



# David Moody

Meet Brit horror's zombie-fixated rising star - he's not as scary as he looks

Words: Jonathan Wright • Photography: Rob Scott

A couple of years back, having begun to make a name for himself writing zombie novels, writer David Moody decided it was time to branch out. "I was trying to make a clean break," Moody says of his novel *Hater*. Sometimes, though, the best of plans go astray – not that this is necessarily a problem.

"You just can't help getting dragged back sometimes," Moody continues. "About two-thirds of the way through writing *Hater*, I stepped back and thought, 'What I've actually done is write a zombie story from the perspective of the zombies,' which I thought was quite cool."

That's one way to describe the novel. Another might be kitchen sink horror not for the squeamish. Its antihero, Danny McCoyne, is stuck in a dead-end job. He has a family. He loves them to bits, but money is a constant worry. Then, inexplicably, violence starts to spread through Britain. At first, Danny is horrified, but soon he's pulled in. Danny has discovered that he's *different* – a "Hater" as the media has dubbed those carrying out the attacks.

It's a relentless, visceral novel, but don't compare it to Danny Boyle's oeuvre. "It gets wrapped up in reviews with things like *28 Days Later*, which has got very little similarity to it," he says, "apart from the fact there's violence in both."

Thanks in great part to an unusual route to success, Moody has had plenty of time to read reviews, so he knows what he's talking about. Although *Hater* is only just coming out through a major publishing house, Moody first unleashed it back in 2006 through his own Infected Books imprint, a company he founded after being made redundant

## Biodata

- **OCCUPATION:** Novelist
- **BORN:** 1970
- **FROM:** Stourbridge
- **GREATEST HITS:** *Hater* is his mainstream debut. There's a backlog of books, including the *Autumn* zombie sequence.
- **RANDOM FACT:** Moody reckons his abiding interest in end-of-the-world fiction stems from living in a house full of women. We think he's joking...

from a job in banking. It's a rare case of self-publishing coming good, although Moody prefers the term "independent publishing".

"Self-publishing just conjures up images of crap books with tacky covers that nobody else will publish," he says, "but there's a hell of a lot of books out there, like mine, where people deliberately decide not to go down the traditional route. It's not that they couldn't get them published, it's just they chose not to."

"The disadvantage for me was that it got too successful. I found that I was doing part-time work and running a business – and I didn't have time to write. One of the great things about the major contract that I've got is now all I have to do is write."

Despite such grumbles, Moody has managed to get a fair number of books into print. Indeed, after a hiatus between his first novel, *Straight To You* (1996) and *Autumn* (2001) caused by a burgeoning family – Moody has two daughters with his partner, who also has another three daughters – Moody has been scribbling away furiously. As well as the *Autumn* series of zombie books, he also published *Trust*, a sci-fi tale of mankind's first contact with aliens.

You'll have to search around a little to find the books at the moment. They're currently off-sale awaiting re-prints by major

publishers in the UK and USA. But what alerted the industry?

"I was just sat there after *Hater* came out and I got an email from a chap at a production company in Los Angeles," he recalls, "saying, 'Are the film rights available?' I thought it was my mates winding me up."

A movie version of *Hater*, to be directed by JA Bayona (*The Orphanage*) and produced by Guillermo del Toro (*Pan's Labyrinth*), is in pre-production. Also, the first of Moody's *Autumn* books has been filmed by an independent Canadian company, Renegade. Expect to see zombies that are "deteriorating physically but sharpening up mentally", but don't expect flesh-eating. Moody: "I just don't understand why something that is dead would have this desire to eat."

Moody wrote the first draft of *Autumn*'s script, which counts as something of an ambition fulfilled. He always wanted to be involved in movies, but he didn't know how to go about it, so "I just wrote the stories I wanted to see in novel form".

It's therefore no surprise to find that cinema was a big influence on him. "I used to sneak down in the night to see films on TV," he says. "I watched *Night Of The Living Dead* in a thunderstorm and things were never the same again."

No wonder he's become a horror writer. As Moody works on *Hater*'s sequel, the delightfully monikered *Dog Blood*, and enjoys the process of working closely with a professional editor for the first time, should we worry? Apparently not. "I've got a good life and I'm happy," says Moody. "My writing makes it sound like I'm not at all, but seriously I am." **SFX**

Turn to page 84 for a profile of *BSG*'s Mary McDonnell.