

TV Book Club set to launch new literary stars

Britain's most powerful book club is returning to our screens and promises to launch a whole new generation of literary superstars.

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Amanda Ross, the TV producer behind Richard and Judy's Channel 4 book club, is resurrecting the idea as a stand alone programme.

The TV Book Club, once again produced by her company, Cactus TV, will be presented by the comedians Jo Brand and Dave Spikey, alongside the style consultant Gok Wan and the actors Laila Rouass and Nathaniel Parker.

Its new list of must-reads include titles by Sarah Waters and Nick Hornby, as well as by the former television presenter Sarah Dunant and by George Pelecanos, one of the creators and writers of the hit American TV drama, *The Wire*.

"What has been great in the past is that, as well as making new names, we have broadened the readership of established writers such as William Boyd and Julian Barnes," Mrs Ross, the sister-in-law of the presenter Jonathan Ross who has been described as the Simon Cowell of the book world.

"I would love to be him. I have got an amazing amount of respect for what he has done, but the main difference would be that he makes money out of the talent that he finds and I am not allowed to.

"We have got to show the same sort of integrity now about how we choose the books as we always did. We have self-imposed rules that we should never choose more than three books from one publisher. I always think about the book first before I look to see who the publisher is. For me it is just about keeping people talking about books."

Over the past decade, celebrity endorsements of books have become hugely valuable to the market. When a title was featured by Oprah Winfrey in the book club segment of her American chat show it was guaranteed a boost of more than a million sales, now known as "the Oprah effect", while in Britain Jonathan Ross's Twitter recommendation of *The Men Who Stare At Goats*, by Jon Ronson, sent sales soaring.

When Richard and Judy recommended *The Island* by Victoria Hislop sales jumped from the low thousands to more than a million.

The same can be said for *Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold and *PS I love You* by Cecelia Aherne, both of which were subsequently made into films and made their authors rich.

"My favourite book that I have found this time, I think, is *Cutting for Stone*, sent to me by Gail Rebeck at Random House," said Ross this weekend as she announced the 10 titles to be featured on the new TV Book Club.

"I was very pleased I found that one. I have always loved *ER* and it is set in a hospital. It is written by Abraham Verghese, an Indian doctor, and it is quite quirky and nothing like any book we have had on the programme before."

Cutting for Stone is Verghese's first novel.

The programme is a stand-alone show, rather than a 12-minute segment. It will be screened weekly from Sunday, Jan 17 as a 10-part series on More4, with repeats on Channel 4 the following lunchtime.

The top 10 tips are:

- The Little Stranger, by Sarah Waters
- Blacklands, by Belinda Bauer
- Sacred Hearts, by Sarah Dunant
- Juliet, Naked, by Nick Hornby
- The Rapture, by Liz Jensen
- Brixton Beach, by Roma Tearne
- The Way Home, by George Pelecanos
- Wedlock, by Wendy Moore
- The Silver Linings Play Book, by Matthew Quick
- Cutting for Stone, by Abraham Verghese