

Vampire loving Darren casts spell on his audience

By Colum Coomey

Author hopeful of sequel from Paramount

BEST-SELLING Limerick writer Darren Shan is hopeful that there will be a sequel to the 80 million dollar production of his story, *Cirque Du Freak: The Vampire's Assistant*.

Delighted with the response from the audience at the film's Irish premiere last week, the Pallaskerry man said: "Obviously, it has to do very well at the box office for Paramount to do another one. All the actors enjoyed making the film and said they would love to do another one, so hopefully, it will get made in the near future".

Speaking during a Q&A at the Omniplex, he spoke about the changes made to adapt his books for the big screen: "I like the way they kept the darkness, they could have gone away and turned it into a comedy or put a nice bright happy ending. I love the way they kept it dark and freaky, I loved the actors I thought John C Riley was brilliant. I thought Darren and Steve were really well cast. I loved the effects and the sets".

London-born Shan revealed that he loved nightmares as a child: "Since I was about five or six, I've always loved vampires. I had a poster of Dracula on my bedroom wall and I'd go to sleep every night looking up at the lord of the undead, trying to give myself nightmares. I used to love having nightmares because they're fun".

It was when Shan got bored of traditional vampire stories that he decided to try something different:

"The idea of doing something from a child's point of view of having this child not wanting to be sucked into this world of blood and nightmares intrigued me".

He is excited about the movie's release on DVD and explained why: "Like a lot of films these days, they shot more than was required so there are a few scenes that didn't make it to the final cut, so I'm looking forward to seeing them".

The successful author gave one young member of the audience some advice on writing: "The most important thing is that if you keep writing and believing in yourself, you can succeed. It takes a lot of time and a lot of hard work but if you keep doing it and keep using your imagination, you keep writing stories, you improve, you learn new things, you get better and one day you will get there".

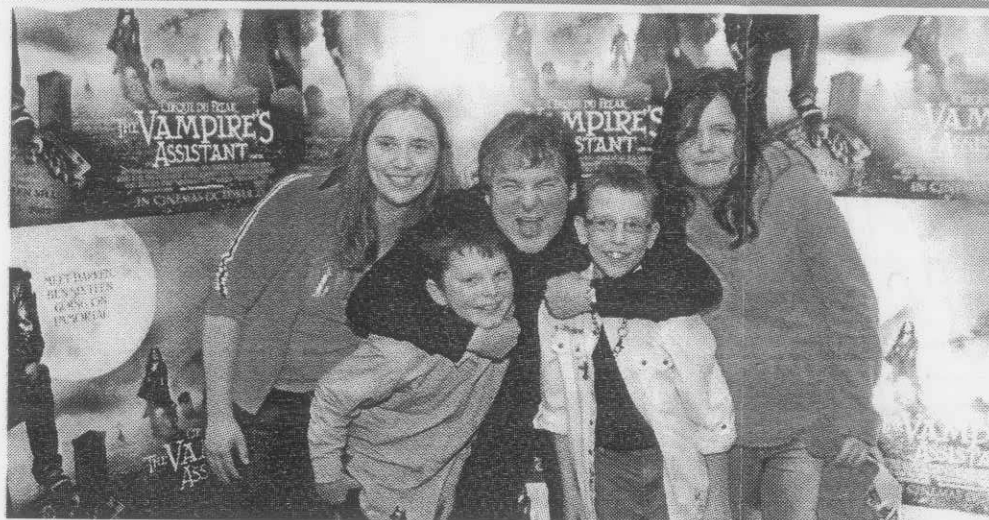
He continued: "I've seen countless times in recent years authors touted as the next Darren Shan but 12 or 13 years ago, nobody wanted the first Darren Shan. Keep working hard and you will succeed".

When asked which of the books was his favourite, he surprised the audience: "My favourite isn't actually out yet... it will be released next year under the title of *The Thin Executioner*. This is the story of a young boy who wants to be an executioner when he grows up".

Darren had the crowd in hysterics when he explained how some of his cousins in the cinema had given him inspiration for the freaks in his books.

He also explained how his cousin Ronan's birthday had encouraged him to finish his first draft of *Cirque Du Freak*, so he could give it to him as a present.

