

Fringe 2024 – Winners of The Popcorn Writing Awards announced

The joint winners of the 2024 Popcorn Writing Awards are VL by Kieran Hurley and Gary McNair, and Weather Girl by Brian Watkins.

The £6,500 prize will be shared between the winners and the runners up (The Book of Mountain and Seas and Knock on the Roof). Popcorn Group and BBC Writers will also offer career development support.

Written by Kieran Hurley and Gary McNair, VL explores the challenges and comedic absurdity of coming of age in a small-town school when you're a VL (Virgin Lips).

Kieran and Gary said: "We're absolutely buzzing to have been awarded the Popcorn Award for VL. When we're writing these characters together our first aim is just to make each other laugh, and discovering that Max and Stevie's trials and travails resonate with others is a great reward. This award is testament to the work of Scott, Gav, Orla, Eve and the whole team, who put so much faith in us and elevate everything we write. Particular thanks have to go to Francesca and everyone at FMP for taking a chance on us again. To share this award with Brian and the Weather Girl team is our honour, and suggests that FMP lot might just know what they're doing when it comes to backing new work."

Weather Girl by Brian Watkins is a blistering satire on climate change and the strange, dark heart of America.

Brian said: "I am honoured to receive this storied award and to be recognised alongside so many other brilliant playwrights. This play is a love letter to where I'm from, for all its strangeness and dysfunction and dark enchanted corners, and I'm immensely grateful to the incredible team and audiences that embraced it wholeheartedly. Chief among those collaborators are my partner in crime actress Julia McDermott, whose brilliance willed the play into existence, director Tyne Rafaeli and producer Francesca Moody. I could not have done this without them. My deepest thanks to the award committee for this incredible honour, and for doing God's work in supporting new writing."

The runners-up take second and third places – The Book of Mountains and Seas by Yilong Liu, which is a bittersweet journey exploring grief, cultural clashes, and the unlikeliest of friendships; and Knock on the Roof by Khawla Ibraheem, a poignant yet comedic narrative portraying one mother's resilience and instinct for survival in war-torn Gaza.

A special mention was given to Pop Off, Michelangelo! by Dylan MarcAurele, a sharp and irreverent musical comedy that hilariously reimagines the legendary rivalry between Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci, skillfully blending historical inaccuracies with contemporary humour.

The winner and finalists were announced at the award ceremony held at the Pleasance Courtyard Cabaret Bar on Thursday morning, with winners and finalists in attendance. Prizes were presented by Christopher Richardson, founder of Pleasance.





VL – Kieran and Gary



Weather Girl – Brian Watkins