Creating Compelling Cover Copy How to Encourage Readers to Buy Your Book

Dave Schroeder

http://www.daveschroeder.com/covercopy.pdf

Who is Dave Schroeder?

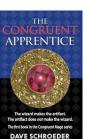


- Author of the Xenotech Support science fiction humor series and the Congruent Mage fantasy series
- Owner of Spiral Arm Press
- Former corporate Chief Information Officer
- Atlanta Radio Theatre Company member
- Successful Self-published Author / Publisher











Less Can Be More

Microsoft designs the iPod package (from 2005)



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EUXnJraKM3k

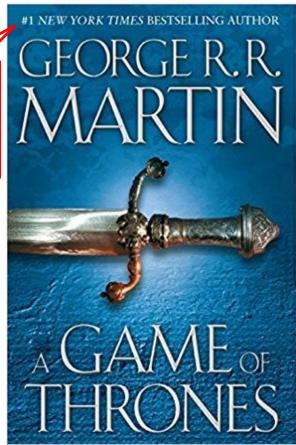
What this presentation is **NOT**

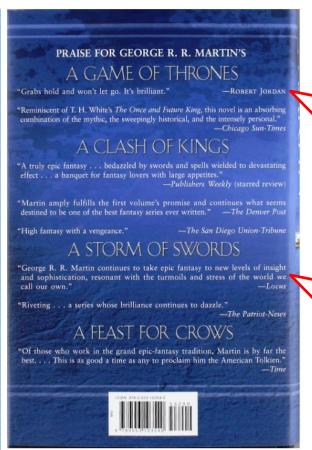
- It's NOT about designing book <u>covers</u>
 Just blurbs and back-cover copy
- It's NOT focused on e-books
 Just printed books, but some advice will apply
- It's NOT going to include non-fiction
 Just fiction, mostly SF and fantasy
- It's NOT for authors using publishers
 Just self-published authors doing it all

Where to find best practices?

Professional Publishers

Sell on author's track record





Use reviews from trusted sources

Refer to other books in a series

Good Omens

Front Cover

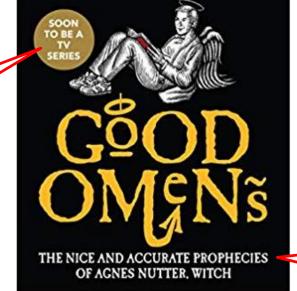
Sell on authors' track records

Terry Pratchett & Neil Gaiman

"The Apocalypse has never been funnier." -Clive Barker

Review from a trusted source

Highlighted circle to draw attention to selling feature



Humorous tag line description of what's inside

Good Omens

Back Cover

Memorable (and funny) tag line

"What's so funny about Armageddon? More than you'd think... Good Omens has arrived just in time." Detroit Free Press

Put Terry Pratchett (New York Times bestselling author of Thud! and exalted Father of Discworld) and Neil Gaiman (New York Times bestselling author of Anansi Boys and revered Creator of Sandman) together . . . and all Hell breaks loose.

Telling a story draws readers in

According to The Nice and Accurate Prophecies of Agnes Nutter, Witch (the world's only completely accurate book of prophecies, written in 1655, before she exploded), the world will end on a Saturday. Next Saturday, in fact. Just before dinner. So the armies of Good and Evil are amassing, Atlantis is rising, frogs are falling, tempers are flaring. Everything appears to be going according to Divine Plan. Except a somewhat fussy angel and a fast-living demon—both of whom have lived amongst Earth's mortals since The Beginning and have grown rather fond of the lifestyle—are not actually looking forward to the coming Rapture. And someone seems to have misplaced the Antichrist...

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ISBN-13: 978-0-06-085398-3
ISBN-10: 0-06-085398-3
ISBN-10: 0-06-085398-3
ISBN-10: 0-06-085398-3
USA \$7.99

Review from a trusted source

The blurb also defines the genres of fantasy and humor

Longer copy can sell!

