

Reader's Entertainment Behind the Words Author Interview Questions

Welcome, tell us a bit about yourself. Where you're from, where you live? Do you have one of those day-jobs?

Tell me about yourself is a question that often pops up in interviews, and I tend to say, there's nothing to tell. I've never considered myself anything special, but if I've had a yearning to do something, I've done it, which I think is a trait of a Gemini: we're very creative and always want to be involved with something, often shunning praise in order to move on to the next thing. I think my interest in writing started in school. The teachers always told me I had a very good imagination and should do more with it. I remember starting a short story but never finishing it – not at school, anyway. Eventually, as the years passed I revisited the story, added the title, *One Rainy Night*, finished it, and placed it in a collection entitled, *A Devil's Dozen*, which was published by Double Dragon.

As for me, I think I'm pretty ordinary. I'm a Brit and I live in a small village in a 3-bedroom cottage. It's pretty idyllic with a garden full of fruit trees, at the end of which, running past the gate, is a major river. I find it amusing when people come to visit and they hear this deep, resonant sound, as if someone has left a car idling in the street. I take them outside and show them it's a ship and their expression is priceless. What I love most is the peace and tranquility. My study has two large patio doors that open out on to the garden and the river – the perfect setting for a writer of any genre.

How long have you been writing?

As I mentioned in the last question, I started to write in school but it was probably a fad and something I did when there was nothing else to do. I took it more seriously about fifteen to twenty years ago and I would say that the inspiration came from a novel I read called *The Manitou*, written by Graham Masterton: a story about the re-birth of a Native American Medicine Man. It was the location for the re-birth that blew my mind – in someone else's body! It was full of myths and legends, and Masterton was weaving fact and fiction together quite seamlessly. That's what really piqued my interest. Last year I made the decision to write full-time.

Briefly describe your writing day.

In all honesty it's not typical. I wake up, stroll down the stairs, feed my cats, have breakfast and check my mail. From there it depends largely on how much writing there is to do and when the inspiration takes me. I'm not one of these writers who will religiously sit down and write for a specific period of time: or stick to a strict number of words and then call it a day. I never put a limit on myself. Writing is creative and there is no set pattern for me. I spend a lot of time researching and planning before I sit down to write the book. When I do, I always have the first twelve chapters worked out so I know where I'm going. With a police procedural that's not usually too difficult. All murder investigations work to a similar pattern. Usually by the time I'm four or five chapters in I know where the next half dozen chapters after twelve are going. My

personal goal is that each time I sit down to write, I like to complete a chapter in one sitting so that I don't lose the thread. That could be anything from one thousand words upwards. I remember when I was writing *Seven Secrets*, one sitting resulted in six thousand words. I've never done that again. I think I took the next two days off.

Tell us about your latest release?

Implant is the third book in the IMP series: each book has a one word title beginning with the letters IMP. The first was *Impurity*, and the second was *Imperfection*.

I had the idea to write something that made us think about the world we live in. We all rely so much on technology: and we believe it makes our lives easier. Most of us have smart phones, smart TV's, Ipad's, and almost everything else that is battery driven, usually requiring an on-line connection for it to work properly. Everything we're involved with depends heavily on that technology. Young people run their entire lives on mobile phones: Internet banking, on-line buying: social media, giving the impression that they couldn't live without it. If they do lose it they become virtual zombies.

I started to have thoughts about that sophisticated machinery falling into the wrong hands. What if someone was clever enough to manipulate it, use in such a way that they could exploit us – turn our lives upside down, especially if we'd crossed them. How much damage could one person cause by turning something as small as a phone into a weapon, or in fact a killing machine? If a killer was clever enough to use it in such a way that he or she didn't even have to be anywhere near the crime scene, how tough would that be for the investigating detective?

Implant Synopsis:

Bramfield, near Leeds, a sleepy little market town nestled on the border of West and North Yorkshire: a place where people tend to keep to themselves. A death they can understand. A murder they can tolerate. But a crucifixion, well that's something else.

Monday morning, as the clock strikes 9:00, Detectives Stewart Gardener and Sean Reilly come to the end of the line, a series of puzzles they have been trying to solve for six hours, which has led them to the naked corpse of Alex Wilson, nailed to the wall of a cellar in his uncle's hardware store. His lips are sewn together and his body bears only one mark, a fresh scar near his abdomen. Above his head are two plain white envelopes.

They do not contain any answers, only further problems.

