Murder One Festival 2025

Directors Report

Overview

The Murder One 2025 took place in the dlr Lexicon venue 16-19 October 2025. Our third year in the library, the feedback from audience and authors suggested that we have cemented the festival as a regular event, and the build in audience figures reflected that.

Ireland's only genre specific international literature festival, Murder One focuses on crime and crime writing. Featuring international and Irish authors but is not limited to current publications, we aim to attract readers of all types.

Crime is one of the largest selling genres and extremely popular among library users, but it tends to be reduced to a single panel in larger festivals. Murder One aims to change that and is building each year, attracting big names.

Audience

Murder One was aimed at all crime fans, covering all aspects of a very broad genre. Bringing in international bestsellers whom readers are familiar with, but who haven't appeared very often in Ireland, is key to building an internationally recognised crime festival.

It is also important to us to include a blend of free and paid events in order to make the festival accessible to all, to generate a buzz and footfall. Again this year *Readings in the Studio* enabled individuals to experience the festival even if they can't stretch to tickets for the panel events. The Readings resulted in great sales in the bookshop.

The Offer

The success of the early Murder One festivals in creating a strong international brand, clearly guided by professional hands, has laid the foundation with publishers to bring some of their big names to Ireland. This year we managed to bring Chris Whitaker to Dublin between his US tours and his events was one of our best.

Children's Day

The children's events this year with Alan Nolan and Elizabeth Murray were described by Elizabeth as 'outstanding'. She was deeply impressed with the organisation and execution by library staff and there was a palpable buzz in the air from the audience.

Masterclasses

The Studio space is ideal to hold masterclasses, and this year we moved to three industry panels events, Sam Blake's own Getting Published masterclass, one with two London based agents, and one with Prof Henry Sutton who runs the Crime Fiction Masters at UEA and has an encyclopaedic knowledge. These were very popular and yielded a box office of €3143 – although costs are high on these events they are a key element of the programme.

Readings in the Studio

To give opportunity to as many writers as possible, and to incorporate a series of free events into the programme, this year we moved we moved our Readings in the Studio event to two, one hour sessions, featuring four authors at each one. These ran at 10am on Saturday and Sunday. Essential and still popular, we will be looking at developing the concept in 2026.

Panel events and in-conversations

Overall our panel events and in-conversations showed stronger booking than 2024, although our Evil Genius event on Sunday evening with Steve Cavanagh and Ruth Ware did not book as strongly as expected – this could have been for several reasons – price (slightly higher than the daytime events) timing (Sunday is a hard sell!) and programming (Steve facilitated a sell out event earlier in the day).

Marketing and Media

Crotty PR did an excellent job this year, with 3 features in national print, as well as many local radio stations from Wicklow to Dublin City. We picked up specific recommended event listing shouts outs in the Irish Examiner and on Q102 in their 'what to do this weekend' items. One audience member booked three events directly as a result of hearing Sam Blake on Sunshine Radio. Ticket sales were strongly driven by our loyal mailing list and radio and the national press features. Library support on digital notice boards and via their newsletter was invaluable and hugely appreciated.

Financials

In 2024 with Arts Council support we were able to use a PR company to look after our media and PR and this brought a significant increase in exposure, with an even bigger impact in 2025 (as outlined above).

This year's grant support of €20,000 from the Arts Council, together with a contribution of €10300 from DLR, plus DLR support on the event space and AV costs, enabled us to increase speaker fees, assist with travel where publishers weren't covering the cost and to bring in

essential support on the management team. Murder One has been a passion project for Sam Blake for many years, enabling the festival to flourish, but previous levels of time commitment are no longer possible.

In kind support – from DLR on venue hire and tech/sound and from publishers supporting travel, plus volunteer hours, totalled €16,337.00 and is something we are truly grateful for. This support is essential to ensure the festival can function.

In 2023 we implemented ticket prices of €15/€12 (with booking fees charged to the customer on top) for big name events and €12/€10 for all other events. We have continued this in 2025 and will keep this price point for 2026. Again this year we found events on Sunday were more difficult to build an audience for and had reduced the programme accordingly. Next year (2026) we will look at weighting Sunday with the bigger names to see if this helps lift bookings.

This year we had attendance of 1350 (an increase of 6.8% on last year) with a box office of €9892.00, resulting in a profit of €2966 which will be ringfenced for 2026 and is reflected in our 2026 Arts Council funding application. In 2026 we are also applying for two ISL signers to work throughout the festival at a cost of €5000.

Highlights

Our sell out event this year was 'The Devil is in the Detail' with Steve Cavanagh in conversation with Jane Casey, Andrea Carter and UK author Anna Sharpe – obviously legal issues are popular in Dun Laoghaire! It was Steve Cavanagh's birthday so we brought a cake on stage and celebrated with the audience. Again our free readings were well supported – this is an essential part of our programme to ensure accessibility regardless of income - and our children's events were extremely popular with one of our authors, Elizabeth Murray, saying that the organisation on the library side was outstanding, she said: ***'Everyone was so welcoming, they were just incredible, it's the first time in ten years where everything has been ready and perfectly organised, it was outstanding.'*** As a previous Dublin One City One Book choice, Elizabeth has delivered hundreds of events, so this is high praise indeed for the DLR team.

Huge thanks to Aisling Donnelly and Domitilla Fagan for their assistance and commitment to making Murder One 2025 a standout festival. Their support was fabulous and their attention to detail very much appreciated. The exhibition they curated around Dr John Curran's Agatha Christie artefacts was hugely popular and commented on. It would be great to look at a complementary exhibition for Murder One 2026.

Recommendations for 2026

- We have already secured 15-18 October for 2026, to include a children's day on Thursday 15th and an industry/workshop day on 16th. We are looking at keynote events to launch the core festival programme on Friday evening, and big names for Saturday and Sunday evenings. Domitilla has suggested that level 4 might be available

for big names – we have Ardal O'Hanlon and Cally Taylor already lined up, plus Jane Casey who had her first stand alone out, and we hope Liz Nugent.

- **2026 sees the publication of a landmark anthology of short stories by Irish Women Crime Writers (plus Cecilia Ahern and actor Emmet J Scanlan of Kin fame) called FEAR – all proceeds are going to Women's Aid. We are hoping to launch this on 15th October on Level 4 if possible. It will have significant coverage in the press and on TV etc.**
- We are currently applying for Arts Council Funding for 2026 and looking for funding for ISL signers. Expanding the team to include a programme manager and PR, has added to the smoothy running of 2025.
- We would hope to continue to offer publishers a Murder One-curated event in association with DLR, whenever major crime writers visit Dublin. This will keep the connection with the main festival and top names in the genre. However, these events need to be economically viable.
- Our only issues this year focused on the building – toilets predominantly! We totally understand that this is an issue for the library as well and action is underway to resolve it. The terrible smell from the kitchen was overpowering – we opened the fire door to create air flow and found when the internal kitchen door was closed it helped hugely. Again we appreciate that this is an ongoing problem for the library too. The café opened late in the morning on Saturday and not at all on Sunday (staffing related I'd imagine) - this meant our authors had to go out for coffee and audience sales were missed. It would be great to be sure that there was cover for 2026.
- Feedback from attendees on the building and location was overwhelmingly excellent, the LexIcon is a perfect home for Murder One and we are truly grateful for the professionalism and support of the DLR team.

Vanessa Fox O'Loughlin

Festival Director

November 2025