Ready Player One

Back Cover



Secondary tag line

Primary tag line poses question and draws reader in

Note: White and yellow text on red is hard to read

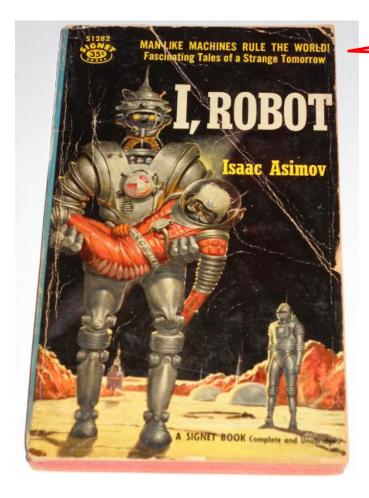
Colors highlight best parts of quotes and distinguish sources

"A nerdgasm . . . imagine that Dungeons & Dragons and an '80s video arcade made hot, sweet love, and their child was raised in Azeroth."

-JOHN SCALZI, New York Towns betstelling number of Old Man's War.

I, Robot by Isaac Asimov

Front Cover of 1956 Signet Edition



Keep your tag lines honest!

REMEMBER THE THREE LAWS!

MAN-LIKE MACHINES RULE THE WORLD!

This pulp-style tag line is over the top

Gil's All Fright Diner

Front Cover



Gil's All Fright Diner

BLOODIER THAN FRIED GREEN TOMATOES! FUNNIER THAN THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE!

Welcome to Gil's All Night Diner, where zombie attacks are a regular occurrence and you never know what might be lurking in the freezer....

Duke and Earl are just passing through Rockwood County when they stop at the diner for a quick bite to eat. They aren't planning to stick around—until Loretta, the eatery's owner, offers them one hundred dollars to take care of her zombie problem. Given that Duke is a werewolf and Earl's a vampire, this looks right up their alley.

But the shambling dead are just the tip of a particularly spiky iceberg. Seems someone's out to drive Loretta from the diner, and is more than willing to raise a little hell on earth if that's what it takes. Before Duke and Earl get to the bottom of the diner's troubles, they'll run into such otherworldly complications as undead cattle, an amorous ghost, a jailbait sorceress, and the terrifying occult power of pig Latin.

And maybe-just maybe-the End of the World, too.

Gory, sexy, and flat-out hilarious, Gil's $All\ Fright\ Diner$ will tickle your funny bone—before ripping it out of its socket!

"Can a vampire find true love with a ghost? Can a teenage witch open the gates of hell? Anything can happen in Martinez's horribly wacky debut."

—Charlaine Harris, bestselling author of Dead to the World

"Gil's All Fright Diner is a hoot of a novel. Fast-paced, Texas-wit-funny, sharply

written, sharply observed. Pure blood-sweet entertainment from Martinez."

—Joe R. Lansdale, author of Sunset and Sawdust

"On the strength of this hilarious book, I'll follow Martinez anywhere. Not since Christopher Moore has anyone managed to make The Damned so damned funny." —Spider Robinson, bestselling author of Callahan's Con

"A rippingly wonderful novel, funny enough to wake the dead and gripping enough to captivate the living." —David Lubar

A. LEE MARTINEZ lives in Terrell, Texas.



COVER ART BY JEFF SOTO . LETTERING BY ISKRA JOHNSON

A TOR® PAPERBACK

TOM DOHERTY ASSOCIATES, LLC . WWW.TOR.COM . PRINTED IN THE USA

Back Cover

Strong opening sentence hooks readers and sets the book's context

Welcome to Gil's All Night Diner, where zombie attacks are a regular occurrence and you never know what might be lurking in the freezer.

Duke and Earl are just passing through Rockwood County when they stop at the diner for a quick bite to eat. They aren't planning to stick around—until Loretta, the eatery's owner, offers them one hundred dollars to take care of her zombie problem. Given that Duke is a werewolf and Earl's a vampire, this looks right up their alley.

Second paragraph introduces characters and primary conflict.

