for journalism and current affairs that crystallised during a lucky break working for his local newspaper. He then trained as a newspaper journalist, and held a series of senior editorial posts on specialist national magazines in public and social policy, before launching the magazine and a separate PR and marketing company – both focused around storytelling for social entrepreneurs and socially responsible business and investment. Along the way, Tim also undertook further study at Warwick Business School and completed the business growth programme ([BGP](#)) at Cranfield School of Management.