

A result of Samhain closing has been the new books that just about got over the publishing start line which have maybe not received the exposure they might have done. Publishing casualties. One of these is Stuart R West's horror / humor crossover novel *Demon With A Comb-Over*. Horror? Humor? Yes that's right. I read it with some uncertainty but finished it having thoroughly enjoyed it. Stuart agreed to an



interview so I could find out more about the man, the books the style.

MS: Hello from the UK, Stuart. Thanks for agreeing to give a few answers to a few questions. Why horror?

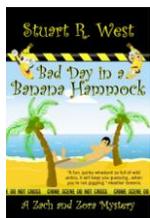
SRW: Howdy, Mick, from the wild west of Kansas. Yee-haw. Why horror? I was always one of those weird kids, I suppose, that never outgrew my love for all things horror. As a child, I caught a matinee of Mario Bava's *Black Sabbath* with Boris Karloff. Peeking at the big screen through my fingers clutched over my face, I thought it was more thrilling than a roller-coaster. It spoke to me in things that are imagined, never before visualized. At least in my youthful experience. Haven't looked back since.

MS: And why humor? Are you a funny guy in real life? Do you ever write pure humor books?

SRW: Depends on who you ask. My wife finds me painfully unfunny, whereas my friends generally think I'm amusing (those who I haven't kicked out of the Stuart R. West Fan Appreciation Society, of course).

To be honest, *Demon with a Comb-Over* didn't start out as a humor/horror hybrid. It began life as a straight-up demonic horror tale. But soon, strange characters started wandering into the book. And with a back-drop of stand-up comedy, it became apparent humor definitely had to play a part.

The only straight up humor book I've written is a sort of twisted take on the "cozy," *Bad Day in a Banana Hammock*.



A fellow writer and I were kicking around silly ideas. I came up with a lead character, a very stupid and vapid male stripper. My pal dared me to write it. So, of course, I did. The stripper wakes up in a strange room, no clothes on, and no memory of the previous night. And there's a naked, dead man next to him. More worried about proving he's not gay than a murderer, he contacts his very pregnant, very agitated sister (an ex security consultant) to help prove his heterosexuality (and his innocence). The chase is on!

Easiest book I wrote, probably the most fun as well.

I'm kinda getting pigeon-holed as a humorous writer. I don't see myself that way, but I'd be lying if I didn't say humor finds its way into all of my books at some point. Just a matter of degree, I suppose. I



can't seem to help myself.

MS: Was there an inspiration for horror, or humor? Any inspirations for writing generally?

SRW: Mick, like an all-you-can-eat buffet line, I suppose I pick a little here, a little there. As I watch a lot of movies and read a lot of books from all types of genres, some things can't help but leak into my writing. But I don't seek out horror/humor as entertainment. I can't think of a single horror/humor author who I seek out.

As I'm sure you're aware, horror with humor's really tough to pull off. Usually what we get are straight up parodies ("Scary Movie," etc.), which I honestly can't stand. For readers to actually care about the characters, the story needs to be respected, never veering into outlandish stupidity. The story should be grounded with the outcome something that matters.

MS: You write other styles of books as well is that right? Do you employ different approaches to writing when outside horror?

SRW: I do write in other genres, criss-crossing genres like a game of hopscotch. My YA series, *Tex, the Witch Boy* (four books), is a paranormal, murder mystery, comedy, thriller, social issues, romance catch all. I think there might be a kitchen sink in there somewhere, too.



I've also written several straight-up horror novels: *Godland*, *Neighborhood Watch* and *Ghosts of Gannaway*, my historical ghost tale detailing the turbulence in a Midwest mining town in the '30's. The latter book was heavily researched and the hardest thing I've tackled. From now on, I'm sticking to the good ol' here and now.

Finally, there's *Zombie Rapture*, my odd take on the zombie book. Everyone's got a zombie book in 'em! Here, the dead are sentient. But they think it's the "Rapture" on earth and want to "save" those still

living by killing them. With a premise like that, I couldn't help myself by incorporating black humor and



amusing characters.

