

'The Bible Experience' wins Audiobook of the Year

Christian graphic novel takes major award during largest annual book fair

» BY BECKY GARRISON

A Christian audiobook and graphic novel won major awards during Book Expo America (BEA) 2007, held in New York City May 31-June 3.

During the Audio Publishing Association's annual Audies award dinner, Zondervan's celebrity-driven audiobook *Inspired By ...The Bible Experience New Testament* was named Audiobook of the Year, as well as winning the Inspirational/Spiritual category.

Eye Witness: Acts of the Spirit (Head Press Publishing) by Robert James Luedke was awarded the silver medal in the Graphic Novel/Drawn Book (Drama/Documentary) category of the 2007 Independent Publisher Book Awards.

Inspired By ... The Bible Experience has sold more than 300,000 units in eight months to become Zondervan's fastest-selling Bible, outselling perennial best-sellers, company officials said.

Also during The Audies, Focus on the Family Radio Theatre's *The Life of Jesus* (Tyndale House Publishers/Focus on the Family) won Audio Drama of the Year.

During the Audio Publishers Association-sponsored seminar "Are You There God? It's Me," Zondervan Vice President and Publisher Mark Hunt said Christian audiobooks have an annual revenue of approximately \$50 million, with 49% of that from Bibles, 24% from fiction and 27% from nonfiction.

Associate Publisher of Oasis Audio Dan



Baker Publishing Group's booth in the African-American pavilion at Book Expo America.

Balow noted that direct-to-consumer sales channels are experiencing double-digit increases each year. He added that for the Christian retail market, this confirms that there is a demand for product. Balow said that if retailers dedicated some effort to understanding and selling the audiobook category, they could see increases that could add a couple percentage points of growth to their bottom line.

Besides audiobooks, Christian-themed seminars at BEA focused on evangelical fiction as well as a presentation by Thomas Nelson CEO Michael Hyatt, who explained the company's One Company Initiative, which took effect April 1 and eliminated 18 imprints.

At a packed session titled "Selling Chris-

tian Fiction: Understand the Subcategory, the Market, and the Sales Potential," *Publishers Weekly* Religion Book Review Editor Jana Reiss and Tyndale Director of Fiction Becky Nesbitt noted how the financial success of the "Left Behind" series in the Christian retail channel led to the influx of crossover fiction titles into the secular market.

Baker Publishing Group's decision to set up a booth in the African-American pavilion was lauded by the panelists, who echoed the need for Christian fiction to reach the Latino, Asian and African-American markets. While the panelists pointed out the difficulty in reaching the Christian young adult market, author Karen Kingsbury noted that she has 13-year-old readers.

Publishers Weekly released the preliminary results of an Academic Research Study targeting religious scholars. The majority of the 692 respondents saw increased enrollments, sometimes dramatic, in the field of study in the last five years. Religions of the World and Religion in America represented the subjects that experienced sharp increase in popularity. The study found that 85% of academics surveyed buy their books from online booksellers and 68% are very or somewhat interested in receiving e-mail promotions.

BOOK EXPO AMERICA

Less space but more traffic at general market trade show

Leading authors out in force to support new titles

» BY BECKY GARRISON

While Christian publishers had a smaller presence this year compared to 2006, reports indicated that the overall traffic to their booths increased during Book Expo America (BEA) 2007.

Although there were no Purpose-Driven Life-type blockbusters being cross-promoted to the general market, Christian authors in attendance included Karen Kingsbury, Bethany Pierce, Taffy Anderson, Travis



Author Connie Neal during a book signing at Book Expo America.

Thrasher, Don Piper, John Carter Cash and Deborah Norville.

Key titles promoted during the Expo included *Kingdom Come* (Tyndale House Publishers), the last book in the "Left Behind" series; *Quiet Strength* (Tyndale) by Super Bowl-winning coach Tony Dungy; *The Final Move Beyond Iraq* (Frontline/Strang Communications) by Mike Evans; *The Dawkins Delusion?* (InterVarsity Press) by Alister McGrath and Joanna Collicutt McGrath; *Sunrise* (Tyndale) by Karen Kingsbury; *Ever After* by Karen Kingsbury and *Dangerous Surrender* by Kay Warren (both Zondervan); *3:16* by Max Lucado (Thomas Nelson); and *The Culturally Savvy Christian* by Dick Staub and *Amish Grace* by Donald Kraybill, Steven Nolt and David Weaver-Zercher (both Jossey-Bass).

Harper One, previously known as Harper San Francisco, highlighted 12 of the publisher's spiritual classics, which included C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity*, Jim Wallis' *God's Politics* and Richard J. Foster's *Celebration of Discipline*.

Forthcoming Bible versions spotlighted at BEA included *My First Message*, a devotional for kids patterned after *The Message* translation from NavPress; *The Apologetics Study Bible* (B&H Publishing Group) with

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Mike Evans book draws 'unprecedented' media coverage

'New York Times' No. 1 debut for FrontLine title addressing Iran fears

» BY ERIC TIANSAY

The latest book by *New York Times* best-selling author and Middle East analyst Mike Evans has drawn wide media coverage.

