

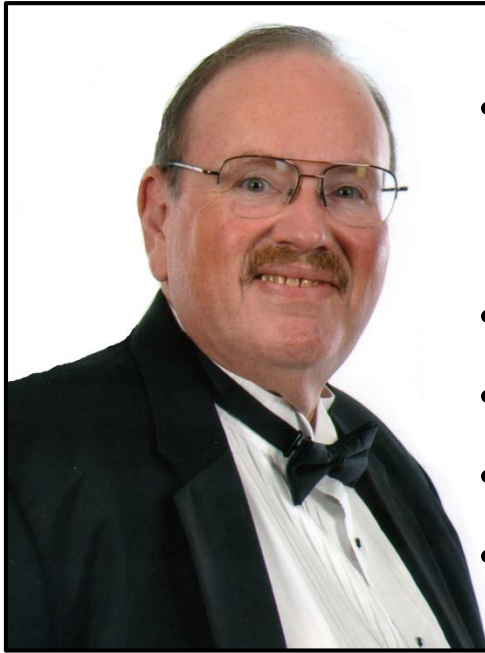
# **Creating Compelling Cover Copy**

**How to Encourage Readers to Buy Your Book**

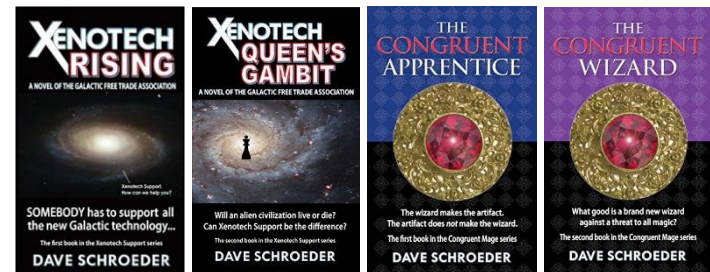
**Dave Schroeder**

**<http://www.daveschroeder.com/covercopy.pdf>**

# Who is Dave Schroeder?

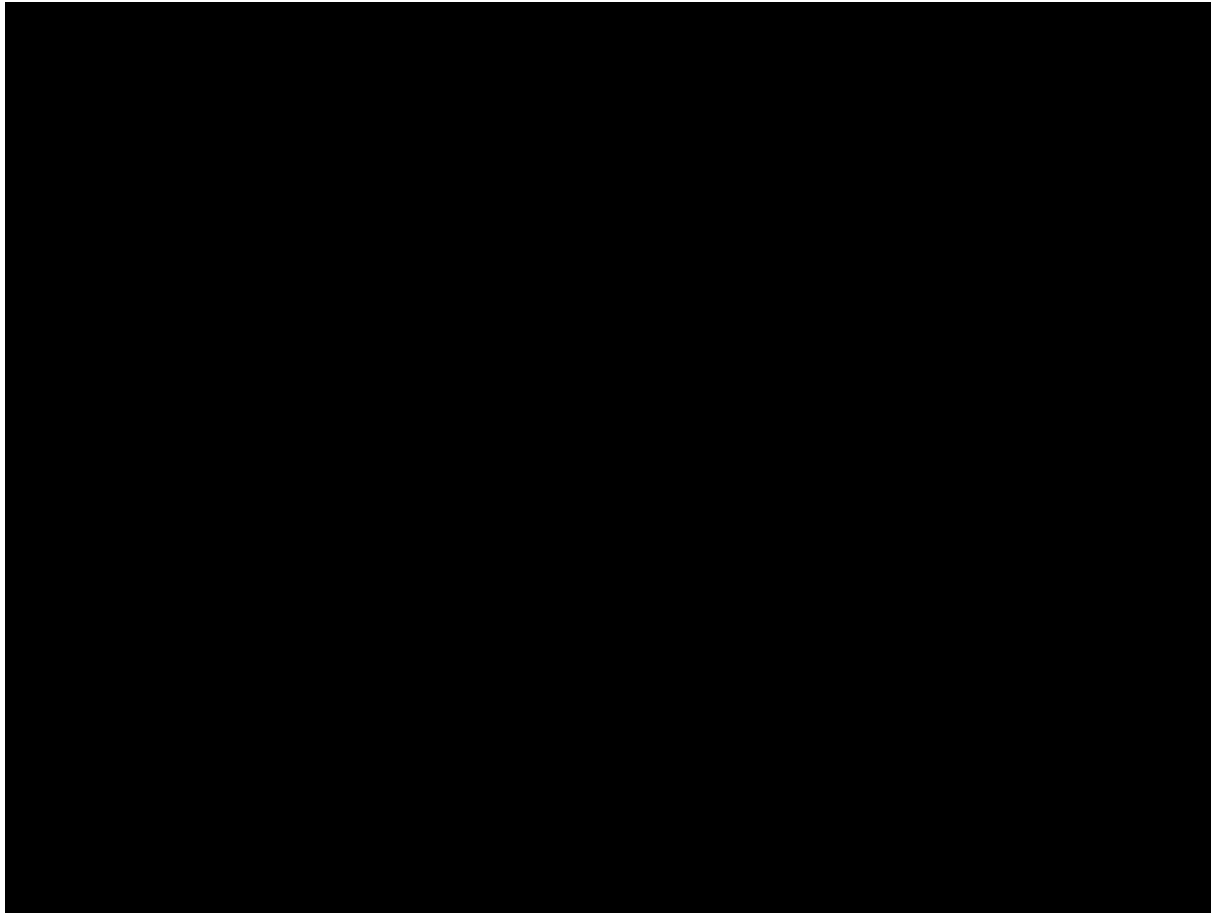


- Author of the Xenotech Support science fiction humor series and the Congruent Mage fantasy series
- Owner of Spiral Arm Press
