



PENGUIN HEADS FOR FRANKFURT WITH AN EXCITING LIST OF NEW TITLES

London, 07 October 2009... In the run-up to Frankfurt Book Fair, Penguin announces some exciting new acquisitions.

Michael Joseph is delighted to announce the acquisition of *Conquest*, a sweeping historical epic of the early middle ages, by BAFTA-winning film-maker Stewart Binns. Editorial Director Alex Clarke acquired world rights for the debut from James Gill at United Agents. Set all over 11th-century Europe in the build-up to, and the aftermath, of the Norman invasion of England in 1066, *Conquest* ranges across a canvas of astonishing breadth and ambition. With an amazing combination of both hugeness and detail, the novel re-imagines the life of its hero, the much mythologized, but little documented, English outlaw Hereward of Bourne.

Clarke says "Stewart Binns writes with the craft and intelligence of a seasoned campaigner. *Conquest* weaves together a fast-paced and gripping saga of heroism and warfare, passion and idealism, violence and love, with an incredibly perceptive and detail-rich evocation of one of the most significant phases of history, with Europe standing at a crossroads. Stewart's brilliant accomplishment is to combine the excitement of Bernard Cornwell with the epic scope and world-vision of Ken Follett's medieval novels. We're hugely proud to be adding *Conquest* to the burgeoning Michael Joseph historical fiction list". Agent James Gill at United says, "*Conquest's* achievement is its mixture of hair's-breadth detail and grand narrative ambition, all too rarely achieved in a debut. It has found an ideal home with MJ."

Also at **Michael Joseph**, a major new arrival has been added to the crime & thriller list. In a heated auction, Editorial Director Stef Bierwerth acquired UK & Commonwealth rights to John Verdon's *Think of a Number* and two further novels in the same series. The deal was brokered by Caspian Dennis of Abner Stein in association with Molly Friedrich, who had previously sold North American rights to Rick Horgan at Crown.

Think of a Number is a haunting and riveting first novel, about a super-intelligent killer who lures potential victims by taunting them to think of random numbers, and then directs their actions toward a diabolical outcome. It introduces unforgettable ex-cop David Gurney, who together with his wife Madeleine, is trying to live a quiet life in the New England country side, but who keeps getting embroiled in some of the trickiest murder cases in the history of thriller fiction. Michael Joseph is launching *Think of a Number* in the summer of 2010 to coincide with Crown's publication in the US.

Michael Joseph is delighted to welcome Ben Kay to the fold with his brilliant debut novel *Instinct*. *Instinct* is a lightning-paced thriller about a clandestine research facility buried deep in the South American jungle, which has developed the ultimate weapons system, a weapon which lives and breathes, and which kills by its very nature...

Editorial Director Alex Clarke acquired world publishing rights and film rights from Robert Dudley - and says of Ben's book: "Ben's debut novel is an absolute belter - his action writing is incredibly



accomplished and hard-edged, and his plotting is edge-of-your seat-stuff... meanwhile, Ben's eye for technical detail and character puts him in line to be a worthy successor to Michael Crichton. We're going to have a lot of fun publishing *Instinct*."

At **Viking**, Mary Mount bought the UK and Commonwealth and India rights for Mirza Waheed's new novel, *In the Valley of Yellow Flowers*. This was acquired from David Godwin for publication in early 2011. The book tells the heartbreaking and urgent story of a family who are the last to leave a village in Kashmir, near the Pakistan border, as the war brings fear and militancy to its inhabitants. The author grew up in Kashmir and currently works for the Urdu Service at Bush House. Mohammed Hanif, author of *The Case of Exploding Mangoes* has already described the book as 'a riveting read. A brilliant, important first novel'.

Viking has also acquired UK and commonwealth rights for *The Financial Lives of the Poets* by Jess Walter, from Harper Collins US. The publication date will be September 2010. In a failing economy, Matthew Prior has given up his day job and just about every security going to set up a website offering cute financial advice. When the site goes belly up, and he realizes he's put his marriage and his family's well-being at risk, paranoia and angst set in. But this is real: he's jobless, deep in debt, suspicious of his wife's online flirtation and six days away from losing his house. In this wonderfully funny and mordant novel, Walter offers a story for our times - a tale of misbegotten schemes, overstretched accounts and domestic dreams deferred.

