

Friday 20 June 2008

BEST EVER SALES IN 25 YEARS OF BOOK FESTIVAL

**SEAN CONNERY'S BOOK FESTIVAL APPEARANCE
SELLS OUT IN UNDER AN HOUR**

The Edinburgh International Book Festival has today experienced an unprecedented demand for tickets and Sean Connery and Murray Grigor's appearance in Charlotte Square Gardens on 25 August sold out within the first hour. Other events which sold out this morning include Tony Benn, BBC Journalist Alan Johnston, Margaret Atwood, Alexander McCall Smith, Ian Rankin, Jonathan Dimbleby and Scotland's First Minister, Alex Salmond.

The 2008 Book Festival programme is the biggest ever with over 800 authors appearing in Charlotte Square Gardens, and highlights include appearances from Salman Rushdie, Alan Sillitoe, Menzies Campbell and Louis de Bernières.

The quality of the programme and the special nature of the events – each event is a one-off and takes place in a relatively intimate venue – combined with comparatively low ticket prices has meant that the demand has been incredible with 300,000 hits on the Book Festival website in the first hour of bookings, and over 21,000 telephone calls - levels usually associated with rock festivals and major international superstar line-ups.

345 customers were queuing outside the specially created Box Office at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre at 10.00am when bookings opened. Peter Lomax from Edinburgh was first in the queue having waited outside the EICC from 6.30am this morning. He was looking for tickets for Salman Rushdie, Richard Dawkins and Sean Connery – and was delighted to be able to purchase all his choices.

Press coverage following the launch of the programme on 12 June was extensive, with more international coverage than ever before which has created interest in the Festival from around the world.

Catherine Lockerbie, Director of the Book Festival said "It is enormously gratifying that literary stars and unknown authors from Scotland and further afield are able to attract such extraordinary interest."

"This year we have invested a significant amount of time, staff and financial resource to develop a system to cope with the demand and we are delighted that we have been able to deal with so many customers satisfactorily this morning. All our systems are working well and we have been taking ticket sales over the telephone, the internet and at the EICC consistently since 10.00am. We know that due to the extraordinary demand a large number of potential customers are finding it difficult to get through on the phone or via the internet, and would ask them to be patient and keep trying."

- ends -

For further information and
photographs of the queues and waiting areas at the EICC
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