- Former corporate Chief Information Officer
- Atlanta Radio Theatre Company member
- Successful Self-published Author / Publisher



# Less Can Be More

Microsoft designs the iPod package (from 2005)



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

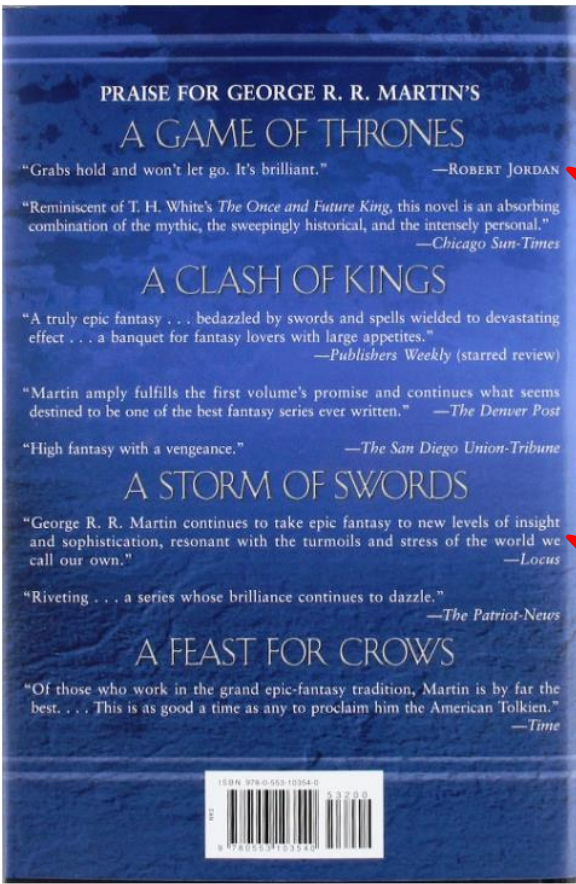
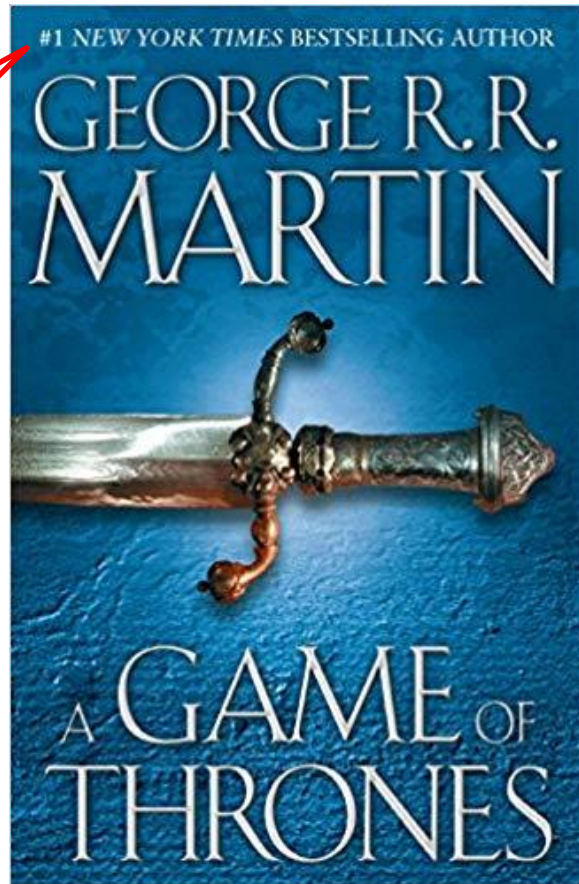
# What this presentation is **NOT**

- It's NOT about designing book covers  
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**

