

## THE TROUBLE WITH CFL LIGHTBULBS

**HOME & GARDEN:** A primer on common concerns and solutions



## USING PODCAST POWER

**DATEBOOK:** Authors give away books to win deals



## SPORTS WARRIORS RECOVER TO TIGHTEN RACE FOR PLAYOFFS

# San Francisco Chronicle

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Printed on recycled paper | SATURDAY, APRIL 5, 2008 | [sfgate.com](http://sfgate.com)

415-775-1131 46¢ plus tax

## S.F. won biggest grant to fight border crime

Though 500 miles from Mexico, city received most U.S. cash for drug war — and now feds want it back



**District Attorney Kamala Harris** hasn't spoken publicly about the controversial grants.

By Jason Van DerBeek  
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

San Francisco's \$3.7 million federal grant to help fight border crime in 2006 was the largest awarded to any county in four states bordering Mexico, according to a federal audit that found the city was not entitled to any of the funds.

City officials have not explained why a city 500 miles from

the state's southern border would have prosecuted more than 2,000 cases for the federal government that were related to drug gangs and crimes near the border in a three-year period.

The audit, which was released this week and challenged all \$5.4 million that the city received from 2004 to 2006, raises questions about the basis for the city's request for funding under the Southwest Border Prosecution

Initiative.

Federal officials who challenged San Francisco's grants were told that the city simply made an "estimate" of the number of cases it handled on behalf of the federal government, the audit found. In a footnote, the audit quoted city officials as saying that the grant requests were not based on "actual cases."

Federal officials also suggested

► **AUDIT:** Page A7

### San Francisco tops Southern California

In 2006, San Francisco received more money from a federal program to fight border crime than any of more than 60 counties in California and three other states that share borders with Mexico. The five California counties that received the most money were:

San Francisco	San Bernardino	Riverside
\$3.7 million	\$2.5 million	\$1 million
San Diego	Los Angeles	
\$2.5 million	\$1.9 million	

Source: U.S. Office of Justice Programs

## SOMBER KING TRIBUTE

### THE BALCO CASE

## Prophet guilty

## DATEBOOK



Seth Harwood in his Berkeley home, where he recorded a podcast of his book, "Jack Strikes Back." Hundreds of podcast fans, he got a contract with a publisher.



Nancy Christopherson conducted the San Francisco Symphony's Baroque program Wednesday.

## Philharmonia offers a better Baroque show

By Andrew Korman  
COLUMBIA MUSIC CENTER

The masterpieces of past ages — the Baroque period, to take the San Francisco example — present a more

controversial proposition. They require just less in their original

medium, but their original

adapted to modern concert which is designed to enhance

larger works of the 17th and 18th centuries.

There are two main ways to deal with the problem, to work a little of the old brought them into a kind of

matchup. You can think of it as Handel and Purcell's regular orchestra program, a

San Francisco Symphony Wednesday night. Almost

anyway you can adjust the circumstances of the performance to fit in

the strings adapted David the Philharmonia Baroque

# Take my book. It's free.

## Giving away books as podcasts is new way to promote sales

By Chris Catledge  
COLUMBIA MUSIC CENTER

Scott Sigler and Seth Harwood have spent the past few years writing novels, disseminating them over the Internet as serialized podcasts and amusing audiences so considerable that top-shelf agents and publishers are now eager to represent the authors.

But well before Sigler revealed podcasting as a new frontier for book promotion, the San Francisco author was rebuffed hundreds of times by major publishers. Sigler's science-fiction horror thrillers attracted little attention.

That changed in 2005, when he offered his first novel, "Earthrise," as a free, downloadable 22-episode podcast on iTunes and his own Web site, [www.scotthisgler.com](http://www.scotthisgler.com). A few hundred early listeners soon swelled to 1,000. By the time he posted "Ascensor" and "The Bookie," his second and third books, which he also narrated, he had 30,000 digital disciples.

Sigler refers to these loyal listeners as junkies because they keep coming back for more. It was the junkies who helped him land a deal with Dragon Moon Press, a small Canadian

Scott Sigler will read from "Bookie" at 2 p.m. today at BarnesandNoble.com, 880 Valencia St., San Francisco.

To download the digital versions of "Bookie" and Seth Harwood's "Jack Wakes Up" and for more information about the authors, visit [www.scotthisgler.com](http://www.scotthisgler.com) and [www.sethharwood.com](http://www.sethharwood.com).

### Accessing novels through iTunes

Navigate to the Podcasts section of the iTunes store. Under Categories, select Arts, then Music Arts, then Literature. Harwood and Sigler's novels are there, along with the work of other authors.



You can subscribe to Scott Sigler's podcasts by clicking on a search for iTunes.

fantasy and science fiction publisher that liked the idea of a newbie author with a sizable following. It was the junkies who helped Sigler's "Ascensor" climb to No. 7 in overall sales on Amazon.com, which played a role in landing him a deal with the Crown Publishing Group.

On Tuesday, Sigler's latest book, "Bookie," a tale of biological possession, was released by Crown. A free digital manuscript of the book was downloaded 41,000 times in just 100 hours since the Crown book was released, according to the publisher. And while Sigler will offer his novels as free podcasts, he is confident that the junkies will shell out \$24.95 for a fix they might already have tried.

"How do I get them to buy a book they may have already listened to?" Sigler said. "I ask them to."

Sigler, 38, blames his distribution method to that of public broadcasting, adding that giving away content pays off even if fewer than 10 percent of the samples ultimately make a pledge.