A detail about the author

Typical Cover Sales Copy

- Tag Lines
- Accomplishments
- Reviews & Blurbs
- Splash Copy
- Series Info
- Stories
- Biographical Info and Social Media Links









#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

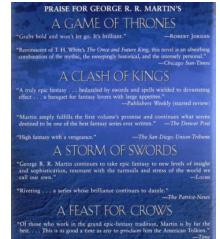
"A nerdgasm . . . imagine that Dungeons & Dragons and an '80s video arcade made hot, sweet love, and their child was raised in Azeroth."

—JOHN SCALZI.



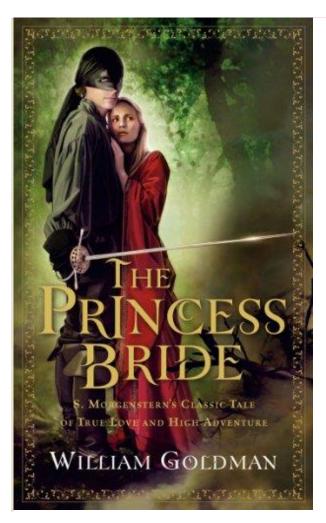


Dave Schroeder is a retired Chief information Officer and the author of the Xenotech Support series of science fiction humor novels. He also wrote the book, lyrics and music for Softwear.com, a musical comedy produced off-off-Broadway. Dave lives in suburban Atlanta where he enjoys writing and voice acting with the Atlanta Radio Theatre Company. Check out his SF humor series at www.XenotechSupport.com.



Match Tag Lines with Novels

- Winning means fame and fortune.
 Losing means certain death.
- Freedom and Justice—American Style
- They were expendable... until they started comparing notes
- The Controversial Classic of Military Adventure
- S. Morgenstern's Classic Tale of True Love and High Adventure



Writing Tag Lines that Work

- Use short, memorable phrases Tech support for alien technology...
- Use tag lines to reinforce your genre Enter a universe of eldritch horror...
- Use humor, if appropriate to your book
 Now serving Armageddon with a side of fries
- Use tag lines to introduce your main conflict Humanity was finally getting its act together—and then the aliens landed...

Emphasizing Accomplishments

It would be great if we could all announce our sales success like this:

#1 New York Times Best Selling Author

Or perhaps share the prestigious awards we've won like this:

Hugo and Nebula Award-winning Author

But there's no reason not to feature lesser accomplishments:

Nominated for Best Fantasy Award at WottaCon

And you could always take a humorous approach if that fits:

My Mom's #1 Favorite Book Until My Next One

If you're new and don't have an accomplishment to feature, don't use one...

Reviews and Blurbs

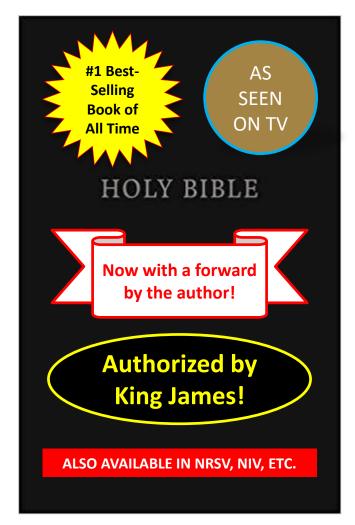
- Plan ahead for your first book

 It's challenging to get an established author, editor,
 or reviewer to provide a review or a blurb for a new,
 previously unpublished author. Cultivate relationships
 but realize what you're asking.
- Send advance copies to friends & connections Ask for honest feedback. Puff pieces are easy to spot.
- Leverage feedback on Amazon & Goodreads Turn readers' comments into blurbs in later editions
- Use comments on previous books for new ones
 Praise for Book #1 includes...

Use Splash Copy Sparingly

What if Microsoft designed the cover for the Bible?

Less is definitely more. Use no more than one splash item per cover.