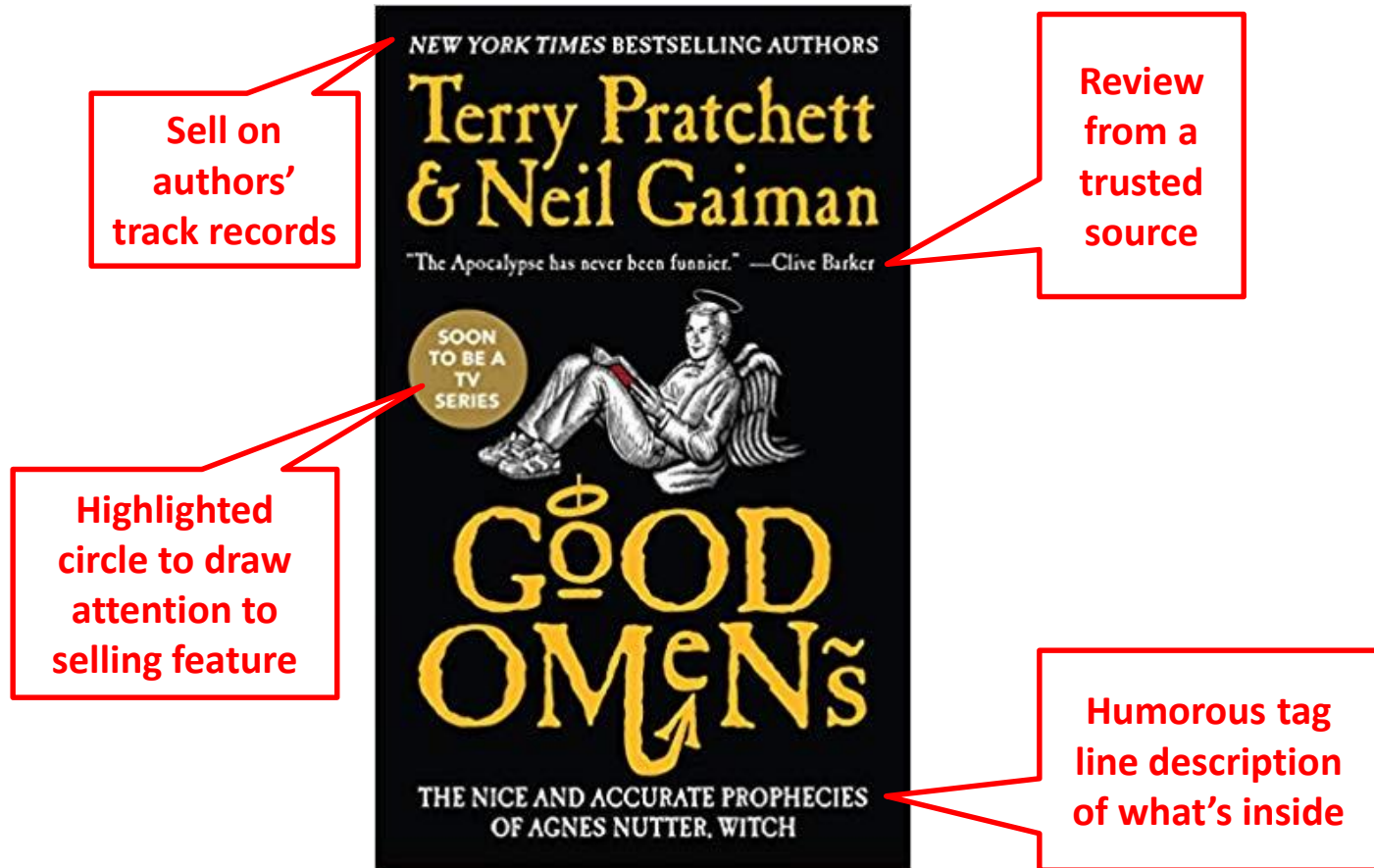


**Use  
reviews  
from  
trusted  
sources**

**Refer to  
other  
books in  
a series**

# ***Good Omens***

## Front Cover



# Good Omens

## Back Cover

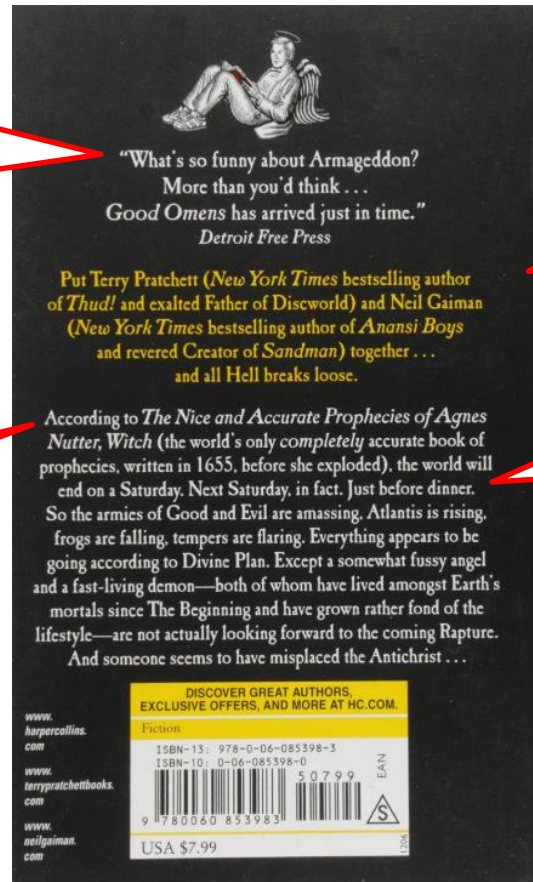
Memorable  
(and funny)  
tag line

Review  
from a  
trusted  
source

Telling a story  
draws readers in

The blurb also  
defines the  
genres of fantasy  
and humor

