Salon sell-out success

LFB’s FREELANCE SALON networking event at the end of November was a sell-out. How to make a living out of investigative journalism was our theme. Paul Lashman, ace reporter and lecturer at City University, London said at the event: “Investigative journalism is bloody good fun. There’s nothing like sticking it to some rotten bastard who’s stitching up ordinary people”.

He declared: “Yes, you can pitch to Panorama as an unknown – it’s all about how strong is the story” and “Sure there are people out there who will try to steal your story, but if I work with a freelance who has good stories I want to make sure they walk away happy.”

Paul added that: “The demand for good data journalism is the main driving factor in the field now” and “I’m working with the NUJ on a document to advise on how you keep your data secure and avoid being hacked by Inspector Knacker”.

Meiron Jones from the Bureau Of Investigative Journalism told participants, “It’s not about qualifications, it’s about learning skills. Mostly you will be taken on trust,” and “If you know more about a subject than else in the room you are an expert”.

CPBF lives! Up North!

Following the winding-up of the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom (CPBF) – see www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1810cpbf.html – the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom (North) is alive and well, covering the North West, Yorks & Humberside and North East of England in its campaigns for diverse, democratically accountable media.

A quarterly newsletter, Media North, in its latest issue covered the effects of the Johnston Press takeover locally and Channel 4’s move to Leeds. CPBF(N) say resources are limited, so they “would prefer people to contact us to go on our email list so that we can send you the online version”. Contact the group at cpbfnorth@outlook.com

In solidarity with gallery staff

LONDON Freelance Branch Committee has sent a message support to the NG27 – 27 artists and educators engaged by the National Gallery who are seeking recognition as employees rather than freelances, with retrospective holiday pay. Their case went before an Employment Tribunal on 27 November, with a judgement expected on 7 December.

Most of the artists and educators, who welcomed visitors and gave talks on the works on display at the National Gallery, were hired on an “ad hoc” basis. Most have been dismissed. Seven are still working – under protest – on less-well-paid staff or casual contracts. The gallery treated them as freelances, but made deductions to their pay through PAYE, gave them staff badges, trained them and put them through appraisals. The 27 say they were effectively employees.

Our letter of support said: “This case goes straight to the heart of issues around ‘bogus’ self-employment practices and the exploitation of precarious workers in the gig economy. We hope you have positive outcome from the Employment Tribunal… let us know if you need more support in other ways… Our union, NUJ will of course welcome any point of law in other ways… Our union, NUJ will of course welcome any point of law and will of course welcome any point of law and will of course welcome any point of law… Our union, NUJ will of course welcome any point of law and will of course welcome any point of law and will of course welcome any point of law.”

Copyright opposition gets weirder

SHENANIGANS continue in the world of copyright. The European Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market is currently being negotiated between the Parliament, the Council that represents the member states, and the Commission – the EU civil service. Lobbying is getting weirder by the day.

One highlight has been copyright sceptic Cory Doctorow proposing that we should all oppose the part of the proposal called “Article 13”. Instead, “we could create blanket licenses” with payments distributed through collecting societies. Sounds great. And it is precisely what Article 13 enables. This is strange, because Doctorow’s piece followed a forceful reminder of exactly this from, er, me. None of the copyright opponents have read the key part of the proposal: none of the dreaded “filtering” of uploaded works is required unless the internet giants refuse to pay licence fees. Instead, we have seen YouTube – owned by Google – nagging kids to pester their parents to oppose the Directive. That rather gets to the heart of their case – the gut reaction of a child “but why can’t I copy this?”

The Freelance regrets

The Freelance apologises for errors in recent print editions. NUJ Gold Badge recipient Jenny Vaughan joined the NUJ in 1969, not the erroneous date we gave in the August 2018 edition. We somehow give an incorrect first name to one of the tutors on our recent “Let’s role play better deals!” training courses in the October 2018 edition: it is of course Humphrey Evans who was tutor along with Phil Sutcliffe. The author of our report in the September 2018 issue on LFB’s participation at Bylinefest regrets his omission of our Training Officer Federica Tedeschi’s name from the list of Branch members who took part in LFB’s workshop event there. All these errors have been corrected in the online versions of the articles.

© Mike Holderness

See www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1812copy.html for more.