The scar however, hides a very sinister secret, and Gardener and Reilly think the death may have something to do with organ trafficking.

But they are wrong!

Alex Wilson is a well-known drug dealer, and they begin their investigation by arresting Jackie Pollard – another drug dealer known to the local police – found outside the shop.

Within twenty-four hours, their efforts culminate in one body, one suspect – with a motive but no evidence – and a number of other possible suspects, all of which, are missing.

With all the information they have, the detectives consider the murder to be drug related: a deal that has probably gone to the wall, with someone seeking revenge.

But they are wrong!

When one of their missing suspects finally turns up in a much worse predicament than Alex Wilson, the clock is ticking.

By the time they are forty-eight hours in, their investigation results in dead ends, more victims: no suspects and very little in the way of solid evidence.

Gardener and Reilly now realize that it's time to answer one very important question. Considering everything that has happened, are the residents of Bramfield – who can understand a death and tolerate a murder – actually prepared for one of history's most sadistic serial killer's, The Tooth Fairy?

Tag Line: The Tooth Fairy: a children's fable – or an adult nightmare?

Implant was very challenging because I'd opened myself up to a whole new world of research including medicine and technology, both of which I found fascinating because I know very little about them in the first place. Luckily for me I have a number of friends who specialize in those subjects who were able to offer expert advice. I'm also very lucky to have a Detective Inspector as a personal friend, without whom, I would be lost. I only write about killers, he chases them for a living, so I don't envy him but I do admire him and his help is invaluable.

Are your characters entirely fictitious or have you borrowed from real world people you know?

Only once: all my characters are usually fictitious with either a little bit of me or a *hint* of someone I know. Only once did I ever use a colleague. His mannerisms and his speech pattern were far too good and far too funny to ignore. I suppose if he ever finds out he'll have a few choice words for me. He featured in the second book in the IMP series, *Imperfection*, which was set in the world of film and theatre, featuring a killer who had an obsession with the one time film idol, Lon Chaney, who was so good with make-up that he was dubbed, The Man of a Thousand Faces, which the killer was able to use to great advantage. The research on that book was very absorbing and time consuming but I learned so much about a world I love, allowing me to blend fact and fiction to support what I wanted to say. I suppose I'm giving far too much away now but he had a minor role, looking after the stage door of the theatre that was brought into disrepute because that's where the first murder took place, on the stage, in front of the audience, prompting the question that if your killer was that good with a make-up bag, how were you going to catch him?

Would you share one detail from your current release with readers that they might not find in the book?

I think it's the location. I'm a British writer, living in the county of East Yorkshire, so it makes sense for me to set my books in places I know. The IMP series is set in the West Yorkshire city of Leeds. But for *Implant* I decided I wanted somewhere fresh and rural, but still in Yorkshire and still connected to Leeds. I believe that a crime or a horror novel always seems more frightening if it has a rural setting. We all realize that crime is likely to be higher in the big cities, but you don't normally associate horrific murders with the gentle, rural surroundings of a UK

village – unless it's in the county of Midsomer, and I'm pretty sure there's no one left there now. About an hour's drive from me are a couple of small towns in North Yorkshire called Pickering and Malton. They are very old fashioned and have an atmosphere of yesteryear. Pickering even has a steam railway, which is very popular with tourists. I spend a lot of time there and I decided to set my cross genre novel, *Seven Secrets* along that stretch of railway from Pickering to Whitby. I also decided that I would move Gardener and Reilly slightly north of Leeds to the self-contained rural communities of Pickering and Malton – but I changed the names. I do suspect however, that people who live there will spot it immediately.

Who has been the most difficult character for you to write? (Any of your books)

That would have to be Gardener – or to give him his full title, Detective Inspector Stewart Gardener. I realized when I started researching *Impurity* that it would not be a stand-alone book. I'd become too emotionally involved with the characters and what I wanted to say: Gardener would have to be an on-going character. I would have to build him up in layers, adding a little something in each book. From the outset I didn't want the stereotypical character that seems to haunt most crime novels, especially hard-boiled crime fiction, or crime noir. I know what a tough job it is and how many hours they work, and that almost always they find themselves hungry at odd times: like four in the morning, and the only thing they can find open is McDonalds. Most of them end up on bad diets, out of shape because of it, irritable, looking old before their time. I didn't want any of that for Gardener. I wanted someone who ate healthily (meaning, if McDonalds was the only thing on offer, he would go hungry), wore suits or fashionable clothes,

looked after himself because he also had a teenage son to care for, due to an awful life-changing incident, which becomes the basis for the opening of the first book. He's not without flaws. Although Gardener is fit and healthy he is constantly dealing with the death of his wife, for which he feels responsible. Further to that, he's lived for years with the feeling that he was also responsible for the death of his mother when he was a teenager. It's all covered in book 1, *Impurity*. One thing I did do however, at the suggestion of a very close American friend of mine, was to give him an identity of his own. He wears a hat. A particular type of hat – and the reason for that is also broached in chapter 1 of *Impurity*.

