

WORDPLAY

Writers' forum

Intelligent, Interesting, Informative, Inspirational

Ezine, Issue 1, February 2010

'In the flesh' Wordplay Forums take place at 9:30 am every second Friday of the Month at Maggies Restaurant. **E-Forums are coming soon!**

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WELCOME TO OUR FIRST ISSUE!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Ian and Michael welcome you to the first edition of the WORDPLAY E-Zine. WORDPLAY is a new Writers' Forum and this is our first publication.

We aim to be what our 'strapline' suggests. In addition, we want to provide writers with an opportunity to get read.

Take 10 minutes to read this, as hopefully an enjoyable antidote to much of life's drudgery, and then pass it on. Comments are welcome from non-members/e-receivers. Be part of WORDPLAY.

Play with Words,
Michael and Ian.

MEET THE FOUNDERS

Ian

began life as foetus, emerging as a child within less than a year. He learnt stuff like that at school, which duly followed. A bachelors degree, 'A Desmond' (2.2) came next and he remained a bachelor for some further years, working as a teacher. And, yes, the holidays were great! Marriage (no longer) and two children – the full set, one of each – came along, as did disillusionment with teaching. Excess government intervention actually made teaching, real teaching, impos-

sible. After a spell in corporate life – a company car, bliss, and a Masters degree obtained the hard way, at home, before and after work – he moved for a short time to what was then, The Institute of Management. Before he became institutionalised he set up his own Business and Management Consultancy (1993). Alexander Consultants Europe SL (Global and Intergalactic seemed a tad over the top!), has been the longest he has ever spent doing the same thing. After five and a half decades on the planet, he is still a child at heart. His passions are his children (now adults in their own right) and writing, particularly comedy. His greatest achievement in life is remaining a Birmingham City supporter through a lifetime of 'thin and thinner'. He has hair which reflects this.

Michael

is an identical twin, so from an early age became used to being called something other than his given name. This ability, he has discovered, is a useful attribute within married life. He left school at 18 after achieving mediocre A Levels (probably eas-

ily good enough to gain entry to a top University now), and started his working life as a self employed chilled foods salesman (aka Ice Cream Man). A couple of years passed, and he decided to try his hand at something different. So his City career began, which spanned nearly two decades and gave him the opportunity to learn a whole range of skill-sets and many ways to churn and burn clients (more positively known as catering to clients' needs!). After his third redundancy (its not all fat cat salaries and eye bulging bonuses) and having spent six months supporting his best friend to the end of his life, Michael moved into the world of personal financial advice. This, he soon realised, is the real rip off sector of the financial industry. Disillusioned with work, with Britain, and with life in general - and for health and lifestyle reasons - Michael moved to Spain with his wife in late 2008. Michael now works in a Restaurant, which gives him the money to struggle to support a relaxed lifestyle, a desire to write, and a son and daugh-

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Print the Wordplay E-zine off and put it in your local bar or staff restroom so that others can enjoy and join in!

THE WORDPLAY MONTHLY WRITING COMPETITION WINNER

Theme: Open House (write about anything)



THE ADDICTION by Michael Barton



How our competition works:

Any genre of writing is allowed.

The maximum length of work is 1,000 words of prose, or 40 lines of poetry.

Entries are judged by all the members of wordplay, on an anonymous basis.

Punctuated by thick grey cumulous nimbus, the angry twilight sky is closing around me. A deep crimson band of cloud hovers menacingly above the obscure silhouette of the mountains on the horizon, like a bloodstained knife over an unknown victim. Very soon, the pitch of the sky will match my own darkness.

I have an addiction, and the need to feed it is swelling within me. It always does when there has been a period without a fix.

The lack of satisfaction eats at me, ripping into my inner being. I argue with unseen demons, telling myself I have no need to sate my desire. It's an argument I know I will lose.

Rain starts to spot on my windscreen, the sky growing bleaker. The mountains now appear dark and lonely. It's like looking into a mirror.

My body aches with the need. My head is pounding with my internal suffering. My cold, clammy hands move grudgingly on the steering wheel. I remind myself it has been only a few days since the last time, and yet it feels so much longer.

I try to convince myself I can wait.

I've considered seeking help, confessing to my nightmare, but no one will understand. Even I don't understand. The one certainty I have is that this addiction is now more than just a part of me. It defines my very existence.

