

ESTRONOMICON

FANTASY ✦ SCIENCE FICTION ✦ HORROR

SD News Report August 2007

It's A Small Press World

After the success in the first year of publishing the eZine, I guess the jump into print was the next logical step for me as a small press publisher ...

Twelve O'Clock

Time for the first SD book

Flaming Dylan with Bob Lock

Photos from the launch night

Initiation Ritual

I went to Alt.Fiction and survived!



ESTRONOMICON
The Official SD eZine

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Published by
Screaming Dreams

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Edited by
Steve Upham

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Cover Artwork

'Outback Jack'
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It's A Small Press World

by Steve Upham

It only seems like yesterday when I first started this eZine, yet the past year and a half has flown past at an alarming rate! A hell of a lot has happened during that time and I admit it has been a struggle to keep up with the sheer amount of work involved with all my creative projects. But it's also been a very enjoyable and rewarding experience, so I can definitely say it's been worth the effort.

Some of you may be wondering what has happened to *Estronomicon* during 2007 as the publication schedule has been on-hold during the first half of the year. So I thought it would be a good idea to put together this *News Report* edition in order to explain more of what's been going on here over the past few months. Hopefully this will give you some idea of just how busy I've been.

After the success in the first year of publishing the eZine, I guess the jump into print was the next logical step for me as a small press publisher. Despite the demand for a printed version of *Estronomicon*, I decided against pursuing this for reasons of cost, time and distribution. Unless you can guarantee a certain amount of sales for every issue on a regular basis then it becomes financially unviable in the long term, as many magazine publishers can surely testify. So I chose instead to try my hand at a book project.

One of my original ideas was to put together a printed collection of short stories by the authors from the eZine. A *Best of Estronomicon* kind of thing, possibly letting the readers vote to choose their favourite tales from all the issues that year. Or maybe voting for their favourite authors, with the winners then being invited to write a brand new short story for the printed anthology.

This may have proved a suitable way for SD to break into the print market, releasing a *Best of ...* collection at the end of each year. But as soon as I mentioned the possibility of books I was inundated with manuscripts and overviews for novels and short story collections! As I began to read through them I was sufficiently impressed to seriously consider taking on several of the titles.

Before you can jump into such a venture there are many things to research and take into account. Learning the technical aspects of print publishing was the first obstacle to overcome, as this was an area where I had no previous experience. So a crash course was needed, with most of it being self-taught but I also owe a lot to

the other small presses who were kind enough to offer me help and advice along the way. So a big thank you to Chris Teague from Pendragon Press, Sean Wright from Crowswing Books, Peter Crowther from PS Publishing and Andrew Hook from Elastic Press. Plus everyone else who helped along the way.

The next step was to decide on what print service I would use. After getting some price quotes I eventually settled on Biddles for the first book. As both Elastic Press and PS Publishing use this particular printer then it came recommended.

But what would I choose as the very first title to publish? I decided to ask one of my authors if I could assemble a collection of their short stories, two of which had already appeared in the *Estronomicon* eZine. I really liked the clear writing style of this work and felt it would provide the ideal material for the very first SD book. *The Midnight Hour* was the result, featuring 14 tales of dark imagination by Neil Davies. Read the next article for more information about this title.

Around the same time I was approached by Bob Lock regarding his debut novel *Flames Of Herakleitos*. This was already receiving very good feedback on the YouWriteOn.com site and Bob was looking to get it into print. Originally he asked me about doing the cover artwork and possibly helping to find another publisher who may be interested in this title.

At the time my intention was to limit the SD books to short story collections only, but I was impressed with the *Flames* novel and after some discussion it was decided that I would publish this through Screaming Dreams. It proved quite a challenge editing a novel and the race was on to meet a seemingly impossible deadline! Photos of the launch night can be seen later in this issue.

On the subject of cover art, I decided to design the first few SD book covers myself. I assure you that this was not out of sheer vanity to see my own work in print! No, it was purely a financial decision as I had a very limited budget to get the small press up and running, so had to be very careful with the available funds. But in future I will be commissioning several other artists for cover work too.

And so I take my first small steps into the wonderful world of publishing. I still have a lot to learn and it's certainly a struggle trying to get more exposure and distribution for the books, but I am enjoying the challenge. Plus with all the kind support from everyone so far I believe Screaming Dreams has every chance of being a solid long-term business and I look forward to releasing many books over the coming years. Keep watching!

