



SELF-MADE MAN

On zombies, self-publishing, and buried novels

After having my first novel (*Straight To You*) published by a small press back in the mid-Nineties, I thought I'd hit the big time. I was wrong. The book didn't even sell out its initial microscopic print run and so, as I put the finishing touches to *Autumn* – my second novel – I started to consider a different approach.

I decided that getting readers interested had to be my priority, so I gave the new book away for free via my website. It worked. More than half a million downloads, a series of sequels and a movie adaptation later, *Autumn* has finally been 'properly' published in the UK (by Gollancz) and US (by Thomas Dunne Books).

Appropriately enough for a book about a deadly disease, *Autumn's* reputation worked its way around the internet like a virus. *Autumn* is, in some ways, a traditional zombie story, but there are some subtle differences that seem to appeal to readers. It tweaks the mythos enough to be different, but remains true to the spirit of classics like Romero's movies and Matheson's *I Am Legend*. I like to think that it's a believable take on the living dead (as much as any story about walking corpses can be believable).

If I'm completely honest, I've been pretty nervous about how the book's going to be received now that the size of its potential audience has substantially increased with this

new release. My approach does twist some of the conventions of the genre, and some of those conventions are what people love the genre for. There's no flesh eating, for example (why would something that's dead need to eat?), and that means there's not the copious fountains of blood and guts (initially) that many zombie purists crave. Also, by the end of the first few pages, only a few survivors remain. They're immune from whatever's caused the devastation and so they don't spend the rest of the plot running around trying not to get bitten. I wanted to avoid some clichés.

Autumn is therefore paced differently to other zombie stories. You will get thousands of blood-crazed corpses attacking a handful of survivors, but not on page one. There was a temptation to increase the gore factor for this new release, but I resisted. The threat posed by the dead increases throughout the series to the point where the characters are forced to think less about how to survive, and more what are they trying to survive for?

The book's been unavailable for a while, and I was worried that I might have missed the zombie boat. But the undead seem to be as popular as ever, and with the sudden surge of interest surrounding *The Walking Dead* and others, this seems

Autumn the perfect time for *Autumn* to rise from the grave.

Author: David Moody
Publisher: Gollancz
Price: £7.99

