

The Little Creative Interview
with Pippa Jay

Let's Meet...

Pippa Jay

Pippa Jay is a die-hard Whovian, Scaper and Sith-in-training. A multi-published speculative fiction author, her works have won two SFR Galaxy Awards, a finalists position in the Heart of Denver RWA Aspen Gold Contest (3rd place), the GCC RWA Silken Sands Star Awards (2nd place), and the 2015 EPIC eBook awards in the SF category. Whilst living happily in the historical town of Colchester in the UK with her husband of 21 years and three little red-haired monsters, she continues to roam the rest of the universe inside her head.

1) When did you first begin expressing yourself creatively and how?

As soon as I could write. I can remember badgering my dad to write out my name in full (a long and complicated affair) so that I could copy it until I had it perfect. It really didn't take much to move onto other letters and words and start stringing them together. So I've written all my life. I also drew a lot, though not as well as I'd have wished to, liked to sew costumes and braid thread and hair, and create geometric shapes in the most conflicting and eye-watering colours as possible. I made spacecrafts out of cardboard and LEGO, and made alien landscapes out of papier-mâché and my mum's floristry equipment.

But writing was always my first love. It still took me until I was eighteen to actually ever finish an entire novel, and it happened to be a Doctor Who story. It was rejected, but I had a fantastic letter from WH Allen, the then publishers of the Doctor Who novels, who gave me lots of feedback and encouraged me to submit again. I never did. It took another twenty years for me to write a second novel, but after a couple of years I found a small press who wanted to publish it, and now I've eleven published titles to my name, with more in the pipeline.

2) From where do you draw inspiration for your work?

Everything. No exaggeration. Pretty much anything can give me an idea. Several stories have started as dreams, or been inspired by a song or a single line of lyrics, or a music album can set the atmosphere or genre of a story. Films, TV, books, and the latest scientific discovery or new gadgets. Artwork - scrolling through stock image sites or places like Pinterest or deviantart.com is a great help if I'm looking for inspiration for a submission call, or if I'm just bored and looking for ideas. I've had an entire space battle from a piece of paper hitting my car windscreen, or technology from mispronounced words from my children, palaces from seashells and alien species from weird creatures in nature documentaries. Every day and everything is a new inspiration.

3) What work are you currently most proud of?

I think that would be my YA zombie story, *Restless In Peaceville*, because it was so far out of my comfort zone and so hard to write. I've never written anything so difficult, or that required so much research, or that caused so much lamenting on social media and tearing out my hair in private. It was a contemporary setting in Louisiana, a place that has a very rich and distinctive culture of its own, and dealing with a type of supernatural being that I've

always shied away from. Writing a setting for a place that exists but that I've never been to or know much about is much more challenging than making something up, and readers will soon pick you up on errors if they know the place well.

I'm proud of myself for sticking with it, and still surprised that it got published and has had good reviews. But it proved to me what I *can* do, and to never say never about what I'll write.

4) What advice would you give to others about the creative side of what you do?

The three key pieces of advice that I always give are read, write and research. Constantly. Even if you only write a few words each day (at the moment I have a minimum target of 250 words because I've had nonstop editing, releases and tours for the last six months, and I have another five months of similar ahead of me before I get any kind of break). 250 words a day is still over 90K by the end of the year. It's all well and good saying you want to write a book, but the words don't mean anything unless you actually sit down and write. I wouldn't recommend my method of writing though - I don't outline or plot, and I don't write linearly either. I start with a handful of scenes - and these may very well not even include a beginning and/or an ending - which I write out to form the bones of my story. Then I go back and flesh it out by filling in the gaps. It's chaotic but it works for me.

Reading, not just in your own genre necessarily, helps keep up your vocabulary, shows you other styles and story ideas. Research can back up what you're writing, or give you new inspiration, but it also applies to looking at publishers, editors, cover artists, marketing companies etc that you might want to use. Never jump into anything without researching it first.

Also, be sure to take time out to go for a walk or a drive, or to do something different so you're not tied to your desk or computer 24/7. It can become unhealthy, and even an introvert like me acknowledges that she needs to go out and socialize once in a while to avoid going stir crazy.

Lastly, never give up - never surrender!

5) What advice would you give to others about the business side of what you do?

Do some kind of marketing course, preferably before you get started. It might not be what you want to do, but you'll need it. Really. Right now I'm doing a workshop on book launches, and I've set this month aside to really read up on marketing and look into trying things I haven't done before. I think it's much harder doing it after the fact and five years down the line than if I'd done it before. On the other hand, some of it might have put me off trying in the first place! Be prepared to have days or more where you'll spend more time and effort working on promotion than writing. I think the days of simply being able to spend all your days writing are past, unless you either have the money beforehand to pay out for a PA and for others to do your promotion, or you're lucky enough to be instantly successful. Otherwise you're going to have to put a lot of legwork into it yourself, and you're going to have to stick at it to have a chance of success. If you thought being a good writer was enough, it isn't.

Pippa Jay is a dedicated member of the [Science Fiction Romance Brigade](#), blogging at [Spacefreighters Lounge](#), [Adventures in SciFi](#), and [Romancing the Genres](#). Her works include YA and adult stories crossing a multitude of subgenres from sci-fi to the paranormal, often with romance, and she's one of eight authors included in a science fiction romance anthology—[Tales from the SFR Brigade](#).

You can stalk her at her [website](#), or at her [blog](#), but without doubt her favorite place to hang around and chat is on Twitter as [@pippajaygreen](#).

Website – <http://www.pippajay.co.uk>

Blogs –

Adventures in Scifi - <http://www.pippajay.blogspot.co.uk>

Spacefreighters Lounge - <http://www.spacefreighters.blogspot.com>

Romancing the Genres - <http://www.romancingthegenres.blogspot.co.uk/>

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