

NEW WRITING NORTH

Press Release: 23 October

Major TV Industry Event Announced for Newcastle

New Writing North brings a major TV industry event to Newcastle, aimed at writers from across the north who want to improve their screenwriting skills, get industry know-how, and make new connections.

Sponsored by North East Screen, Screenwriting Weekender takes place at the Live Theatre in Newcastle from 31 January to 2 February.

It features leading screenwriters, such as Tony Schumacher (*The Responder*), executives from TV production companies such as Clerkenwell (*Baby Reindeer*), Merman (*Motherland*) Warp (*The Virtues*) and RED (*It's a Sin*) as well current opportunities from BBC Writers.

It will also showcase tips on how to break into TV scriptwriting from agents at Curtis Brown and Casarotto.

The event features a keynote speech from the critically acclaimed screenwriter, Peter Straughan.

His credits include this year's highly anticipated film *Conclave*, starring Ralph Fiennes, Stanley Tucci, John Lithgow, and Isabella Rossellini, and the BAFTA award-winning, Academy nominated film, *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (co-written by Bridget O'Connor) starring Gary Oldman, Colin Firth, and Benedict Cumberbatch. He also adapted Hilary Mantel's the BAFTA and Golden Globe winning *Wolf Hall* for the BBC, and its forthcoming sequel, *Wolf Hall: The Mirror and the Light*, which is currently in production.

Tony Schumacher, behind the hit Liverpool drama, *The Responder*, starring Martin Freeman, based on his own experiences as a Merseyside police officer, will be in conversation with the South Shields-based screenwriter, Emile Robson, exploring his inspiring story, how he navigates the industry and his approach to writing.

Lisa Laws, Development Director at North East Screen, said: "We are delighted to be sponsoring New Writing North on The Screenwriting Weekender which has an impressive line-up of world class talent.

"Stories are the lifeblood of our industry and the region has a rich history of storytelling in all its forms. However, for years we have lacked a visible local screen industry. That is starting to change with the North East seeing an 89% increase in film and TV production over the last two years, and a fourfold increase in commissions from the region. For anyone who wants to make the most of these new

NEW WRITING NORTH

opportunities to get their untold stories in front of global audiences, this event is a must."

The weekend will explore a range of topics from demystifying writers' rooms and creating iconic characters right through to pitching.

The leading entertainment company, FilmNation TV, is supporting 10 bursary places to support northern writers who would otherwise be unable to access the event to take part.

Kirstie Macdonald, Creative Director, FilmNation TV UK, said: "I'm delighted to be involved in this exciting event amongst such wonderful local talent, and to be part of the renewed wave of enthusiasm for our fantastic region."

North East Mayor Kim McGuinness said: "I am determined to make the North East a powerhouse of creativity and culture, because that will open the door to opportunities that can transform people's lives. Screenwriting Weekender shows how we can make this happen, by helping people find routes to get ahead in the film and TV industries.

"We have a proud screenwriting legacy with the likes of Dick Clement, Ian La Frenais, and Peter Flannery bringing iconic shows like *Auf Wiedersehen Pet* and *Our Friends In The North* to TV screens. As Mayor I want the North East's diverse new voices to be heard and seen across the world by helping unearth a new generation of talent."

The writer John Higgs, who specialises in finding unsuspected narratives that can change how we see the world, will give a session on how to maintain your creativity and optimism in a market-driven industry and uncertain world. Higgs's books include explorations of James Bond (*Love and Let Die*) and *Stranger Than We Can Imagine: Making Sense of the Twentieth Century*.

Jo Schofield, Senior Talent Executive, Screen Yorkshire and former script editor at *Emmerdale* and *Coronation Street* will chair a conversation with Northern writer Jackie Okwera, who has worked in writers' rooms for HBO Max, Netflix, Apple TV+, Sky, and Channel 4, and drama commissioner Phil Dodds, about their experiences of navigating the industry and working in writers' rooms.

Jess Loveland, Head of New Writing at the BBC and Kirstie Macdonald, Creative Director, FilmNation TV UK, will discuss how writers can create a spec script that will wow agents and production companies.