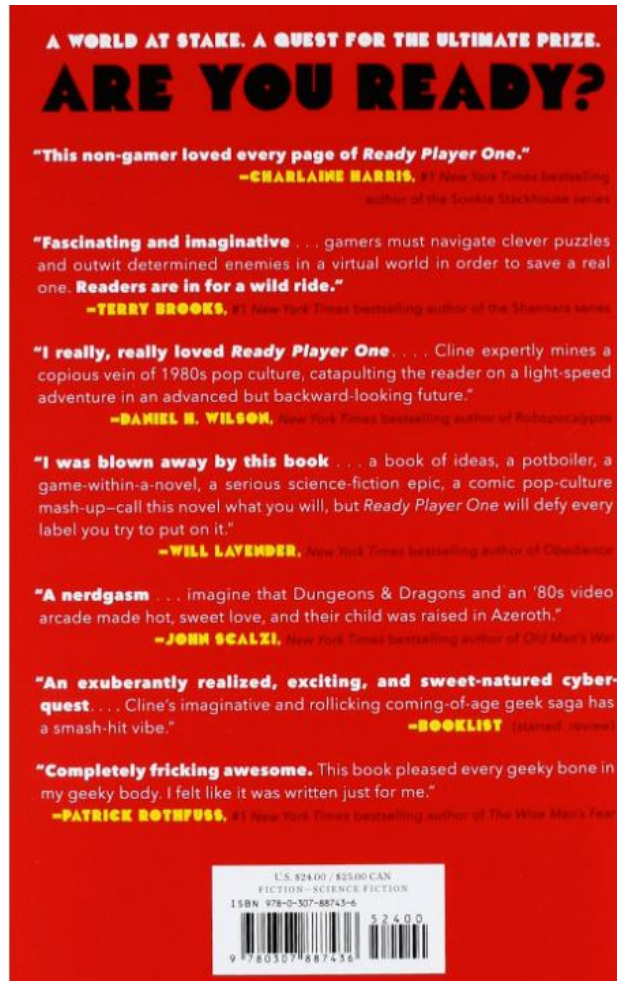
Longer  
copy can  
sell!





# 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

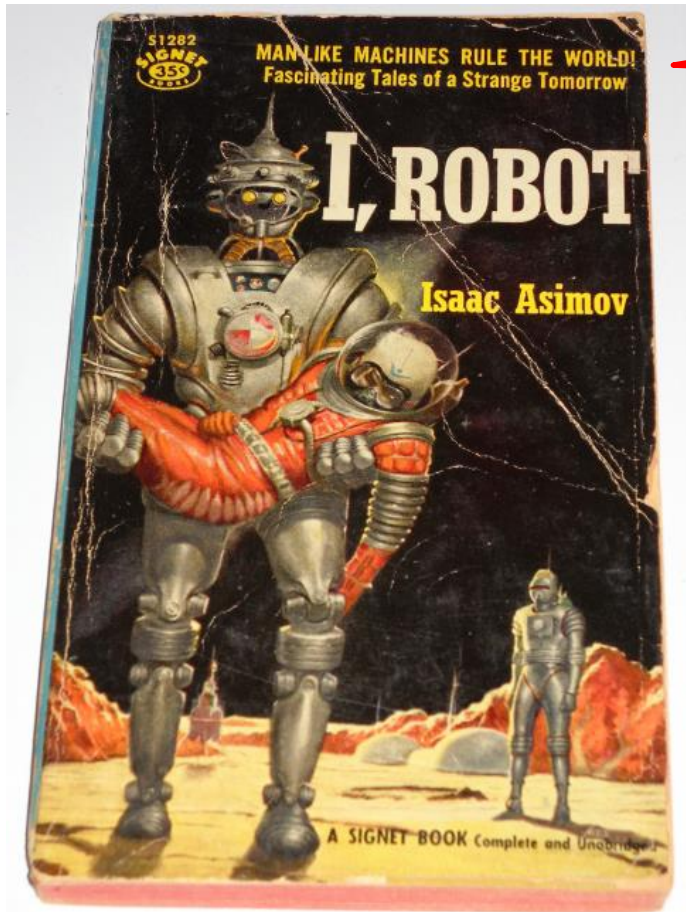
Colors highlight best  
parts of quotes and  
distinguish sources

**"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 Times bestselling author of *Old Man's War*



# *I, Robot* by Isaac Asimov

## Front Cover of 1956 Signet Edition



Keep your tag  
lines honest!

