

EPISODE 85: SHAKING UP THE AUDIOBOOK MARKET – WITH KEVIN TUMLINSON

Speaker 1: Two writers, one just starting out, the other a bestseller. Join James Blatch and Mark Dawson, and their amazing guests as they discuss how you can make a living telling stories. There's never been a better time to be a writer.

James Blatch: Hello, and welcome to the Self Publishing Formula podcast with Mark and James. Welcome along to another week.

Delighted to have you with us. We're still in the unfinished studio. It sounds like a film title, or the name of a series of works by Van Morrison or something in the Dutch era. The Unfinished Studio, I mean it's Rembrandt, or something, isn't it?

Mark Dawson: Oh my goodness. I'm completely lost. Carry on.

James Blatch: That's because you did Maths and Law. "You should've studied the arts." I say to an author.

Mark Dawson: What car do drive James? What I should I've studied?

James Blatch: Yeah.

Mark Dawson: Carry on.

James Blatch: You studied the right things.

Have you had a good week, Mark? Where are you with books, at the moment? We haven't caught up with you for a while.

Mark Dawson: Well, I'm working hard. I've got a couple of really, really cool things that I can mention later, about collaboration, that are quite exciting.

The stuff I'm writing at the moment, I'm trying to finish the fourth Isabella Rose book, and it's very, very difficult. It's the hardest book I think I've ever had to write, because it's kind of tying up ... It's the end of a series, so there's three books before it, that need to ... References all need to be consistent.

I'm trying to introduce some plot twists that I hadn't thought of when I was writing the previous books, and it is really complicated. I've been working with it for ages, and it is like pulling teeth at the moment, so it's not all glamor.

It's not all sitting around in unfinished sheds, chatting of our books. Sometimes it can be a question of sitting down on the train, like I was this morning, and just trying to wrestle the words out. I'll get there, but it's hard work, at the moment.

James Blatch: Sweat, blood and tears. Yeah.

Mark Dawson: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Lots of tears.

James Blatch: Lots of tears.

And you've got no news to announce on Hollywood, at the moment?

Mark Dawson: No. Only that it's close, and we've agreed the terms of the deal now. I'm just waiting for a call back from my Hollywood lawyer ... That sounds terribly pretentious ... to say that the deal has been done.

We've spoken to the producers and the company that are putting the money up. Just really a question of getting that done, so they can start writing the script, and hopefully pitching it for a pilot in the autumn.

James Blatch: Okay. Well, talking of Hollywood, we are, John ... As we sit here at the moment recording this, John Dyer and I are both planning to go to the United States. I have to say, as we sit here, the United States is being ravaged by hurricanes, at this particular moment. Is it Irma?

Mark Dawson: Irma.

James Blatch: Irma is about to finish her tread of destruction in the Caribbean and hit Florida. Our thoughts and our prayers certainly go with everybody in that part of the world. We hope you stay safe.

We know that several members of the SPF community have posted that they're moving out for the moment, so by the time this goes out, we'll know what happened. But hopefully, we will make it down to Florida.

I'm just looking at the calendar to try and pick a date. We're going to be in St. Pete's Beach for the NINC conference. The annual NINC conference, Novelists Incorporated. That finishes on Friday the 6th. I would think that Wednesday the 4th looks like a very likely day for SPF drinks.

This is a day not to be missed, when the SPF credit card comes out of John's wallet. Moths fly everywhere, there's a lot of cobwebs and dust gets blown off John Dyer's wallet, but the credit card that emerges, it gets handed to a nice guy.

Can you remember the guy's name in the Sharktooth Tavern in TradeWinds?

John Dyer: Troy.

James Blatch: Troy. It gets handed to Troy. His eyes light up, because he gets a decent tip out of the evening, and we have beer. It's very likely to be in the Sharktooth Tavern, in the TradeWinds Resort, which is in St. Pete's Beach in Florida.

Unfortunately, Mark cannot make it this year, but John Dyer's going to be there, and in many people's eyes, it's the same experience. I'll be there, as well, of course.

We would love to buy you a drink, and to say hello. Just please tap us on the shoulder, tell us you listen to the podcast, whisper the magic word, roll up one trouser leg, and do the magic secret handshake, and we'll buy you a beer, and have a good evening, like we did last year.

Do join us, so that will be Wednesday, the 4th of October, at the Sharktooth Tavern at the TradeWinds resort. TradeWinds Island Grand is the official name of the hotel in St. Pete's Beach. We'd love to see you there.

