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## **Awards in hand and a foot in the door - Times competition.**

By Michael Knipe.

Michael Knipe reports on the broad range of exciting projects, in fields as varied as songwriting, charity funding and virtual entrepreneurship, marked by the latest Times Student Awards

Winning one of last year's five Times Student Awards was "one of the best moments in my life," said one of the winners, Greg Scott, last week.

In addition to receiving the prize of a laptop and camcorder, worth #5,000, for creating a website, he was, unexpectedly given a job for ten weeks at Dell, the computer systems company which co-sponsored the award.

A year later Greg, 20, is still studying computing at Imperial College, London and when he finishes this three-year course, he is considering taking a medical degree course with the intention of becoming a doctor.

At the time of last year's success, Greg had just recovered from treatment for a rare brain tumour, which was surgically removed. He had been told of his tumour in December 1999 and, although anxious to discover as much as possible about his condition, he had found information difficult to access and spread over many media sources.

This led him to create the website that won him the Student Award. It included not just medical details but also gave personal accounts from other patients, a message board of support and Greg's diary of his hospital stay.

Greg is now fully recovered from the tumour. The website is still up and running and has received more than 10,000 hits.

Further evidence of the creative use of the Internet was provided by the winner of The Times Student Virtual Entrepreneur Award, co-sponsored by Barclays. Steve Saxon, 21, was in his final year at Trinity College, Cambridge, studying computer science. His idea for a website involved the development and storage of photographs. "I take lots of photographs and don't want them just stuck into albums, so I thought a service that developed photographs and scanned them into a website for you to see would be more useful," he said.

There were more than 300 entries last year for the Songwriter/Composer Award, won by Virginia Prout and Steve Patterson (see story, right) and a similar number is expected this

year.

"They were all of an extremely high standard," said Keith Sheppard, managing director of Raymond Weil UK, the co-sponsors of the award. "The finalists, especially, showed enormous talent in every aspect of songwriting from composition and lyrics to actual performance."

Sexual politics, problems facing immigrants in Dublin and the radical instincts of Tony Benn were the subjects which won joint first prize for two undergraduates in the Student News Journalism Award, co-sponsored by Sky News. Contestants had to provide a news report or interview, plus (for the finalists) a two-minute VHS tape telling a news story.

The winners were Johann Hari, aged 21, studying social and political science at King's College, Cambridge, and Hugh Miles, aged 23, studying English at Trinity College Dublin. They each won #4,000 and a six-week work placement at Sky News.

In third place came Nick Parrott, aged 22, studying journalism at Sheffield University, with a lively video on information technology in schools and an intriguing article on a professor's search for a contraceptive vaccine for squirrels. He won #2,000.

Last year The Times Student Business Award, co-sponsored with KPMG, challenged students to draw up a business plan for a charity.

It sought to highlight how funding would make a difference to charities, helping to launch projects that may not otherwise get off the ground. Students were asked to write a business plan outlining how the sum of #5,000, awarded in addition to the prizemoney by KPMG, could be used to achieve one or more of the charity's objectives. In addition to cash prizes, KPMG pledged to donate #1,000 to the charities chosen by shortlisted candidates.

First prize was won by Amit Patel, a medical student at Bristol University. His plan for CLIC - the national charity that supports children and young adults who suffer from cancer and leukaemia - set out how the donation could help to develop a communications system that would help to link doctors in Bristol to patients and their families in Devon and Cornwall. Mr Patel won #5,000.

Emma Bradley-Johnson, from Durham University, came second, winning #3,000 for her business plan to set up a freephone line, based at Durham University Student Community Action, that pupils from secondary schools can call for academic advice.

A third prize of #2,000 went to Peter Sidgwick, of Mansfield College, Oxford, for his business plan for Homes for a Future, which provides long-term care for abandoned children in Romania.

