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### John Niernberger offers a visionary look at contemporary America in his first novel, *DisasterLand: Life's Greatest Adventure*

Overland Park, KS (July 1, 2007)—The world's first disaster-themed adventure park is the subject of screenwriter John Niernberger's first novel. Nestled deep in a remote Nevada valley within DisasterLand's twin geodesic domes, guests experience a hurricane, earthquake or terrorist attack during their 10-day stay.

Mr. Niernberger describes the style as, "Michael Crichton with a dose of Tom Robbins," a "gentle satire that pokes fun at this unique time in our nation's history while managing to ask a few questions along the way."

The book is the story of a family of four from the Midwest who win a trip to DisasterLand by receiving a golden DVD after a simple act of kindness.

"It's an adventure story at heart, a story of bravery and conquering the unknown—which is, of course, DisasterLand's intention: to help make everyday people heroes, to bring families together."

The park was founded on a very real concept: Mr. Niernberger witnessed the collapse of the second World Trade Center tower from his East Village rooftop on 9/11. "In the hours and days afterward, the world was transformed. The U.S., a nation of 'ME,' became a nation of 'US,' where we wanted to help our neighbors, to give a part of ourselves for the betterment of others." "Why," he asked, "can't the world be like this every day?"

In fact, *DisasterLand* had been written as a script years before and immediately shelved with the intention of producing it later as his career developed. It was set aside after the attacks, however, seemingly for good. But by 2003, the idea had returned, stronger than ever. "Wouldn't it be wonderful if a place like this really existed? If it could somehow make us realize what was really important? What we take for granted every day?"

And work on the book began. "A film script suddenly felt too limiting for the subject matter. 120 pages just wasn't enough, I needed a broader canvas. And though I had never written a novel before and only a few short stories, I knew there was only one possibility for the material.

"A novel allowed me the space to develop the world I was seeing. *DisasterLand* is a heightened world of Technicolor emotions, with lurid dreams and nightmares—a world tilted just a degree or so off true. Rich in sensual fulfillment, it's a place where nothing is hidden and everything is in play," said Mr. Niernberger. "And I hope it's as much fun to read as it was to write.

"It's also very much a show-biz book, coming out of my years of working in many aspects of film production. There's a degree of authenticity to it that comes from this experience. Elektra, one of the main characters, is DisasterLand's lead producer and it's through her eyes that we glimpse the soul of the park."

Mr. Niernberger self-published the novel after consulting several contacts in the publishing business and submitting an earlier draft to selected agents. "New technologies are revolutionizing the publishing business right now the same way digital video revolutionized the film business in the late 90's," Mr. Niernberger said. "For me, there was no choice. Friends encouraged me to go the traditional route, and several doors were opened. But after only a few conversations I realized I was going to do it on my own. The book is very timely, and I wanted to claim my territory.

"The changing dynamics of the industry mean authors' advances are smaller and smaller, and publishers are requiring authors to do more and more of their own publicity. So what's the advantage unless your book is selected to be nourished? Why not operate from a position of power instead of powerlessness? I own the copyright, I make the decisions I see best. In the end I think the book will find a home in traditional publishing but I believe I will be in a much stronger position because of what I've done. I won't be an unknown quantity."

So what's next? "The sequel, of course!" Mr. Niernberger laughs. "I'm raring to go—the story's already there. But first thing's first. I've already had quite a few requests for an audio book version which I'm giving very serious consideration to. It could be done as early as January. But," he says, "first thing's first. This book, for now, is number one."

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*DisasterLand: Life's Greatest Adventure* is available wholesale in the U.S. from Ingrams and Baker & Taylor; in the U.K. from Bertrams and Gardners.