Twelve O'Clock

The Midnight Hour

Time For The First SD Book

I first encountered Neil's work when he submitted his short story *The Extreme Makeover Of Helen Watson* to the eZine. I was immediately taken not only with the tale itself, but the quality of the writing style from this author. I published this in Issue 4 and went on to feature another story, *Photographs*, in Issue 6.

I was keen to read more of Neil's work and when I discovered he had quite a selection of other short stories available I asked if he'd be interested in me putting these together into a paperback book. The very first SD book in fact. And I am very pleased that he agreed. The following tales were chosen ...

The Midnight Hour, Argument, Ribbons Of Blood, The Shadow, When The Fires Die, Photographs, The Perfect Marriage, Road Rage, Virgin Flesh, Death by Popcorn, Frozen Food, Away With The Fairies, Bonding, The Extreme Makeover Of Helen Watson.

To give you a taster, here is a short extract from the title story ...

* * *

00:00am. Midnight.

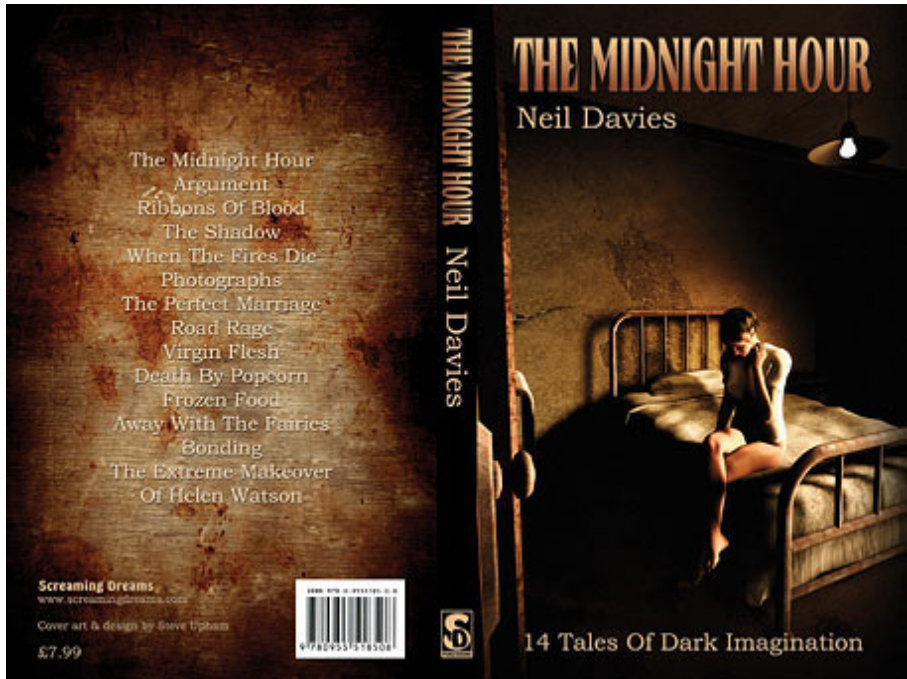
The first shuffling of feet in the hallway outside.

Right on time, as always.

Clare raised a hand to her forehead, felt the damp heat of her skin and ran shaky fingers back over her black hair, severely pulled back and tied with an old elastic band. It felt greasy. How long had it been since there had been enough hot water for a decent shower? Every morning she bathed as best she could in the freezing water that spurted erratically from the taps in the bathroom, but still she felt dirty, sweaty, gritty.

* * *

The cover art was based on the first few paragraphs of this story. I liked the idea of showing a subtle yet dark and moody scene which would set the tone for the book. I also kept the title text very simple and clear, which I think worked out nicely. Here's how the final wraparound cover turned out ...



Cover artwork : Copyright © Steve Upham 2007

ISBN : 978-0-9555185-0-8
Paperback : 216x138mm : 176pp

£7.99

The Midnight Hour can be purchased directly from [Screaming Dreams](http://ScreamingDreams)

Visit the author's website at : www.nwdavies.co.uk

Flaming Dylan

With Bob Lock

Photos From The Launch Night

Hot off the press in March was the *Flames Of Herakleitos* novel by Bob Lock and we held a book launch evening at the Dylan Thomas Centre in Swansea.



