

CRIME STORY

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Innovative festival reveals the facts behind crime fiction

A festival for crime fiction writers and readers offers its audience a rare insight into the fascinating world of real-life criminal investigation.

Crime Story 2018, which takes place at Northumbria University, Newcastle on 19 May, brings together people from the two very different worlds of fact and fiction.

Detectives, forensic scientists, lawyers and criminologists will guide crime writers and readers through the investigative process as they attempt to

solve a fictional crime, written exclusively for the festival by Denise Mina, the award-winning author of *The Long Drop*, *Gods and Beasts* and *The End of Wasp Season*.

Fifteen crime experts are taking part in the festival, including Professor Dame Sue Black, one of the world's leading forensic scientists; Detective Superintendent Steve Barron who led Operation Sanctuary, a large-scale investigation into sexual exploitation in North East England; and HH Judge Timothy Gittins, who will be presiding over a fictional case in Northumbria University's historic courtroom. Other experts specialise in toxicology, victimology and vulnerable witnesses.

In a series of panel events, delegates are guided through the practices of police and forensic investigations and the legal process. But Crime Story is not simply about setting the facts straight. Delegates can also choose from a range of in-depth discussions, including from Northumbria University academics, which will inspire the ways characters are written and plots are developed. Work with money laundering experts to devise your own strategy to hide £100k, or with legal and sexual exploitation professionals to understand how the most vulnerable people slip through society's net.

Crime Story has also paired writers with crime experts to offer a series of four unique creative writing workshops. Leading crime writer David Mark teams up with lawyer Natalie Wortley to lead a session in which participants will write their own courtroom scene. Tony Williams, author of *Nutcase*, teams up with Professor Peter Francis, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Northumbria University and a leading criminologist, to deliver a session on writing the victim.

Crime Story is a biennial festival, presented in partnership by New Writing North and Northumbria University. The festival first took place in 2014, headlined by Ann Cleeves (*Vera* series, *Shetland* series). In 2016 the headliner was Paula Hawkins, author of *The Girl on the Train*.

Claire Malcolm, Chief Executive of New Writing North said: "We're absolutely thrilled to bring Crime Story back for its third outing. The festival makes a very unusual offer for crime writers and readers and we always receive lots of lovely feedback from our audience, who find the day both fascinating and inspiring.

"Whether you are a writer who is trying to finesse their story or – like I am –

a huge fan of crime fiction, you will find so much interesting detail in the day. Crime Story is made possible because of our creative and collaborative partnership with Northumbria University, which is just as innovative in its own way.”

Katy Shaw, Professor of Contemporary Writings at Northumbria, is Chairing the event. She said: “I’m delighted to be hosting Crime Story 2018. The issues we’ll be discussing couldn’t be more relevant or more pressing.

“This unique event unites leading experts from the fields of forensics, psychology, literature and policing to offer new and vital perspectives on why and how twenty-first century British society writes the crimes of our times.”

Julian Wright, Head of Humanities at Northumbria University, added: ‘Crime Story at Northumbria University is a unique event. It celebrates the connection between researchers in criminology and creative writers and novelists.

“It’s an amazing opportunity to engage with crime fiction and understand more about how crime writers make their work resonate with real-world experience.”

The full programme and tickets are now available at www.crimestory.co.uk

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