The Final Move Beyond Iraq (Frontline, an imprint of Strang Communications) debuted at No. 1 on the *New York Times* best-seller list in the Paperback Nonfiction category for June 3, company officials said.

In *The Final Move Beyond Iraq*, which released May 15, Evans looks at why victory in Iraq is important to U.S. security, and why the U.S. and Israel should not let Iran achieve its desire for nuclear weapons.

After the book's release, Evans appeared on FOX News Channel's *Your World With Neil Cavuto*, *Fox & Friends*, CNN's *Glen Beck* program, *The Alan Colmes Show* and *The G. Gordon Liddy Show* as part of the national media tour promoting the book.

Tessie DeVore, executive vice presi-



dent of the Strang Book Group, said the media response to Evans' book "has been unprecedented."

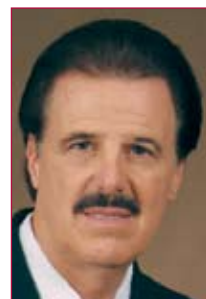
"In the first two weeks surrounding the street date, Evans has garnered

more than 40 interviews, 15 of them with national media," she said. "Many of the top-tier media gatekeepers are extending invitations to Evans. This tells us that the subject is very much up for debate and those who are interested do have a fighting chance at using America's media to sound a very important alarm on behalf of Israel."

DeVore added that the timeliness of the book's message "has been totally in sync with the media war now being debated in our country surrounding the present Middle East conflict."

The Final Move Beyond Iraq debuted at No. 16 on *USA Today's* top 150 books best-seller list and No. 1 on *Publishers Weekly's* Paperback category for May.

"This is an important book—perhaps one of the most important ones we have ever published," DeVore said. "We expect it to stay on other best-selling lists for quite a while."



Mike Evans

Strang Communications has published six other *New York Times* best-selling books, including *The Seven Pillars of Health* by Don Colbert, M.D.; *The Threshing Floor* by Juanita Bynum; *The Maker's Diet* by Jordan Rubin; *The Faith of George W. Bush* by Stephen Mansfield; and G.P. Taylor's novels *Shadowmancer* and *Wormwood*.

Online document postings aim to authenticate memoir

Unusual moves by debut author spotlight ongoing fallout from James Frey's fabrication scandal

» BY KEN WALKER

The author of a dramatic new testimony has published corroborating documents online to validate his story, in light of last year's James Frey scandal.

Soon after Frey's embarrassing admis-

sion that he fabricated parts of his Oprah-endorsed *A Million Little Pieces* (Anchor, 2003), Rob Mitchell researched the legal ramifications of a Web site name spoofing the controversy.

Last November, the Greensboro, N.C., stockbroker posted a millionlittleproofs.com. The site includes documents and audio interviews with several staff members to authenticate his just-published memoir—*Castaway Kid*—as one of the last “lif-ers” to grow up in an orphanage.

Mitchell's effort to legitimize his testimony symbolizes the fallout from Frey's book. Two publishing executives could only recall two books being pulled from Christian stores the last 35 years because of doubts over their veracity: *Crying Wind* (Moody, 1977) and *Satan Seller* (Logos, 1972) by Mike Warnke, who took a well-publicized fall from grace before writing *Friendly Fire* (Destiny Image) in 2002.

“The Christian industry has always had testimony books,” said Dan Rich of David C. Cook, which in September releases *Finding Home* by Jim Daly, president of Focus on the Family, with Bob DeMoss. “I think Frey would have been fine if he had put (a note) in there that ‘some of this is fictional.’”

Released in June, *Castaway Kid* was the latest memoir published by Focus on the Family through its partnership with Tyndale House Publishers, but it was the company's fourth in the last 15 months.

Others included *Wild Child, Waiting Mom* (April 2006) by Karilee Hayden and Wendi Hayden English, *Saving Levi* (January 2007) by Lisa Misraje Bentley and *Light From Lucas* (February 2007) by Bob Vander Plaats.

However, Mitchell's is the first to go an extra mile to ensure readers of its validity.

The son of a mentally-disturbed mother and a father who tried to kill himself and wound up in a vegetative state, the author acknowledged people could be skeptical of his background.

“When I first looked at caseworker notes in 1991 and thought of writing a book, I thought, ‘People would think I made this up,’” said the father of two children. “My goal was to be as close as possible to my recollections.”

While ultimately readers will judge whether his story rings true, John Duckworth, senior book producer at Focus on the Family, said he was reassured by the stack of verifications (including photos) that Mitchell supplied.

“They provided a level of credibility and detail that would be hard to come by for many authors, since most people's childhoods aren't described in caseworker reports and other documents,” Duckworth said.

In addition, Mitchell had a mutual acquaintance who vouched for him. And, the author flew to Colorado Springs, Colo., to meet with the ministry's staff, which helped build trust, Duckworth said.

