

AUTHOR INTERVIEW



STEVEN FEASEY: LOOP DE LOUP!

Coming from a tough background and having gone through an education that only a school of hard knocks can give a young man, Steve Feasey came to writing relatively late.

Here we chat to Steve about his first published novel *Changeling*, which presented a snapshot scene to him after watching a documentary about the history of the adventure book as well as giving his own thoughts about writing, dream-genies and how a teenage Steve helped formulate his principle protagonist...

Falcata Times: Writing is said to be something that people are afflicted with rather than gifted and that it's something you have to do rather than want. What is your opinion of this statement and how true is it to you?

Steve Feasey: I like the idea of writing being described as an affliction because at times, for me at least, it does feel like some kind of compulsive disorder. Waking up at four o'clock in the morning because the dream-genie has visited, plodding downstairs in your dressing-gown and writing the chapter that your muse has just whispered into your ear cannot be normal, can it?

FT: When did you realise that you wanted to be a writer?

SF: I'm new to the game. *Changeling* is the first thing that I've written - not written and had published; first thing written, full stop. But when I started it nearly eighteen months ago, I immediately knew that writing was what I had wanted to do; I just hadn't known it.

FT: It's often said that if you can write a short story you can write anything. How true do you think this is and what have you written that either proves or disproves your POV?

SF: I'd imagine that there is a huge difference between writing short stories and writing a novel. I admire anyone who can condense the essence of a story into such a short form and still produce a fully-fledged, rounded piece of work. You have to be very disciplined to be able to pull that off.

FT: If someone were to enter a bookshop, how would you persuade them to try your novel over someone else's and how would you define it?

SF: I'd tell them that if the story hasn't grabbed them by the throat and demanded to be finished by the time they've got to chapter three, I'd give them their money back from my own pocket.

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FT: How would you "sell" your book in 20 words or less?

SF: A contemporary fantasy-horror that embodies the best aspects of adventure/thriller writing, appealing to both teenage and adult readers alike.

FT: Who is a must have on your bookshelf and who's latest release will find you on the bookshops doorstep waiting for it to open?

SF: Stephen King is the best story-teller out there. A bookshelf without a copy of The Stand is simply incomplete. I hate queuing, but I'd happily stand in line outside a bookshop for the next Donna Tartt novel.

I LIKE TO KEEP MYSELF GUESSING AS TO HOW IT'S ALL GOING TO PAN OUT.

FT: When you sit down and write do you know how the story will end or do you just let the pen take you? ie Do you develop character profiles and outlines for your novels before writing them or do you let your idea's develop as you write?

SF: I'm simply too disorganised to even attempt to plot a story. I like to have a beginning, an end, and if I'm lucky, a key scene somewhere in the middle of the book. I like the organic nature of writing a story and the way that your characters can surprise even you when they end up in a situation that you've written them into. I like to keep myself guessing as to how it's all going to pan out.

FT: What do you do to relax and what have you read recently?

SF: An obvious answer, I know, but I read when I want to relax. Some people say that you can't enjoy reading as much once you've written a book, but I don't agree. I've always used reading as a means of escape. When I was a teenager it was all I had at times, and I would lock myself away in my room and take myself away. Luckily, I'm still able to do that.

FT: What's your guiltiest pleasure that few know about?

SF: Timepieces. I love wristwatches. There is something about strapping time onto you in the morning that is immensely satisfying and terrifying. There is a shop near to where I live that repairs and sells old clocks. I love going in there and looking up at these time-machines; listening to the their voices and wondering about the history behind them.

FT: Lots of writers tend to have pets (mainly cats.)

What do you have and what are their key traits (and do they appear in your novel in certain character attributes?)

SF: We have some fish that refuse to die. They're ancient, and despite my inability to remember to feed them regularly, they carry on coasting around their tank, occasionally leering at me through the glass with a look of utter disdain on their faces.

FT: Which character within the book was the most fun to write and why?

SF: Tom is my go-to man. He's great fun and I love the way that he can diffuse a scene with a few choice words. I also love the way that he deals with all of the madness around him as though it's the most natural thing in the world.

FT: How similar to your principle Protagonist are you?