There was a good turnout, despite it being a Friday evening, with lots of support from the author's family and several other Welsh writers. The live music went down well and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves, especially with the free wine on offer! Bob read some of his poetry, with his niece Holly taking over for the extract of the *Flames* novel. Rhys Hughes was also kind enough to give us a rendition of one of his fine poems and a good time was had by all. Oh, and we sold quite a few books of course!

Here's what Bob had to say afterwards, kindly reproduced here from his original blog post ...

* * *

The launch of *Flames of Herakleitos* took place on Friday 23rd March. The event was opened by David Woolley, published poet and director of The Dylan Thomas Centre and I then gave my opening address welcoming quite a large number of guests, old and new friends.

Music was supplied by Franco Rinaldi a Welsh/Italian singer/ musician and then a reading was given from the book by my niece, Holly. Who, I have to admit, did an excellent job, much better than I could have done. However, I didn't get away with keeping a low profile and gave a rendition of two poems of mine, *Follicly Challenged* (sub-titled : *to all the curls I knew*) and was assisted by my daughter, Juliana who supplied the last line, here is that poem ...



Follicly Challenged by Bob Lock

This barren dome, damned cranium bare
That once so flowed with lustrous hair
You betray me with your flashing beam
That startles horses when I'm seen

Those lovely locks so careless she'd
Found on my pillow and not on head
I mourned them all as their life did wane
And swirled round sink, disappeared down drain

"Comb over" I tried, to hide the loss
Made jokes of rolling stone and moss
But in my room I cried alone
When finally threw out my faithful comb

And shaved off the last few failing strands
That clung to scalp with desperate hands
Then heard the words I do most hate
As my daughter slapped my naked pate.

"Hi baldy..."

Holly recited a poem of mine entitled *In your hand* and then Rhys Hughes was kind enough to give a rendition of a poem of his which drew the audience into a surreal world where Vikings invaded his bedroom (we all waited with bated breath to see if he was either ravaged by them or forced to join in with their Abba songs).

Finally Holly read my *Magic Colouring Book* poem and I ended the reading session with *Mother please don't cry for me*. The evening was rounded off with a mixture of music and singing ranging from old Neapolitan songs to Tom Jones' *Delilah*.



The guests watch the show on stage



Holly reading *Flames* - Franco playing - Rhys Hughes reading his poem

Thanks to everyone who attended and made it the happy night that it turned out to be! — **Bob Lock**



Bob signing copies of his novel



A very dubious bunch of characters! Guarding the wine table are ...

Steve Lockley - Mike O'Driscoll - Paul Lewis - Bob Lock
Steve Upham - Chris Teague - Ian Simmons - Brian Willis

* * *

About The Book

It's 1969 and a four year old girl witnesses the terrifying death of her father, which is attributed to Spontaneous Human Combustion. The child is unable to explain what she saw, and shortly after the incident, whilst in hospital, almost suffers the same fate when she is attacked by an unknown entity. But she survives.

Thirty years pass, Lucy Fenton has grown into a writer of horror stories and is the star of their film versions. She is haunted by the morbid feeling that the entity has not yet finished with her. It turns out she is correct and leads her to a parallel world where everything she has ever known is turned on its head.

Flames Of Herakleitos is a 'YouWriteOn.com *Top Ten Book*'. It has also been requested by the Welsh Academi to be put forward in the 2008 *Welsh Book Of The Year* awards. Here is a short extract from the second chapter ...

