



**PUBLISHING ON THE FRONTIERS OF CONSCIOUSNESS: an interview with Rak Razam, editor of The Journeybook by Jennifer McMahon**

**JM:** Rak, you're editor of this little nugget of consciousness...

**RR:** It's a big journey Jen, it's the journey of a lifetime.

**JM:** How did the idea to compile a psychedelic anthology come about, and why is Undergrowth.org publishing it?

**RR:** Well Undergrowth has always been about promoting and discussing alternative memes and consciousness issues. We have a focus on activism and ecology and the like, but all these themes arise from consciousness, so psychedelic issues – and solutions – have always been part of our publishing endeavour.

I co-founded undergrowth.org with Tim Parish, my fellow editor and art director in early 2004, so this is our fourth year in business as a not-for-profit organisation. Undergrowth has done eight independent press books (one of which was a DVD, another an art book), many of which are still available as e-books online at our website [[www.undergrowth.org/e\\_books](http://www.undergrowth.org/e_books)] and *The Journeybook* is the eighth one.

Each different book we've done has explored different themes about contemporary culture or the underground – or counter culture – or

progressive ideas with art, literature; sort of the crème de crème of Australian alternative artists and writers and media makers.

So issue eight has been no exception, except it's a full coffee-table size book with a print run in the thousands, and we're targeting it at the larger global psychedelic and counter-cultural community. It's called *Journeybook: Travels on the frontiers of consciousness*. We do have a number of authors from Australia and overseas exploring issues about psychedelics, hallucinogens, sacred plants, shamanism, our connection to the earth and spiritual awakening. There really is such a tremendous amount of top-quality writing and art in this book that I like to call it "the world's best psychedelic anthology".

We have over 50 pages of full colour art by professional photographers and artists that really help convey a sense of what the psychedelic experience is all about. We also have a carefully curated selection of Non-fiction articles, first person narrative trip reports and interviews by Daniel Pinchbeck, Eric Davis, Stanislav Grof, Dennis McKenna, brother of the late Terence McKenna, who also has a previously unpublished interview in the collection, and a lot of new material by well known and new writers and artists.

In curating the selection of material we wanted to take the reader on a journey through the history of altered states, and also into a first-person travelogue type account of the main plant sacraments and modern chemicals that alter our consciousness and at times can bring us closer to the planet and a sense of the divine. We cover most of the main plant sacraments from ayahuasca, marijuana, san pedro, datura, salvia divinorum, magic mushrooms, etc; and modern substances like LSD, ecstasy, DMT, DMX, ketamine, and a slew of polysyllabic rec-chems, but all are fresh first-person accounts of people's journeys of discovery.

*The Journeybook* also has a fun "flip-book" format and an "innerspace timeline" charting significant dates in consciousness, both of which lead the reader on a journey through the material in the book. It's really a self-contained "primer" not just for the converted, but for those who know nothing about these materials. It's designed to be able to show to your parents, friends – anyone who is open to learning about the shamanic and the other in a lush, well-written compilation.

**JM:** Why did you do it?

**RR:** We felt the time was right after 50 years of hallucinogens being put in the class A or 1 category of illegal drugs, they're now being reconsidered by medical science and also by the establishment as a whole, for what they can do for our species. I guess, especially in this time of global warming, financial collapse and rapid paradigm shift we wanted to connect people to the awareness of the earth through sacraments, not necessarily drugs, and have some type of spiritual awareness.

A central tenet of *The Journeybook* is that this has a long cultural history not just for the last 50 or 60 years, but all through time immemorial: all indigenous cultures and tribes have had a connection with the earth through the plants and sacred interfaces. We wanted to showcase that history and awareness in a professional, cutting edge package presented in an artistic manner.

**JM:** Your own experiences in that realm have been quite profound as elucidated by your articles. Do you think we need to go to South America, for instance, and train with the shamans there to find enlightenment?

**RR:** There's two stories – "Jungle Fever" (recounting the ayahuasca tourism movement in Peru) and "Surfing" (a detailed report about a DMT incursion whilst wired to an EEG machine reading brainwaves) which recount my gonzo reporting experiences in Peru in 2006. But ultimately I believe there's a 'jungle in our soul' and I don't think we have to go to some far-flung country to find it. I think we just have to touch that part of ourselves which wants true meaning in life and quests for something authentic and you don't have to take drugs to get that but you have to try to connect in a spiritual sense, which is where indigenous knowledge is invaluable. That's what this book is getting at.

It's getting at consciousness itself and that's on the rise at the moment across the planet. We've gone through eight years of the War on Terror and there's an equal and opposite thing as the paradigm shifts and the planet awakens and the people awaken themselves and want to live more sustainably. All these elements are talked about in *The Journeybook*. We're not advocating anyone taking anything illegal. We're not advocating doing anything illegal. But we are encouraging people to think for themselves and look at breadth of history behind these ideas and how these models of awareness may help us chart a course towards a sustainable future.