

Craig Brown wins £50,000 Baillie Gifford Prize

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Winner's One Two Three Four 'reinvents the art of biography'



Craig Brown has won the £50,000 Baillie Gifford Prize, for his "joyous, irreverent" *One Two Three Four: The Beatles in Time* (4th Estate). He received the prize at an online ceremony held yesterday evening, in place of the usual prize dinner.

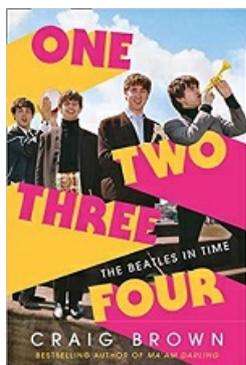
One Two Three Four follows Brown's acclaimed *Ma'am Darling*, about Princess Margaret, in jettisoning a standard biographical approach and instead telling the story through an accumulation of straight narratives, memoir, anecdotes, press cuttings, recollections by fans, and other material. Introducing the book from her home, where her husband was filming her on his phone, chair of the judges Martha Kearney described the book as "an unbelievably fresh take on the Fab Four" that "reinvents the art of biography". Fellow judge Bee Wilson said that it "makes you see [the Beatles] through a completely different lens... it's funny, it's sad, it's fresh".

In a statement, Kearney said: "In the deep gloom of 2020, we have discovered a shaft of light. *One Two Three Four* is a joyous, irreverent, insightful celebration of The Beatles, a highly original take on familiar territory. It's also a profound book about success and failure which won the unanimous supports of our judges."

On being told by Kearney that he had won (*see picture*), Brown thanked his publisher 4th Estate, mentioning in particular his editors Nicholas Pearson and Robert Lacey, and his publicist Naomi Mantin.

In addition to BBC presenter Kearney and journalist and author Wilson, the judges were professor and author Shahidha Bari, editor and novelist Simon Ings, *New Statesman* writer Leo Robson, and *New York Times* opinion editor Max Strasser.

Each shortlisted author received £1,000. The full shortlist for the prize was:



One Two Three Four: The Beatles in Time by Craig Brown (4th Estate)
The Idea of the Brain: A History by Matthew Cobb (Profile)
Black Spartacus: The Epic Life of Toussaint Louverture by Sudhir Hazareesingh (Allen Lane)
Our Bodies, Their Battlefield: What War Does to Women by Christina Lamb (William Collins)
Stranger in the Shogun's City: A Woman's Life in Nineteenth-Century Japan by Amy Stanley (Chatto)
The Haunting of Alma Fielding: A True Ghost Story by Kate Summerscale (Bloomsbury Circus)

Brown will appear on the next episode of the Baillie Prize podcast *Read Smart*, talking to host Razia Iqbal.

The prize was known as the Samuel Johnson until Baillie Gifford, which supports other literary events including the Borders, Hay, Cheltenham and Henley book festivals, took over as sponsor in 2016. Baillie Gifford signed a new, seven-year sponsorship deal for the prize in 2019, when the winner's purse increased from £30,000 to £50,000.

Invited guests at the ceremony yesterday also enjoyed the investment management firm's generosity, receiving in advance hampers containing olives, cheeses, crackers and Champagne; there was a copy of one of the shortlisted books for each guest too.

Charles Plowden, senior partner at Baillie Gifford, told the online audience that the prize aimed to become the most significant non-fiction book prize in the world. He hinted that he expected his firm's sponsorship to continue beyond the current contract.

The 2019 Baillie Prize winner was Hallie Rubenhold for *The Five: The Untold Lives of the Women Killed by Jack the Ripper* (Doubleday/Black Swan), which in paperback went on to become a Waterstones Book of the Month and a *Sunday Times* number one bestseller.

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