

BOOKS



60 SECONDS WITH...

Jeremy Poynting

We chat to the founder and managing editor of Peepal Tree Press about the state of the Caribbean publishing world

» **What changes in publishing have you witnessed in your 34 years of publishing?**

For us, the most impactful changes have been in print technology and communications. We made all our own books until 2009. Submissions arrived in the post, and correspondence was all by mail. We were early adopters of technologies but for the first dozen years we had no email and no website. Now we use mostly digital printing – a blessed relief.

» **How has your submission policy evolved?**

We still work with a detailed knowledge of contemporary Caribbean writing and its 20th-century past. We ask: what does a new work add to what is already there? How does it develop what Caribbean writing has to say about the region and its diasporas? What does it tell Caribbean people about themselves, and others about the region? Over 30 years, that inevitably changes, but what doesn't change are the essentials of good fiction and poetry: a vision, a distinctive voice, and mastery of the craft. Our strategy has at its core a concern that region stories



get told as well as diasporic ones; and that reviving important books from the past, in our Caribbean Classics series, has as much value as giving voice to the new.

» **What change would you like to see?**

What sadly hasn't changed is the difficulty of building dynamic Caribbean readerships. Readership waxes and wanes. Faber & Faber, for instance, has started

buying titles from Caribbean authors after years of indifference. Maybe it's the Marlon James effect, though I also think that the success of some of our titles in winning national and international prizes has helped

to alert mainstream publishing that there is excellent Caribbean writing. There are festivals such as Calabash and Bocas, but also insularity, a total absence of intra-Caribbean distribution, the high costs of inter-island physical communication, and a dearth of good bookshops, with some very honourable exceptions – kudos to Trinidad-based Book Emporium and Paper Based, and Austin's in Guyana.

* WWW.PEEPALTREEPRESS.COM

PAGE BY **CAROL MITCHELL**, FOUNDER OF CARIBBEANREADS PUBLISHING AND AUTHOR OF THE CARIBBEAN ADVENTURE SERIES, AMONG OTHER CHILDREN'S BOOKS. VISIT WWW.CARIBBEANREADS.COM



3 GREAT READS

Try these diverse and diverting new Caribbean titles



WHERE THERE ARE MONSTERS
(PEEPAL TREE PRESS)
BY **BREANNE MC IVOR**

In these carefully crafted stories, Mc Ivor reaches deep into the roots of Trinidad folk narratives to present us with very modern versions of our troubled selves, albeit with room for humour (of a distinctly gothic flavour). The Trinidad of her stories is utterly contemporary but also a place defined by its folk mythologies and its cultural creations, its traditions of masking and disguises. Discover a bold new voice in Caribbean fiction.



NOMAD
(HOUSE OF NEHESI)
BY **YVONNE WEEKES**

Weekes, a writer from Montserrat, moved to Barbados in 1996 following the Soufrière Hills volcano eruption. According to A-dZiko Simba Gegele, *Nomad* is "a survivors' handbook, a travellers' guide for anyone who has known the burden of a life bundled into bags. Weekes' word journeys conjure... and reveal the inner world of the eternal wanderers."



THE MASQUERADE DANCE
(CARIBBEANREADS)
BY **CAROL OTTLEY-MITCHELL**

It's carnival time in St Kitts & Nevis, and Saulo is excited to see and hear the masquerade – he dreams of dancing it one day. But when the day get too close for comfort, Saulo is not sure he is ready for his big debut. This story, aimed at children aged five to eight, is inspired by a real and incredible young man who is mesmerised by the masquerade beat. It's a charming tale that also helps readers learn about this fascinating tradition, with its roots in African, Indigenous Caribbean and European culture.