

Thursday 12 June 2008

BOOK FESTIVAL CELEBRATES 25 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE

Catherine Lockerbie today celebrated 25 years of the Edinburgh International Book Festival, announcing the biggest and most international programme ever. The packed series of literary and political events taking place in Charlotte Square Gardens this August culminates with a world exclusive: the launch of one of the most eagerly anticipated books for years, the long-awaited memoirs of Sean Connery, *Being A Scot*. In the city of his birth, and on his birthday, Sir Sean will be in discussion with his co-author, distinguished Scottish film-maker Murray Grigor on the final day of this year's Book Festival.

Sir Sean's appearance also marks a James Bond presence in this, the 100th anniversary year of Ian Fleming's birth. Author and comedian Charlie Higson will launch the fifth and final episode of his hugely successful Young Bond series, while we also present the authorised biography of Ian Fleming, *For Your Eyes Only*.

Running from 9 to 25 August, with a record 800 authors participating in over 750 events, this year's Edinburgh International Book Festival welcomes specially invited guests from over 45 countries, with over 200 Scottish authors also taking part. Major literary names include Salman Rushdie, Louis de Bernières, Margaret Atwood, Alan Sillitoe in his 80th birthday year and Hanif Kureishi. A powerful line up of politicians, political commentators and foreign correspondents includes John Prescott, Alex Salmond, Menzies Campbell, Tony Benn, Jonathan Powell, David Owen, Gavin Esler, Jonathan Dimbleby, Polly Toynbee, Martin Bell, Alan Johnston, Matt Frei and Kate Adie.

A special 25th Anniversary opening event will feature a major public figure revealed in a new light in conversation with Ian Rankin. The mystery guest will be announced on Friday 8 August, the day before the Festival opens.

Special themes include **Focus on China**, in this Olympic year, bringing the finest writers on and from the world's most populous country. To mark the 60th Anniversary of the founding of Israel, and the fifth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, our **East and West** and **War and Terror** series bring world experts to Edinburgh to examine, in depth, relations between the west and the Islamic world.

Catherine Lockerbie said: "I am overjoyed that so many authors, from the most renowned to brand new writers being heard here for the first time, have accepted our invitation to come and be part of our intricately constructed 25th anniversary Festival. It is my passion to make this the most international, illuminating, engaging, argumentative and inspiring celebration of words and ideas anywhere in the world. I hope the pressing issues and powerful individual voices in this year's programme reflect that ambition, a fitting one for Edinburgh, the first UNESCO City of Literature, and the world's greatest festival city."

Culture Minister Linda Fabiani said: "The 25th anniversary Edinburgh International Book Festival is a great addition to the city's wider festival programme, which again looks firmly set to be an outstanding, world class Festival in its own right. The programme for this year's Book Festival is hugely impressive and I, along with many thousands of other festival goers, look forward to enjoying what's sure to be a fantastic series of events."

The adult programme is complemented by the RBS Children's Programme, which is packed with events, workshops and debates for every age group from toddler to teenager.

Founded in 1983, the Edinburgh International Book Festival is the largest festival of its kind in the world. Under Catherine Lockerbie's directorship, it has become a platform for audiences to debate with leading thinkers from the worlds of science, politics, business, economics and journalism as well as literature.

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