

Edinburgh International Book Festival 2012 launched today



Ian Rankin celebrates 25 years of Rebus as well as giving a sneak preview of his new novel; poet Alice Oswald gives a rare reading of *Memorial*, her reimagining of Homer's *Iliad*; and Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond gives a glimpse into his life outside politics to author Ian McEwan in just three of over 800 events in this year's Edinburgh International Book Festival, which was launched this morning in the sumptuous surroundings of the Signet Library.

Among an A to Z of highlights from the festival, director Nick Barley also announced the Edinburgh World Writers' Conference 2012-13, which marks five decades since the 1962 Writers' Conference that brought together 70 authors to discuss pressing issues of the day. The 2012-13 conference will address the same five questions as the 1962 event – whether literature should be political, the relationship between style and content, the concept of a national literature, censorship and the future of the novel – and will tour to 14 countries throughout the following year.

A glittering cast of writers from 44 countries, including such well-known names as Will Self, Pat Barker, Zadie Smith and Val McDermid, will be in Edinburgh to launch and discuss their new books, and the festival also features some more unusual names. Pop music icon Nile Rodgers visits to look back on a career working with Madonna, Bob Dylan and Prince, among many others, and former Prime Minister Gordon Brown looks forward to a new relationship between Scotland and England.

Four guest selectors – children's author Vivian French, BBC stalwarts James Naughtie and Sue MacGregor, and illustrator

Chris Riddell – have also curated elements of the programme and will chair several of the festival's events.

An equally rich children's programme includes visits from David Walliams and Val McDermid, both unveiling their first books for young readers, as well as a sneak peak at Jacqueline Wilson's new book *Four Children and It* and illustrator-in-residence Chris Riddell's new drawings for Neil Gaiman's spooky *Coraline*.

✘ Festival director Nick Barley said: 'In 2012, the Year of Creative Scotland, we are delighted to showcase some of the best Scottish writing, from well-established authors to debut novelists, as well as welcoming some extraordinary literary talent from around the world to help us rethink aspects of society that affect our everyday lives. This is a year for taking stock about what matters to us in a time of uncertainty, doubt and data overload.'

See the Edinburgh International Book Festival's full programme at www.edbookfest.co.uk