

PROFESSIONAL WRITING NEWS

June 2011

MA student scoops national biography prize

For Matt Cox, an MA in Professional Writing meant taking time out from a successful legal career. Not a decision to be made lightly, but one that was more than vindicated when Matt was awarded the prestigious Tony Lothian Prize for first-time biographers in October.

For his MA project, Matt had focused on the previously undocumented life of Prince Monolulu, one of Britain's first black celebrities.

Racing tipster, preacher, dancer, nude model, lion-tamer, conjuror, fire-eater and frog-swallower, the self-styled 'Prince' led his colourful life against the backdrop of the Caribbean, Tsarist Russia, New York, several European capitals and two World Wars. Matt first heard about him while growing up in the East End of London, where the Prince was a legendary figure in racing circles.

Drawing on the skills gained on the MA course, Matt submitted a 20-page proposal for a biography entitled *White Lies, Black Magic: Prince Monolulu, the Celebrity Britain Forgot*, including a synopsis, a sample chapter and notes on the intended market for the book.

Prize dinner

After being shortlisted for the £2000 award, Matt was awarded the prize at a dinner in London attended by writers, publishers, agents and journalists, including Lady Antonia Fraser, Alison Weir and Kate Williams.

"It's very satisfying when any reader enjoys your work, but particularly in these circumstances," Matt said. "I'm sure that the enthusiastic support and professionalism of my tutors contributed hugely to my development."

In April, Matt returned to Falmouth to give an inspirational talk on creative research to this year's MA students.



He described the challenges he'd faced in sorting out fact from fiction in the Prince's life, and how he had made all sorts of serendipitous discoveries, drawing on sources ranging from audio archives of East End life to collections of vintage cigarette cards found on eBay.

Concluding his talk, Matt stressed that students on the MA course should make the most of the exceptionally supportive environment that they enjoy at Falmouth.

Living dangerously

Listeners to Radio Four may be feeling a little worried for the safety of Professional Writing graduate Patrick Evans.

Patrick's series of despatches from the 'dead zone' around Chernobyl, for *Saving Species*, involved encounters with wolves as well as exposure to enough radiation to send a Geiger counter off the scale.

For Patrick, however, such hazards are all in a day's work. As a script supervisor for the BBC's Natural History Unit, he's worked on projects including *The Bear Family and Me*, which documented a year in the life of a family of the little-understood American Black Bears.

As well as his TV and radio work, Patrick has published several pieces on his

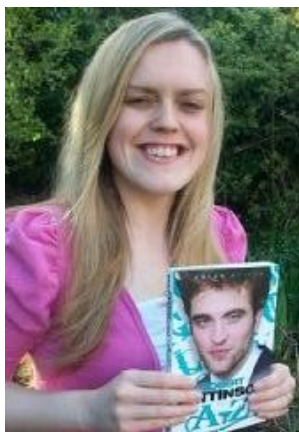
adventures in Eastern Europe and Asia in the Guardian and the Daily Telegraph. His by-line also appeared recently in the Japan Times, over a long feature about getting up-close and personal with Siberian tigers in the remote Sikhote Alin Mountains of Russia's Far East.

No doubt Patrick's time spent studying rhetorical structure under Derrek Hines stood him in good stead when dealing with these fearsome predators.

Sarah's string of celebrity bestsellers

When Sarah Oliver started on her MA in Professional Writing in 2006, the project she had in mind was a book about rugby.

Four years after completing the course, she has indeed published *Be the Best*, an inspirational guide to the game for young players. But she's also become one of the UK's top-selling non-fiction authors, with several celebrity books under her belt and more in the pipeline.



Things took off for Sarah after she landed a job as an editorial assistant at an online entertainment magazine, where she soon became editor. She started writing pieces about Robert Pattinson that generated huge volumes of

traffic, and rapidly made herself into the world's leading expert on the teen heartthrob.

Sarah was then commissioned by John Blake Publishing to write an A-Z guide to the actor, which sold in shedloads.

This was followed in short order by A-Zs on Justin Bieber, Taylor Lautner and several other celebrities which have made Sarah into a more or less permanent fixture on the paperback non-fiction charts for over a year. Her seventh in the series, on Miley Cyrus, was out last month.

Sarah says: "The time I spent at Falmouth made all the difference to me, as it gave me the confidence and know-how that I needed to make the most of my talent in a highly competitive publishing environment. I'm also grateful to the course team for the giving me some very sound advice on contracts."

News flashes

So much has happened since our last newsletter that we can't hope to give you more than a flavour of what we and our graduates have been up to. A few highlights...

- In January, full-time students worked with MA TV Production students to create three internet dramas over the course of a week-long workshop presided over by John Yorke, the BBC's Controller of Drama Production and New Talent.

- Other visiting lecturers over the past few months have included best-selling novelist Emily Barr, leading non-fiction author and publisher Tom Bromley, *Green Wing* and *Campus* scriptwriter James Henry, business-writing guru John Simmons, and trail-blazing book apps developer Dan Witters.

- At the London Book Fair in April, we threw a well-attended party for editors, producers, agents, publishers and alumni.

- Alumna Lizzie Bird has signed a book deal with Reader's Digest.

- Student Tom Southam has been signed for his cycling memoir by the Jenny Brown Literary Agency.

- Student Kelly Stevens has presented life-writing workshops with the Royal College of Surgeons.

- Course leader Christina Bunce has moved on to become Head of Continuing Professional Development at Falmouth, where we'll be working with her closely. Helen Shipman's capable hands are now on the Professional Writing rudder.

- We've said a fond farewell to poet, playwright and unforgettable course tutor Derrek Hines, and welcomed two new tutors: award-winning novelist Kris Kenway and top literary editor Andrew Wille.

Find out more about MA Professional Writing at Falmouth and how to apply [here](#).

You can also check us out on [Facebook](#) or tune into our tweets on [Twitter](#).