

Write right!

FREELANCE journalism is one of the most difficult fields to break into, especially in South Africa. Having freelanced for a variety of magazines and newspapers in South Africa and overseas, Bianca Thomas saw a need for a comprehensive writer's guide in South Africa.

"In my experience, there is one crucial factor that separates overseas writers from South African writers: the lack of a comprehensive source of information on publications that accept freelance contributions. In the US, freelancers make use of *The Writer's Market*, *The Gila Queen's Guide to Writing Markets* and *Freelance Success*. In the UK, similar publications are available, but South African writers have no such resource, which is why I am putting one together."

So Thomas has started *WRITE!* magazine. Currently only available through subscription, it will include market information (South African, US, Canadian, Australian and UK), editor interviews, author interviews, writers' showcases, writers' classifieds, writers' resources, editors' resources and articles on writing.

The magazine is aimed at writers, editors, publishers and anyone else interested in earning extra income through freelance work. It will focus on helping writers publish all types of writing from fiction to non-fiction in magazines, newspapers and journals around the world.

The magazine will also offer writers the opportunity to advertise their services. The first edition includes interviews with *Out*

There magazine editor Monica Graaff and US mystery writer Barbara Paul as well as articles such as "Writing the perfect query letter" and "Law for writers: what you need to know". New South African freelance writer Annemarie Luck's column, *Seeking Sanity*, will also appear in the writer's showcase section.

The writer's showcase section will feature one new writer every month. The idea is to give the new writer a chance to get his or her work noticed by editors around the country and abroad. Short stories, novel excerpts, poems or non-fiction articles can be submitted for publication. A short biography of the writer together with contact information and a small photograph will be published alongside the work.

Not only will this resource be of service to writers and photographers, but also to editors in that it will (hopefully) result in better query letters, manuscripts written to the editor's personal specifications and a forum for editors to advise writers on what they really want and need. The first issue will be sent to 30 South African editors and 50 other editors.

WRITE! will be published monthly with updates being sent out throughout the year. A private web site will also be available to subscribers only. The web site will also house a discussion room for South African writers and an e-mail critique group. Subscribers without Internet access can send their work for critique via ordinary mail.

A subscription costs R96 a year for the print edition and R72 a year for the email edition. Both contain the same information.

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Thumbsuck

THE BOESAK BANK

Nice little Freudian slip in some recent copy from Cape Town on the fraud trial of Allan Boesak. Boesak may not have noticed any improper transfer of funds to his Foundation for Peace and Justice because it happened at a time, his lawyer persuaded witness Mary Burton to concede, when he was travelling extensively on behalf of the United Democratic Fund.

WOOF-BANG

Famous words attributed to Malawian president Bakili Muluzi: "The media has a role as a watchdog, but when the dog displays rabies it needs to be vaccinated." Whew, Thumbsuck thought that being rabid was a recipe for destruction.

THE CUSHY CAREER

Man seeks job as journalist on Sunday Times. Gets told to try his hand at freelancing and prove himself. After six weeks of supplying good stories, the following conversation takes place:

"OK, I've shown I deliver. How about that job?"

"Sorry, no vacancies right now. Hang in a bit longer with the freelancing — after all you're pulling R8000 a month."

"No, I'm tired of reporting. Now I want a job, an office, a car and a column in the paper."

THE JOURNO'S BURDEN

"Are we merely porters who carry press releases from the government and put them in the paper? Or are we re-porters who explain the significance of the news to our readers?" Paul Hemp (*Ten Practical Tips for Business and Economic Reporting in Developing Economies*).

FLEECED ON HIS OWN RECOGNISANCES

Few people can miss Sunday Times news editor Peter Malherbe. Not least the scroungers in Grahamstown. On a recruiting trip to Rhodes recently, he was hailed as an old friend in the street by a hustler seeking spare change. The bemused Malherbe had forgotten the ways of Grahamstown and was about to refuse. But the man reminded PM where he had lived during his student days in Grahamstown nearly 15 years earlier ... and that he'd always scored from the young Malherbe in those far off times. The snookered Malherbe reached into his pocket ...

AFRICAN SUPER HIGHWAY

Ghana's village phone shops are doing runaway business offering e-mail addresses to cus-

tomers. The result is a rocketing trade in messaging, and the invention of a new verb. "Now my son, you must dot-com me when you get to Accra," is common speak in the rural areas. Such success on the info highway must drive Jay Naidoo ... dotty.

HARD PRESS

Against the backdrop of the struggle to scrap Section 205, journalists might consider cases where we would be hard pressed to remain silent about our sources. Consider what happened to Frene Ginwala as editor of Tanzania's post-independence paper the *Standard* in 1970. She published a story about a top Zanzibari government member having abducted a woman for a forced marriage, only to discover later the information was false and had been planted to discredit the paper.

Three Zimbabweans in a similar situation last year decided to hell with the principle and coughed up the name of the source who fed them false information.

IDI AND THE ZIMBABWEAN EGO

Zimbabwean press-hater Robert Mugabe would no doubt enjoy the kind of coverage given to that well-known African patriot Idi Amin (now resident in Saudi Arabia). When Idi grabbed power in 1971, his picture featured in the country's key daily, the *Argus*, 101 times in just five months. A year later, it was up to 157 times in the same period. By 1976, it was 215 times — an average of twice in each edition. Among Amin's bullying tactics was his attack on a (black) journalist at a press conference: "That question must have been asked by a white African and surely not by a Ugandan." Mugabe may be following his mentor's footsteps but as a produce of Jesuit education, it's unlikely he'd seek sanctuary with the Saudis.

UNCOOL

"At least 20% of South Africans travel on British passports and an estimated 10% on other foreign passports." This item comes from a rag called *South Africa News*, circulated in London, and available at the offices of our very own High Commission there. Maybe racism-hunter Barney Pitsoyiwe should take his media probe up north, where evidently it is still cool to conflate South Africa with a white minority.

DAILY DISPATCH - ONE OF THE BIGGEST

The latest issue of the ALL MEDIA AND PRODUCTS SURVEY shows (once again) that the Daily Dispatch ranks right alongside South Africa's best read newspapers. Only newspapers published in the top three cities (Johannesburg, Cape Town & Durban) can claim to have higher daily readership figures. These are our latest figures followed by the newspapers we beat ...

Daily Dispatch	EAST LONDON	199,000 readers
The Mercury	DURBAN	196,000 readers
E.P. Herald	P.E.	145,000 readers
Pretoria News	PRETORIA	119,000 readers
Natal Witness	PIETERMARITZBURG	115,000 readers
Die Volksblad	BLOEMFONTEIN	110,000 readers
Evening Post	P.E.	96,000 readers
Diamond Fields Advertiser	KIMBERLEY	47,000 readers

If you are battling the tough climate, why not call on one of your biggest allies to promote your business to nearly 200 000 readers?

Daily Dispatch

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