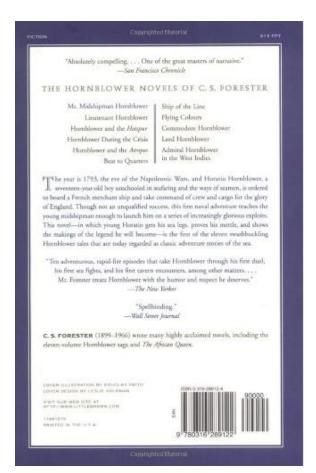
Series Info Can Help Sell

If your book is part of a series, that can help build readers' interest

THE HORNBLOWER NOVELS OF C. S. FORESTER

Mr. Midshipman Hornblower Lieutenant Hornblower Hornblower and the *Hotspur* Hornblower and the *Atropos* Beat to Quarters Ship of the Line Flying Colours Commodore Hornblower Land Hornblower Admiral Hornblower in the West Indies

Readers love to follow the adventures of characters they've invested in.

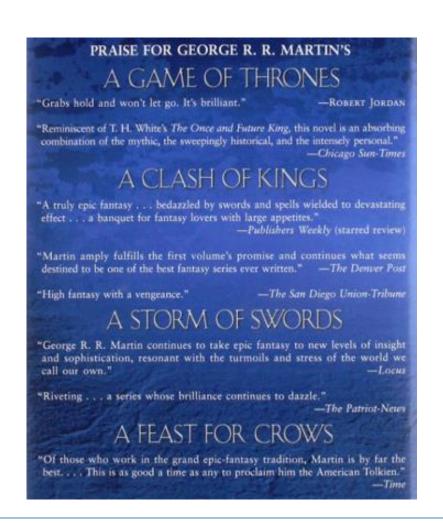


Back cover of *Mr. Midshipman Hornblower* by C. S. Forester

Series Info Can Help Sell

Of course, it only helps if you actually WRITE all the books in the series...

It's okay to note books that are planned, but not yet written—if you follow through and write them.

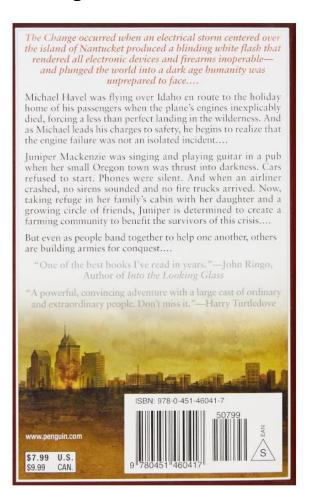


Telling a Story Helps Sell

Stories hook readers, so they don't want to put the book down.

Michael Havel was flying over Idaho en route to the holiday home of his passengers when the plane's engines inexplicably died, forcing a less than perfect landing in the wilderness. And as Michael leads his charges to safety, he begins to realize the engine failure was not an isolated incident...

Readers want to know why the engines failed and what happens next...



Back cover of Dies the Fire by S. M. Stirling

Telling a Story in Bullet Form

The story doesn't have to be an excerpt from the text...

- Set up the initiating conflict
- Introduce local challenges
- Show larger political context
- Add external threats
- Note resource limitations
- Demonstrate hero's character

The big question your readers want answered is "What happens next?"

HONOR IN TROUBLE:

- •Having made him look the fool, she's been exiled to Basilisk Station in disgrace and set up for ruin by a superior who hates her.
- Her demoralized crew blames her for their ship's humiliating posting to an out-of-the-way picket station.
- The aborigines of the system's only habitable planet are smoking homicide-inducing hallucinogens.
- Parliament isn't sure it wants to keep the place; the major local industry is smuggling; the merchant cartels want her head; the starconquering, so-called "Republic" of Haven is Up To Something; and Honor Harrington has a single, over-age light cruiser with an armament that doesn't work to police the entire star system.

But the people out to get her have made one mistake. They've made her mad.

Back cover of On Basilisk Station by David Weber

Author Bios Help Build Brands

Photographs help readers connect with authors. So do Social Media links.

