

# Books

# The write stuff

## Eight new books for your fall reading list

By MICHAEL GILTZ

**P**ublishers can find a dozen different roads to the best-seller list — and fall is the season when they each make a mad dash for success. But which titles are the likely front-runners?

Everything is falling into place for debut novelist Daniel Mason, author of this season's first breakout title, **"The Piano Tuner."**

His first book arrived in bookstores

with a first printing of 150,000 — far more copies than most books ever see. So it's easy to believe Mason is poised to hit the best-seller list.

Of course, it helps that his story — set in 1886, about a British piano tuner sent to Burma on a "Heart of Darkness"-like journey to service a rare Erard grand piano — is worthy of such publicity muscle.

Getting a movie made is a surefire way to spur sales — at least for the paperback. Case in point: **"Cloud of Sparrows"**

(Oct. 1), a rousing tale of Shogun Japan by Takashi Matsuoka. The novel has already been sold to Universal — and Matsuoka is already working on the sequel.

Joy Hakim is the best-selling author of ten acclaimed history books for younger readers. Her most ambitious book yet, **"Freedom: A History of US"** (October) — written for adults as well as older kids — will have a 16-part PBS series, beginning in January, hosted by Katie Couric. Look for appearances by Paul Newman, Robin Williams, Glenn Close, the President and the First Lady.

If you don't have a TV series or movie to promote



First-time author Daniel Mason's novel, about a British piano tuner sent to Burma, is destined to be a best seller.

your work, it helps to come with a good pedigree — and Thomas Steinbeck (son of John) has that in spades. His first collection, **"Down to a Soundless Sea"** (October), follows pioneers forging into the Monterey Peninsula in the early 1900s.

But if mom or dad wasn't a legendary, Pulitzer Prize-winning author, how about comparing the new book to a best-seller everyone knows.

Expect to read that Allison Pearson's **"I Don't Know How She Does It"**

(October) is firmly in the Bridget Jones tradition — except this one covers the territory after a formerly lovelorn gal has married and had a couple of kids. Funny, sharp and poignant, the novel was a hit in the U.K.

Linking your book to a best-seller certainly isn't limited to fiction titles. Les Standiford's **"Last Train**

**to Paradise"** (Sept. 24), has a compelling but little-known story, good packaging — and strong blurbs from best-selling authors Carl Hiaasen and Susan Orlean.

Children's books can be similarly marketed. Philip Ardagh is an acclaimed

British author of dozens of bestsellers — in the U.K. at least. Here, he's a virtual unknown. But that may change with the release of **"A House Called Awful End"** (out now).

A cult following can be useful when marketing a book, too. Rick Altermott has been a graphic

novelist for decades and his greatest creation — a hillbilly named Doofus with a truly dreadful haircut — has been praised to the skies. Altermott's first collection is **"The Doofus Omnibus"** (out now), with an introduction by best-selling graphic novelist Daniel Clowes (**"Ghost World"**). Brace yourselves for something strange.



Delacorte  
416 pages, \$24.95  
(October)



Fantagraphics  
112 pages, \$16.95