A red Mercedes cuts across my path. Fat tyres squeeze filthy rainwater up, out, and against my windscreen. I hit my horn, and hammer my fists against the dash.

Then I am calm.

I realise it is futile to make such trivialities a contest.

My internal argument is forgotten as my headlights bathe a billboard in a yellow haze. It announces an approaching town. I laugh at the coincidence, and see it to be a personal prophecy. After all, who's ever heard of a town called Obsession?

I pull across to the inside lane. A

car sounds its anger at me. I hope it's a Mercedes.

Others now speed past me, but they are no longer a consequence. There is more pressing business to which I must attend.

I have second thoughts, a small modicum of doubt. What if this place called Obsession is unable to feed my desire?

I castigate myself for having such fears. I chide my self-questioning. I remind myself I have never failed to find what my heart desires, what my mind craves, and what my body yearns for. When the need has taken me, there has always been someone willing to feed my addiction. I've never failed to find a place to provide for my need.

Tonight that place will be Obsession.

I pull off the main carriage way, onto the slip road and into the darkness beyond. The smooth black tarmac of the motorway turns to potholed concrete before making its quiet descent to the Promised Land.

I stop and survey the town in the depths of the valley - if it can be called a town. From here, it looks no more than a hotchpotch of dimly lit houses. Perhaps I am wrong, after all. Perhaps this isn't a place for me to feed my addiction.

Those doubts again! I quickly force them out. I continue down, with the certain knowledge that in such deserted places I always find my next fix.

I drive slowly through the desolate main street. There are few cars, and even fewer people. The rain has stopped, and the whole place is lit in shimmering blues and reds and greens like a seedy pick up bar, which is exactly what I'm looking for.

I find it at the end of the street, and park a few yards away. I check my wallet, take the cash out and put it in my pocket. In a place like this, I have a wad big enough to look like a millionaire.

I walk across the street, and enter the bar. No one looks in my direction,

which is good.

I order a beer, and flash the cash. That gets a couple of looks. I sit at the bar, alone. Have another couple of beers.

I watch three local girls in the corner, all high heels, low cut tops and belts for skirts, playing pool and starting to pay attention to the stranger at the bar. The brunette, the tallest of the threesome, puts her hand in her pocket, turns her back to her audience and gives a small package to one of her friends who disappears for a few minutes and then returns with a renewed enthusiasm for life. Bingo!

I send drinks over, and soon Miss Brunette comes over to say hello. It doesn't take long to persuade me to leave with her. After all, a stranger with a pile of cash and an obvious addiction is an easy hit.

We get in my car. Her legs are long and sensuous, as is her voice. But that's not what I'm after.

She pulls her belt across her and tells me to drive. I obey her command.

Ten minutes later we stop.

Only the half-light of the moon creeping in through the windscreen lights the little package she has taken out of her pocket and is now holding up. I go to take it from her, but she withdraws the offer.

'First we have a little fun' she says, pouting.

Her choice - it always has to be her choice.

I agree, and lean across her.

Her sweet perfume invades my senses. She lets my hand brush against her pert breast, signaling her willingness.

I open the glove box, and withdraw my present to her slowly.

My head is clear, my hands sweat free.

The blade shimmers in the moonlight.

Miss Brunette makes to scream, but it's too late.

Simone Segal's entry 'Your Soul, Your Spirit' was voted in second place. Read another of her pieces, 'Brim Your Cup' on this month's Poetry Page.

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Feature: Using the Web to increase your Profile and Profit



Wordplay member **Rob Innis** discusses web based publicity

Confused by the dazzling array of web-based opportunities to promote yourself and your work? Nervous of where to start? Perhaps my Top 10 tips will help.

An experienced professional writer advised me that I needed a blog and a web site to promote my writing activities. I admit to having been a bit sceptical. Where would traffic (people actually looking at my sites) come from but with my natural enthusiasm I leapt in at the deep end and set up both a blog and a web site. Mistake number one!