If you could be one of your characters for a day which character would it be? Why?

That's a fabulous question. I think it would have to be Luther Grant, a character I featured in a short story called, *Lost and Found*, which was published as part of a collection entitled *A Devil's Dozen* by Double Dragon. I have always been a big fan of the mysterious – stories with twist endings that leave you surprised by the fact that you never saw it coming. During the 1960's there was no shortage of material like that, particularly on the TV. *The Outer Limits* springs to mind. From its very opening of "Do not adjust your TV set..." you were gripped. Alfred Hitchcock also had his own series, as did Boris Karloff when he presented *The Veil*, and *Out Of This World*, the latter being something I can never lay my hands on. I have to say however, my all-time favourite was *The Twilight Zone*. Rod Serling wrote some of the stories and hand-picked others. I have nothing but the greatest of respect for such an imagination. *Lost & Found* is homage to the man himself, and his series. It all started from a conversation I once had with a

colleague when I mentioned that I had started to collect them all. He replied, “Do you know, I’ve seen loads of them, and never seen the same one twice.” Neither have I, I thought...

I even gave the story a Twilight Zone opening:

“Witness Luther Grant, a loner, 61 years of age. He has a moderate inheritance and a care free life, most of which he’s spent collecting things he holds dear, much as we all do. At present, he’s testing his knowledge to its limit on America’s most popular game show. Luther has no family and no one he would define as close. But he does have a strong will and a very sharp mind. He’s also very determined. A trait that’s going to lead him into unfamiliar territory...”

I would love to be Luther Grant, because in that story he was given something that every film buff, or author, or even admirer of that kind of fiction or TV – the trip of a lifetime. I might even be prepared to settle for what happened to him...

What’s next?

I work very closely with a group of filmmakers called Edge Ways, who produce trailers for my books, *Implant* being on of their greatest achievements. We have now discussed some new ideas so you will hopefully see more of their work (and mine) next year. If you want to see what these guys are capable of and how well they help to promote my books, they’re all on my website. I

have also finished a novella entitled *Ryder On The Storm*, which is a cross genre story, blending crime and the supernatural, mixing myths and legends with facts, which will hopefully be out later this year – although as yet I have not had a confirmation from a publisher.

Ryder On The Storm Synopsis:

When builder Terry Johnson spots what he thinks is a bargain he can't resist but to succumb to temptation. The large, detached house stands on the side of a railway track and would be perfect for his needs ... and it's cheap! What he couldn't possibly know is the tainted history surrounding the building: and that it stands on the same ground as an unsolved murder dating back to the 1850's. But he's about to ... the consequences of which are life-threatening...

Based upon a true incident, *Ryder On The Storm* is a stand-alone supernatural crime novella from the author of the IMP series, featuring one of the characters, desk sergeant Maurice Cragg.

And I am currently two thirds of the way through another in the IMP series, entitled, *Imperceptible*, which examines the possibility of what you do when one of your own goes rogue, but that's all I can give away for now lol.

All writers are readers. Are there any particular authors that have influenced how you write and, if so, how have they influenced you?

Quite a number of them, really: in the early days it was, without doubt, Graham Masterton. His ability to write an economical, fast paced, story with the capacity to create stunningly clear

images inside your head, mixed with myths and legends and fact and fiction opened up a whole new world of books to me, which started with *The Manitou*.

Peter James is without doubt one of our finest crime writers, not to mention a really nice guy. He has been so helpful to me in my writing career, and the quality of his writing is very influential. Peter writes about Detective Roy Grace in his *Dead* series but the book that really caught my attention was a stand-alone entitled, *Denial*, a terrifying psychological thriller that also had a connection to the film world. Once again, well written, deeply researched, and all the more terrifying because things like that can happen.