* * *

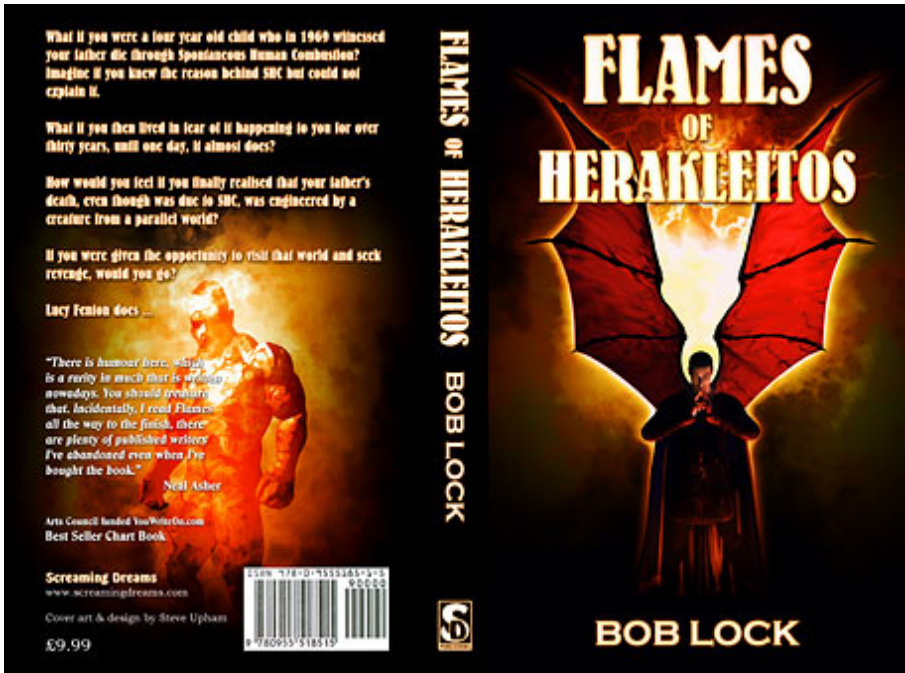
Luther Krell was a mage, and like all of his kind hated being rushed. Yet as he sat in his workshop, he dwelt on the fact that a commission was a commission, and as his reputation was at stake, he had put caution aside and accepted the work. Normally he would have fasted three days for the task required but necessity had made him cut it down to two. The meat was easy to find and he ground the rotting flesh up in the bowl with his mortar. Krell, the golem-creator was nothing if not methodical. The meat he used gradually transformed into a thick, reddish brown paste. The stench permeated his small room, stuck to his clothes, and even seemed to cling to his very skin. It was a good batch, and a good omen. His next golem would be powerful.

Many potential mages, or thaumaturgists as they preferred being called, made animated beings. Thaumaturgy invoked images of miracle-workers or life-givers. However, none had yet discovered his method of life-giving. Many thaumaturgists succeeded in creating passable golems, but only Krell's were robust and refined. Not one had been lost in all the time he had been creating them. They had become the pinnacle of animated clay perfection. All-conquering, yet submissive and subservient to their owner. The perfect bodyguards, assassins, or if wanted, common work-horse.

* * *

Copyright © Bob Lock 2007





Cover artwork : Copyright © Steve Upham 2007

ISBN : 978-0-9555185-1-5
Paperback : 203x127mm : 360pp

£9.99

Flames Of Herakleitos can be purchased from [Screaming Dreams](http://ScreamingDreams.com)

Visit the author's website at : www.scifi-tales.com
plus more info here : www.flamesofherakleitos.com

Initiation Ritual

I Went To Alt.Fiction And Survived!

Alt.Fiction moved into its second year with another day of readings, workshops, discussions and book launches featuring the UK's finest talent in science-fiction, fantasy and horror writing. Ideal for both genre readers and prospective writers. The event was held on Saturday 28th April 2007 at the Assembly Rooms in Derby.

I decided to attend this at the last minute, which was only made possible by the kind transport arrangements made by author Steve Lockley. Cheers Steve! I'm glad I went as it proved to be a most interesting and informative event. If they hold another Alt.Fiction next year then I would certainly recommend going.

The various panels featured throughout the day were excellent. Of particular interest was *The World of Small Presses* with Sean Wright, Andrew Hook and Chris Teague, who shared thoughts and experiences from their respective small presses. Anyone who is thinking of starting out in publishing should attend discussions like this one as you can gain a lot of valuable information. Authors should also take note because it can help achieve a better understanding of how the small presses work before considering submitting to them.

Another enjoyable session was *Horror Readings and Audience Discussion* with Tim Lebbon, Mark Morris and Sarah Pinborough. Each author read a section from their latest novel and then questions were answered. If you haven't yet read any of their books then I recommend you add them to your collection soon!

The *Pendragon, Crowswing and Elastic Monster Launch* was also worth attending, with authors Paul Kane, Tony Richards and James Cooper reading extracts from their latest releases. I especially liked the stories in Tony's new book *Going Back* from Elastic Press, which is definitely well worth buying.

There were lots of other panels and discussions going on throughout the day but you couldn't get to them all unfortunately as they were held simultaneously in different rooms. So you had to pick and choose which ones to attend.