With the benefit of hindsight, what I should have done was to research, then reflect and review what I actually wanted to achieve to plan a strategic approach. Therefore, after a year of trial and error but having now achieved page one ranking on Google, here are my top 10 tips:

1. Decide on your budget. Lots of internet services are, surprisingly, free, so in this current climate try to make it part of your strategy of utilising only the free ones but be prepared for some investment.
2. Next, think what medium to use: text emails, video emails, digital photos, video, sound, online publishing, social sites, forums etc. The answer is probably all! Consider carefully what name you are promoting: your actual name, nom de plume or a brand name.
3. Research who is offering what and consider if one supplier can provide all or most of the required services. This will benefit you with an easier integrated approach to learning their use and installation. For instance, Google provide many more services

than just a search engine! So perhaps you will find integrating digital photos onto your blog easier with an all Google product based strategy.

4. Decide the priority of what services you need – if you are just about to have a book published, you may need a blog immediately to help promote sales.

5. Do not reinvent the wheel – if you have some friends (or family) who are technically competent ask them to help set-up your new online services or at least help with testing it.

6. Try not to do everything at once; sitting up all night wondering why your digital photos take 20 minutes to upload will only put you under unwanted pressure. You need a good photo of yourself to add to your site (s) that you can use every time to build a consistent looking profile.

7. Once you have your sites set up you need to generate traffic. Try to get your site address (i.e.: www.yoursite.com) into your byline and definitely ensure it appears in all of your published books. Exchange it via links to other sites and always add it to your email signature, or any signature that you use in forums, business cards, or other giveaways.

8. These new resources do take time to implement and maintain. However, if you are writing to make a profit then it is a business. Therefore, this has to be accepted as a work activity and consequently a time overhead. Do not underestimate its importance – nothing dents your reader's image

of you more than an out of date blog for instance. Monitor your traffic via your hosting sites web traffic statistics – it can reveal all sorts of amazing details

about your site visitors, which is often useful information to help increase sales.

9. The reader feedback you receive will probably surprise you. Blog sites especially offer an easy commenting option for your fans or critics to comment on your work. There are sites offering forums enabling readers to interact directly with authors. Use this feedback to enhance your future writing and market appeal i.e. profit!

10. After your efforts, remember that you will still need a personal approach to promote your work. Book signings, appearances at literary festivals or writing circles should also be part of your marketing campaign – which now you can promote on your state of the art electronic services.

There is no doubt that a professional well-presented web presence will get you noticed by readers, publishers, and editors alike. In fact, without it you are missing an opportunity so the sooner you start to build it, the quicker you can interact with your readers.

Additionally you can easily set-up your own online sales service for your readers. Providing you with a welcome financial advantage during these difficult market times.

Do you have any tips or advice to share with other writers? Why not send them to Wordplay? Email us at wordplayezine@mail.com

TON UP!

Let off steam in 100 words.... You choose the subject.

GREAT HABIT

Oh how it pains me, "negativity" so long I lived my life with it like most. So much time and energy wasted on it, our comfort zone, I want to shout out to the world, you can stamp it out! You CAN build such POSITIVITY in your mind, building strength like you would build muscles in the gym. It takes effort, it takes will, when used the results are phenomenal! Will creates power, using will power makes one feel amazing, it allows you to reach all your goals in life, form a great habit of POSITIVE THOUGHT, a habit that you'll never want to abort! Thank You.

Simone Segal

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THE POETRY PAGE

BRIM YOUR MINDS CUP

Up and down High and low

Feeling good, feeling bad, your energy flow

Where are you going, Do you know?

You have the power, you have the control

To steer your thoughts and feelings, to reach all your goals

This is the way, the law of attraction

Your thoughts and your feelings, Are your life in action

What you think about, you bring about

The choice is all yours, it's you who creates

Only you open doors

Visualise exactly all your dreams, don't be coy

The health, the love, the wealth, and the joy

Take time to do this every day

Feel like your wishes are flying your way

Believe in your thoughts, and not what you see

Positive attitude, Is a state you must be

Ban every fear, ban every doubt

Create in your mind, a negative drought

Form a habit of awareness; be conscious of your mind

Control your own thoughts, and there's where you'll find

The power with in you, to master your mind

Your dreams coming true

All your great thoughts

You have attracted to you

It's hard at first; you will think you're at war

Fighting off demon's, of your thoughts from before

You have to step out, of your comfort zone

It's positive attitude that will create your own throne

To be king and creator, of your very own life

Think and feel your way to success

A life without strife

When your mind is full of woe is me and sorrow

That's exactly what you're creating for your tomorrow

But if positive thoughts brim your minds cup

Scientifically proven

That's the WAY UP!!!!!!!!!!!!

