

# The Spoken Word

**I**t was at a recent event when the master of ceremonies called us all to attention; Clean and clear, soft but firm and the spoken word came through. FireFlyz was fortunate to catch up with him after the formalities were done and he agreed to answer a few questions about 'his' spoken word. Let us introduce Nick Atkinson.

## Where are you from?

I am from the United Kingdom and the majority of my early years were spent in a small village near Cambridge, called Catworth.

## What memories do you have of learning English?

Obviously, English has always been my native tongue and to be honest I don't clearly remember the English lessons at school, let alone the examinations and countless essays that I must have written. I wonder -- who does? Surprising though it may seem I feel I didn't learn to speak English until I was 30. That was when I went to Japan as an English teacher having never taught before and realised how I had never had to think about what I was saying, why I was saying it and who I was saying it to; but when you do and also start to look at how the language is formed it takes on a whole new light.

## How did you start with the Master of Ceremonies work?

When I arrived in Malaysia in 2005 I was not sure what I would do. I set up a business and had the required work permits and even though things were pretty tough in the early years it was after a relatively short time that I knew this was going to be my home. I had no idea though that once again the spoken word, as it came out of my mouth, would change my life. I was in a meeting, selling international newspapers of all things and the gentlemen I was speaking to asked what I was doing the following Wednesday. A strange question to which I answered with a bit of puzzlement.. "Uh, nothing, I don't think."

"Well, can you host a conference for me? I need your British voice." The thought



With Dato' Jimmy Choo after hosting his launch at the Malaysia International Shoe festival

was, to say the least, a bit daunting for a moment, but he then said, "I will pay you of course." That was November 2008 and when I arrived at the Sime Darby Convention Centre I remember being so pleased that the rostrum was a solid block and covered my shaking knees.

And thus, chapter one began; slowly to start with but I became involved with a small business organisation that organised regular events, seminars, dinners and such like and I would be the Master of Ceremonies or, 'emcee' as we like to say in Malaysia. Every event was a challenge in itself, not least to create a script that fits the topic, as well as the audience bearing in mind that 99% of them are Malaysian; this taught me to think about the who, what, why, where, when and how of everything I did. Additionally I had to deal with the fact that I needed to talk 'to' my audience and not 'at' them!

## On that note, how do you feel about the English language today?

Let's keep it simple; English itself is a beautiful language with a simple grammatical structure that incorporates words and phrases from many other languages. It has produced some of the best literature the world has ever seen, and has been at the forefront of the modern communication age, providing a common communication point for people who otherwise might not have had one. I am lucky to have this as my native tongue and as long as people still

want to hear me I will speak as often, and as loudly as they want ... but still maintain the clarity and precision that the language deserves and still be able to revel in the joy of English ... a language with noses that 'run' and feet that 'smell'!

## Your voice does have a certain familiarity to it. What else do you do?

I always get immense pleasure when members of any audience compliment the clarity, the tone or whatever after I have spoken. Best of all, though, was after one event with nearly a thousand in the audience, the 2009 Master's Football Gala Dinner at the Sheraton Hotel in KL, and the one guy who comes up to me afterwards and says "I need your voice!" "Okay, can you elaborate?" "Yes" he said, "I am doing a radio ad and need an English voice for the campaign. I want yours!"

What could I say but when and where? And so chapter two began and the rest is history.

## And how goes the future?

That was five years ago and the story is still writing itself. I have done numerous voice overs for radio and TV, with many corporate videos and such like under my belt Thankfully, I continue to get requests each week for both voice and emcee opportunities. I love my work and that's why I always say that I have found my voice in Malaysia. 🎙️

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