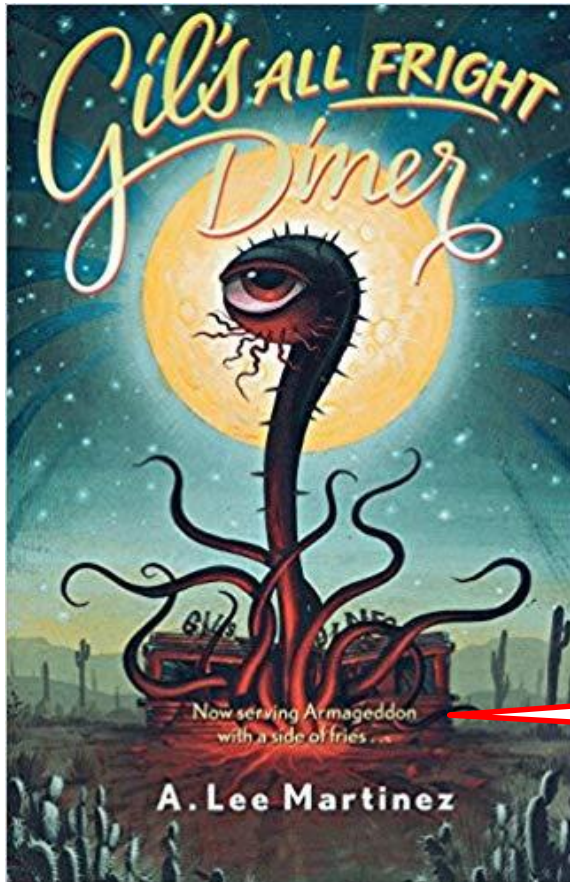
REMEMBER THE  
THREE LAWS!

MAN-LIKE MACHINES RULE THE WORLD!

This pulp-style  
tag line is over  
the top

# ***Gil's All Fright Diner***

Front Cover



**Note:**  
Armageddon  
seems popular  
these days

**Don't LOSE  
your tag line**

# Gil's All Fright Diner

## Back Cover

**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 sorcerer, 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

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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.

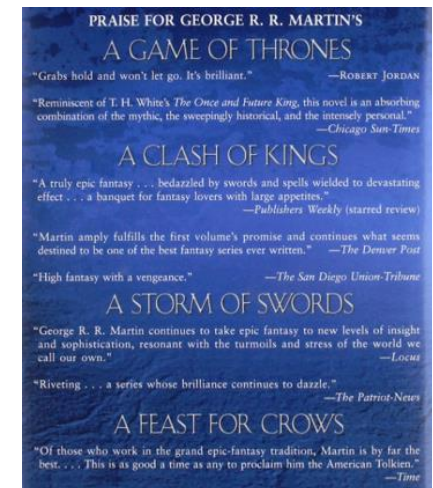
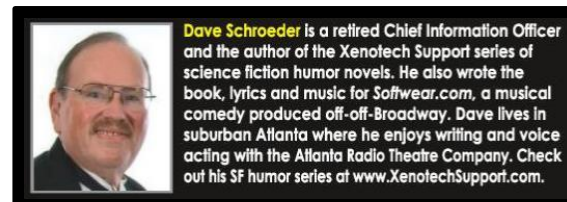
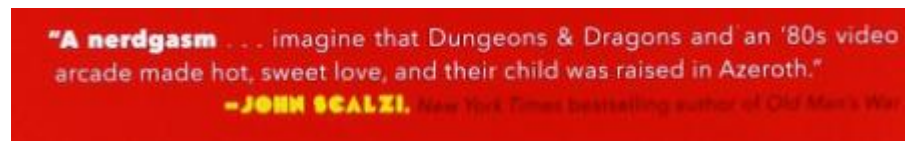
Duke and Earl are just passing through Rockwood County when they stop at the diner for a quick bite to eat. They aren't planning to stick around—until Loretta, the eatery's owner, offers them one hundred dollars to take care of her zombie problem. Given that Duke is a werewolf and Earl's a vampire, this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

Second paragraph introduces characters and primary conflict.

