

2005/July FRANK COTTRELL BOYCE - Publishing News

Frank Cottrell Boyce, whose debut children's novel *Millions* has just won the Carnegie Medal, is one of the few Englishmen who could claim to have a successful screen writing career, and not be accused of over-egging the pudding - he wrote *Welcome to Sarajevo*, *The Claim* and *24 Hour Party People*, to name but a few of his movies. So you might expect his ultimate ambition would be to win an Oscar. You'd be wrong. He's always wanted to write a children's novel. "The thing is," he says, "what's the biggest thing anyone's going to say to you as a screenwriter - 'I love your work'? I was in a Moss Side library recently doing a reading and I got to the end of the chapter and this kid said 'Whoa! Don't stop, man, this is getting good!'. That doesn't happen to you if you're a screenwriter...it's much more important to people, children's writing."

How does he feel about rocketing into the world he's always wanted to be a part of? "To be honest I'm still kind of reeling from the fact that the book's been published at all...I've been on a high ever since my agent rang to say Macmillan were going to do it. And I can't get over winning the Carnegie, because most awards have been devalued. If you won an Oscar you'd be pretty chuffed, but you'd have to admit, in your darkest hour, that some pretty crap scripts have won - *Good Will Hunting* won a script Oscar. But the Carnegie - Arthur Ransome and CS Lewis won that. You've got to say [the Carnegie judges] know what they're doing, although they may have lost their marble this year!"

"The thing about children's literature is that it is, and always has been, much more ambitious than grown-up literature, philosophically and stylistically. You can be incredibly innovative and not lose your audience, while grown-ups who do that become elitist and high-brow. If attempt something completely different as a children's writer, people come with you."

Millions has already been released as a movie, directed by Danny Boyle (*Shallow Grave*), and in six weeks' time, Macmillan will publish *Framed*, Cottrell Boyce's eagerly awaited second novel. Had the attention he's been

getting since the publication of *Millions* put pressure on him when it came to writing a follow-up? “What’s terrifying is going out and reading the book, which was written very quickly, hoping it would work. I was really struggling with the new book, and I had to go out and read *Millions* somewhere, and I remember thinking “Oh God, it’s brilliant...If only I'd known it was brilliant I'd have enjoyed writing it!”