At **Fig Tree**, only this week, Juliet Annan bought the UK and Commonwealth rights for the follow up to the already hugely successful *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett, from Amy Einhorn Books at Penguin Putnam. The title of the novel is yet to be confirmed, but telling the story of a family in Mississippi who fall on hard times during the Depression, it sees Stockett exploring just how far they would go to save themselves. If the success of Stockett's debut novel is anything to go by, Penguin has high hopes for this, her second; Putnam (USA) now has 730,000 copies of the hardcover of *The Help* in print.

Another recent acquisition at **Fig Tree** is Margot Henderson, co founder of Arnold and Henderson caterers and the Rochelle Canteen, who is to write a cookbook on entertaining. Fig Tree bought World Rights from Felicity Rubinstein and this will be their first cookery book.

Through her vast experience of domestic, catering and restaurant cooking Margot has developed a very strong idea and attitude towards how she approaches the table and the kitchen when entertaining, turning each event into an individual and memorable experience. Margot says of her book, 'A cookbook with attitude, practical and useful in the kitchen, as well as beautiful, it will also be a handbook and guide with pointers and advice for entertaining. In fact, it will put Arnold and Henderson out of business, as from now on everyone will know how to do it.' Fig Tree will publish in Spring 2011, and intend to add one or two cookery books to their list a year, going forward.

Joining the **Hamish Hamilton** list, with rights acquired from William Morris, is the brilliant and otherworldly *Light Boxes*, by Shane Jones. In short bursts of intensely poetic language, this gripping first novel tells the story of a town that is being persecuted by a mysterious spectre, February, and the townspeople's efforts to combat him. Steeped in visual imagery, this is a hauntingly enigmatic



modern fairy tale – in which nothing is as it seems...

Light Boxes was first published in 2009 in Baltimore, USA, with a print-run of 500 copies, and has since been optioned by film director Spike Jonze and bought by publishers from around the world (Eichborn have bought German rights and Penguin US have American rights).

Puffin is anticipating great interest in Ex Sun Editor, David Yelland's debut children's book *The Truth about Leo* for which they already hold US and translation rights. The book is a powerful and heartfelt debut about love, loss and learning that grown-ups don't have all the answers. This is a poignant and incredibly moving story about alcohol abuse and how it affects family relationships, a subject that is rarely dealt with but which has huge reach amongst both children and adults.

In more exciting news for **Puffin**, they'll be celebrating the 65th anniversary of the Moomins in July 2010 by publishing a stunning range of picture, board, activity and novelty books to bring the Moomins to a younger audience. The new publishing, previewed in Bologna, has triggered auctions in several territories (Finland, Norway and Denmark) resulting in five key publishers being secured with a first printing on the new publishing of over 250,000 copies. Puffin is in negotiation on further deals to be concluded in Frankfurt and hopes to announce the signing of a major US partner soon. The novels by Tove Jansson are being repackaged and published with their original covers as part of the anniversary celebrations.

Following **Puffin's** acquisition of acclaimed thriller writer Alex Scarrow's debut children's novel, *TimeRiders*, a two-book deal with the author has already been won pre-fair in a hot auction by Bloomsbury in the US. Puffin anticipates a great buzz in Frankfurt around this title and it is firmly positioned as a bestseller on their list for 2010.

Celebrated author of the *Worst Witch*, Jill Murphy, is set to publish a new young fiction series and **Puffin** has acquired the rights. Jill Murphy's *Worst Witch* series have become some of the most successful titles on the Young Puffin paperback list and have sold more than 5 million copies worldwide and been translated into 14 languages. *Dear Hound* is her first fiction title outside of the *Worst Witch* series for over fifteen years and Puffin are thrilled to have secured world rights for a significant sum. This heartwarming tale, gorgeously illustrated by Jill is set to be a timeless classic with the heart of *Charlotte's Web* and the charm of the *Sheep-Pig*.

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