I'm hoping that our guest, our interviewee today, will be there; Kevin Tumlinson. He's somebody that gets about. We often bump into him around the world, at various events.

We spoke to Kevin, because Draft2Digital is a very well-known platform. A lot of you understand what it does, but I do get Kevin to go through the 101 of Draft2Digital at the beginning, for those of you who are not familiar with it.

We're speaking to Kevin at this time, because they've got quite an exciting development in an area that is dominated by one big name, but like all these areas, is growing at the moment, and there'll be different ways of doing it.

We're talking about audio books. At the moment, there's a couple of fish, and one very big fish in the sea, but Draft2Digital are partnering up, and

they've got an announcement, which I'm delighted to say they came to the SPF podcast first. We recorded this a little while ago, so let's hear from Kevin, and then we'll pick up after the interview.

Kevin Tumlinson: At our heart, we are a publishing aggregator, which basically means that you can upload your manuscript as a Word document, and we'll do a free conversion to the popular ebook formats, and we can actually distribute that book to our catalog of book distributors worldwide.

We've got a growing list of distributors out there. We hit most of the majors. We hit Apple iBooks, we hit Kobo, we hit Barnes & Noble, and a bunch of others you may, or may not, have heard of, but we can put you in quite a few markets. We're adding new distributors all the time, so it's an exciting and growing business, actually.

James Blatch: It is a necessary part of it, for the modern self-published author.

There's a lot to do, there's a lot to take care of, from getting your book to market, and to have a one stop shop for the vast majority of the various places you want your book to be for sale on is extremely useful.

Kevin Tumlinson: Right. Yeah, we have other tools that are part of our development here. We want to make things very easy for the author.

Our conversion tool I mentioned, we can convert to ePub. We're making some improvements to that. We're going to be announcing something very soon, that's very cool.

We just recently made improvements to the print layout tool that we have, where you can do your automated layout for print, in whatever trim size that you prefer. You can take that file, upload it to Create Space, to Lightning Source, to anybody you use for POD.

All these tools in the background, the universal book links, all this stuff, it's all really exciting stuff. We're constantly tinkering under the hood, to make sure that we're building something authors can use to grow and build their careers. Get that author career off the ground, and moving in the right trajectory.

James Blatch: Great. That's a great thing. It fits in well with the way that the self publishing community works, which is mutual support.

Just to reiterate, all the formatting stuff is completely free to use. You don't make a penny out of that, but people could simply only use that service from you, if they wanted.

Kevin Tumlinson: Right. You can use this without ever distributing through us. If you want to use this to generate ARCs, for example, or if you want to generate a book that goes to a vendor directly, that's fine.

If you're exclusive, if you're in KDP Select, for example, you can use us to convert your book to both ePub, and MOBI formats, and you can upload either of those to Amazon.

You don't have to use us for distribution. That is the only way we make money, is if you distribute through us. We take a royalty, but other than that, what we really want is to make sure that we're empowering authors to get out there and build their careers.

We understand that sometimes there are reasons, valid reasons, why you may want to go exclusive, or go direct to a vendor. We want to make sure we support that, but we do kind of hope you distribute through us, because we like money.

James Blatch: Yeah, because at the end of the day, there has to be a business there, and you're not going to be able to do the rest of it. That's a bit like

us, as well. At the end of the day, we do need people to buy courses to keep SPF going, but that's a huge amount of what do, including this podcast, of course, which is free to consume.

Okay, well let's get onto what we've got you on today to talk about, which is a new agreement you have. A new linkup on the audio books side of things.

I'll get you to explain it first, but I think people should understand from the beginning, this is significant, because the market is dominated at the moment, and there's not a lot of flexibility.

Your new linkup threatens to change that.

Kevin Tumlinson: Right. The big announcement is that, as of July 18th, we're going to have a partnership with Findaway. They're an audio book production company.

They've created a new service called Voices. We're partnering with them to basically make it very easy for our authors to port their content over, and begin the production process with Findaway Voices.

Right now, the dominant company that you mentioned, is Amazon's Audible. ACX is the program that a lot of authors are familiar with, for getting their books basically produced as audio books.

Right now, those guys completely dominate this marketplace, which has its ups and downs. Mostly downs, though, from the perspective of the author.

Audible controls all pricing, it controls all distribution, and they demand some exclusivity if you go with certain aspects of the program.

What we've been trying to do, is build something that can essentially redefine that audiobook industry, and make terms more favorable for the

indie author. That's what we've been working towards. This partnership is going to go a long way towards empowering authors.

