

INSIDE THE WRITER'S MIND

LOVE, SUSPENSE & HAPPY ENDINGS - THE WILD AND WACKY WORLD OF A ROMANCE WRITER...

THURSDAY, AUGUST 23, 2007

Author Interview with Marcia James

The band finished playing a lively tune which the audience has been clapping along with... "Hound Dog".

Carol Ann comes on stage clapping. "How appropriate, you guys! How about it, audience, aren't they great?"

Audience applauds and hoots.

"Well, we do have a special guest in the studio who will be spending the next half hour with us talking about her latest book. How do I prepare you for this woman? She's funny, she's gorgeous, she's talented, and she's one of my good friends! Her logo is a cute little dog. You're gonna love it. It's a Chinese Crested hairless dog. If you've never seen one, you are in for a real treat, because my guest has brought one with her! Please make welcome, one of my favorite people to hang out with, Marcia James!!!"

Audience stomps, hoots, and hollers. The band takes up playing "Hound Dog" and Marcia walks out from between the center curtains.

CAROL ANN: Welcome, Marcia, and friend. Tell me about your cute logo. **Carol Ann pets the darling dog** Oh, it feels strange to feel just skin on a dog.

MARCIA: **laugh** In my debut comic romantic suspense, *AT HER COMMAND*, the DEA heroine has a canine partner, a Chinese Crested hairless dog named Smokey. This mini crime-fighter is a drug-sniffing dog who plays an important role in the book's suspense and romance plots. I had a caricaturist make a drawing of a Chinese Crested to use as my logo, and the dog has become so popular, I now put a "crestie" in each of my books.

CAROL ANN: Audience, I have to tell you I had the pleasure of listening to Marcia talk about her book to a group at a library panel we participated in.

Carol Ann holds up a book and the camera pans in



Isn't that the cutest cover? Oh, and that's her logo holding the book. ****laugh**** Marcia, please tell the blog studio audience all about your book.

MARCIA: Gladly! *AT HER COMMAND* pokes fun at the alphabet soup of D.C. law enforcement agencies. As the book blurb reads, "When the DEA, the FBI and the DC police unknowingly put operatives undercover at the same club, sexy sparks fly." The novel is rated R for Risqué, and there's a more detailed blurb and an excerpt on my Web site (www.MarciaJames.net) that is definitely for adults only.

CAROL ANN: Rumor has it that you like to write about sex. Now this is a PG blog studio, but I'm sure you can give us some insight into exactly what you're talking about with this!

MARCIA: ****Marcia avoids a doggie kiss**** I know so many authors who cringe when it's time to write the love scenes in their books. But I enjoy writing those sections and often do so before penning the rest of the book! ;-) To me, that's when the hero and heroine are laid bare – figuratively and literally. Those scenes, at least in my books, are vital to my protagonists' inner development. They don't have sex until they've made an emotional commitment to each other, which means the book's subsequent Dark Moment is so much more devastating. I also think many things about sex are humorous, and how my hero and heroine handle the ups and downs of lovemaking (no pun intended!) shows a lot about their personality and character.

CAROL ANN: Where did you come up with the idea for your book?

MARCIA: I lived in the Washington, D.C. area for over 20 years, where I witnessed how uncooperative the different federal and local agencies could be. So I thought, "What if several of these agencies decided to investigate the same sex club, but didn't bother telling each other their plans?" I could see the comic possibilities inherent in the idea, especially when the hero and heroine (and the secondary hero and heroine) fall in love, but can't believe they'd be attracted to someone who either works in or frequents such a hedonistic establishment. They're very relieved to discover they're all in law enforcement! I'm pleased to report that *AT HER COMMAND* has received great reviews, and I've had requests for a sequel.

CAROL ANN: ****Marcia's dog crawls across the table and onto Carol Ann's lap**** What makes your book so different from any other? ****Carol Ann avoids a doggie kiss****

MARCIA: *AT HER COMMAND* straddles the line between a hot romance and an erotic one. It has a traditional (aka "non-kinky") hero and heroine who find themselves fish-out-of-water in their undercover location. But since that location is a sex club, there's detailed information about the types of things that happen in a place like that, which makes the book more risqué than your average sexy romance. I believe the book appeals to a wide-range of people, including those who are curious about alternative practices, such as the viewers who tune into the CSI TV shows when they have a kinky storyline. One author of "sweet" romances emailed me to say she enjoyed my book and received "quite an education" while she was being entertained. ;-D

CAROL ANN: Do you have any collections? Um besides dogs? ****Carol Ann hands the dog back to Marcia****

MARCIA: I collect snails – not the real ones, but glass figurines, garden statues, etc. It started when I was very young and used to doodle in circles that resembled snail shells. Since snails have the reputation for being VERY slow, I don't use a snail as my logo. ;-D But there is a caricature of a snail on my Web site's "Contact Me" page.

