

## **The Little Creative Interview**

*with Alex J. Cavanaugh*

*Let's Meet...*

# Alex J. Cavanaugh

Alex J. Cavanaugh has a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree and works in web design, graphics, and technical editing. A fan of all things science fiction, his interests range from books and movies to music and games. Online he is the Ninja Captain and founder of the Insecure Writer's Support Group. He's the author of Amazon Best-Sellers CassaStar, CassaFire, CassaStorm, and Dragon of the Stars. The author lives in the Carolinas with his wife.

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

I'd enjoyed drawing, but I really latched onto music at a young age. I started playing trumpet in grade school and continued on through college, minoring in music. (Today I play the guitar.) Writing didn't really hit until I was about ten or eleven. I'd written a little, just something to occupy my time and exercise my imagination. But what really sparked it were two different things.

First, I saw a drawing by Frank Frazetta for the upcoming television series, Battlestar Galactica. The image sparked an idea in me, and once I started watching the series, a story formed in my head. I started writing and finished my first full story. (It went into a drawer for thirty years before I took it out and revised it. That story became my first published book, CassaStar.) Second, I discovered Terry Brooks' Sword of Shannara series. That really sparked my imagination and drew me into fantasy as well as science fiction. It turned me into a voracious reader, which further spurred the writing.

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

As a movie junkie, I watch a lot of films, as well as shows. I find a lot of inspiring ideas in the ones that delve into the unknown and worlds beyond ours. How can one not be inspired by someone's incredible imagination brought to life?

As a musician, I am most certainly inspired by music. I write to it, letting it set the mood and lead the story. A pounding metal riff does wonders for a space battle!

One of my books was specifically inspired by a song – Dragon on the Sea by Ayreon. The lyrics told the story of Queen Elizabeth sending out Sir Walter Drake to fight the enemy and I pictured a similar story with a real dragon ship.

**3) What work are you currently most proud of?**

What author isn't proud of every book? CassaStar is still special as my first and the story that was with me for thirty years. CassaFire proved I could write a sequel and a female lead character. Dragon of the Stars took some reviewers by surprise, something an author always likes to hear.

I'm most proud of the third Cassa book though—CassaStorm. Wrapping up a trilogy is always a challenge. I was also writing from three point-of-views, including a ten-year-old boy. Ten! The last time I was ten...well, it was a really long time ago. The story had to end huge and I pretty much threw everything including the kitchen sink into it. The result is a great ending to the series and definitely my best work. I certainly wish more readers would take a chance on CassaStorm as it can be read on its own.

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

Take a speed writing or typing course! Just kidding. Well, maybe not. I'm a slow writer.

When you get an idea, a scene, write it down. Then figure out – is it the beginning or the ending? Either one is a really great place to start a story. I usually get the ending to a story first and then map out how to get there. That works even if you aren't someone who outlines. You can just let the story unfold as you write but always with a destination in mind.

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

Don't be afraid to ask for help! Ask writing friends, online friends, family, whoever. Of course, the key is to have an army of those people you can ask. Which means you need to be a friend first and help others. Be supportive of other authors and help them spread the word about their books. Buy their books and review if you can. Then when you have a release, others will be just as willing to assist you.

I also recommend joining a writing group online. As the founder of the Insecure Writer's Support Group, I witness the writers and authors there helping each other with every aspect of this business. Those writers know they are not alone.



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