Nigel McCrery is a writer I've come across more recently. He has a particular detective called Mark Lapslie, a man who really does not suffer fools, but who does suffer a very unusual complaint called, synaesthesia. Nigel created *Silent Witness* and *New Tricks*. He writes in a very tight, economical style and has a wickedly dark imagination: an author not to be missed.

If you could have dinner with any writer living or dead, who would it be and why?

That's a pretty tough one. I think one possible choice from an earlier answer would be the creator of *The Twilight Zone*, Rod Serling. But if I were to choose one author it would probably be H.G. Wells, most famous for his novel *The War of the Worlds*. Wells had such a vivid imagination and I found it highly amusing that when his novel was first translated on American radio, people actually believed that what they were hearing was real. Another fascinating book of his was *The*

Time Machine, which was the topic of a very interesting film entitled, *Time After Time*, in which Wells himself followed the infamous Jack The Ripper into modern day London, after the Ripper has accessed the machine. I once read that the original version of *The Time Machine* was never actually submitted to the publisher, but a different version, because Wells was unhappy with his original ending. Whether that's true, I don't know, but it did prompt me to write a short story entitled *Herbert's Legacy*, which was included in the collection, *A Detective's Dozen*, published by Double Dragon.

If you could ask your favorite author a question what would it be?

Of all of the books you've written, which is your favourite and why? In the case of Peter James or Graham Masterton I think that would be a hard question to answer because of the sheer volume.

Do you have a secret talent readers would be surprised by?

I am a musician. I spent much of my early life touring the UK as a singer and guitar player. Most of the time I worked as a solo artist but in the later years I formed a band called Stagefright. We were a trio. I played guitar and took lead vocals, we also had a very talented keyboard player who literally could play anything, and our drummer was the vicar in the village where I live. We toured the UK for around six years with not one crossed word. We really enjoyed ourselves. I

still do the occasional shows but certainly not as many as I used to. Most of my shows feature music of the 60's.

Your favorite go to drink or food when the world goes crazy!

Smoked haddock, mushrooms and Mexican rice, with a glass of Rose wine. It's so simple to make and tastes like nothing on Earth.

What is the one question you never get ask at interviews, but wish you did? Ask and answer it.

Strangely enough, the question is the same as I would like to ask my favorite author: Of all of the books you've written, which is your favourite and why?

I suspect it would be *Seven Secrets*: a cross genre story; basically it was a crime novel with a supernatural background set against the backdrop of The North York Moors, in particular the railway line that runs from Whitby to Pickering. I travel on there quite a lot and one particular night my neighbours and I chose to dine on the Pullman train. It takes about three hours and you are fed a five-course meal with wine. When you reach Pickering everyone is allowed off the train for thirty minutes for some fresh air. It really was a most perfect night. We all stayed over at a hotel, an old manor house in Grosmont. Breakfast the next morning in the dining room was

pretty enlightening. There were coats of arms all over the walls, a balcony leading to another level, suits of armour and one of the biggest fireplaces you had ever seen. My neighbour's wife, Jean, just happened to mention that she could imagine people having been walled up in the room: wrong thing to say to a crime writer with a vivid imagination. I lost interest in breakfast and immediately started plotting. One of the most interesting things I found was that, originally, the track had seven stations, but one had to be closed due to a major accident. You can't even find where that station stood today but that became the basis for the novel.

Seven Secrets Synopsis

Whitby - 1835: a schooner runs aground in a violent storm. The crew and the human cargo are missing presumed dead, save one, and he's making no sense.

Pickering Station - 1855: the authorities find an abandoned train, engine still warm. It was supposed to be full of inmates for the nearby asylum. It was empty, with no trace of what had happened.

Beck Hole - 1864: a serious incident at the railway station not only forces its closure, but the whole place to be sealed up in an effort to contain what's in there.

Present Day: NYMR passengers are being abducted and butchered and discovered in strange locations.

Detective Chief Inspector Arthur White takes the case, his last before retirement. There are no clues, little in the way of information and witnesses are thin on the ground: until a disturbing piece of evidence propels him into the past, to the incident that forced the closure of the train station at Beck Hole, and a notorious surgeon known as The Organ Grinder, who conducted illegal experiments on the inmates at the Grosmont Asylum.

White discovers that during the doctor's reign a high number local people were also disappearing, much as they are today. Was he involved? And why did *he* disappear without trace? More importantly, what is the connection between the recent disappearances and the isolated incidents in 19th century? When White finds out, he will have to overcome his most personal fear to solve the mystery: furthermore, he'll have to put his life on the line - only, he doesn't know that!