



Curious to see how Daniel Radcliffe, famous for playing Harry Potter on the big screen, will tackle his latest project – a Hammer Films adaptation of the bestselling novel, *The Woman in Black*. The film will see Radcliffe play a young lawyer, Arthur Kipps, who travels to his deceased client's house only to discover that it is being haunted

Summer projects

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Julie Meer looks through colour samples as she tries to decide which paints to choose for her new wellness centre in Dubai. Paulo Vecina / The National

Finishing touches

In their penultimate week, Katie Boucher sees how our four Summer Diary participants are faring with their projects of the past seven weeks: writing a screenplay, learning Arabic, getting fit and starting a business

Julie Meer is starting up Body Balancers, a wellness, sports and physiotherapy centre, in Jumeirah Lake Towers, Dubai.

This week has gone so quickly. The biggest hurdle has been working on the interior of the centre with the contractor and designer. It's critical as it provides the whole look and feel of the company, the message and the image that we want the public and our clients to see. It's been a real eye-opener, because obviously if you have unlimited funds you can go out and do some amazing things. But we're not that lucky. We had to hit the high street and try to be pretty creative to achieve the look we want within our budget.

We have brought some designers on board to help us, but luckily my business partner Carol is quite knowledgeable about colour therapy and feng shui, so she worked with them to set the tone. The idea was to make our clients feel at ease in a calm, safe environment.

We visited a few places around town, and looked on some websites and through magazines to get some ideas. If we found something we liked we would take a picture of it and put it in the wish book to see if it would fit. In two weeks the contractor will start work, and then the fit-out should take a month.

It's a great feeling to be at this point. While you're working on the paperwork you feel a bit stuck,

like there's loads of other stuff you could be getting on with. But it's going to be fantastic to see our vision materialise. I can't wait to see what it's going to look like.

Jeanne LeSage is the managing producer of the Abu Dhabi Film Festival. She is doing the Original Fitness beach boot camp.

I had a much better outlook this week and tried my best to ignore the struggle of last week and just get back out there. Things are getting busier at work, so I've grown to be very appreciative of this time for myself. I want to make the most of it.

Unfortunately, on one of the days, after getting dressed and ready to go at 5:30am, I suddenly remembered that I had lent my car to a friend and was completely stranded. So I missed the morning session. It completely messed up my day but I made sure that instead I went to the evening boot camp. It was so bizarre to go in the early evening as the sun was setting. I had one great boot camp moment, though: Phil (the instructor) often asks me to set the pace for the group run at the end of the session. This is a big challenge for me with a group of runners with very diverse speeds and abilities; plus when I first started, I couldn't even run the whole distance without a walk break. It's tough but I can see a progression every time I do it. Well this week, near the end of the



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Julie Meer

run, which is after a pretty tough hour of intense exercise, for some masochistic reason I thought it would be fun to challenge the group to a sprint for the last 50 metres. It seemed like a good idea at the time. So, off we went for the last gasp. Then, true to my usual grace and poise in athletics, my gym trousers started falling down. Just when I thought I couldn't get any more goofy out on the course. But I guess it's because I'm losing weight, so no complaints here.

Steve Watson used to work in media but has, since arriving in Abu Dhabi last August, been a house husband. He is writing his first screenplay.

This week I wanted to take my draft screenplay to my mentor, Magy, for some feedback. But first I had to put it in a legible format, so I bought Celtx, a screenwriting template from Microsoft. I had read last week, in my book *Write Screenplays That Sell: The Ackerman Way*, that it's no use just writing a document. Whenever you submit you've got to make it as easy as possible for someone to read and engage with it.

Magy is a very clever and inspirational lady. Being a bit of a newcomer to all this I was expecting a drubbing, but she was very positive in her appraisal of my work so far. My task had been to write a 12-minute screenplay, with each page taking a minute. I presented her with 26

pages. Not surprisingly, she asked me to cut it right down. She told me that although at the end the interaction between characters and the close was great, by the time the audience got there they would be asleep because the introduction was too long. I needed to reduce the dialogue and introduce the action much earlier. It's the first stage of film-making – you shoot everything and then so much is left on the cutting-room floor.

It was great to get her feedback. When you watch a film you often think: "When's it going to get going?" Sitting with Magy it was very clear that I could get things going a lot quicker.

Interestingly, she said that the passion I have put into this task indicates a level of enjoyment on my part. And I have enjoyed it. I'll be interested to see what the Abu Dhabi Film Commission says; whether they can take it to the next stage.

Murtuza Kaizar is the branch manager of Hafele, a German company that supplies the construction industry with door hardware. He is studying level three Arabic at the Berlitz Language School in Abu Dhabi.

Having been frustrated at the lack of people to practise Arabic with on a day-to-day basis, a colleague of mine at work, who was really happy to hear about my interest in learning the language, has promised to

quiz me with 10 new words every morning by e-mail.

Then, for the first time since I took up this course, I spoke with confidence to the Arab-speaking man who washes my car. Due to the language barrier, I never used to be able to converse with him more than our standard greeting. However, I realised that now that I have more vocabulary in my store I could question him on why he had been ignoring my car recently. I took him completely by surprise!

I had been meaning to teach my son Arabic at the same time as I have been learning it; but I got some very helpful advice from a customer at work on the topic. He suggested that my wife and I first concentrate on the languages we both commonly speak if we want to train our child perfectly in any language, instead of confusing him with a new language that neither of us are very confident in.

Having reached this stage, I have already started imagining the endless possibilities if I complete the course successfully. Of course, I still worry about losing touch if I don't put it to use. But then, I have already fallen in love with Arabic movies. This week I watched two of the four I chose last week. It's a lot more fun with subtitles and I like conversing and replaying certain conversations that I recognise from my course.