Do I mix up my writing style? I didn't think I did, but looking back, yeah, I suppose so. Ghosts of Gannaway adapted a more fitting, laconic style for the era. The YA books are more flip, more hip (my daughter yells at me for saying "hip."). My Killers Incorporated series treads the tough-guy noir line.

MS: Do you feel more comfortable writing in a specific genre?

SRW: Not really. In fact, I'd like to try most genres at some point. Except erotica. Not that there's anything wrong with it! It's just after the first sex scene, I tend to get bored. I mean, how many times can you describe sex? Time would be better off experiencing it, I think.



Not sure about science-fiction, either. Looks like a lot of research involved!

MS: How does it work when you start a book? Do you know from the outset what genre it will be? Or does the idea dictate that?

SRW: Mick, the only thing I know is that my tales usually begin as straight horror. Sometimes humor's appropriate, other times not. But when dealing with horror, the humor's usually pitch black, the way I like it.

MS: And so how does your writing process look? Set times? When you can fit it in?

SRW: No real process. Just force myself to sit down and start knocking books out. Until the damn dog starts moaning to be walked.

MS: Do you plot out totally or kind of wing it? Do you begin with an idea, a character, a plot? How does



it work for you, and does it vary from book to book?

SRW: I'm totally winging it. That's the fun part, seeing where the characters take me. Once I have a solid idea of who the characters are, they generally dictate the storyline. It can also be terrifying, worrying I won't know what to do next. Something I'm sure most writers face.

MS: With the addition of humor in your books - is that a feature of them all? Have you had any experience in comedy? Do your characters evolve with humor in them or do you find you have to inject it into them?

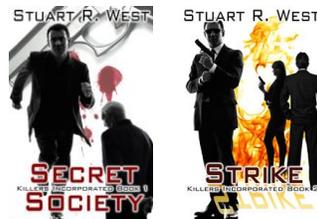
SRW: I think it's important to have humor in characters regardless of the serious content of the tale. People say and do funny things all the time. I like to listen and observe. My wife calls it eavesdropping. I call it "artistic license."

MS: You live in Kansas you told me, a part of America I haven't seen. Tell us about it and your town and your life - as much as you want to reveal.

SRW: What's to tell? It's boring. Don't visit Kansas, Mick! Now, I do live in a suburb of Kansas City, so I'm not exactly in the farmlands. But I have relatives there and it's pretty much as one would expect: Bible thumpers extraordinaire, the Ku Klux Klan, the Westboro Baptist Church, serial killers, intolerance to the Nth level, incest, black magic worshippers. A Norman Rockwell painting come to life! It's horrifying!

MS: What's up next for you? More horror? More humor? What do you have planned?

SRW: I'm finishing up the third and final book in my *Killers Incorporated* series. It's a darkly humorous set of tales about my protagonist, Leon Garber, a serial killer who takes out abusers. (He has his reasons). He's approached by a corporation, Like-Minded Individuals, Inc., that sponsors serial killers, providing them with cover stories, false identities, lists of victims, etc. For a hefty fee, of course. The problem is LMI turns on Leon. So...the thrills start there. It's my take on Big Business gone wild.



I also have two completed books in limbo, abandoned by Samhain Publishing. One is *The Book of Kobal*, an irreverent prequel to *Demon with a Comb-Over*. It features the titular demon destroying a disco, getting into a slap fight with Jesus and spanking Hitler. Fun for the whole family!

I really like the other one, *Dread and Breakfast*. Sort of a Texas Chainsaw Massacre only populated with a myriad of colorful, darkly amusing characters caught in a B&B during an awful winter Midwest storm. Wacky hijinx ensue!

MS: Thanks much for the answers, Stuart. Take it easy.

SRW: Thank you, Mick! If you ever cross the ocean again, don't visit Kansas! No offense intended.

http://www.amazon.com/Stuart-R.-West/e/B00B419X5C/ref=ntt_athr_dp_pel_1

