# What books would you say influence you in general, and specifically Affluenza?

Any author has to be influenced by the great stream of American comic novels, from *Huckleberry Finn* to *Catch-22* to *The World According to Garp* and the new crop of books like *Absurdistan.* They have the power to take on big social issues by laughing not at the issues but at ourselves. So those influences are all there in *Affluenza*. I've also been strongly influenced by the work of three contemporary authors: Tim O'Brien, particularly *Tomcat in Love* for it's pain and honesty in an essentially comic setting; Russell Banks, particularly the amazing *Rule of the Bone*; and, although he’s not really a comic novelist, John Casey, whose *Spartina*blew me away. I've had the chance to work and talk with all three and have tried to apply their lessons into *Affluenza*. What those novels have in common are three elements I think are key to a great comic novel: a protagonist who's down on his luck but doesn't know how close he is to winning; a journey where he's a fish out of water, trying to make sense of an apparently senseless world; and a moral chemistry that lets the protagonist win against all odds and actually make sense of the human experience.

# What books would you compare Affluenza to?  What would be good companions read to it?

One of my favorites, and I hope a close comparison, is Stanley Bing's *Lloyd: What Happened,* which covers similar territory and similar human dilemmas. All of Christopher Buckley's books are good comparisons, although they're intentionally more comic than *Affluenza*. Of them, *Thank You for Smoking* is probably the best companion.  *The Player* by Michael Tolkin, which was adapted into the Robert Altman movie, is similar book and a great send up of the movie business. And both *A Man in Full* and *Bonfire of the Vanities* by Tom Wolfe are good companions. Although my book is funnier, I concede I'm not as sharp a dresser. Both those books cover the central disease I wrote about in *Affluenza*, the feverish desire to possess, or to be seen to possess, more.

# Describe the kind of free lancers or partners you like to work with.  What are their qualities or style?

When not writing, I work in a high-pressure, time-critical creative environment. I want to work with people who are the best in the business (but don't have to say so), who can make decisions and deadlines, who have the social intelligence and emotional maturity to make you want to work with them again.