

Mystery writer considers Palm Springs' novel appeal

Posted: November 16th, 2011 | **Author:** [Will Dean](#)

Will Palm Springs be the site of dastardly deeds and unexpected villains in a Russell Quant mystery?

Author Anthony Bidulka, who created the fictitious sleuth 10 years ago, was looking around and taking notes when he visited the desert city earlier this month.

He appeared Nov. 6 at a book-signing event at the Greater Palm Springs Pride Festival, courtesy of Q Trading.

Bidulka, 49, said he travels with a journal to record sights and impressions he may want to include in a story line.

"I've been to all the places" featured in the seven-book series, he said. "They're based on my experiences to varying degrees."



The eighth book, "Dos Equis" (a Mexican beer), is due out in the spring. Each book title in the Russell Quant series features something "ingestible and hints at where in the book he travels," Bidulka said.

Like his main character, Bidulka is a gay man based in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. It's where the author grew up on a farm.

But the most interesting thing about Quant isn't that he's a gay character, according to reader feedback. It's the unique place he's from, Bidulka said.

"It's the new exotic location," he said about Saskatoon. "A lot of people haven't been there."

But the character and his creator aren't the same person. Unlike the unattached Quant, Bidulka has been with his husband about 20 years. They were married in 2008.

"I always kind of thought I was going to keep him single throughout the series," Bidulka said about Quant. "Then he found a guy I thought was going to be perfect.

"It only lasted a book," Bidulka added. "It kind of made me mad."

As a writer, one of the biggest challenges Bidulka faces is how to get his work in front of readers since the closing of LGBT bookstores in recent years in the U.S. and Canada.

Bidulka said he uses digital marketing to reach readers sitting at their computers. He primarily does this through Facebook and by making sure his website, www.anthonymbidulka.com, is dynamic and changes.

Social media can be time-consuming when done well, he said, but it works. People often show up at his book signing after seeing something about his work on Facebook, he said.

Bidulka appreciates that readers enjoy reading the mystery series as much as he enjoys writing it.

He worries sometimes about the stories “becoming just a formula,” he said. “From a writer’s perspective I want to make sure I’m invested.”

When he’s no longer invested he will know he’s done.

Bidulka already has a new character in mind for another series — one he describes as a “Canadian James Bond” type who returns to Saskatoon and realizes his father is gay.

But before Russell Quant is retired — if that ever happens — how likely is it he will end up in Palm Springs lounging poolside, hanging out at the local haunts and solving mysteries?

“You never know,” Bidulka said. “Never say never.”



About this blog

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