

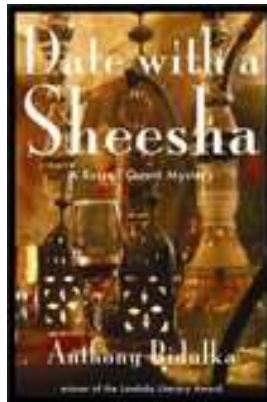
SASHA JACKSON MYSTERIES

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Anthony Bidulka: On Cellphones, Will & Kate, Poplars, and Scrolls.

Carol Channing, I mean, sorry folks, today we're talking with mystery author *Anthony Bidulka*. I became hooked on his Russell Quant series a few years ago when I read *Tapas on the Ramblas*. Russell is a fun character and Bidulka's mysteries will keep you guessing.



And here we go...

Jill: What can you tell me about your current work in progress?

Anthony: I am currently working on the eighth instalment of the Russell Quant mystery series. As you may be aware, in each book, in addition to his home town of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Russell always spends some time in a foreign locale in pursuit of bad guys and good wine. I'm considering calling this one either "Dos Equis" or "Two X's". You figure out where he's going this time.

Name one living and one dead writer whom you were influenced by/whom you emulate. Tell me why.

The incomparable Gail Bowen, author of the Joanne Kilbourn series, certainly made me aware that a mystery series based in Saskatchewan could be successful beyond provincial boundaries. She also taught me that a key to growing compelling and realistic series characters is to write about them as if they exist and have lives even between books.

Robert B. Parker showed me that a good writer can deliver meaning, humour, intent, menace, whatever, with very few words. It was as if he only had so many words to spend in his lifetime, and didn't want to use them up all at once.

(Aside from Jill: Okay, who doesn't like Robert B. Parker & the Spenser books. But what about Susan Silverman? Is she annoying or what?)

Jill: What's the most unusual place and time that a great writing idea came to you?

Anthony: I don't think this is unusual, but my best ideas come to me while I am travelling and out of my usual element. There are certain moments during great trips where you can be sitting, let's say, in a beautiful vineyard, sipping a fine wine, the air is warm, the smells not quite familiar, and your mind is suddenly free of day-to-day shackles, left to roam, to contemplate beauty, to believe in dreams and achieving the nearly impossible. For me, that is when greatness finds a fertile field to plant its seeds. However, although ideas often develop when I am away, they rarely come to fruition until I am back home, in my familiar, comfortable setting.

How close - give a fraction or a percentage if you want - is your sleuth to you?

33.33%

Name four LIVING famous people (with whom you have no relation or connection) that you'd enjoy having cocktails with. Tell me why or what you'd like to discuss with them.

Any living PAST President of the United States - To discuss what it felt like to be, for a time, the most powerful man on earth leading the most powerful nation. What were their greatest fears and joys during their time as president? How did it feel to step down from the role and become a civilian?

Oprah Winfrey - To discuss her views of the world, giving, spirituality, fame, religion, education, love, power, Nate Berkus.

Osama bin Laden - To discuss evil, the use of power, destruction, murder to achieve a goal, the single-minded pursuit of an ideal, to investigate a perspective for which I have little or no understanding of.

Carol Channing - for the sheer fun of it.

Worst memory of school (any grade/level).

Only the first twelve years of it.

What are your writing requirements (place, atmosphere, etc.) and your usual writing routine?

Quiet. My home office. I'll start with creating an outline that details whodunit and the story arc for each major character, then off I go. When I am in full time writing mode (ie not promoting, doing book tours, researching, travelling, etc), I tend to write Monday to Friday, early morning to about mid afternoon. I'm also a draft writer. I don't send in a manuscript to my editor until I'm quite sure it is as perfect as I can get it. The key is knowing when it's time to let it go.

The one thing you wish you had known before getting your first book published...?That the publishing industry was about to be turned upside down and inside out. Then again, I don't know if knowing it would have made any difference to me.

Who is (are) your favourite minor/supporting character(s), from your own work?

Although Sereena Orion Smith, Russell's mysterious next door neighbour, and Kay Quant, Russell's mother, quite regularly rank amongst reader's favourite, the supporting character I enjoy writing the most is Errall Strane. I think it has something to do with the fact that amongst all the characters, Errall can be flawed, nasty to Russell, and thinks she is the star of the series. I think this makes the dynamic between the two characters crackle and unexpected, for me as well as the reader.

Name the last two NON-fiction books you read. Comment on them as desired.After a great deal of resistance, I read *Eat Pray Love*. Totally loved it. I enjoyed how Gilbert tells a story, and I appreciated how she investigated concepts and ideas which I was unfamiliar with and hence, learned a great deal about.

Inside the Magic Kingdom : The Seven Key's to Disney's Success. Simple basic rules for success, that needed repeating, told in a unique setting. Stuff like never be late, under-promise and over-deliver, say please and thank you.

Strangest thing a fan/reader has ever said or done to you (online, at a signing, whatever...)Arrived at a party I was hosting, sat alone on the pool's

diving board all night watching me like an owl, then was the last to leave (by invitation).

Somewhere... in a closet, in a desk drawer, under your bed... you have an early draft, an old manuscript, an outline for a book you never finished writing. It was probably one of your very first attempts at writing. What's it about, and will you ever finish it?

It is a thriller called "On the Eighth Day", sort of a futuristic, doomsday type of storyline, about what happens when the world suddenly stops working. The timing was bad for this manuscript. I completed it right around the time of the Y2K craziness about what would happen on New Year 's Eve 1999. By time it was ready to go, the market was already flooded with this type of story. Perhaps some day....

What would you like to write outside of crime fiction?

I'd love to try fantasy, romance, children's books. The problem is finding the time.

Who would Russell rather dine with: Berlusconi or Sarah Palin? Berlusconi. If nothing else, at least the wine and food would likely be fantastic.

Turn back the hands of time... reverse technology... pretend you're in a world sans electronics, which means no e-books. You (and Russell) have a choice: would your stories be told on scrolls delivered by carrier pigeons, or chiselled into stone tablets? Why.

Totally the scrolls. Easier to work with. Easier to pass around and get into different markets across my kingdom. (I am king in this scenario, right?)

The famous stupid question by Barbara Walters: if you were a tree, what kind of tree would you be? What about Russell?

I would be a Poplar. Russell an Aspen.

Your pet peeve? Russell's?

People who stand in the middle of doorways, grocery aisles, hallways, sidewalks as if the world belongs only to them. Noise polluters: Public whistlers. People who yell/talk loudly at the beach or other public places. People who use cell phones loudly in public. People who walk around with those little cellphone ear-and-mouth pieces in even when not talking to someone, because they think it looks cool.

Russell's thoughts on the pending nuptials between Kate and Wills?

Is wondering whether Kate's love for a good hat will transfer to hubby once the rest of his hair is gone. And, feeling triumphant because he was amongst the first to predict that after an initial awkward phase, it would be brother Harry who would be the hotter prince. Should Kate change her mind? Nah. She's gonna be queen!

Russell's stance on marijuana use?

Although personally an abstainer, and currently residing in a one-time Temperance colony, is thinking it's about time to legalize the damn thing, and regulate its use and distribution, just like beer and Baby Duck. Let's move on.

So there you have it folks... Inside the heart and mind of Anthony Bidulka (and Russell Quant). Pass me a glass of Baby Duck and bring on the carrier pigeons and the scrolls!

More on Anthony's latest release: [Date with a Sheesha](#)

Learn more about Anthony Bidulka and the Russell Quant series at:
www.anthonymbidulka.com