The Focus executive also has a personal connection with memoirs. His mother, Marion, releases *Naked on Any Doorstep* (Multnomah Books) on Nov. 20, describing how she overcame abandonment as a child by her mentally-ill father.

Whatever the true experience story, Duckworth said the principles are the same: use written permission forms, and ask about anything that doesn't “smell” right, such as contradictory dates, conver-

sations that sound unnatural or passages that seem vague or self-justifying.

In Daly's case, Rich said, Focus' president has shared his story in so many venues that it reassured him any discrepancies would have already been questioned.

“It is a rather amazing story of how God worked in his life,” Rich said of Daly's story of spending his early years in a low-income tenement with alcoholic parents and his eventual abandonment.

“Is he embellishing or stretching the truth? I don't think any publisher can ever know if someone is doing that,” said Rich,

Cook's senior vice president and publisher. “But, in Jim's case he has shared this story all of his faith life. He has been in situations where there have been family members and his (life) coach, adding verification that it is accurate as to their

part.”

Still, in the aftermath of the Frey controversy, amazing stories could spark media investigations, although Rich said that will depend on their popularity.

If a Christian memoir gained Oprah's endorsement and wound up selling 2 million copies, he said it could pique curiosity.

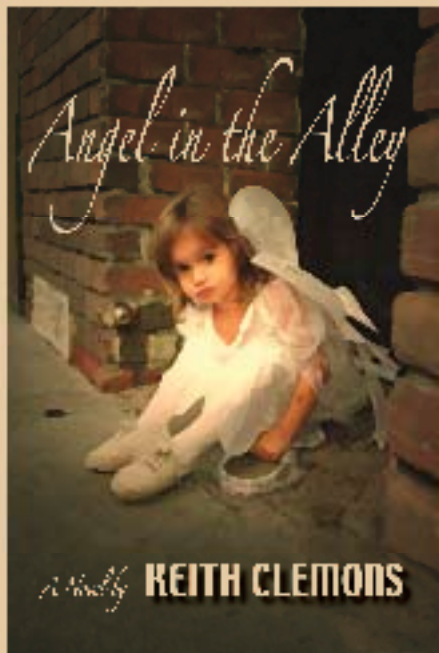
“If it wound up on the *New York Times* best-seller list, it would have all kinds of scrutiny,” Rich said. “But, we have a very credible book with credible content and we'd love it if it would reach a lot of people.”

However, once people move past the issue of believability, Mitchell hopes they are touched by what God did in his life.

“Nobody can relate to growing up in an orphanage, but what they can relate to are deep emotions in their own life—loneliness, abandonment and betrayal,” he said. “*Castaway Kid* isn't about how great Rob Mitchell is. It's about how amazing God is.”

NEW...from Award Winning Author Keith Clemons

When Bibles are banned in the name of world peace and the church goes underground to survive, how far will one man go to keep the Word alive?



Peter Dover has enough money to purchase anything his heart desires—except the life of Angela, his seven year old daughter. She's dying of cancer. Angela wants to spend her final days with her family but Peter's on the run accused of sedition and murder. Stealing Angela from the hospital, Peter hitches a ride on an eighteen wheeler driven by a trucker with a pet Chihuahua and the adventure begins. It's a race against the clock with his own imprisonment and the death of his daughter at stake—a journey that will challenge Peter to become the man he truly is.

New Release, Summer '07
ISBN 978-0-9731044-5-7
\$13.99

GEORGE COLTON
PUBLISHING



Robert Mitchell



Jim Daly



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commentary from people such as Chuck Colson and Ravi Zacharias; and *The Word of Promise*, Thomas Nelson's dramatic audio Bible production of the New Testament featuring the voices of Hollywood celebrities, including actor Jim Caviezel, who will reprise his role as Jesus from the blockbuster *The Passion of The Christ*.

While most Christian publishers were relegated to the lower level with the children's books at the Jacob Javits Convention Center in New York City, evangelical publishing companies such as Harper One, Zondervan and Jossey-Bass were situated

with their respective parent companies on the main retailing floor.

A few evangelical publishers such as Thomas Nelson, Tyndale and Guideposts were also situated on the same floor. In an effort to reach the multicultural Christian market at BEA, Grupo Nelson had a booth in the Spanish pavilion, while Baker Publishing Group set up shop in the African-American section.

“There's a smaller presence of Christian publishers at this year's BEA,” Eric Helus from NavPress said. “Fortunately, for those who attended, we've experienced an increase in traffic this year over

last year's expo.”

Even though faith and politics titles were not as visible this year as they had been after the 2004 election, Kelly Hughes of DeChant-Hughes & Associates Inc. predicted another rise of religious books with political themes heading into the 2008 election.

While only a few emerging church titles were on display during BEA, David Lewis from Baker Books said: “Books on the emerging church are selling well and growing. The ABA (American Booksellers Association) retailers and libraries are looking for more books on this movement.”