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Northumbria University honours outstanding creative talents

Students could be forgiven for being Star Struck at their graduation ceremony today.

Joining them to receive their own honorary degrees were the award winning writer Val McDermid, whose novels include *Star Struck* and photographer of iconic stars from the world of fashion, Christopher Moore.

It's not difficult to understand why the University has honoured these two creative leaders in their chosen fields of words and pictures.

Val McDermid is a popular award-winning author with an international reputation as a writer of crime fiction. She is the first student from a state school in Scotland to be accepted at St Hilda's College Oxford, where she read English. She is probably best known for her novels featuring the characters Lindsay Gordon, Kate Brannigan and Dr Tony Hill. The Dr Tony Hill series has been adapted for television as *Wire in the Blood*, starring Robson Green and filmed in the north east.

She is a keen supporter of many writing and community causes, including New Writing North, which has a partnership with Northumbria University. As a campaigner for libraries, she may have been encouraged to hear that Northumbria University's own library was ranked third in the UK in the Times Higher Education Student Experience survey.

Val McDermid said, "I'm delighted that Northumbria has chosen to honour me today. I come from a very ordinary working class background, and it was access to libraries and later to university that changed my life. I feel very proud to be recognised by a university that strives so hard to provide a supportive and encouraging atmosphere for student creativity of all kinds."

Byker-born Chris Moore is known throughout the fashion community as the 'Catwalk King'. His pictures have appeared everywhere from *American Vogue* to the front cover of *Time* magazine and *The Sunday Times*. For over twenty years he provided every catwalk image for the International Herald Tribune.

His first job, at 16, was on Fleet Street before moving on to *Vogue* in 1954, where he worked with stellar names in photography: Cecil Beaton, Henry Clarke, Clifford Coffin and, his hero, Norman Parkinson.

Throughout his long career he has recorded the changing fashion industry, with a diverse schedule which can take him from shooting Dior's spectacular show at the Palace of Versailles to student creations at the Graduate Fashion Week in London's Earls Court.

His website, catwalking.com, is a virtual global fashion portfolio. In 2009 he was honoured at a special event at 10 Downing Street, when 25 of his iconic photographs were displayed to mark the 25th anniversary of London Fashion Week.

In 2011 Northumbria University held an exhibition of nearly 80 of his seminal images and last year he received a 'Lifetime Achievement Award' at the Graduate Fashion Week Gala Show.

Chris Moore said: "It really is an honour to receive this degree from Northumbria University. The fact that I was born in Byker, not very far from this University, is very poignant. I love Newcastle, it's a lovely place. Whenever I cross the Tyne I get a lump in my throat."

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