CAROL ANN: Thank goodness, you don't collect the real ones! I think they're kind of creepy. Say, wouldn't it be funny to have a snail in one of your books? You know, like maybe it gets loose and crawls up...no! Shame on me!! **Marcia and Carol Ann laugh** Okay, I'm sorry. Let's be serious. Who keeps you inspired to continue writing?

MARCIA: It's a three-way tie between my wonderful husband, my great critique partner (Kensington author Patricia Sargeant), and myself. I enjoy fiction writing so much, that I'd continue to write romance novels even if I wasn't selling my manuscripts. But nothing can beat the support of family and friends.

CAROL ANN: How do you come up with the titles for your books?

MARCIA: The title *AT HER COMMAND* comes from the premise of that book and foreshadows the Dark Moment. But I'm also a big fan of alliteration and have been using it to name the manuscripts in my as-yet-unsold comic mystery series, which is currently with three publishers. The series features a sex therapist heroine who solves murders as an amateur sleuth. The first in the series is *SEX & THE SINGLE THERAPIST*, followed by *DEATH & THE DOUBLE ENTENDRE* and *MURDER & THE MENAGE A TROIS*. I also like the idea that there's a hint in the titles to help readers know the order of the books in the series: "single", "double", and "trois".

CAROL ANN: I love it! You are a guru at promoting yourself. Can you give us less knowledgeable writers a few hints?

MARCIA: Thanks for the compliment! ;-) My background is in PR and marketing, so I've been applying what I know to author promotion. That said, I continue to learn all I can from established authors and creative newbies on my Romance Writers of America email loops. I'm co-presenting a PR workshop at September's Central Ohio Fiction Writers' conference and at the April 2008 Chicago "Spring Fling" conference. For those events, I've developed a "living document" on author PR, which I give freely to any author who'd like it as a seed file to start their own. Just go through my Web site and request it.

Other than that, here's some suggestions: Lock in your author domain name and create your Web site (at least on paper) BEFORE you sell. Brand yourself and promote your brand as much or more than you promote your individual books. Google your proposed slogan (mine is "Hot, Humorous Romances") before you commit to it to make sure it's unique. Take advantage of the many free PR opportunities for authors out there – especially the chance to be interviewed (like this!), guest-blog, and participate in online chats. If you have the time, post comments on other authors' blogs. All of these things increase the number of hits you'll get when Googled. Come up with a creative idea for bringing people to your Web site. An example of this is author Paige Cuccaro's "Writer's Cave" Web site pages. (http://www.paigecuccaro.com/html/the_cave.html)

She puts photos of authors' offices on her site for free and has pages of them now. Readers love to see where their favorite authors work. The Writer's Cave is a great PR idea! Depending on your finances, you can check into the many online sites that will promote an author for a fee. I haven't tried any of these, but I wouldn't rule it out for the future. And don't forget to promote to the general public, not just to established romance readers. You can send press releases to your college's alumni association and to your home town newspaper, as well as to trade publications and newsletters of associations that would have an interest in your book. For example, since I have a crestie dog in my books, I have posted on a Chinese Crested message board. You can also come up with a creative tie-in to your books for your promotional giveaways and on your Web

site. I give away thumbcuff keychains that relate to the law enforcement protagonists in my books and also remind the reader that my books contain some kinky elements. On my Web site, instead of a blog, I have a funny sex advice column “written” by my sex therapist heroine.

CAROL ANN: Wow, you've given me so great ideas, and I'm sure the blog studio as well. Thanks for being so generous. Most authors I interview are romance authors, and you are no exception. There are all kinds of romance novels, just as there are all kinds of romances. Our world is made up of romance. You can find it everywhere. Tell me, what does the word “romance” mean to you?

MARCIA: “Romance” means unconditional love, respect, commitment, and trust. Trust is an ongoing theme in my books. Many of my protagonists have been hurt in the past and have trust issues. When they finally let down their defenses, they are hurt again by a loved one who either didn't return their trust and/or lied to them. My law enforcement heroes in particular have an unfortunate habit of putting their jobs before their personal lives and withholding information from (or misleading) the heroines, in the name of doing their undercover work. But they learn their lesson in the end. ;-)

CAROL ANN: Do you believe the pen is mightier than the sword? Why?

MARCIA: Yes, because the written word can be incredibly persuasive and empowering, can be disseminated easily and widely, and can live on long after the writer's death.

CAROL ANN: That is so true. Marcia, I have truly enjoyed having you in the studio today. And my, look how fast the time passed. Oh, my, what is that dog doing? Does it have to...you know?

MARCIA: Whoops! Yes, I think I'd better get the dog to the nearest fire hydrant. Thanks for having me. **Marcia waves at the audience as she runs off stage. A strange wet trail is left in her wake**The audience laughs and the camera rolls over the credits

Visit Marcia and learn more at: www.MarciaJames.net

AT HER COMMAND is now available in print as well as e-book!!

To order the paperback (ISBN: 9781419956201), go to Cerridwen Press Print

Or order a paperback copy from Amazon here.

To order the e-book (ISBN: 1-4199-0704-2), go to Cerridwen Press E-book