



# The Detective Kubu Newsletter

## *DEATH OF THE MANTIS* *Book Tour*

We've just finished our US book tour, which was exhilarating and exhausting. In the five weeks we were on the road, we had 30 events of one sort or another, drove 3,500 miles (just under 6,000 kms) and flew about 6,000 miles (just under 10,000 kms).

It was a great trip, but we're pleased to get back to a normal schedule.

So what were the highlights of the tour, other than all the wonderful bookstores we visited?

### The Pacific Northwest

The US Northwest is different from all other parts of the country. It is heavily wooded, borders the Pacific Ocean, and is overcast the whole time. In the six days we were in Seattle and Portland, we saw the sun for about an hour. Portland, Oregon, differed from Seattle in that the drizzle came with puffs of sunshine.

### Powell's Bookstore

Portland was wonderful. The non-event highlight was a visit to Powell's bookstore. It is so big that they give you a map to find the various color-coded rooms. It covers a whole city block on multiple levels. Without doubt it was the biggest bookstore we've ever visited - several times bigger. Of course we checked whether they carried our books. They did - in all formats. Thumbs up. Powell's is amazing and worth a visit.



The Orange Room at Powell's

### Ashland

After Portland, it was Ashland - another extraordinary place. With a population of 20,000 in southwest Oregon, Ashland holds an annual Shakespeare festival that lasts 8 months and uses three theatres. Almost all shows are sold out months in advance. Over 400,000 seats are sold, and people come from all over the country.

Not all shows are Shakespeare's plays, as we discovered when we saw *The African Company presents Richard III*, which is a play based on a true story of how a small company of Black actors in New York in the early 1800s were put out of business by a White theatre through intimidation and political influence. It was brilliant.

Please share this newsletter with friends of yours who are readers.

## Is such a Book Tour worth the time and expense?

It is difficult to say. Purely in terms of books sold, probably not. But we think that the exposure to new readers will eventually pay dividends. At least that's our story. Actually, we think the greatest benefit is to meet the booksellers. What we ultimately want from such a tour is to have them recommending DEATH OF THE MANTIS, as well as our earlier books, to customers looking for suggestion for what to read.

What makes the trip is worthwhile is the people you meet. Everywhere, we met wonderful readers, either already Kubu fans or eager to find out more. Every bookstore made us feel welcome and ensured that we had an audience.

Plus we had ample time in the car to talk through the intricacies of our fourth Kubu mystery, which is about a third finished.

## DEATH OF THE MANTIS receives additional accolades

In its October newsletter, Strand Magazine – a major mystery magazine – included DEATH OF THE MANTIS in its top 12 mysteries for 2011. We're thrilled!

Last week, BookReporter, a widely read online book newsletter reviewed DEATH OF THE MANTIS and had this to say about it:

*“DEATH OF THE MANTIS is one of those rare books that transcends its rich genre. While there is a mystery at its core, it is also a study of the human condition, of the best and worst of people who do what they do for the best and worst of reasons. And Kubu is one of the best friends you will make between the pages of a book.”*

And *“DEATH OF THE MANTIS is a wonderful piece of work, a novel that is quietly perfect in every way.”*

We promise that we paid no money for this, nor wrote it ourselves!!



Click on the link below to “like” Michael Stanley and Detective Kubu on Facebook.

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Michael-Stanley/135421979876906>

## The Book business is tough right now

Throughout the tour, much of the casual discussion was about the issues of ebooks and Amazon becoming a publisher in its own right. Independent booksellers don't particularly like either, although more and more are selling ebooks in their stores. A number of booksellers, and certainly other publishers, are frantic about Amazon becoming a publisher. They are scared, rightly so in our opinion, that Amazon will become a monopoly for both the production and selling of books and ebooks. Some bookstores refuse to carry books published by Amazon, because they don't want to foster Amazon's success. The question is: are they hastening their own demise by trying to ignore Amazon?

Certainly the authors and agents we spoke to reported very difficult times. In the past, publishers gave promising authors four or five books to gather momentum. Now, if you don't have momentum after two, you're probably going to be dropped. For those authors who are still getting contracts, advances have dwindled dramatically, sometimes to zero - unless you are a superstar. Authors are scrambling to find publishers, and few are making a living.

Added to this is the rapidly growing practice of libraries enabling cardholders to download ebooks over the internet. This means that readers can get all the books they like without cost and without leaving home. In the current economic climate, this

is seen as a very good thing by readers. However, it is not good for authors since, in the USA, no royalties accrue for library book usage.

So authors are at the bottom of the totem pole (as our American friends would say) - being squeezed from all directions. They're seeing smaller advances, if any, and diminishing sales - a vicious circle. For established authors it is difficult; for new authors almost impossible.

Something has to break. We don't know what, but unless something happens, new authors will find it very difficult to find publishers who are willing to take a chance on them. Publishers are putting almost all their budgets behind established authors. And if new authors self-publish, they will face the gargantuan task of getting known.

To put the problem into perspective, in 2010 there were approximately 750,000 books published in the USA, of which more than half were self-published. What would a new author have to do to stand out in that crowd?

In a starred review, Library Journal writes *"Impossible to put down, this immensely readable third entry from (Michael Stanley) delivers the goods. Kubu's painstaking detecting skills make him a sort of Hercule Poirot of the desert."*

## Bushman hunting kit a great success

At most of the events on our book tour, we showed an authentic Bushman hunting kit that Stanley bought about 40 years ago. It has everything that a Bushman would own – bow, arrows, spear, knife, digging stick, fly whisk, knobkierie, sandals, poison containers, rattles, and a toy bow and arrows. All of this came in a beautiful, leather hunting bag. Readers loved this show and tell.

## Book Club offer

If your book club reads any of the Detective Kubu mysteries, either Michael or Stanley will be delighted to visit or phone in to chat about the book. If you are interested, drop us an email at [michaelstanley@detectivekubu.com](mailto:michaelstanley@detectivekubu.com)

## Buying our books

We always encourage readers to buy from local bookstores because otherwise they may disappear. However, if you prefer to buy online, click on the link below or paste it into your browser. Then click on "Buy the books" on the left. It will take you to all the other ways of buying our books.

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Stanley, Michael, and Bushman hunting kit at Powell's, Beaverton