A detail about the author

# Typical Cover Sales Copy

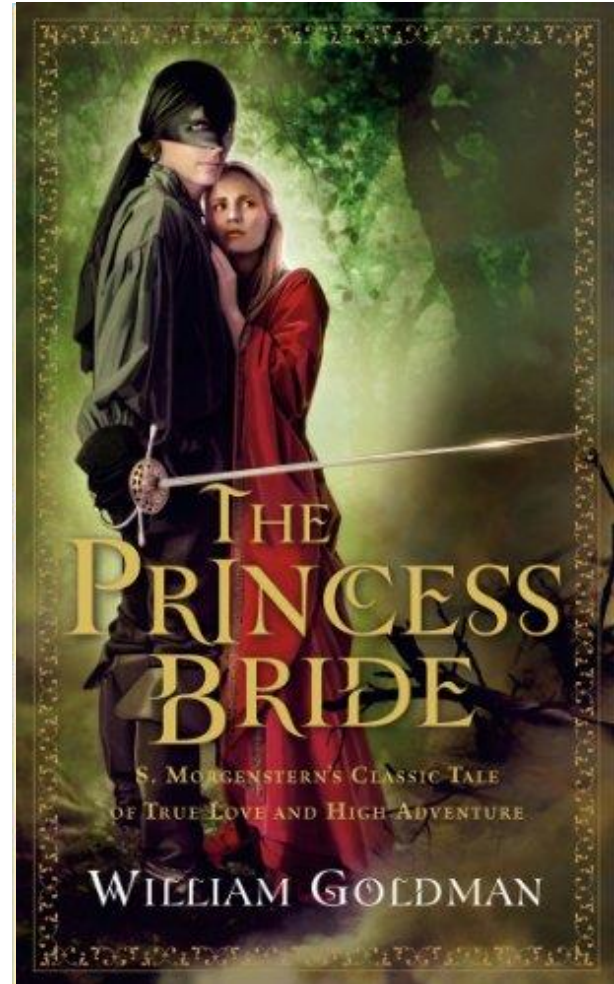
- Tag Lines
- Accomplishments
- Reviews & Blurbs
- Splash Copy
- Series Info
- Stories
- Biographical Info and Social Media Links





