

FBF 2022: Commercial & Genre Fiction

Brent Butt | *HUGE* [CookeMcDermid] (Psychological Thriller)

- Set against the backdrop of life on the road for touring comedians, *HUGE* is a harrowing psychological thriller (for readers of **Linwood Barclay**) and the debut novel from award-winning screenwriter and **International Emmy nominee Brent Butt**, whose popular sitcom *Corner Gas* (viewed in **60+ countries**) spawned a theatrical feature film and the current primetime series *Corner Gas Animated* (Prime Video, IMDbTV)
- Dale Webley is a road-weary comedian on the back half of a mediocre career, who is starting to consider the grave and soul-crushing option of getting a “real job”; hip, edgy Irish stand-up Rynn Lanigan is on a very different trajectory and is in the running to host a new network television show – the two end up travelling together across a remote and foreboding stretch of rural countryside performing a run of live shows in some unlikely communities, but it’s their opening act, and not the crowds, that have Dale and Rynn the most concerned: Hogie is overly keen, strangely intense, and emotionally volatile, and as the tour progresses, his increasingly bizarre behaviour swells and spirals until his true capacity for violence is starkly revealed, leaving Dale and Rynn trapped in a van with a maniac in the middle of nowhere, wondering if they’re going to get off the road alive
- *HUGE* shines a spotlight on the little realized reality that comedy and horror are not-so-distant cousins – in certain situations, every word skates along the narrow, twisted edge that separates laughter from violence
- This is a world **Brent Butt** knows well: before his sitcom success, he was a highly acclaimed stand-up, performing at top comedy clubs and festivals around the world (including a performance attended by Queen Elizabeth II)
- **Rights Sold: Canada English (Doubleday Canada); Pub date: Fall 2023; Page extent: 308 (ms)**

Nancy Crochiere | *Graceland* [CookeMcDermid] (Women’s Fiction)

- For readers of commercial women’s fiction by such authors as **Maria Semple** and **Jennifer Weiner**, viewers of *Gilmore Girls*, and fans of **Elvis Presley**, *Graceland* is a hilarious, big-hearted debut novel featuring a cast of imperfect but deeply lovable characters on a road trip through the US
- Three generations of women travel from Boston to Memphis – former soap star Olivia Grant, who’s newly been prescribed an oxygen tank, ropes her pink-haired teenage granddaughter Dylan into a road trip to Olivia’s idol Elvis’s home “one last time” with the promise of introducing Dylan to her unknown-to-her father, leaving Olivia’s daughter and Dylan’s mother Hope, who fled Memphis 17 years ago with a huge secret, in hot pursuit behind them
- Over the course of the weekend, miles tick by and long-guarded secrets begin to surface, and Olivia, Hope, and Dylan must face hard truths about each other and themselves on the bumpy road towards acceptance, forgiveness, and ultimately, grace
- **Rights Sold: World English (Avon/HarperCollins); Pub date: May 2023; Page extent: 400 (pb)**

Cherie Dimaline | *VenCo* [CookeMcDermid] (Contemporary Fantasy)

- **Optioned for television by AMC**, from the **internationally bestselling** and critically acclaimed author of the **Marrow Thieves trilogy (winner of the Governor General’s Award and Kirkus Prize)** and *Empire of Wild* comes *VenCo*, a wickedly subversive, deliciously imaginative, and deeply feminist novel of contemporary witches on the rise
- Lucky St. James is barely hanging on when she finds out that she and her grandmother are about to be evicted from their apartment. One night while doing laundry in the building’s dank basement, she finds a tarnished silver spoon depicting a story-book hag over letters that spell out S-A-L-E-M, and unknowingly alerts a hidden network of witches masquerading under the guise of international headhunting firm VenCo. Devoted to placing exceptional women in roles where they can influence business, politics, and the arts, VenCo’s leader Meena has spent years searching out witches hiding in plain sight. Since colonial times, the witches of VenCo have awaited the moment seven magical spoons will come together and ignite a new era, returning women to their rightful power
- With only one more spoon to find, Meena sends Lucky and her grandmother on a dangerous, sometimes hilarious, road trip through the United States in search of the seventh spoon. The trail leads them at last to the darkly magical city of New Orleans, where a final showdown will determine whether the coven will be completed, ushering in a new beginning, or whether witches will be forced to remain forever underground
- **Alexis Henderson’s *The Year of the Witching*** meets **American Horror Story: Coven** in this compulsively readable fantasia of adventure, history, Americana, feminism, and magic – *VenCo* is a novel only the supremely gifted **Cherie Dimaline** could write
- **Rights Sold: Canada English (Random House Canada), US English (William Morrow), Film/TV (AMC); Pub date: Feb 2023; Page extent: 400 (hc)**



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Karen Lord | *The Blue Beautiful World* [CookeMcDermid] (Sci-Fi)

- Award-winning SFF author **Dr. Karen Lord** returns to the universe of her novels *The Best of All Possible Worlds* and *The Galaxy Game* in her latest, *The Blue Beautiful World*, a near-future sci-fi novel that imagines a post-climate disaster Earth suffused by VR tech, preparing for First Contact between Earth and extra-terrestrials
- The Global Government Project has begun to train a group of young diplomatic representatives in a simulation for First Contact, when the simulation turns true and the concept transforms from hypothetical to impending reality, drastically changing life as they know it. Kanoa, a diplomat from the Pacific, ponders whether there might also be non-human intelligence in the depths of Earth's oceans. Meanwhile, rock star Owen, whose near-superhuman ability to sway both crowds and individuals have always distinguished him throughout his career, has been using his influence to invest in projects that prime him to be one of the foremost figures in this new world. Owen's and Kanoa's paths collide as the idea of a new galactic civilization sets in and they, alongside many others, must consider how to navigate this new and strange existence and what it will mean for the future of the Earth
- *The Blue Beautiful World* is **Karen Lord** at her best and a continuation of her "rewarding, touching and often funny exploration of the forms and functions of human culture" (SFX) in *The Best of All Possible Worlds* and *The Galaxy Games* – both slated for reissue, with brand new cover treatments, from Del Rey in 2023
- "It's refined, meditative and life-affirming, and its exploration of gender politics and ethnology confirms Lord as the natural heiress to Octavia Butler and Ursula Le Guin." — *Financial Times* on *The Best of All Possible Worlds*
- **Rights Sold: North America English (Del Rey); Pub date: Summer 2023; Page extent: 225 (ms)**

Robert Freeman Wexler | *The Silverberg Business* [Small Beer Press] (Speculative Western)

- **Angela Carter** meets **Cormac McCarthy** in *The Silverberg Business*, a gloriously strange hard-boiled tale that crosses genres and defies expectations
- It is 1888 and Shannon, a Chicago private detective, returns home to Galveston, Texas for a wedding. Galveston's new rabbi asks Shannon to find Nathan Silverberg, gone missing along with a group of swindlers who claim to be soliciting money for a future colony of Romanian Jewish refugees. What seems to be a simple job soon pushes Shannon into stranger territory as his investigations lead him to a malevolent white-haired gambler, monstrous sand dune totems, and a group of skull-headed poker players trapped in an endless loop of cards and alcohol, who may be his only means to survive the business
- **Robert Freeman Wexler** turns to the state he was born and brought up in and takes the best parts of mysteries and westerns to forge something, as *Publishers Weekly* said in its **starred review**, "**Steeped in the early history of Texas's statehood and laced with eerie portents of supernatural horror.**"
- **Rights Sold: North America English (Small Beer Press); Pub date: August 2022; Page extent: 228 (pb)**