James Blatch: Yeah. That is significant. We've chatted before about this area, but the dominance of Audible, and the ACX platform, I suppose, is almost accidental. It's just kind of grown up there, it's been the one stop shop, a bit like you are trying to be, in a different field.

But that's no reason why it should be like that forever.

Kevin Tumlinson: In a lot of ways, just like with eBooks, we have Amazon to thank for opening up the audio book market.

It's been great on a lot of levels, because the ACX program, things like their royalty split, that opened things up so that authors could actually produce their books very little, or no overhead.

The problem is, that doesn't work out so great for the narrators, a lot of the time. A lot of narrators are starting to shy away from doing those deals. Those who are still doing it, sometimes aren't very skilled at the work, so the pool of talent has been trimmed down.

We want to change that, and there's another aspect to Audible that we're looking to change, and it's kind of the sacred cow of Audible, but we're trying to break the credit model that they use.

Basically, the credit model is bad for everybody, when you really start to look at it closely.

It's bad for the readers, because they tend to only get books a couple of books at a time. Depending on the program you're paying for, as a listener, you might get one or two credits a month, maybe three. You might potentially buy more credits here and there, but for the most part, you're

only going to download the number of books you have credits for each month.

You tend to only download really lengthy books, because you don't want to waste your credit on something that only lasts an hour. You're looking for books that are 24 hours long, 30 years long. You're wanting something that has some meat on the bone.

There's a limitation to the readers, there. There's a limitation on what they can actually get. There's a limitation on how many books they can get per month.

For the authors themselves, the real problem for us, this limits what we can actually put up ... With this huge investment, this huge overhead of production, we don't want to waste money on something that's not going to sell. Our short format work isn't going to sell on Audible, because people aren't going to invest in it.

What we're trying to do, we're trying to break this credit model so that ... Basically, we're offering price controlling. **We want the author to be able to control their price, which is something Audible does not let you do at this point.** They dictate the price.

What we want, and what we think is going to work well, we want authors to be able to control their price, even to the point of offering a book for free.

With Findaway Voices, that's an option. You can price all the way down to zero. You can price at \$2.99, \$4.99, whatever is comfortable for you. If you notice, those prices are vastly different from what you get, if you try to buy a book direct on Audible. You're usually going to pay 30 bucks, 25 bucks, something along those lines.

The hope here, and the strategy here, we think that if the authors are able to control their pricing, new readers will come along, because they'll be

willing to try an author out. **An untried author is much more attractive if it only costs a couple of bucks to listen to that book.**

But we also get the advantage of being able to do short-form work and sell that directly. This is exciting to me, because I'm thinking in terms of serialized short fiction, right? Which had its heyday in eBooks for a while, and is somewhat diminished, but now we've got a whole new open playing field, where if you do have the overhead to invest, you could produce something ... hire someone to narrate for you. Short format work is a little more accessible for the average author to be able to record themselves, as well.

There's no cost, no overhead at all, if you bring in your own audio book files to Findaway Voices. Now we have an opportunity for authors to produce their own work, control this stuff again, no gatekeepers, and the only Findaway makes money at that point, is on distribution, just like D2D.

We can actually take these short stories and novellas we have, especially the serialized stuff, and maximize our royalty potential there.

Whereas before, on Audible, the best we could hope for, is to bundle all that stuff into one volume, and really take a hit on how much profit we can make off of it. We don't control the pricing, so you know Audible's going to price it at whatever, and short story collections and that sort of thing, really don't do so hot in Audible, on audio book sales. Now we're opening that up.

James Blatch: There's a few things to pick up on there.

The first thing is that I think this system sounds much more author and reader orientated, than the existing system. Again, let's pay credit to Amazon for breaking the ground, and making everything possible, and it will adapt in the future, there no doubt, if this is significant, and it sounds like it's going to be.

The idea of being able to put shorts ... and revive shorts ... I say revive, it's been almost impossible to really get shorts working in the audio market, but that's a real possibility.

You say they've diminished a little bit, maybe the stats are there, but there are significant authors making a good living through shorts, at the moment.

Kevin Tumlinson: Well, that is true. Yeah, I didn't mean to imply that you can't do that. I interviewed Dean Wesley Smith, and he makes a lot of money off of short fiction, including doing his bundles. Smith Monthly, and that sort of thing.

James Blatch: It depends on how you consume your audio books. It might actually suit you.

If you have to commute every day, that's 30 minutes, you might love the idea of listening to a short that's going to last one or two days, rather than weeks.

Kevin Tumlinson: I know I would. I'm doing my thing. I'm writing, I'm producing podcasts, I'm doing the marketing work for Draft2Digital.