The highlight of the day though had to be the final feature with author Iain M Banks. This man can certainly hold an audience in the palm of his hand! The room was packed and everyone seemed to really enjoy his reading and general chat.

The event was also a great opportunity to meet up with old friends and greet new faces too. I was delighted to finally meet in person a few more of the future SD authors, including Allyson Bird and Gary McMahon who are such lovely people! It was a real pleasure to spend time talking with them throughout the day, along with everyone else who I managed to say hello to there.

The thing I wasn't quite prepared for though was the traditional *Curry Night* ... Although I was aware of this strange ritual, it never occurred to me that this would be my *Initiation* night. And I have to admit I was terrified! I am not used to eating hot and spicy food, so the thought of having my first ever curry filled me with dread. What would I do? Run away and hide? Or put on a brave face and confront the impending doom like a man?

I decided it was now or never, and sat down at the table like a condemned man waiting for his last meal. You may think it silly to be worried about eating a curry, but when it's something you've never tried before then it's only natural to be concerned about making a fool of yourself if you keel over and die in the attempt!

I was also faced with the embarrassing situation of having to admit to everyone that I'd never had a curry before. So had to ask their advice on what to order. I have to admit I was half expecting them to get me the hottest dish and watch me squirm. But fair play they ordered a very mild option which thankfully I managed to survive. I never imagined the day I'd be eating curried banana.

Then it was back to the hotel. The hotel from Hell, as it turned out. Little did we know, when we booked, that there was a nightclub practically underneath which kept us awake half the night with the constant *boom, boom, boom* at full volume. Then everyone seemed to pour into the hotel corridors and carry on the party inside. What a night. Needless to say none of us got much sleep and we all looked like death warmed-up the next morning. We must remember not to book into this place again next year.

But it was certainly a memorable trip and I'm really glad I went. It really does help to get out and attend such events, not only to enjoy the practical aspects but the social side is just as important too. Where else can you sit down and chat with a table full of authors and publishers over a curry, and then spend a sleepless night in a hellish hotel, eh? It's all part of the fun!

Home Improvement

Overhauling The SD Website

I'm no expert on web-design and my limited technical knowledge in this area tends to prevent me from achieving exactly what I want. So I've always kept my web pages very simple in construction, yet tried to make them look interesting by incorporating graphic elements to spice things up a little without overloading at the same time. It's a tricky balance I must admit.

It took me quite a while to redesign the previous SD website and most visitors still seemed happy enough with that layout, so I had no intention of overhauling from scratch again so soon to be honest. It's only because I needed to find a way to add online ordering for the books that I had to start thinking about redoing the website again this year.

This proved to be a nightmare and took me several months from start to finish! My first challenge was finding a suitable eCommerce solution. I looked around at various hosted options but they were all too expensive for my limited needs. So then I turned to the software-based packages and tested a number of demos.

One thing against several of the programs were the requirements needed for the web-server hosting the online store. It turned out that my SD site didn't meet the minimum specs and I didn't fancy paying for an expensive upgrade or going through the hassle of changing hosts or domain names. So I had to look at alternatives, of which there weren't many.

Another factor was the price of the eCommerce software. Some packages offer two or three versions but the "starter" editions usually only allow selling a limited amount of products. Then there's a big jump in price to the next version.