Cirque Du Freak: The Vampire's Assistant will be released on October 23.



Nichola Lopez, Dermot Curtin, Eamon Browne and Aine Barry pictured with Limerick author Darren Shan at the Irish and UK Premier showing of the movie *The Vampire's Assistant* written by Limerick Man Darren Shan in the Omniplex Limerick.

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Closing date: Tuesday, October 27, 5pm
Shortlist announced early November.

Eight years on and JFK school plans remain on hold

By Colum Coomey

Principal frustrated at lack of progress

THE principal of JFK primary school on the Ennis Road, admits to being frustrated that the functioning of his school has been greatly impaired by a mix up in their categorisation.

Bill Reidy explained: "We have been placed in the wrong rating category for primary schools. Now we have six prefabs, even though a design team was appointed to build a new school in 2001".

The school sent a letter to the Department of Education explaining that they should be moved from the 2.4 band of primary school ratings to the 2.1 band, applied to schools which need to be rebuilt.

He continued: "We were originally promised a school in 1971, but this never happened so we revisited the idea in the late 90's and we received a letter in March 2001, which committed to the development of a new school".

Funds were amassed to construct a gym, because of the limited green space in the grounds.

Mr Reidy told the Limerick Post that parents were appalled to learn that the Department of Education had not utilised all of their funding

this year, as they have been waiting so long for a new school.

Another issue which concerns him is that children have to use an outside toilet which, he believes, is a safety risk.

The school's plight is to be raised in the Dail.

Deputy Kieran O'Donnell has expressed concern that too many promises have been made and broken.

"JFK has been in the school building pipeline since 2001. Drawings for its construction have been drawn up since 2006, but still, there is no money forthcoming".

JFK, he added, must get funding from the Department of Education when the next round of funding for school building is announced.

"The staff is excellent, but the environment is simply inadequate for children to get a modern education.

"This is not acceptable in this day and age. I have written to the Education Minister Batt O'Keeffe outlining to him the urgency of funding a new building there, and I will be bringing the issue up in the Dail.

"It is absolutely critical that JFK gets the go-ahead. It needs new facilities without further delay. Over 280 children attend the school, and whole cohorts of children have entered it and moved on to secondary since it entered the pipeline. This cycle cannot be allowed to continue into the future".

Books, authors and fancy dress in the library

THE Children's Book Festival, organised by the city's Library Service, continues this week with a range of activities lined up.

On Thursday, October 22, at the City Library in The Granary (Michael Street), the Science Alive Show with Michael Moylan, has two sessions, one at 9.30am and the second at 11am. Age group - fourth, fifth and sixth classes.

The author, Sarah Webb, visits the library on Friday, October 23 to chat with fifth and sixth class pupils at 10.15am and at 11.30am.

Mid-term break activities include: Pignut Productions' Puppet-Making Workshop for the age group 7 to 10-year-olds on Tuesday, October 27, from 2.30 to 4.30pm in The Granary. Numbers are limited so booking is essential at the library desk.

On Thursday, October 29, The Granary will host a Halloween Craft session and Storytime, at which children can wear fancy dress (age group 6 to 9-year-olds). The event takes place at 3pm and as numbers are limited, booking is essential at the library desk.

On Friday, October 30, a Halloween Craft Session and Storytime takes place (children can wear fancy dress) age group 6 to 9-year-olds. The event commences at 3pm and booking is essential at the library desk.

On Saturday, October 31, Tall Tales with Witch Hilary, for 3 to 4-year-olds

IMO want legal limit for drink driving reduced

THE Irish Medical Organisation has asked the Minister for Transport, Mr Noel Dempsey, TD, to introduce and publish the proposed legislation to reduce the legal limit for drink driving without further delay.

Ireland is one of only three EU countries with the legal limit above 50mg/100ml.

The IMO state that the evidence from other countries is very clear:

"Reducing the limit will reduce the number of deaths and injuries on our roads.

"At the current legal limit of 80mg/100ml, a driver is 5-10 times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash. Drinking almost any amount of alcohol impairs a driver's ability to drive safely. The risk rises rapidly when the blood