SF: There's quite a bit of the teenage me in Trey. I felt very lonely at that age - who doesn't? - and didn't really fit in, but I was never as resourceful as he is. I would love to be like Lucien, but I'm just not cool enough (if at all).

FT: What hobbies do you have and how do they influence your work?

SF: I used to be into photography, and worked in that industry throughout my life, and I think that my experiences with visual media gives me a big hand when I need to close my eyes and 'be somewhere' with my characters. I also coach rugby and love the controlled violence of the sport.

I IMAGINE HIM AS THIS HUGE BRAUNY HELLS-ANGEL FIGURE AND WHEN HE TALKS, I LISTEN.

FT: Where do you get your ideas from?

SF: My dream-genie visits me quite often. Usually when I least expect it. I imagine him as this huge, brawny hells-angel figure, and when he talks, I listen. I also like obscure medieval folklore, and I use aspects of some of these stories to create elements of my nether-creatures.

FT: Do you ever encounter writers block and if so how do you overcome it?

SF: I haven't been writing long enough to have experienced it yet, but I have begun to experience the dreaded 'writer's procrastination'.

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FT: Certain authors are renowned for writing at what many would call uncivilised times? When do you do write and how do the others in your household feel about it?

SF: I like the mornings. I like to wake up, get the kids packed off to school, down a pot of coffee and then get to it.

FT: Sometimes pieces of music seem to madly influence certain scenes within novels, do you have a soundtrack for your tale or is it a case of writing in silence with perhaps the odd musical break in-between scenes?

SF: I write in silence. I can't 'get there' if there is music on. I've tried to write with music in the background, but I just cannot be a passive listener, so I have to get up and turn it off.

FT: What misconceptions, if any, did you have about the writing and publishing field when you were first getting started?

SF: I was blissfully naïve about the industry and I can't help but think that this was a good thing. Macmillan have been tremendous in their support for me and Changeling, and since becoming published the book has been nominated for the Waterstone's Children's Book Prize.

EEEK, THAT SOUNDS A BIT PONCY

FT: If music be the food of love, what do you think writing is and explain your answer?

SF: It's a mirror to life. Whichever genre you choose to explore, writing attempts to form an amalgam between life and fantasy to try to make sense of it all. (Eeek, that sounds a bit poncy...)

FT: What can you tell us about the next novel?

SF: It picks up where the last one left off. It was great to be able to get right into the story and not have to worry too much about backstory (as you inevitably do with the first book in a series). There are some really exciting new characters, a few new nether-creatures and a denouement that I hope will have everyone tearing through the pages to get to the end. It's a bit 'darker' than the first book, but I wanted it to ratchet the tension up from Changeling and put more of the characters 'on the back foot'.

FT: What are the last five internet sites that you've

visited?

SF: www.facebook.co.uk
www.writewords.org.uk (a good site for aspiring and published writers)
www.theonion.com (so funny)
www.framleyexaminer.co.uk (even funnier - especially the classifieds)
www.stevefeasey.com

FT: Did you ever take any writing classes or specific instruction to learn the craft of writing a novel?

SF: No. After I'd written Changeling I asked my agent if she thought it would be a good idea to go on a creative writing course. Her reply of, "God, no!" put me off of the idea.

FT: How did you get past the initial barriers of criticism and rejection?

SF: You grow a great, thick, rhino-like hide and suck it up. Honestly, there is no way to prepare for the pain of rejection (and I had a LOT of rejections), so you just have to take it on the chin and keep believing in your writing.

FT: What are the best and worst aspects of writing for a living, in your opinion?

SF: The rare moments when you come back to something that you have written recently, read it back and think, "Damn, did I write that?"

The worst thing is the self-doubt that constantly threatens. I am never going to be good enough in my own mind, and I beat myself up too much over my writing. Most times you come back to something that you have written recently, read it back and think, "Damn, did I write that?"

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT STEVE AND TO KEEP UP TO DATE WITH TREY AND FRIENDS, PLEASE VISIT STEVE'S WEBSITE AT:

[HTTP://WWW.STEVEFEASEY.COM](http://www.stevefeasey.com)