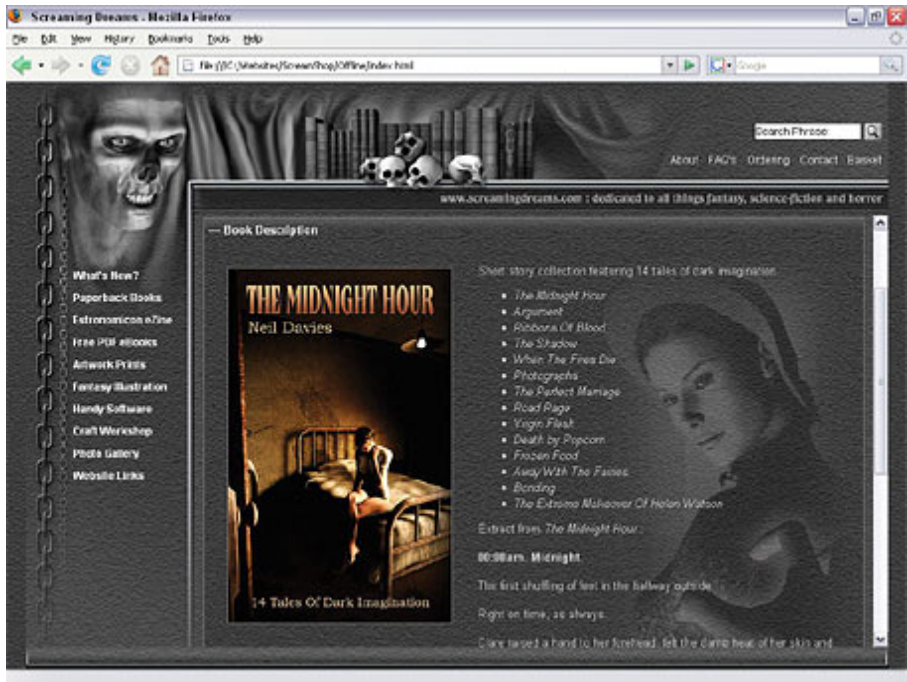
There are some free open-source alternatives but they tend to be a lot more complex to setup. Not a problem if you are more technically-minded and an expert in web-programming, but I couldn't figure out how to use them anyway!

I eventually found one commercial package that was fairly easy to use, not too expensive, plus worked OK on my web-server, so I went ahead and purchased it. Although trying to adapt my own templates has been a real pain and it does tend to be a bit glitchy in places. But at least it has now allowed me to develop a

shopping cart so customers can order the books directly online from the SD website. It's early days yet but appears to be working smoothly so far.

There is still a lot of content to be added to the site but the book and eZine sections are now online. The rest will be uploaded in due course.

I decided to retain a similar style and the monochrome colour scheme of my previous design, in order to keep it subtle yet convey the look of a fantasy/horror themed site. I hope that visitors will like it anyway. Here's a screenshot of how the pages are looking right now ...



Website design and graphics : Copyright © Steve Upham 2007

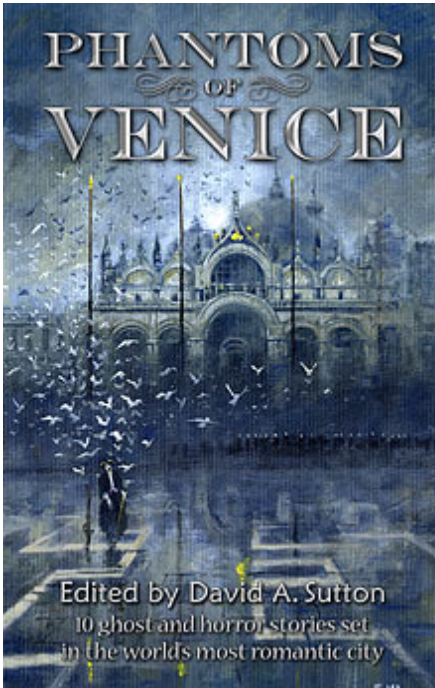
www.screamingdreams.com

Fast Forward

The Next Books In Progress

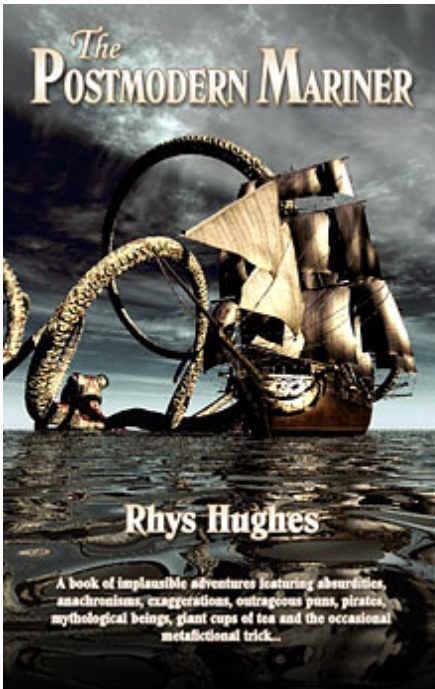
The first two SD titles have already been featured earlier in this issue, but what else is in the pipeline I hear you ask? Well, there should be at least 3 more books published this year, maybe more, with lots to follow in 2008 and beyond.

