

Ennis Book Club Festival 2008

Ennis, IRELAND, 11th February 2008

Author and former hostage **Brian Keenan** will appear at the Ennis Book Club Festival 2008, which takes place from 29th February to 2nd March.

The Belfast native who was held hostage by Islamic Jihad in Lebanon for four and a half years will participate in the international festival's Sunday Symposium to talk about memoir.

The 'Reading Memoir' session will also feature **Richard Tillinghast**, critically acclaimed US poet; **Hugo Hamilton**, winner of the Rooney Prize for Irish Literature; and **Nuala O Faolain**, Irish Times columnist and author of 'Are You Somebody?'

Keenan is the author of four books including 'An Evil Cradling', the 1991 winner of the Irish Times Literature Prize for Non-fiction. The book tells of the great friendship he experienced with fellow hostage **John McCarthy**, and the brutality that was inflicted upon them by their captors.

Commenting on Brian Keenan's participation in the second annual festival, Ms. Patricia Callaly of the Ennis Book Club Festival Organising Committee said, '*Brian Keenan is a wonderful writer and an eloquent speaker. I have no doubt that his unique narrative style of writing complemented by his fascinating background will attract even greater numbers of literary enthusiasts to the festival. He deservedly joins a stellar list of world renowned authors on this year's festival programme of events.*'

Other confirmed festival participants include **Roddy Doyle**, a Dublin dramatist, screenwriter and Booker Prize winning author of 'The Commitments', 'The Snapper' and 'The Van'; British author **Joanne Harris**, who wrote the best seller 'Chocolat'; **Lorna Landvik**, actor, playwright and author of the best selling novels 'Patty Jane's House of Curl' and 'The Tall Pine Polka'; **Dermot Bolger**, the author of eight novels and winner of the **Samuel Beckett Award**; **Neven Maguire**, an award winning celebrity chef; poet; **Fintan O'Toole**, drama critic, journalist and broadcaster; **Ré O Laighlís**, the biggest selling contemporary writer in the Irish language; **Diarmuid Gavin**, writer, garden designer and TV personality; **Theo Dorgan**, Cork-born poet and broadcaster; and **Morgan Llywelyn**, an esteemed author of historical fantasy, fiction and non-fiction books.

The **Ennis Book Club Festival 2008**, supported by **Clare County Library**, is expected to attract hundreds of book club members and book lovers from all over Europe and North America. The programme of events will feature author visits, readings, lectures, workshops, exhibitions and cookery demonstrations, musical entertainment, chocolate tasting in various venues around Ennis, and a speed dating-style networking session for book club members to get to know one another and exchange views.

Tickets for all events are now on sale at **Glór Box Office**
065 6843103 info@glor.ie

For further details on the Ennis Book Club Festival 2008 see
ennisbookclubfestival.com

Alternatively email
info@ennisbookclubfestival.com
or contact
00353879723647 / 00353857758523.

About Brian Keenan: Keenan was born into a working class family in East Belfast in 1950. He left Orangefield School early and began work as a heating engineer. However, he continued an interest in literature by attending night classes and in 1970 gained a place at the New University of Ulster in Coleraine. Other writers there at that time included Gerald Dawe and Brendan Hamill. In the mid 1980s Keenan returned to the Magee College campus of the university for postgraduate study. Afterwards he accepted a teaching position at the American University of Beirut. In April 1986, shortly after taking up the position, Islamic Jihad kidnapped Keenan. After spending several months in isolation, he was moved to a cell shared with the British journalist John McCarthy. The British and American governments would not negotiate with terrorists and Keenan was effectively ignored. Because he was travelling on both British and Irish passports, the Irish government made numerous diplomatic representations for his release, working closely with the Iranian government. Throughout the kidnap they also provided support to his two sisters, Elaine Spence and Brenda Gillham, who were spearheading the campaign for Brian's release. He was released from captivity to Syrian military forces on August 24, 1990 and was driven to Damascus. There he was handed over by the Syrian Foreign Ministry to the care of Irish Ambassador, Declan Connolly. His sisters were flown by Irish Government executive jet to Damascus to meet him and bring him home to Northern Ireland. He now lives in Dublin.

2008 Programme

<http://www.ennisbookclubfestival.com/home-images/EBCF-2008-Programme.pdf>

County Clare Arts Office

<http://www.clarelibrary.ie/arts.htm>

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