Simone Segal

WORDPLAY wants to encourage writers of all abilities and all genres.

We feel it only right that the poets amongst us have their very own dedicated space. So here it is!

If you have any work you would like us to consider for inclusion, please email us at:

wordplayezine@mail.com

The Sky's the Limit

I want to try something different
But I don't really know just what
Something for my own amusement
That wouldn't cost such a lot

I've already done Line-dancing
Kick-boxing and Tae Kwon Do
So if you know something less taxing
I'm willing to give it a go

I don't fancy deep sea diving
Or anything that involves getting wet
So I won't be taking up surfing
Unless of course it's just on the net

I could fancy myself as a jockey
Now that's a thing I could do
But could I stay perched on the saddle
With my legs almost doubled in two

Perhaps I'd like motor racing
Speeding my way round the track
But I'm sure to find it so bracing
I would meet myself coming back

I'm not ready for cross-stitch or knitting
I'm not in my dotage just yet
I want something really exciting
Like learning to pilot a jet

What about creative writing
A friend asked me in jest
Now that sounds so inviting
I think I'll just scrap the rest

Mery Kilduff

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WHAT ARE YOU READING?

Our members review their latest read.

Love Comes Softly by Janette Oke

Love Comes Softly, set in the 'Little House on the Prairie' era, is a tale of love blossoming from tragedy and is a heart rending tear inducing novel of life out west. The hardships endured and the courage of the first pioneers seeking to claim land and build homes for themselves. It is a memorable novel of loss and love.

The story opens with a tragedy. A young newly married woman who has just found out she is pregnant is confronted by a team of men carrying her young husband's dead body wrapped in a blanket. They tell her of the terrible accident that had occurred that had resulted in his death and the fact that they had had to destroy his horse as the poor animal was beyond help.

The young woman distraught, pregnant and lonely has to carry on the trek alone with no idea how she will manage and only the thought of her unborn child giving her the will to live at all.

On the wagon train is a man traveling alone with a baby daughter as his wife had died of the fever shortly after the birth. He too is struggling to survive his loss and their tragic circumstances throw them together on the frontier prairies of 1800's.

Their story is told by Janette Oke with such pathos that you will find it hard to hold back the tears. It is an inspirational fiction classic. 'Love Comes Softly' the first of her 8 'Love Comes Softly' novels following the lives of the same family, has sold a million copies. The book is now a Movie Premiere on the Hallmark channel. Don't miss it!

Mery Kilduff

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TON UP! Part 2

Rant

Why do so many British living in Spain constantly moan about things by misquoting the facts to fuel their whinging?

This week in one of the local papers, the perennial favourite 'UK Winter Fuel Allowance' was their target. Instead of checking their facts, easily done on the UK Government website, no they just moaned on about 'Why does he get it and I don't.'

The rules are very clear if you actually do 5 minutes simple research. Stop boring others with misleading information and pointless rhetoric. When you actually understand the qualifying rules then have a sensible debate. Thank you.

Rob Innis

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WHAT ARE YOU READING, TWO?

The Lost Symbol by Dan Brown

After having enjoyed each of his previous novels, and read most in two or three sittings, I bought my copy of *The Lost Symbol* with great expectations.

Once more Robert Langdon is unwittingly ensnared in a race against the clock and around a major city – not Paris or Rome this time, but Washington DC – to unlock the secret of an ancient code. This time it is to save the life of his friend and mentor Peter Soloman. Along the way, Langdon is reunited with Soloman's sister, Katherine, who provides the love interest and a foil for Langdon's bumbling knowledge. Soloman is held captive by a mysterious man named Mal'akh, who despite his huge wealth and obvious intellect, is unable to unlock the truth behind the legendary Masonic Pyramid. Only this can save his friend, although there may be a higher price to pay.

I have to say that, whilst there is a twist in the tale, I found the plot thin and formulaic: substitute the Illuminati or the Templars for Freemasons. The love interest threatened to be an interesting sub plot but failed to materialise, and the finish was not so much a fanfare as a quick blast on a kazoo.

