

Chindi Authors' romance week, transcript of live Facebook Q&A, 9/2/16

Hello Carol, Good luck and for those who have not yet read your book, how would you describe Crazy Over You?

Thank you, Crazy Over You is a contemporary romance. It is essentially an honest portrayal of one woman's reaction to her husband's infidelity while also being a story of love, hope, family and friendship.

I really enjoyed reading Crazy over you and can't wait for your second novel, I just wondered did you have much say in your book cover and are you pleased with the result?

Thank you, that is so lovely to hear. As a self-published author I did. I could have had a cover made by Matador but I had an idea of what I wanted and had already started work on it. At first it was to be a photograph of a lady with the confusion in her mind drawn in doodles around her. However, once that was underway I decided I wanted an original design that would work towards building a brand for future books. I spoke to my nephew, Drew Bristow, who is an illustrator and we started work on the design I have now. We agreed a brief, Drew came back to me with the image and I was delighted.

Thank you for your reply and just to let you know I love the cover and when people say 'don't judge a book by its cover' I think they are right to a certain point but it is definitely an important factor when choosing a book and I think you are on to a winner! Well done.

That's very kind of you thank you.

I've heard that writers should have a beginning, middle and an end in their head before starting their novel. Did you know how you were going to write 'Crazy Over You'?

Yes I had a very clear path in mind, in fact the beginning; middle and end were very much the plan I started with, opposed to chapter outlines.

I want to know about your next book. Will we see the same characters or is it a totally different story?? And how long till we get to read it!!!!

Hello oo another good question! I am aiming for the writing process to take less than three years this time. I can't see that my new book will be ready this year simply because I know how long the copy edit and proofread can take. So if I say next year I think that is a reasonable goal. It is a contemporary romance again with the theme being based on lost and rediscovered friendship.

Will that be Abby again? I love her soooooo much.

Ah that is lovely of you, but no not for this one, though there are characters in Crazy Over You I would like to revisit one day.

Hi Carol what is your next book going to be based on? Will it involve some of the characters from crazy over you? Xx

Hello, it is a contemporary romance as well but it doesn't have the characters from Crazy Over You in it, though I may like to revisit some of those later (I have an idea that keeps popping into my head!).

Can't wait xx

I am not a big reader but I really enjoyed reading your book, what inspired you to write it and is it based on anyone you know?

Thank you, it is always great to hear that somebody has enjoyed reading your book! The inspiration was wanting to write an honest story on the impact of infidelity on a relationship. I would say the characters aren't based on people I know as such but the situations within the text are. I like writing from what I know.

How long did it take you to write the book? Did you ever struggle to write parts of the book or did it just come naturally?

Hello, I started officially writing my novel in 2012 (though I had parts in notebooks before) and it was published in 2015 so the whole process took three years. I would say the final year of that was the copy editing and proofreading time. I struggled with some aspects at times but worked through it, I didn't include anything I was unhappy with in the final novel.

Hello, Do you think your book will ever be made into a film and if yes who do you think would make play a good Abby and Simon? Or who might you compare their characters to in other books/movies? X

You are too young to remember Thirty Something I am sure, but it is a TV drama that was popular in the 80s and 90s. I loved it. I'd like Abby and Simon to be played by Mel Harris and Ken Olin as they were in that series (only with clothes that look less 1980s).

What made you decide to write a book and what is your favourite book and author? Did you base your style of writing on them? Xx

I was always interested in writing but it was only when I took a break from teaching that I decided to give it a go. I tend to have favourite books and authors at different times in my life. At the moment I am a big Lucy Diamond, Jane Costello and Mhairi McFarlane fan – I think when you are reading other people's work while writing it is hard not to be influenced by them.

I hated pride and prejudice at school with a passion. What books did you love or hate at school?

My sister would tell you I liked toy cars and not books at school and that would be true! Though later, when I discovered Judy Blume's Are You There God It's Me Margaret I loved it.

When did you know you would write?

I was always interested in writing and kept notebooks at various times, but I don't think I really knew I would write until I got started on Crazy Over You. When that started coming together in my mind and taking over my thoughts I knew I could write it.

Did you find it hard to come up with story line, and what gave you the motivation to go on, and also write another book?

I wanted to write a book on the impact of infidelity on a relationship, I had read other stories on the same subject but none of those I read went into that impact in depth. So probably the desire to write that story is what spurred me on. Once it started coming together the writing itself became its own motivation. When I finished Crazy Over You I wrote 10000 words of my next story almost straight away. It was good to move on to new characters and a new situation. Keeping that going is more challenging with another book to promote too so I need to ensure I give it the time it deserves. Long answer there!

Did you ever have 'writers block' and if you did how did you overcome it? Also how extensive was your research put into locations etc...?