NEW WRITING NORTH

Malak El-Gonemy, Development Executive at Tiger Aspect, will chair a conversation with screenwriters Mark Brotherhood (*Ludwig*), Jason Cook (*Hebburn*) and Ashley Storrie (*Dinosaur*) on how to break into writing comedy for the screen.

Roxy McKenna, Development Producer (Screen) at New Writing North, said: “It’s a chance to hear from those working at the coal face of TV, with invaluable insights and exercises, from creating an unputdownable opening for your script, to sessions with leading agents on how to break into the industry, to learning to pitch ideas with leading development producers. There’ll also be a focus on the writing itself – how to navigate audience trends, maintain creativity and generally, be inspired. There will also be an opportunity to network with other writers, as well as producers and funders at mixers throughout the weekend.”

On hand are representatives from North East Screen, CreativeUK, Film Hub North, BBC, BFI NETWORK, and the Film and TV Charity, as well as execs and producers from regional production companies keen to build networks with northern writers.

Other speakers include development producer Emma Millions, who has created hundreds of pitch decks, and written for the likes of Ant and Dec, and Alex Cameron from Parrot Analytics, who uses data to explore the tension between writing what you think an audience wants, and what you as a writer want to say.

Topics will also explore mental health and wellbeing for writers, and ways to improve the often financially precarious and emotionally challenging experience of being a working writer for TV.

New Writing North’s mission is to break down barriers to opportunities for northern writing talent, helping to identify, support and create career-changing opportunities.

The charity leads the development of creative writing and reading in the North of England. Based in Newcastle, the Arts Council Portfolio Organisation has developed new writing talent since 1996.

It runs numerous awards and writer development programmes to support screenwriters, including the Channel 4 Writing for TV Awards which offers packages of support to emerging writers from the north, including placements at film production companies Bonafide Films, Red Production Company, and Rollem Productions.

Screenwriting Weekender: 31 Jan-2 Feb, Live Theatre, Newcastle upon Tyne.
Tickets: £100+ booking fee, there are a limited number of bursary tickets available.
Book: <https://newwritingnorth.com/event/screenwriting-weekender/>

ENDS

NEW WRITING NORTH

Notes to Editors

New Writing North

New Writing North leads the development of creative writing and reading in the North of England. We are based in Newcastle upon Tyne, where we have produced nationally significant work since 1996. We are proud to be a charity and an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. We believe that writing talent is everywhere, but that opportunities are not. We work hard to both identify talent and create fantastic career-changing opportunities for people from across society. We develop programmes and activities that inspire people to engage with creative writing and reading, whether this is to develop their skills and professional ambitions or for pleasure and wellbeing.

We help excellent writing find local, regional, national, and international audiences.

[Home - New Writing North](#)

About North East Screen

North East Screen is the screen agency for the North East. We develop and champion North East England as one of the UK's leading film and TV production hubs where exceptional screen industry talent can live, create and work. We support all incoming productions with crew, locations and facilities shooting anywhere in the North East England through our free and invaluable Film Office. We manage the North East Production Fund on behalf of the North East Screen Industries Partnership. We work with Indie production companies based in the North East providing them with business and commission development support. We offer professional support to home grown freelancers including writers, producer, directors and artist filmmakers. We connect experienced crew to job opportunities and, for those just starting out and wanting to work in film and TV, we run the NE Screen Crew Academy.

www.northeastscreen.org

[@nescreen](#)

North East Screen Industries Partnership was formed by Combined and Local Authorities from across the region to level up the regional film and TV industries by more than doubling its 2019 share of the UK production market and delivering an annual economic impact to the regional economy of £88m.

NEW WRITING NORTH

It includes Tees Valley Combined Authority, (representing the five authorities of Hartlepool Borough Council, Stockton-On-Tees Borough Council, Middlesbrough Council, Darlington Borough Council and Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council), and the North East Combined Authority, representing its partner authorities: Northumberland County Council, North Tyneside Council, Newcastle City Council, Durham County Council, Gateshead Council, Sunderland City Council and South Tyneside Council.