# 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.**



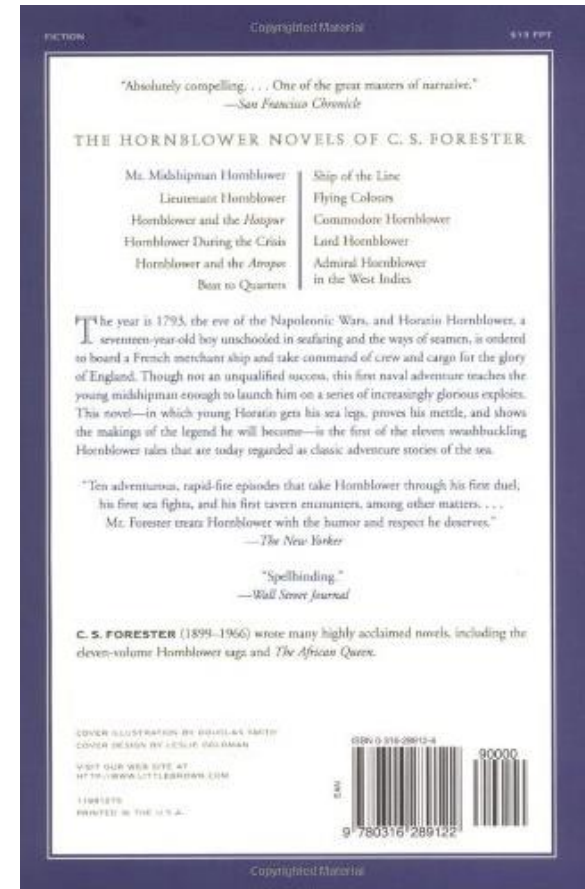
# Series Info Can Help Sell

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

## THE HORNBLOWER NOVELS OF C. S. FORESTER

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

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

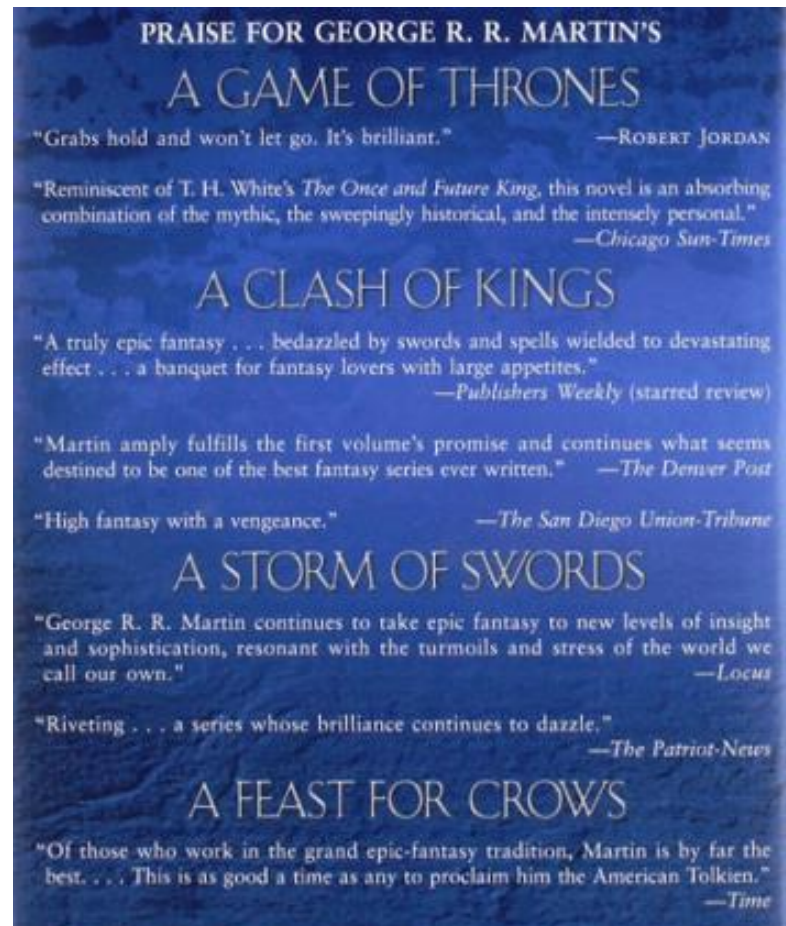


Back cover of *Mr. Midshipman Hornblower* by C. S. Forester

# 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.**

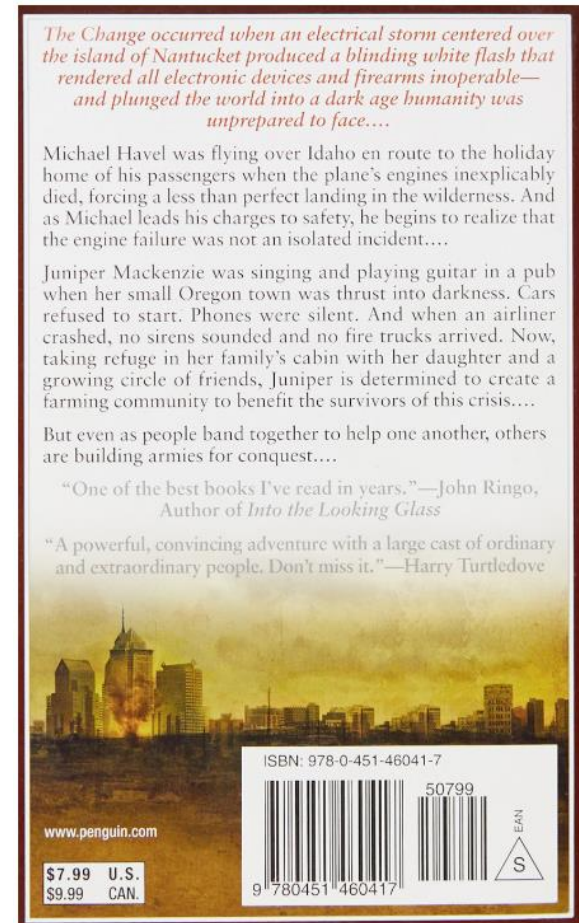


# Telling a Story Helps Sell

**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

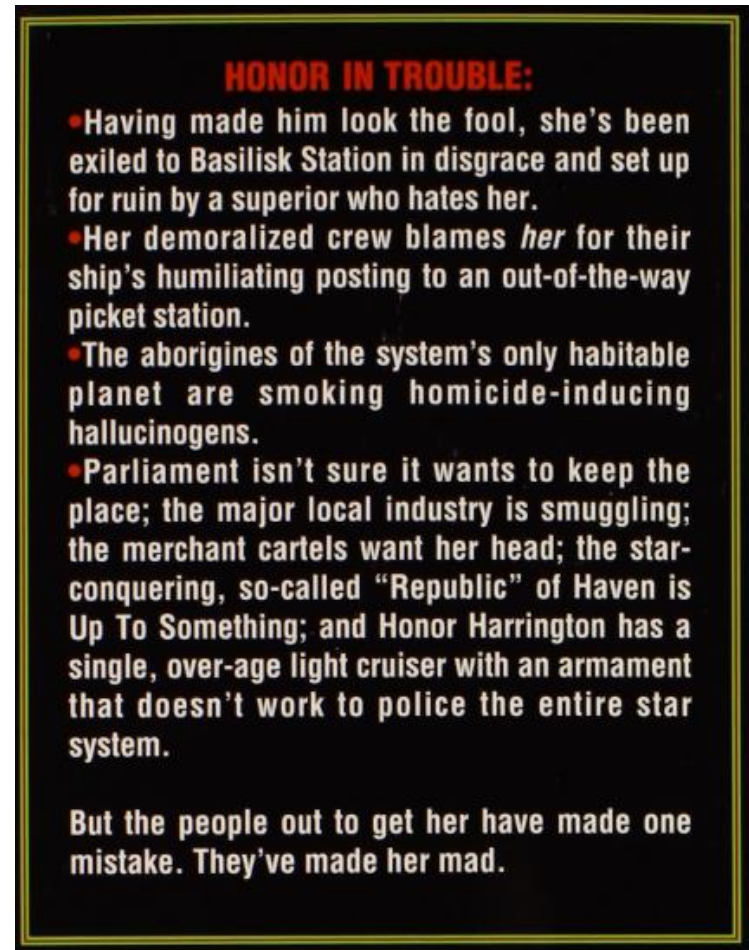


# Telling a Story in Bullet Form

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?"



