

SO WHAT'S WRONG WITH BEING MULTIFACETED?

Stephen King, the best-seller *di tutti* best-sellers and hyperactive master of the macabre, has sold more books than there are people in Canada. He could publish his laundry lists, and if they had any kind of narrative tension—an odd number of socks, say—they'd lodge in the upper reaches of *The New York Times* best-seller list for months. Anguishing his legions of fans is the fact that King has taken a full year's break from publishing fiction, which means that—let's see—two fewer of his books have arrived in bookstores since November 1987.

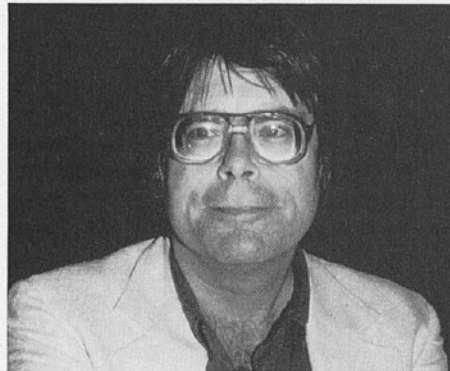
Fortunately, during this virtually Stephen King-less period we have *Bare Bones: Conversations on Terror With Stephen King* (edited by Tim Underwood and Chuck Miller, McGraw-Hill) to tide us over. In this collection of interviews, King lays down the law on his work, his life and his wealth. Clearly. Unequivocally. Once and for all. As these verbatim quotations, enhanced by our own questions, prove.

You've said the film Creepshow was an homage to the great E.C. Comics of the 1950s. Did you read them as a boy?

- (a) "I used to get some comics; I don't think they were E.C.'s."—page 126
 (b) "The E.C. horror comics of the fifties—God, I loved those mothers!"—page 36

Are you at all pretentious?

- (a) "Most of [my novels] have been plain fiction for plain folks, the literary equivalent of a Big Mac and a large fries from McDonald's."—page 504 [*Different Seasons*, Signet, 1982]
 (b) "I never said this to anybody because it sounds so goddamned pretentious, but [with *The Stand*] I wanted to do *The Lord of the Rings* with an American background."—page 98
 (c) "You know the book by William Golding, *Lord of the Flies*? That's *Carrie* out of control—high school society run riot."—page 95
 (d) "Originally I set the book [*The Shining*] in the form of a Shakespearean tragedy."—page 74
 (e) "In fact, I wanted to have a section in the book [*Salem's Lot*] called 'extracta' the



way there's a section in the beginning of *Moby-Dick* called 'extracta.'"—page 102
 (f) "[In *The Stand*] I wanted to play very consciously off that Revelations idea, where you have a kind of testing, almost like an Old Testament deal."—page 106

Do you think reviewers are fair to your work?

- (a) "Whenever I publish a book, I feel like a trapper caught by the Iroquois. They're all lined up with tomahawks, and the idea is to run through with your head down, and everybody gets to take a swing. They hit you in the head, the back, the ass, the balls."—page 97
 (b) "Most reviewers around the country have been kind to me."—page 52

How old were you when you sold your first novel?

- (a) "By the time *Carrie* was sold, I was 24."—page 73
 (b) "I sold *Carrie* when I was 26."—page 33

About how much of your day do you spend writing?

- (a) "I work about two hours a day."—page 75
 (b) "I work maybe five hours a day."—page 169

Stanley Kubrick brought The Shining to the screen. Was he in motion or sitting still when he decided to buy it?

- (a) "He looked up and said, 'This is the book.'"—page 134
 (b) "Kubrick came raving in and shaking the book and saying, 'This is the one. This is it! Make the deal. Make the deal!'"—page 118

What did you think of the film version?

- (a) "I'd admired Kubrick for a long time and had great expectations for the project, but I was deeply disappointed in the end result."—page 28
 (b) "*The Shining* is a beautiful film."—page 143

What row do you prefer when you're in a movie theater?

- (a) "My kids wanted to sit in the third row whenever we went to the movies and although it didn't bother them I'd spend three hours with these giant people looming over me like an avalanche. So I finally told them that we couldn't do this anymore."—page 57
 (b) "I go and sit in the second row and watch all those car wrecks and I'm like anybody else."—page 108
 (c) "What I do, if I smoke [marijuana] anymore, is when I'm driving to the movies, to smoke a couple real quick so I can sit there in the first row."—page 206

Did The Body (filmed as Stand By Me), your novella about a boy run down by a train, spring from your own experience?

- (a) "No."—page 17
 (b) "I was out playing one day with this friend of mine. I was about four. I came home, deadly pale. . . . [My mother later] found out that night that this kid I had been playing with had been run over by a train, okay?"—page 162

What are your thoughts on your novel-object, It?

- (a) "It's wonderful."—page 88
 (b) "I should call it *Shit*."—page 191

We think you're great. Finally, what's your favorite cartoon?

- (a) "The funniest cartoon I ever saw has this little schmo in a French restaurant with this waiter bearing down on him with this maniacal expression on his face."—page 209
 (b) "My favorite cartoon of all times is one in *The New Yorker* of a writer who looks really bummed out."—page 92

—Martin Kibn