

In conversation with Scottish crime fiction writer Ed James

Fans of the Scott Cullen crime fiction series have welcomed the news that the Edinburgh detective will be returning to duty later this year after author Ed James took a short break to concentrate on other novels featuring characters like Dundee-based DS Vicky Dodds books and DI Simon Fenchurch who investigates crimes in London's east end.



The prolific writer aims to publish another two Fenchurch books before the popular Cullen returns to the Edinburgh streets in October.

After a number of rejection letters, Ed started publishing his books on Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) which helps authors publish books directly to Kindle devices and apps and relatively quickly he was able to give up a lucrative career in IT project management to write full time.

His first book, "Ghost in the Machine", has been downloaded over 400,000 times, hitting both the Amazon UK and US top 5.

Ed recently took time out of his busy schedule to look back on his successful career to date and provide some advice to aspiring authors.

He told the Edinburgh Reporter: "I had been in a band in Edinburgh and wanted to make a career in music. We were looking for a record deal and although I think we were close, nothing came of it, so I started writing. My first book was about someone in a band which I submitted to a few literary agents but there was no interest.

"I have always been a huge fan of crime fiction and decided to write police procedural books.

"An agent liked my synopsis and sample chapters but after a stressful wait I received the stock note that they were not interested.

"I tore the book apart and thought why has it been rejected?

"My day job at the time was very stressful and I actually gave up writing for 18 months.

In 2011 I read about John Locke and Amanda Hawkins selling millions of on-line books and a friend of mine who is a police officer suggested uploading mine.

"It was slow to start off with and I was working on two sequels but I was able to build up a following. When I reached the thousand true fans, the magic started to happen.

"I decided to make the first book free and that decision paid off as the book reached number four in the free charts and it was getting serious numbers of downloads every day.

"By January 2014 I was making enough to live on

"On an average day I get up about seven and get fired right into writing with the occasional stop for tea and toast. I normally finish up about 2/3pm. I am quite efficient and a book takes me about five weeks.

"So far seven Scott Cullen books have been published. I decided to make Scott a detective constable as I didn't want the usual clishy detective inspector with the failed marriage and kids who don't talk to him. I deliberately wanted the characters to be more realistic with more accuracy with the sort of stuff not usually covered.

"I know a few police officers which was helpful and I was able to pick up some procedures here and there from other books and authors. It was fairly straight forward and required getting my head round the chain of evidence.

"It turned out well and people liked them.

"If I had to give advice to aspiring authors it would be to make sure they the book is as good as it can be and to put their heart and soul into it. It may not succeed but if it is rejected then don't give up. It is also important to get honest people to read it and provide feedback. Sometimes you have to take any criticism on the chin.