I don't remember having writers block very much while writing Crazy Over You, though I have experienced it with the novel I am currently writing. I think that is partly because I had some plot issues I wasn't happy with. I enjoy doing research. With Crazy Over You the research was largely situation based, as I already knew many settings. For my new novel I have done such things as visited and chatted to the lovely people at Shore in East Wittering - I like doing research as it spurs ideas and the imagination.

Out of everyone who has bought your book who were you the most excited about reading it? X

Oh gosh this is a really good question. I am not sure I am ever excited but I am always nervous. I want people to enjoy it. Readers invest money and time into reading your novel and you hope they will enjoy the reading experience.

Thank you! Xx

Hey with such a busy life with kids, grandkids, after school activities etc. how on earth do you find time to write? Do you have to just lock yourself away and allow set periods of time to write?

Hello, that is what works best really, a nice hotel room, lots of light, a good view and just me shut in it for twenty-four hours. It is a great way to get lots done and sometimes the only way to get lots done.

A nice hotel room on your own, absolute bliss!!!!

Do you think a story with the theme of infidelity can be considered romantic? X

Hello, I hope you got your copy of Crazy Over You OK, I remember you were a competition winner! That's a very good question. I think Abby and Simon's is a romantic story, they have shared a lifetime together, been married for fifteen years and have a family. Their past is as much a part of the story as the present situation they find themselves in.

Thank you for the reply, great to know and I'm very excited about reading it. I've read all your great reviews xx

It's quite a common thing for people who create things to go through periods of self doubt and not thinking their work is good enough - did this ever happen to you at any point whilst writing your book and if so how did you get over any slumps?

It didn't really happen with Crazy Over You until it started selling and going out to book reviewers etc. I think when I wrote it, it was very much something I wanted to do and so I wrote the story I wanted to read without really considering how others would view it. My second novel is different as I am more aware of readers' likes and dislikes, and the fact there is an audience out there. As I write I have to put that to the back of my mind.

I can see you have been getting some great reviews from book bloggers; do you have any tips on contacting and working with bloggers? X

Thank you. I would say research and find book bloggers who enjoy your genre, it won't guarantee a good review but choosing someone who likes a similar style of book may help. Follow them on twitter and read their blog. Interact with them before you ask for a review. Read and follow their review policy and make your request personal. Don't hassle them as almost all book bloggers are doing it in their spare time because they love books. Once you have a review be grateful, add it to your website and link to it from your own social media. As Crazy Over You is my debut novel I found starting with bloggers with a smaller following and getting some reviews first helped when it came to approaching book bloggers with a larger following. Finally keep at it, not all bloggers answer a request and some have huge to be read piles. I try to contact at least one a week.

Hello! Which part of the process to publication did you learn most from?

Oh that's a good question, I would probably say having a professional copy edit and learning what my bad habits were and about correct layout and presentation. They are lessons I will take on to other novels.

If your book were a cake what cake would it be?

Haha fabulous! Mille-feuille, it is multilayered and laced with lighter and darker moments.

Who designed the cover for Crazy Over You? I love it.

Thank you, that is lovely to hear. My very talented nephew Drew Bristow designed the image on my front cover. He is an illustrator. We worked closely on it and he did an excellent job of interpreting the brief and putting up with my emails.

Oh, and is there anything in particular you had to research for Crazy over you or for your new book??

I did a lot of research on infidelity forums, people's experiences of infidelity and on divorce statistics for Crazy Over You. I also researched odd things like stone skipping, Anne Summers parties and so forth. I love researching as it opens up ideas and spurs you on. I was recently researching wetsuits for my new novel - it is sometimes crazy being a writer but it gives you a great excuse to do things you otherwise wouldn't.

What inspired you to put your thoughts to paper? Did you ever get stuck about what to write next? X

I have kept notebooks at various times in my life, generally at times when I have wanted to get thoughts out of my head, I think it can be good therapy in some ways. I also like to make observations about the people or situations around me, while in cafes, A&E, the library and so on. Yes I sometimes get stuck what to write next so I try to write another part of a chapter and story and then come back with a fresh mind.

When do you write? Do you have a set time of day?

Well my time is governed by the fact that I also have three young children. I'd like to say I have set times and I stick to them but it wouldn't be true. I write during school hours and sometimes late into the night. Occasionally I get to sneak off to a hotel for a night and that is probably when I get most done.

Hi Carol how often do you write?

Hello, not as often as I would like or, being as I am about a third of the way through my second novel, as much as I should. I try to do a day (that being within the time my children are at school) a week but I sometimes let promotion for Crazy Over You eat into that time and I shouldn't.

Phew! Thank you all so much for the great questions, I have been nervous all day but that was lots of fun! Thank you again and happy romance week! xx