

Zombie series is e-book triumph for Brit novelist

Dreadlines



David Moody

"I've got a bizarre life," explains David Moody, the British writer behind a trilogy of apocalyptic zombie novels that are generating a large international fanbase. "I've got a large family – four girls – and I'm a bank manager."

When not settling accounts at his day job he's busy crafting an end of the world hell in his *Autumn* book series, which details the struggle of survivors in a world where 95 percent of the population has been wiped out by a virulent disease that reanimates corpses into, you guessed it, mindless killing machines.

"The thing that I like to do is put a bit of believability into it," says Moody. "What has never appealed to me about zombie stories is the gratuitous flesh-eating, which usually doesn't have an explanation. It's usually just gone for gore's sake, so I tried to get rid of a bit of the gore element of it and put a bit more emotion into it. There's no psychobabble."

He's also quick to point out that he's very aware of the importance of creating charac-

ters most people can identify with. In the first book, *Autumn*, the main players are an engineer, a university student, and a computer technician. Citing *Independence Day*, he says that too often end-of-the-world narratives revolve around unrealistic individuals. Raise your hand if you've ever known a fighter-jet-flying US President.

"Dealing with the man or woman on the street instead of stereotypical heroes, scientists, politicians and soldiers etc. gives the books a unique and unsettling air of honesty and matter-of-factness, which has huge appeal," says Moody.

It's the same sort of appeal as in Danny Boyle's latest movie, *28 Days Later* (written by Alex Garland, *The Beach*) which features a London bike courier and his companions fighting to escape a deadly and highly communicable disease that's wiped out most of England by turning the infected into violent human monsters.

The similarities aren't lost on Moody, who completed *Autumn* in the fall of 2001.

"I've had plenty of e-mails from people saying, 'Have you seen *28 Days Later*? The blokes nicked your idea!' I don't think that for a second," he says. "The two books are very similar, and I absolutely love that film."

The *Autumn* trilogy, however, is bigger in scope with more characters.

Moody recently released part two, *Autumn: The City*, which follows a second group of survivors, and is designed to take the reader "closer to understanding what happened to destroy the world on a single inauspicious September morning." He

plans to release the final installment, *Autumn: Purification*, in September of 2004. In addition, he's also releasing, (in free installments online) *Autumn: Echoes*, "a collection of snapshots of lives," of characters that weave their way through the main stories.

The best part is that *Autumn* in its 120,000-word entirety is available for free download at Moody's site, at www.theinfected.co.uk. *Autumn: The City* can be had exclusively there as well for less than US \$5.

"I put myself in the shoes of the reader," says Moody, who's had his story downloaded over 30,000 times so far. "I'm completely against the traditional ways of going about it, of getting an agent, a publisher. I want to do it on my own. I've got enough faith in my writing that I can do that."

And just what the hell sparked this family man-banker's fascination with the living dead so much that he started penning free zombie novels?

"It's the image of the bodies," he notes. "That's the lasting memory from the first time I sat down to watch *Night of the Living Dead*. It's the scene outside the farmhouse when you're looking at the farmhouse and the bodies are walking towards it. There's just something about the bodies being shells and congregating around the house for no other reason than the fact that there are living people in there. It's something that's always freaked me out, and it comes up time and time again in the *Autumn* books."

Dave Alexander



David Moody

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