

# Diversify and survive

**A music writer offers tips for staying in business in the current challenging climate by trying new markets.**

Diversifying is one of the keys to survival in the current recession. Some of us got into music writing not because there was money in it – I don't recall ever being over-awed by an NME cheque – but because we had a passion for it, and I can't believe people who are passionate and knowledgeable about music don't also have other interests.

I'm finding there's still decent money in books, and rates are not being cut in the US yet – but expenses are, so US publications are using me more to do interviews in Europe rather than flying staff writers over. There's never been a better time to start sending ideas over to features editors over there. If, say, *Vanity Fair* in Italy or Ger-

many pick up on an interview I've done, I can often charge more than I got for the original piece; even if only a small women's mag like *Mindfood* in New Zealand takes it, it's a couple of hundred quid more for very little extra work. The key is always keeping your copyright. Finding editors who speak English and are receptive and reply to emails is hard, though. If anyone else sells their work abroad in this way, we should pool contacts. With everyone cutting back on costs, more publications will buy in interviews. When it comes to the US, many

## More online:

- Beware citizen book publishers!
  - Photographer forced to un-publish
  - Facebook thought we were stupid
  - US supreme court to hear © case
- See [www.londonfreelance.org/fl](http://www.londonfreelance.org/fl)

publications will require a full transcript of your interview after you've filed copy, and their quote- and fact-checking process afterwards is quite laborious. But all writers have to go through this process, every time. The *New York Post* recently paid me four months late – by which time the value of the dollar cheque in sterling had nearly doubled!

In my experience, publications in Russia and Korea are particularly bad at honouring invoices, for instance, and I no longer sell there.

I've tried independent syndication agencies too, and would love to know of a good one. In my experience even when they do place a feature, it's for pitiful amounts. I don't mind them taking a 50 per cent cut, but I do mind them giving a 3500-word piece to a publication with a healthy circulation for £300.

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## Free tax advice

THE NUJ Freelance Office has agreed with accountants H W Fisher that they will offer some free tax advice to NUJ members. For details, see Fisher's "Authors and Journalists Team" at [www.tinyurl.com/fishers-authors](http://www.tinyurl.com/fishers-authors) – this may be especially apposite since on 1 April Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs officials gained the power to enter your place of business – your home, if you claim for it as an office.

## Strike support

We will be passing the hat for the welfare of striking journalists and their families at Branch meetings. As we went to press the *Yorkshire Post* group were on strike over job cuts, with Johnston Press colleagues in Halifax balloting for action too; and the *Daily Record* and *Sunday Mail* in Scotland were due to have struck, also over job cuts, on 17 and 18 April. Watch [www.nuj.org.uk](http://www.nuj.org.uk) for updates. There was a comedy benefit in London on 15 April. Send us your fund-raising proposals.

## Longer holidays for casuals

From 1 April, workers' entitlement to paid time off increases to 28 days per year if you work five days a week, and pro rata.

This follows a European ruling that state holidays (in the UK, Bank

Holidays) must be counted on top of the normal entitlement.

So for every £100 you are paid for working regular shifts, you should get an extra £12.10 in respect of paid time off. Some clients

automatically add this – check, and if it's not there, claim!

For advice on this and other features of being a casual worker see [www.londonfreelance.org/feesguide/GeShiTxt.html](http://www.londonfreelance.org/feesguide/GeShiTxt.html)

## REVIEWS

## Keeping ethics alive

THERE ARE numerous stirring examples of good – and bad – practice in the ethics of journalism in *To Tell You the Truth – The Ethical Journalism Initiative* by Aidan White of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) – the worldwide federation of journalists' unions to which the NUJ is affiliated.

*To Tell You the Truth* documents many incidents in which reporters in war and conflict zones put down their cameras or microphones to help people who were critically injured, and who always ensured – sometimes at the cost of their own lives – that "the story never came before the people".

Less dramatic, but closer to home, are examples of good prac-

tice such as the photographer who still works at the *Oxford Mail*, despite being briefly sacked in the 1980s for refusing to "snatch" a picture of a disabled boy with artificial legs being dropped of at school, after his mother had approached the paper to say she wanted the publicity around her son to stop. A one-day strike by the photographer's colleagues forced his re-instatement.

The book also sets out clearly and concisely the financial pressures, "working conditions that crush the spirit of journalism" around the world and statistics on global advertising markets. (You'll have to read the book to find out which corporation regularly has its product –

branded cups of iced coffee – prominently displayed in front of the presenters during television news programmes broadcast from the lovely city of Las Vegas.)

As well as presenting cases from countries where press freedom is in a much worse state than in the UK and Ireland, there are also fascinating case studies from the countries in the world – mostly in Europe – where journalists have more rights than here.

You can download *To Tell You the Truth* as a pdf file from [www.ethicaljournalisminitiative.org/en](http://www.ethicaljournalisminitiative.org/en). The *Freelance* has seen a hard copy, so watch this space for details of how to get one.

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## Shafted: the media & the miners' strike

THE 1984-1985 miners' strike was a defining moment in British industrial relations – and, indeed, politics more widely. *Shafted*, a book edited by Yorkshire freelance Granville Williams and published by the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, to which the NUJ is affiliated, explores how the media covered the strike, which started 25 years ago this Spring.

*Shafted* analyses the pressures on journalists who reported the strike, and the important contribution from the alternative media and the coverage of the long conflict by freelance photographers. It reminds us of many instances of strong solidarity and cohesion in our organisations, an example being the refusal by all *The Sun*'s chapels to run a front cover showing a picture of Arthur

Scargill cropped to appear as though he was giving a Hitler salute. The 15 May 1984 edition instead ran a blank front page stating that the tabloid "decided reluctantly, to print the paper without it".

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- There's a longer version of this review, with details of how to order *Shafted*, online.

## Express derailed

Back on 8 March the *Scottish Daily Express* featured an exposé, courageously researched by trolling social networking websites, of how the survivors of the Dunblane school shooting in 1996 – some just turned 18 – were behaving like, er, teenagers. The *Freelance* would like to congratulate the journalists who were prominent in a letter-writing campaign that led the paper to print a two-page apology on 22 March.