

Writing without a net



(Missed a few days of posts, sorry, but we're back on schedule. Thanks for your patience!)

You all know how we love “theme weeks” here on the JMD blog and now we present one long overdue...a week about my thoughts and impressions on being a writer, complete with subtext headlines, no less!

Now, read on...

I have been making excellent progress in the past few weeks on Book 2 of Jeremy Shuttle Adventures, “What Next?”. It's been fits and starts for me on this book, including figuratively “ripping up” almost half a book after I decided it was not what I was interested in writing (hey, I would have loved to know that *before* I wrote half a book but that's not how it always works out).

One of the mistakes I have made was to offer up an expected publish date for the book. With Book 1 (“What If?”), there was no expectation; it just came out when it came out. Of course, once a “Book 1” is published (which naturally suggests at least a “Book 2”), then there was a requirement to publish the next book in the series and not just because of my personal enthusiasm to write the rest of the tale.

The problem is, I am not a writer by trade. I am (perhaps) *becoming* a writer by trade, but for the time being, I am a writer by desire. The difference is in how I addressed my writing.

When writing for fun, neither the audience or commercial success of the writing is of any great import. Rewarding, yes, but not at the forefront of my thinking. Once I had established the official website and publicly “advertised” the impending release of Book 2, then I had a responsibility to write...and to a certain deadline.

And there’s the rub. I have had decades of experience with deadlines, even in a creative field like advertising (let’s not digress over the issue of whether some advertising is creative or not). But where I did not have any experience with deadlines is when it related to fun. Other than being called in from playing by Mom because it was getting dark, I’ve never considered time and expectations when doing fun things.

Writing the book on my own schedule led to a number of days where I would just put to the side the actual writing. Oh, I would be dialoging and “writing” the characters and scenes in my head (in great detail, mind you), but the actual ink to page or fingers to keys might skip a few days. But really, who cared? Sure, I’ve had a some sales, but hardly enough to believe the world was anxiously waiting the arrival of my next book. I knew I’d get around to it. Eventually.

Regular readers already know what happened next. Those missed days turned into missed months and what was to be an annual release turned into a (maybe) year-and-a-half production.

Granted, you can’t “rush” creative. And I didn’t expect to throw out a hundred pages of developed story. Still, it was clear that even the limited discipline I had during Book 1 had evaporated and I was doing a disservice not only to my readers, but myself as well.

I can’t imagine what it’s like for established authors to have to generate their work by a due date. What if nothing comes up? Do you just cobble together something and hope it doesn’t

reek? Do you give back your advance money (assuming you're that "big" an author)?

I've already had my experience of writing without a net. The result was I crashed on getting the book out "on time". Setting a deadline, even a self-imposed one, is only meaningful if it's taken seriously.

And while I don't like anything serious in my fun, I suppose it's okay to occasionally take my fun seriously.