

Rich pickings at Dubai 2014

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Ahdaf Soueif, Eoin Colfer, Joanne Harris, Jojo Moyes and Ibrahim Nasrallah are among more than 100 authors scheduled to appear at the 2014 Emirates Airline Festival of Literature, which runs from 4 through 8 March.

Paddy Ashdown, Darcey Bussell, Richard Madeley and Judy Finnigan are also in the line-up, which was revealed this week at a LitFest gala dinner, sponsored by the InterContinental Dubai Festival City, where the event is based.

Attendees included local authors Nujoom Al Ghanem and Rachel Hamilton, runner-up in the Montegrappa First Fiction competition in 2013.

The LitFest has also revealed that the theme for the sixth Festival is "metamorphosis", which will be incorporated into sessions and panel discussions. Director Isobel Abulhoul said: "The theme is very apt for next year, and after winning the wonderful accolade of Best Festival, we continue to evolve. Each year our international reputation grows and this has helped us attract our stunning line-up of authors, resulting in a programme that is exciting, enriching and accessible."

Desert Stanzas, a night of poetry under the stars, returns in 2014, and new events include Literary Idol, "a cross between *Dragon's Den* and *Pop Idol*", where aspiring writers can have their work read out by an actor and critiqued by a panel of experts. There will also be a night of music and poetry where folk rock/poetry fusion band LITTLE MACHiNe will perform.

Photo: His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Vice-President and Prime