The next official launch will be held at Fantasycon in September, for *Phantoms Of Venice*. This is a paperback reprint of a fine anthology edited by David A. Sutton, which was originally only released as a limited edition hardcover by Shadow Publishing a few years ago. This updated edition features a wonderful atmospheric new cover illustration by Edward Miller.



The *Dead Ends* anthology, which features over 20 short horror stories, is also coming along nicely and should be ready for release before the end of the year. Anne Stokes has produced a delightfully dark and mysterious cover piece for this one, which is sure to impress!

The Postmodern Mariner by Rhys Hughes is due out fairly soon. Originally this was going to be released earlier in the year but then the author decided to go travelling for a while, so I decided to postpone it until later. We are hoping to do some kind of unofficial book launch on the beach for this one when he returns to the UK, which should be quite fun! If the weather holds out of course.



Mariner cover : © Steve Upham 2007 and Kangazang! cover : © Kat Nicholson 2007
(both covers still in progress and subject to change)

Terry Cooper has now finished the manuscript for his SF novel *Kangazang!* and I will be going through this one in due course. No official release date yet but I'll be doing my best to fit it into the schedule at the earliest opportunity.

Against The Darkness by John L. Probert is due to enter the editing stage very soon and I'm hoping to have the first draft ready for proof-reading in the next few weeks. I still haven't got any cover artwork lined up for this one yet though so have to try and find a suitable artist fairly quickly!

Dave Cook's supernatural novel *Past Sins* is currently in the reading phase and this will be a nice addition to the SD lineup. Again, no definite launch date yet but it will be released as soon as it's all ready to go.

Slow Motion Wars, the SF slipstream collection by Allen Ashley and Andrew Hook, is also in the pipeline. I have one or two artists interested in doing the cover illustration for this one but haven't chosen anyone yet.

All these titles were originally in the 2007 print schedule, but due to many factors things have been a bit slower than planned. So some will probably slip over into 2008, but rest assured they will all be released in due course.

Looking further ahead to next year, also watch out for the paperback edition of Steve Gerlach's dark novel *Lake Mountain*, Allyson Bird's short story collection *Bull Running For Girls*, Garry Charles' gritty novella *Tranquillity*, plus the short story collection *Obsidian Dreams* by Barry J. House.

There are also other books in progress so keep watching the site for more information as it becomes available. I hope some of you will be kind enough to purchase at least one of the SD books when they are published. Remember, your support is essential in keeping this project alive!

Also, please help spread the word and tell your friends about the books too. Every bit of extra exposure will be very much appreciated, cheers.

I would like to take this opportunity to once again say a big thank you to all the authors who have taken an interest in publishing their work through Screaming Dreams. I hope that all the titles will sell enough copies to make it worthwhile for all the time and effort everyone has put into this venture.

So here's to a successful 2007 and beyond. I trust I will be able to continue reporting good news about the SD books this time next year!

Final Thoughts

A Few Last Words Before I Go

There is a lot more to publishing a book than just sending off the text to the printers. The whole process from start to finish can take several months in fact. You would be surprised at how long it takes just to read all the submission requests and respond to everyone. That's before the editing begins and creating the book layouts, proof-reading, correcting and sorting out the cover artwork.

Then you have to get the books printed of course and make them available for sale. Which means not just adding the titles to your website and setting up online ordering and payment options, but also doing book launches where possible and trying to get dealers and shops interested in stocking some copies too. This is an uphill struggle as not many places are sympathetic to the small presses and the trade discounts required make it impossible to turn a profit most of the time.

You also have to think of advertising in order to get more exposure for the books. This includes sending out free review copies, taking out paid-for adverts in suitable magazines, posting info to relevant websites/forums/blogs, attending conventions to be seen by your target audience and printing/distributing promo flyers to let people know what's available. It all takes time. And money!

There are also the financial aspects to consider, including how you are going to fund all the costs to get started, setting up a new business bank account under your publishing name, plus registering for tax if you have not already done so. Oh, and you need to make sure you keep accurate accounting records of course.

So starting your own small press is certainly not for the faint-hearted. You do need to be pretty dedicated and have a well developed business plan before you decide to jump into such a venture, otherwise you can run into all sorts of trouble. And even when you have thought of everything, it rarely goes exactly to plan so you need to keep on your toes and adapt accordingly along the way.

You may wonder why anyone would be mad enough to do all this? I guess the simple answer is that some people have a real passion for books and at some point decide they want to try their hand at publishing. Then the fun and games begin!