Another approach is to use bios to introduce an author's other works.

Longer bios that also share details about the book can be effective.



DANIEL O'MALLEY received degrees from Michigan State and Ohio State before returning to his childhood home, Australia. He now works for the Australian government, managing media relations for the agency that investigates transport accidents.

rookfiles.com



TheRookbyDanielOMalley

NEAL STEPHENSON is the bestselling author of the novels Reamde, Anathem, The System of the World, The Confusion, Quicksilver, Cryptonomicon, The Diamond Age, Snow Crash, and Zediac, and the groundbreaking nonfiction work In the Beginning . . . Was the Command Line.

Elizabeth Moon, the New York Times bestselling author of the celebrated Deed of Paksenarrion and Paladin's Legacy epic fantasy series, presents Deeds of Honor, a brand new collection of short stories set in the world of Paksenarrion.

With two exclusive, never-before-published stories featuring characters from the *Paladin's Legacy* series, *Deeds of Honor* gathers together lore and legends from Palesenarrion's world, along with tales from the *Paladin's Legacy* era, all revised and updated for this special compilation.

Rich with the vivid and immersive storytelling for which Elizabeth Moon is known, the eight short stories in *Doeds of Honor*—collected here for the first time, with all-new author notes—are certain to please any fan of the *Paksenarrion* saga.

Advice on Your First Book

If you're a self-published author releasing your first book...

Make a virtue out of a necessity... **MY NOVEL** Use a quote from your book that by I. Writegood draws in readers as a tag line... "Toes. I love hairy toes..." Or use a memorable tag line Can an Orc and an Elf-maid you've created... find true love in suburbia? Feature an accomplishment that A NEW NOVEL FROM A SURVIVOR works for a first-time author... OF THE TROLL WARS ON THE INTERNET

More Advice on Your First Book

If you're a self-published author releasing your first book...

WHAT ABOUT BACK COVERS?

Tell a story to capture interest...

Share a picture of the author...

And include a brief author bio to help readers connect with you...

First contact was not made when a spaceship landed on the White House lawn, but when a three-alien delegation teleported into the office of the most powerful man in the world. The visitors had timed it well, arriving at the beginning of a half-hour block the great man had reserved for a restorative mid-day power nap.

- "What can JPMorgan Chase do to help you gentlebeings?" said the chairman.
- "We come in peace," said the tallest of the visitors, a lean, tiger-striped seven foot humanoid.
- "Live long and prosper," said the shortest alien, a three-foot pyramid with an eye at the apex of each side.
- "Klaatu barado..." began the third alien, a round, red-skinned being with a beard made of long, white manipulative tentacles who looked like a caricature of Santa Claus.
- "Cut the crap," said the chairman.
- "Right," said the tallest alien. "We're from the Galactic Free Trade Association and we want to cut you in."





Dave Schroeder is a former Chief Information Officer who's done his share of providing I.T. phone support. He's served as Chief Technology Officer for a Bay Area dotcom and as the head of ecommerce for a former big name Internet consulting company. He also wrote the book, lyrics & music for Softwear.com, a musical dotcomedy produced off-off-Broadway. Dave lives in suburban Atlanta where he's a writer and voice actor for the Atlanta Radio Theatre Company.

For more about the universe of the Galactic Free Trade Association please visit: www.XenotechSupport.com

US \$14.95

Other Resources

There's lots of advice about how to write cover copy on-line.

Kindlepreneur has recommendations on writing back cover blurbs https://kindlepreneur.com/back-book-cover-blurb/

Barnes & Noble offers five tips for writing book blurbs https://www.barnesandnoble.com/bnpress-blog/5-tips-writing-book-blurb/

Here's a link to help you write back cover stories that grab readers https://authorunlimited.com/blog/back-cover-blurb

Cover blurbs are like speed dating

You only have so much time (and space) to convince a reader your book is worth buying. Hook them with stories, cover blurbs, reviews, author bios, tag lines, accomplishments and more.