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news

Hipster Publishing

R77 Offers Books on Graffiti, Fringe Culture

WHAT DOES A LEGENDARY teenage graffiti writer do once he's grown up? In Roger Gastman's case, he decided to publish books about graffiti. Gastman has turned his passion for street art and fringe culture into an inventive publishing house that partners with established small firms like PowerHouse Books and Gingko Press to provide distribution and promotion for a list focused on youth culture-inspired art books.

Gastman's publishing house, R77, is teaming up with PowerHouse Books to release *Sonic Order of Happiness*, his second book on the graffiti artist Dalek. It's a hardcover monograph documenting iconic cartoon characters created by the artist. PowerHouse will distribute the

title and provide marketing and promotional support.

Sara Rosen, publicity director at PowerHouse, told PW that PowerHouse, which itself specializes in cutting-edge books, has been waiting to work with R77. "We love the Dalek book, but we really admire Gastman and R77," she said. Dalek's first book sold well, Rosen said, and "we can use the new book to introduce the R77 line. Roger's a true independent. He doesn't follow trends, he creates trends."

As a teenage graffiti writer in Washington, D.C., in the early 1990s, Gastman published a cult zine focused on graffiti, tattoos and other aspects of fringe culture. In 1997, he discovered book publishing and teamed up

with Gingko Press, a California art and design book publisher, to copublish his first book, *Nickel Plated Angels*. The book sold about 5,000 copies, created a stir around Dalek's work and convinced Gastman to abandon zines for books.

R77 and Gingko have published two exclusive editions of *Enamelized: Graffiti Worldwide* for sale only through the Urban Outfitters chain, and the two have also published other titles on an exclusive basis for other companies. Gastman's new venture is called *Swindle*, a quarterly periodical on art, culture, fashion and music distributed by Gingko and published in hardcover, complete with glossy advertising spreads. Gastman said the hardcover magazine offers "original articles on what we think is cool."

Gastman is also working on a project he calls "my masterpiece." He's spent the last 18 months traveling the country to research *Bound for Glory*, a 300-page history of freight train graffiti that will feature more than 1,000 images and 150 interviews. "It's a textbook on youth culture that will have a market beyond the graffiti audience," said Gastman. "It's a real document of the scene."

David Lopes, an editor and



R77 title set for release this spring.

sales rep for Gingko, said Gastman is the perfect collaborator for the company, which publishes its own list of books on "gritty street art," including *Fucked Up & Photocopied: Instant Art of the Punk Rock Movement*, which has 25,000 copies in print. Lopes said the house publishes 12 to 20 books a year, a mix of original and co-produced titles. The press handles distribution and fulfillment from a warehouse at its Corte Madera, Calif., headquarters. It has a staff of four in the California office, along with a sales representative in New York City and eight people in Gingko's parent company in Hamburg, Germany.

"Roger is very dynamic," said Lopes. "He's a model for nontraditional publishing and his projects help extend our brand."

—CALVIN REID

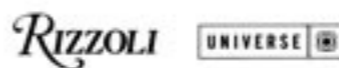
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WHITE STAR PUBLISHERS

People

Jovanovich Leaves Pearson

New health problems have forced Peter Jovanovich to step down as chief executive of Pearson Education. Jovanovich, who joined Pearson in 1997, had taken a six-month leave of absence last year to recover from a double lung transplant. Jovanovich returned to work last summer, but time demands related to his recovery and treatment forced him to go on long-term medical leave.

During his tenure at Pearson, Jovanovich helped build the company into one of the world's largest educational publishers. Pearson made two huge acquisitions under his watch—the 1998 purchase of Simon & Schuster's educational and professional businesses and the 2000 acquisition of the testing and training company NCS. Will Ethridge, president of the higher education, international and professional group, and Steve Dowling, head of Pearson's school division, will now report directly to Marjorie Scardino, chief executive of Pearson, as will George Werner, chief financial and operations officer.

—JIM MILLIOT