By rising to prominence without the finan-

# Writers discover marketing tool in free podcasts of books

► **PODCASTS**  
From Page E1

cial backing of a mega-publisher, Sigler has defied the industry's modest operandi. He's discovered how to assemble, retain and sell to a growing audience, all on a shoestring budget.

"We are always looking for authors who have a platform and a core fan base, and our goal is to grow their audience and find new readers," said Tina Constable, Crown's publisher. "Scott is no exception and his fan base is already formidable. The wave of the future is how we harness the Internet to find these new readers, and we are devoting an enormous amount of energy and resources into this effort. The traditional model for publishing our books is quickly becoming obsolete and we recognize that creative Internet strategies are necessary if we want to remain competitive."

Either because Sigler asks them to, or because they just want to, some fans lend a hand to promote his books through word-of-mouth recommendations, and others have contributed comments and technical assistance to his Web site. What's more, because fans often hear chapters of the books before they are published, some have even contacted Sigler with corrections about weaponry, government agencies and other details.

"The feedback I got for 'Ancestor' helped make for a much better book," said Sigler, adding that he responds to all fan mail. "It's a wild style of publishing with 30,000 editors."

His podcasts also have raised the profiles of such podcasting novelists as J.C. Hutchins, Tee Morris, Mark Jeffrey, Mark Yoshimoto Nemcoff, Phil Rossi, Mike Bennett and Harwood. Harwood,

author of the Jack Palms crime series, records his podcasts in the small spare bedroom of his Berkeley flat. An Iowa Writers' Workshop graduate, he turned to crime noir after working the floor of the New York Mercantile Exchange. He now writes full time and teaches literature and composition courses at City College of San Francisco and Chabot College in Hayward.

A listener of Sigler's early work, Harwood decided to podcast his first book, "Jack Wakes Up," shortly after he wrote it in 2005 to court publishers and increase his following. He has since written two more books that detail the life of Jack Palms, a one-bit-wonder

With the "Jack Wakes Up" podcasts well under way, Harwood's following got bigger. He secured a print-on-demand deal in the fall with Bealock Books, a small Barrington, N.H., company started two years ago by Jeremy Robinson.

"An author with a built-in audience has already proven that his book will be well received by readers and that he is willing to put resources into marketing that other authors aren't," said Robinson, an author.

Harwood had spent the weeks leading up to the March 16 release of his novel exploring the loyal "Palms daddies" and "Palms moonrats" on Web sites, podcasts,

**"How do I get them to buy a book they may have already listened to? I ask them to."**

SCOTT SIGLER, San Francisco author of several books of science fiction-horror

action movie star turned criminal. The series is set in the Bay Area, as is Sigler's newest podcast novel, "Nocturnal."

Sigler, already a seasoned podcaster, had taught Harwood how to cut down on background noise by covering the fan of his MacBook with a pillow, use an external monitor to avoid standing too close to the noisily computer, and buy the right type of USB microphone. (Harwood's Blue Microphones Snowball cost \$100.)

Thick blankets that serve as sound barriers hang from the walls of the spare room where Harwood records his roughly 50-minute episodes, which he uploads to his site [www.sethharwood.com](http://www.sethharwood.com) and iTunes every week. In the garage directly above his "recording studio" are a washing machine and dryer.

"When I record, I have to make sure they know upstairs so they don't start the laundry," he said.

blogs and message boards to purchase the book on opening day. He gathered online with his fans that morning, staying in touch through the comments section of his blog, as well as through the social network Web sites twitter.com and ning.com. At 10 a.m. sharp, about 150 of his fans bought a copy (or two) of "Jack Wakes Up" from Amazon.com.

Sigler developed this strategy after recognizing that Amazon sells only so many books at a given time. A large rush of purchases made within a small amount of time has the potential to dramatically boost the sales rankings of a title, especially one published by a small press. The authors then use the inflated numbers as a way to drum up excitement and sell more books.

Sean Robertson, an original Palms daddy, liked the series so much he decided to contact Harwood by e-mail. Next thing he



STEPHEN DODD/MEDIA FOCUS

Scott Sigler offered thousands of free podcast and digital downloads of his manuscripts, which he later sold as books.

knew the two were having a beer.

"It could certainly be considered a stunt, but it's brilliant," said Robertson, the vice president and creative director at CBS Outdoor, one of the country's largest billboard advertisers. "Ultimately, the content has to be good enough for people to stick around. Seth and Sigler are really good."

To help promote the book's release, Robertson arranged a deal to hang 10 "Jack" billboards, designed by Palms Daddy Jerry Scullion, in eight BART stations. Scullion also helped design Harwood's book jacket.

The Amazon blitz, along with giving away more than 20,000 digital copies of his manuscript, looks to have paid off. Harwood's "Jack Wakes Up" sold more than

400 copies in the first five days, a substantial number, according to publisher Robinson. "Jack" also reached No. 45 in overall book sales on Amazon.com, No. 1 in mysteries and No. 3 in Amazon's mysteries-and-thrillers, and suspense categories.

Meanwhile, Rogue Pictures, a division of Universal Studios, has optioned Sigler's "Infection," possibly leading to the ultimate book sales bump: a movie.

"I can't say that I will always be so involved with the promotions, but I am used to it," Harwood said. "As a writer and as a podcaster we're in a unique position to interact with our fans. This is just the beginning."

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## Crossword Answer

