



In 2004, an original and quirky book entitled *Newton and the Giant* earned the coveted Silver Birch Award. The author, Michael McGowan, was unfamiliar to many; an apparent newcomer in the world of children's fiction. Like Newton, his daring and brilliant hero, Michael was far from unprepared for the new world in which he found himself. You see, Michael was already a talented and prolific writer in a variety of media, including film (*My Dog, Vincent*, 1998), television (*Henry's World*, 2002), magazines (*Saturday Night*, *Toronto Life*, *Harrowsmith* and others), and newspaper (*The Globe and Mail*). He has made it his habit to continue writing in various media, as well as producing and directing, most recently with the critically acclaimed film, *Saint Ralph* (2005).

Martha: So, Michael, thanks for taking time out of your insanely diverse writing life to chat with me... You clearly have an intensive media background, in addition to your writing career. Which do you enjoy the most? (or is that like asking "Which of your kids do you like best?")

Michael McGowan: I seem to enjoy working in a variety of media. It's great to hide away and write for a few months. I find that it's actually the hardest thing to do. I know if I had nothing but writing ahead of me for the rest of my career I would probably start being less productive. However, trying to juggle a number of balls seems to work better for my personality. I like the time I spend away from writing directing because by the time I get back to writing I'm looking forward to it again.

Martha: So what are you working on at present? Can you catch us up on your "creative genius"?

Michael McGowan

Meet the Author

Michael McGowan: I've just finished writing, directing and producing a one-hour pilot for the CBC called *Left Coast*. I was out in Vancouver most of the fall working on the project. Just before Christmas, I finally finished the sequel to *Newton and the Giant* called *Newton and the Time Travel Machine*. I'm actually hoping to send it to HarperCollins tomorrow after I finish inputting a few changes. I'm trying to finish a first draft of a screenplay that I'm developing with Telefilm and CBC has ordered a bunch more scripts for the series that I'm hoping will go into production this spring.

Martha: Are you allowed to tell us anything about *Left Coast* or the screenplay for Telefilm—feel free to plug your work shamelessly! <grin> What about the new *Newton* adventure?

Michael McGowan: *Left Coast* is a family show set on a fictional BC Gulf Island about a displaced Toronto family (is that vague enough?) while the screenplay is attempting to be an homage to Canada (it's a road movie) against a backdrop of some fairly serious themes. As I'm not sure how much I'm allowed to say about the show, and the screenplay is still in its infancy, I'll stay purposely vague on those two issues. As for *Newton Deux*, our hero invents a time-travel machine and Herbert and Gertrude go missing. Newton needs to find them in order to stop Gertrude's brother, Prince Raphael from taking over the kingdom. Most of the characters from the first book are in this one.

Martha: I can't wait! I know there will be legions of school kids, (and their teachers) rubbing their hands together in glee, reading that Newton, Herbert, Gertrude (and lets hope the quadruplets too!) are on their way back. Did you always have another adventure for Newton in the back of your mind?

Michael McGowan: I definitely thought I would write another *Newton* but I didn't know what it would be. When HarperCollins said they were interested in a second, that's when I started trying to figure out the plot. I tend to come up with ideas only when I have to. In other words once HarperCollins committed, then I began the process of mentally running through various plot ideas until finally I came up with one I thought would be interesting. That seems to be the way I generate most of my ideas. For instance, I knew that CBC was really trying to develop a family series and that prompted me to start thinking along those lines.

Martha: So what does a guy who works on so many projects at once do for fun?

Michael McGowan: Go into a sensory deprivation room!

Martha: I bet. <grinning> Is there any medium in which you haven't worked yet, and would like to? Anything you're still dying to try?

Michael McGowan: Not really. I'm always looking to try to find good stories to tell and the medium seems to sort itself out. For me that's the challenge and when I start a new project I have no idea whether or not I'm going to be able to pull it off.

Martha: Well we're very happy you've managed to pull it off so successfully, and we look forward to seeing more of your work—in each of the various media—in the years to come! Thanks for letting us into your world... and here's to some rewarding downtime in that sensory deprivation room! ■

Keep your eyes peeled for Michael McGowan's second novel, *Newton and the Time Machine*, which is in the process of being published by HarperCollins. Air dates for Michael's other projects have yet to be announced.