

# PROFESSIONAL WRITING NEWS

December 2007

## Student lands book deal

**P**rofessional Writing student Frea Lockley had more than one reason to be cheerful as she picked up her MA award last month. Frea had just signed a contract for her first book with a leading London publisher.

The non-fiction book is scheduled for publication by Octopus in 2008 and will take an upbeat, enthusiastic look at motherhood.

As the mother of a lively nine-year-old son, Frea certainly meets the first test for authors: know your subject. She also worked for several years as a teacher, notching up plenty of experience of dealing with large groups of easily bored kids.

### **Bold move**

Giving up her teaching job in Brighton to take up a place on the Professional Writing course was a bold move for Frea, but one that she certainly doesn't regret:

"It's been an amazingly stimulating year, and signing a book contract has made it seem all the more worthwhile. To be honest, this wasn't a project that I had in mind a year ago when I started the course. But one of the best things about the MA is that it gives you insights into many different kinds of writing.

"The idea for the book came out of attending sessions on creative non-fiction taught by Susie Marriott, a brilliant tutor who's a very experienced author and editor herself. She was extremely helpful in showing us how to package and present book ideas for maximum appeal to publishers and agents."

### **Run of achievements**

Frea's success is the latest in a run of achievements by students and former students of the course. In the summer, Penzance-based Joanna Thomas (2004-5) saw her book *Lost Cornwall*, which delves into some of the most fascinating but least-



**Plenty to celebrate: Professional Writing students at November's MA Awards Day**

known aspects of the county's history, published under the prestigious Birlinn imprint, alongside authors such as Alexander McCall Smith.

Meanwhile, Frea's fellow student Tim Warren has heard that his script for a radio comedy series featuring God as one of the main characters has been taken up by a well-known independent production company and submitted for commissioning by BBC Radio 4.

Course-leader Christina Bunce says: "We're always delighted by the success of our students, and it's very rewarding to be able to help them develop strong ideas in a way that allows them to reach the widest possible audience."

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## Oscar-nominated writer picks a winner

**A** script by a Professional Writing graduate has won a £3000 prize as well as mentoring from one of the UK's most celebrated screenwriters.

As a writer on films including *Gladiator*, *Shadowlands*, and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, Bill Nicholson knows more than a little about what makes an inspired script. So when he picked Patrick Evans's screenplay as the winner of South West

Screen's Screenwriter Development Competition, this was recognition indeed.

"The screenplay benefited from a simple powerful idea that was sustained throughout the plot, as well as a richly researched setting," Nicholson comments. "I now look forward to working with Patrick on maximising the emotional impact of the wonderful story he has created."

Patrick's screenplay, *White Elephants*, is set against a backdrop of corruption in the



Patrick Evans

Nigerian oil Industry and tells the story of a father and teenage daughter torn apart by time, reunited in desperate circumstances and forced to rediscover what it means to love.

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## From myth to film in five days flat

**N**o sooner had this year's intake of MA students arrived in Falmouth than they found themselves grappling with a tough creative challenge.

Presented with the ancient Cornish myth of the Giant Bolster, they were asked to come up with ideas for adapting the story to a contemporary setting.

After selecting the strongest, they were then required not just to develop the concept into a script, but also to work with film-maker Serena Rodgers and a cast of professional actors to shoot and edit it into a 20-minute film. Oh, and the whole process had to be wrapped up in five days.

The completed film re-imagines Bolster as a grotesquely arrogant celebrity chef whose bullying of staff and customers is rewarded with a fatal come-uppance.

Asked about what she got out of the project, student Maria Faulkner says:

"Apart from an incredible sense of achievement and a group of people I could trust? I got the message. One I had heard many times but never learned. The secret

to being a writer is to write. As simple as that."



If you can't stand the heat: actors on the Bolster film set

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## Where are they now?

**I**n which we track down alumni of the MA Professional Writing course, to the ends of the earth if necessary. Only room for a few snippets this time...

Dave Nixon (2005-6) writes entertainingly on his blog ([davepaulsplace.blogspot.com](http://davepaulsplace.blogspot.com)) about being summoned for a job interview with media giant Endemol. A delayed train results in Dave arriving ten minutes late and drenched in sweat – not the ideal state in which to discuss his approach to creating enticing copy about womenswear for the M&S website. But we're pleased to say that the story has a happy ending.

In other copywriting news, Duncan Heaney has walked out of Falmouth (as it were – he may still have been able to afford a train ticket) and into a job with Prompt Communications, a Chiswick-based public relations, marketing and copywriting agency specialising in technology.

Meanwhile on the publishing front, Kathryn Treeby (2003-4) has been appointed Author Liaison Coordinator at the academic publishing house Palgrave Macmillan.