All in all, this was Dan Brown saying "hey, readers, I've made you wait five years for this novel. The reason for the delay is the amount of research I've had to do. Look at the work I've put in!" And throughout we are forced to do so.

In parts, I found the book read more like a thesis with factual information not so much teased out, but the reader smacked around the face with a wet fish called research. Personally, as a reader I'm not really interested that the "coily nicknamed explosive Key 4" primarily consists of cyclotrimethylenetrinitramine!

Many of these facts are pulled out in whole sections as character memories, which serve only to slow the pace of the story.

From a writer's point of view, I quickly became fed up with the opening of sentences "Apparently..." and also the italicised thoughts "what in the world..."

So, overall, I have to say I was bitterly disappointed with the story, the quality of writing, and the editing which seemed to be non-existent - this 500 page piece of egotistic hogwash could have easily been slashed to 400 pages (of eloquent egotistic hogwash).

If you want to learn how not to write, then this is a book you must read. Other than that, wait for the movie. It will be a box office smash!

Michael Barton

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MAKE THE CASE

Argue for a statement which may seem indefensible.

Only 250 words allowed!

This month:

Bankers deserve their bonuses!

Are bankers worth their bonuses? What do they do actually? They take our money and ostensibly invest it for us at ridiculously low interest rates 0 point something per cent .

They take maintenance charges from our pathetic balance and should any interest be earned the government extracts 18 per cent for their coffers.

Ask for a loan and they want collateral – security against non-payment but if we had collateral we wouldn't need the loan. We could sell the house or the car ourselves and not wait for the bank to take it away from us.

It seems the only time it's easy to borrow money is when you don't need it! It's farcical!

So to the premise: Bankers deserve their bonuses. I can tell you, I think they deserve everything they get! Take that any way you want to!

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A TO Z OF WORDS

PLAY WITH WORDS

Apparently, it seems, as if, as it were, can cover up a lack of any genuine facts, so to speak. Allegedly is similar.

Because is a word that you are not supposed to start a sentence with. When asked why this is, people normally answer 'because'. Thus proving you can end one with it too.

Casual is confusing. 'Smart casual' as a dresscode; what exactly is that? How does it differ from 'Casual smart'? And as for casual sex – sex in a cardigan and slippers perhaps?

Devil actually has the word evil in it, brilliant. A bit like Elvis lives being anagrammatical.

Every good boy deserves fruit. Something you learnt at school – it's either to do with music or rainbows. Bet the lad was really pleased with an apple for his efforts.

Fasten is still a word without its ending, unlike glisten (glist?). Although glisten works without its beginning which fasten doesn't do (asten?).

Gossip, the veracity of which is probably best summed up by the last four letters being used in reverse.

Half full or half empty is usually taken to express either optimism or pessimism. It is somewhere in between – imism, possibly.

Ian is a name never used for main characters in films, plays, novels, or songs.

Juxtaposition is supposed to define modern art. Another word is pants.

Knight is a word where the first letter is silent. What is the point of that then? P is another letter that has its quiet moments – punnecessary, really.

Level has just got to be the perfectly balanced palindrome.

Middle of the alphabet. More to come.

Nothing ventured, nothing gained. True, but there is always the possibility of failure and/or rejection.

Oxymorons are fantastic. Deafening silence, happily married etc.

Phrasal verbs were something I had never considered until I met someone studying English as a second language. It brought about new knowledge, that'll be the past tense of one!

Queer, a bit like gay, seldom used now in its original sense.

Reply. If you have already pleyed, why do you need to do it a second time?

Sentence. Technically a series of words joined together from starttofinish. Or have I misunderstood?

Tense. Past, Present, Future. Or merely anxious about time.

Upstarts at school very often become Start Up business successes. Teachers weep.

Vini, vidi, vici, or something like that. Anyway numerically it amounts to 15 in Latin. Letters as numbers, what?

Words, the very thing, and maybe the only thing that sets us apart from the ani-

mal kingdom. Without them this would not be possible.

Xylophone (well, what else did you expect?). Not to be mistaken for telephone, or, indeed, cellophane, less still the hybrid of those – cellphone. Confusing, isn't it?

Yes, for all its positive connotations is not exclusively so. Yesterday has gone and

there is nothing you can do about it.

Zero, the number of letters yet to be addressed here, **Apparently!**

Ian Alexander

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