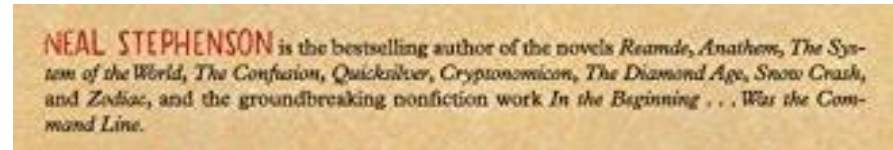
Back cover of *On Basilisk Station* by David Weber

# Author Bios Help Build Brands

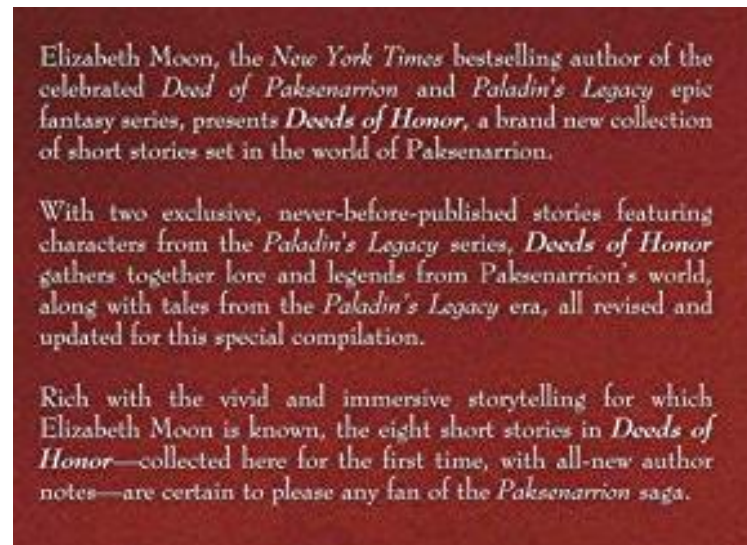
Photographs help readers connect with authors.  
So do Social Media links.



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.



# Advice on Your First Book

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

Make a virtue out of a necessity...

**DEBUT  
NOVEL!**

Use a quote from your book that  
draws in readers as a tag line...

*"Toes. I love hairy toes..."*

Or use a memorable tag line  
you've created...

**Can an Orc and an Elf-maid  
find true love in suburbia?**

Feature an accomplishment that  
works for a first-time author...

**A NEW NOVEL FROM A SURVIVOR  
OF THE TROLL WARS ON THE INTERNET**

# More Advice on Your First Book

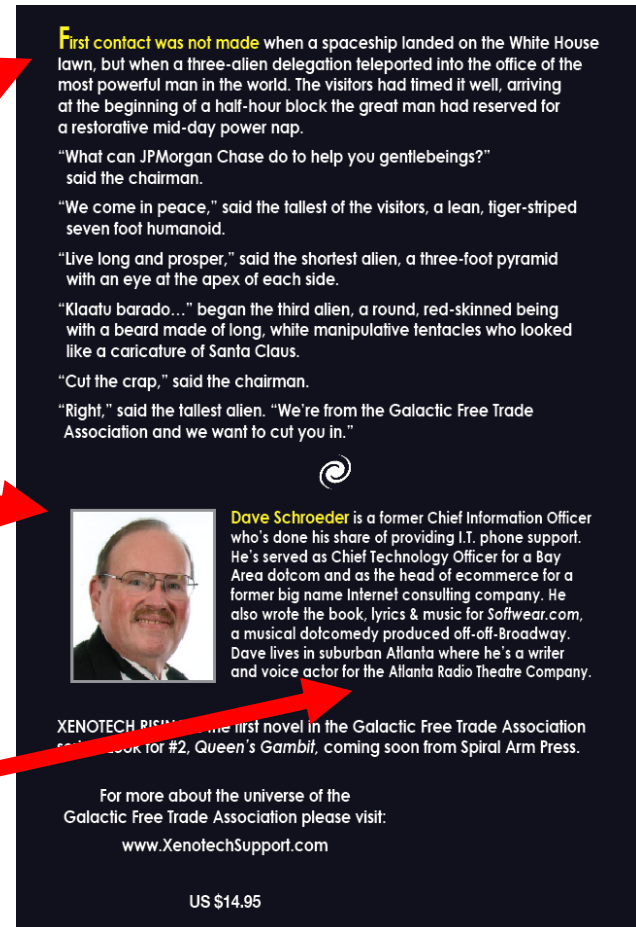
If you're a self-published author releasing your first book...

## 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...



# 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.

Q&A