

Lord Puttnam is arriving at Platform Alteration

Film producer and politician Lord David Puttnam will speak to Birmingham media industry professionals this week at a Screen WM and 4iP event exploring the potential of new media platforms.



Lord David Puttnam

The event, called Platform Alteration, will examine the new opportunities available for content producers from traditional platforms such as film, TV

and print as well as new platforms such as social media and games.

It will also feature contributions from a panel of experts including Alice Taylor, commissioning editor, education, Channel 4, Pete O' Donnell, director of Codemasters, Jamie Sefton, sector manager at Game Republic and Pip Piper, chair, Producers Forum.

The event, presented by

regional screen agency Screen WM in conjunction with 4iP and Creative Networks, is designed to explore what the constantly changing media landscape means for producers and address the challenges faced in using new platforms to create engaging content in new ways.

With over forty years experience in the media industry, BAFTA-winning Lord Puttnam was a previous chair of Columbia Pictures and has also taught at the National Film and Television School.

Screen WM head of innovation, new media and skills Jason Hall said: "With

his commitment to innovation and dedication to the power of entertainment media as a source for both social change and economic impact, Lord Puttnam is the embodiment of the values of 4iP and Screen WM's Digital Media Fund. We are delighted to welcome him as our keynote speaker."

Platform Alteration featuring Lord Puttnam will take place at Birmingham Hippodrome on Wednesday 10 June.

→ **WEB:** www.screenwm.co.uk
www.4ip.org.uk

Festival will tell digital dads what it's all about

A two-week digital festival bringing together Birmingham's creative sector for an eclectic mix of seminars, debates, swap shops, Twitter forums and networking events kicks off today in Digbeth.

Fazeley Digital '09 Festival runs from Monday to Thursday June 18 at the city's new digital arts and media hub Fazeley Studios and is open to all creative businesses with an interest in digital media. A key feature of the event will be an interactive "mind map" event called "my Dad's on Twitter but he doesn't know why," which explores how and why people use social media and

“We wanted to harness all the energy that's out there in the city and get people together to network”

LUCAN GRAY
Jaki Booth.

The brainstorm will be streamed, blogged and fed into the web with the support of local media companies Adhere Creative and Media Dog, allowing a "virtual audience" to contribute by feeding their thoughts back into the mind map.

Other highlights include a creative swap shop, which allows companies to combat the recession by swapping skills and products for services that they really need and a Digital Britain "unconference" with a live video stream of Lord Carter speaking at the ICC on June 17. The week will also include talks on

developing business models for online content, online journalism and selling creative products.

The event will conclude with a grand high tea for 300 creative workers in Fazeley Studios' magnificently restored 19th century chapel reception.

Lucan Gray, landlord and developer of Fazeley Studios said: "Fazeley Studios is home to some of the best creative and digital companies in the country and many of the city's most high-profile bloggers. They are doing prestigious, often cutting-edge work in their field and working closely with innovative firms based elsewhere in the city.

"Despite the credit crunch, many of these businesses are winning new contracts and taking on new staff.

"They are growing because everything around us is going digital, from our social lives to our business models and even the way we organise our lives.

"We wanted to harness all the energy that's out there in the city and get people together to network and maybe lead to new collaborations and projects.

"Above all we wanted to make the events innovative and useful. For example, the interactive mind map will hopefully not only produce ideas and action points about how we can spread the benefits of social media, but will also create a whole new way of coming up with ideas in general: one that combines the immediacy and the buzz of gathering people together at a physical event with the vast numbers of people you can reach by putting a question out to an online audience."

Fazeley Studios, launched in February, is 65 per cent full and home to Fullrange, Ikon Eastside, Substrakt, Meshed Media, Rice Media, Birmingham Jazz, Furore PR, Adage Models, Capricorn Studios, Podnosh, Unsuitable, MConsulting and Mudlark.

■ A full programme for the festival can be found at www.fazeleydigital.com.



Gavin Douglas prepares for Caribbean Fashion Week



Birmingham fashion designer Gavin Douglas is set to debut his new collection at Caribbean Fashion Week which takes place in Jamaica between June 10 and 15. The designer's fifth appearance at the event will be supported by Birmingham City Council which will be presenting its city centre masterplan - the Big City Plan - at the event.

helga henry

Street art is truly uplifting

Ever since 1998, the month of May has found me on the sunny streets of Birmingham, sampling the weird and wonderful delights of the annual Fierce! Festival.

And although there was no festival this year, the Friday before last was no exception.

As part of the 2009 "for one year only" programme, Fierce! and our partners at Ikon Gallery presented the iconoclastic performer, Reverend Billy.

The self-styled anti-capitalist preacher (he exorcises the tills at Tesco containing "Wall Street funny money") gave a blistering free performance in Oozells Square with his funky backing singers, the Gospel Choir of Life After Shopping.

Opposite the headquarters of the RBS, his giant quiff quivered to the message that what we spend our money on has an effect on the climate, our jobs and homes, in fact on the whole world.

Hundreds of people gathered to hear the word of the Reverend.

Still more happened upon him by chance. From the clapping, cheering, whooping and dancing of the crowd, everyone had a good time.

Art in the streets is uplifting and democratic.

There's the chance that people will stumble upon something to make them laugh, cry or gasp.

As an audience gathers, they share reactions, jokes and vantage points. They connect.

The critic Lyn Gardner said of The Sultan's Elephant that this work "turns a million strangers into a community".

It was the same in Liverpool, capital of culture, where grandmothers, toddlers and all ages in between waited for half a day for a view of La Machine's giant mechanical spider as it paraded the streets with its live orchestra perched atop cherry-picker cranes.

Grand artistic gestures funded by public money may seem unnecessarily splashy in the current climate. But everything is relative.

Given the community cohesion this work promotes (it's been proven that crime reduces during events rather than proliferates) and the city-promoting media attention it generates, they constitute good value for money. Some previous Fierce! highlights such as the Great Swallow (Benjamin Verdonck's giant nest on the side of the Rotunda) or the much acclaimed Street Pianos (15 pianos in community settings emblazoned with 'Play Me, I'm Yours') were produced for the public money equivalent of two duck houses, a moat and some manure.

Or a fraction of one per cent of what we've spent to bail out a bank.

Play Me I'm Yours has, from its Birmingham beginning, taken place in Sydney, Australia, Sao Paulo, Brazil and is now in London.

But the city, and Fierce!, had it first.

■ Helga Henry is general manager of Fierce Earth and chair of Creative Republic