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BOOK FESTIVAL CELEBRATES 25 YEARS IN STYLE

The 25th anniversary year of the Edinburgh International Book Festival has been a glorious success and has certainly proved to be eventful, launching with a surprise appearance from the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, and closing on Monday with the launch of *Being a Scot* where, on his 78th birthday, Sean Connery made his only public appearance to talk about the book. The Connery event was the fastest selling event in the 25 years of the Book Festival with all 570 tickets gone in under an hour.

Packed in between the two were 800 authors, from 45 different countries appearing in 750 different events. As well as the Prime Minister, leading political figures included the First Minister, John Prescott, Jonathan Powell and Robert Kagan, foreign policy advisor to US Presidential candidate John McCain. The persistent rain in one of the wettest Augusts on record, which turned parts of Charlotte Square gardens into muddy pools frequented by yellow rubber ducks and seagulls, failed to deter visitors. Almost 200,000 people visited the Book Festival this year, with 75% of tickets sold which represents a rise of 3% in ticket sales from 2007.

The Book Festival ventured into publishing with a new book, supported by the Scottish Government's Edinburgh Festival's Expo Fund. *Lights Off The Quay* contains new and specially commissioned work from four of Scotland's internationally acclaimed and award winning authors – John Burnside, Janice Galloway, A L Kennedy and Don Paterson.

Five authors from the 2008 Man Booker Prize Long List enthralled audiences including Salman Rushdie, winner of the 1981 Booker Prize, the Booker of Bookers in 1993 and the Best of the Booker earlier this year with *Midnight's Children*, who presented his new book, *The Enchantress of Florence*. His sold-out event was beamed live into the Melbourne Writers Festival, with the Australian audience on the other side of the globe asking him questions as part of a pioneering live satellite link with the second UNESCO City of Literature.

A lighter note was struck by cult American author, Chuck Palahniuk, author of *Fight Club* and *Choke*, who launched his new novel *Snuff*, about the porn industry. His superb sense of story-telling and interaction, as well as his three-hour book signing – the longest for this year – captivated a diverse audience, many of them attending a literary event for the first time.

Many sold-out events featured exclusive book launches, including new memoirs from Carol Thatcher and Kate Adie.

Catherine Lockerbie, director, said: "This festival has surpassed all my expectations. From the success of our surprise opening event all the way through to Sir Sean Connery's warm, witty and relaxed appearance, filled with quirky stories and wide-ranging intelligence, we have had an astoundingly good response from authors and audiences alike. Despite the hideous weather, people have been coming in incredibly eager numbers, hungrier than ever for the sustenance we offer, from the most famous names in the world to the brand new. We have had a great sense of engagement and enquiry across the whole range of the programme, including little-known authors visiting the UK for the first time. There could hardly be a better anniversary present. "

The Book Festival continues with a special autumn event with award-winning Australian author David Malouf. Master storyteller and winner of the Commonwealth Writers' Prize, his book *Remembering Babylon* was shortlisted for the Booker Prize and won the first ever IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. His latest collection of stories, *Every Move You Make*, captures the intimate subtleties of the men and women whose lives are played out against the immensity of the Australian landscape. Malouf will be appearing at the Traverse Theatre on Tuesday 23 September at 7.00pm. Tickets are available through the Book Festival box office on 0845 373 5888 or online at www.edbookfest.co.uk.

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