



Child's play creates a publishing dream

Patrick Watson

TO A CHILD, a stroogle sounds a lot like a strudel and Dr Stelzer sounds a bit like Dr Seuss.

It's a good start for 27-year-old children's book author Dr Cameron Stelzer, but he hopes his literary debut of *The Stroogle* will speak for itself.

Stelzer developed the idea of his fictional stroogle creature while working as a gallery attendant for the Natural History Museum in London.

"I had the most boring, uninspiring job imaginable," Stelzer says.

"I felt so small and insignificant, standing in the dark, in a huge building, in a huge city, just waiting for something exciting to happen. Then out of the blue I had this idea of a tiny creature full of life and colour."

When Stelzer tired of London and returned to Brisbane, he had high hopes and approached a number of agents to publish his book.

None was interested, however, and just as he was about ready to bury his stroogle in the cartoon cemetery, a chance conversation with Jenny Adlam, 23, turned the tide.

While attending a workplace health and safety class (Stelzer does school workshops) their conversation drifted to gnomes, purple eggs, foxes and stroogles.

Enthusiastic about their common beliefs in children's literature they decided to bypass publishing houses altogether and, instead, start their own.

They say *The Stroogle* is a step backwards for children. By this, they mean a step away from a modern, technologically addicted childhood towards one full of creative literature.

A few months after meeting they launched Daydream Press and *The Stroogle* as their first book. Stelzer

controls the creative side, while Adlam sells their common vision of "imagination, inspiration and creativity".

With a market already flooded with children's books it is a courageous task to try to cut yourself a slice of the much-coveted pie.

But Stelzer and Adlam say they are filling a niche that didn't exist and are confident of their success.

"I really wanted to be involved with something that's creative but positive. I like encouraging children to read. I really didn't see that happening. I wanted something viable. We don't need books of dos and don'ts and rights and wrongs, we need stories with these built into it," Adlam says.

Adlam says many picture books offer good messages, but lack the ingredients children fed on diets of television and video games crave. She claims *The Stroogle*, and other books like it, will whet their appetite and leave them wanting more.

There is no doubt the strawberry-esque stroogle is colourful, but is it colourful enough to wrestle children away from those popular Telletubbies?

Along with a few silent partners, Adlam and Stelzer have financed Daydream Press themselves and both say they have sacrificed a lot to launch the book.

Stelzer describes it as an "ugly duckling" type story aimed at four to eight-year-olds. Daydream Press is so confident of its success that already the pair are planning further stroogle adventures. Outside of the stroogle sphere they also are scheduled to be released *The London Fairy* and *Fazza Bazzoo*, *The Adventures of a Flying Chimpanzee* next year.

Daydream Press: www.daydreampress.com
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INSPIRATION . . . Cameron Stelzer with his book, *The Stroogle*. Picture: Vanessa Hunter