I don't get as many opportunities to just chill out with some fiction, as I used to. I don't have a commute. I don't have drive time anymore, so something in the 15 to 30 minute range, where I could digest a short story or a novella, would be kind of nice for me, personally.

I think a lot of listeners are going to be in that same boat. Short, digestible ... And serialized fiction is perfect. If you become skilled at doing your own stuff, you can keep your overhead very low, and just continuously produce these audio books.

Findaway will help you with this, by the way.

James Blatch: Technical help and advice, and so on?

Kevin Tumlinson: Technical help, right. Exactly.

James Blatch: Because a lot of people don't really know where to start, with that sort of thing.

Kevin Tumlinson: Right.

James Blatch: Obviously, you and I are seasoned professionals, but...

Kevin Tumlinson: Exactly. Right, yeah. Although I have yet to actually record an actual audio book. It's a lot more work than you think.

James Blatch: It's a lot more work, and also it's very different. I'm happy doing voiceover.

I don't actually think I would be happy doing a book, even my book, because it requires a bit of acting.

Kevin Tumlinson: There's a performance component there. You don't have to go overboard with it. Some people are very good at doing this, and there are nuances to it that make it an enjoyable listen, but it doesn't necessary have to be high performance.

The other side of that, by the way, we know that the biggest barrier here is the cost of production. Sometimes you can pay multiple thousands of dollars to produce an audio book.

Findaway, when they approached us about this, one of the things we brought up, was this cost, mentioning that a lot of authors don't have that kind of revenue, or that sort of money to throw at a production.

We were very pleased with their response, because they're working hard to figure out ways to make this more affordable for the authors. The goal is to get it down to, not thousands of dollars, but hundreds of dollars.

What can we do to make things simpler and easier, and more cost-effective? Narrators need to make their living too, so nobody's trying to cut narrators out. But if there are ways, maybe incentive programs, maybe ...

We've talked about production kits. We've talked about all kinds of ideas to make this easier for the author, in terms of both time and money. I'm very excited about that.

The reason we got into this partnership in the first place, is Findaway is very much like Draft2Digital in the way it approaches the author. The author isn't so much our customer, as they are a partner.

We want to make sure that whatever we're doing is centered on, "How can we help this author succeed?" Findaway, they're very generous about all that. They get it, so we were happy to partner with them.

James Blatch: That's great. I can see, potentially, us even adding a little session, maybe, to our 101 course on the basic setup for voiceover. We've got a couple of our guys, John Loxton comes to mind. I've actually stood in his little voiceover. He's got a fantastic voiceover booth in his house in one of the Carolinas. South, I think.

Kevin Tumlinson: Yeah.

James Blatch: I thought it was in North. Anyway, it's something that he does, and it works for him. I think he's going to be one of the people who takes advantage of the flexibility here, which brings me onto the next significant point, and probably the point that most people ... that their ears would have pricked up about, is the pricing.

This is the opportunity to do with audio books, what we advise people to do with their eBooks, which is to give one away at the beginning, at least a portion of a book.

There's no reason why that system of having somebody ... Because this is a different audience.

Some people only listen to audio books, so you've got the opportunity of getting somebody hooked on your character and your story, and getting them as a customer for life.

Kevin Tumlinson: Right. To me, this is the biggest game changer. We've been preaching this marketing method for years in the ebook circles.

It's very difficult to do this sort of thing with physical books, print and hardback, but we're talking about another digital format with a different type of audience.

But the marketing approach could still work. I believe it will work. We've just never been empowered to do that before.

Having the ability to do prices all the way down to zero, you can do first in series free, introduce a listener to your serialized fiction, for example. If they like it, they'll go on to the next one, particularly if they only cost a couple of bucks to get the next installment.

Whereas, right now, the process is, someone else controls your pricing, someone else controls basically every aspect of that audio book, and unless they really enjoyed it, they're unlikely to keep going. They're unlikely to use that next credit.

Then there's a huge gap between this month and next month. If I use my two credits, and get two of your books, that cuts me out for 30 days. I might

listen to both those books over a weekend, if I'm really interested in them, but now I'm losing momentum.

There are multiple opportunities here for the author to really gain some control, which is always good for the author, and good for the reader, too. It keeps the pricing down, means more books per month. I can purchase and listen to more books per month. I can discover new authors. It's really the typical sort of win/win/win scenario that everyone always likes.

James Blatch: Yeah, yeah. Absolutely. Like I alluded to earlier, it fits into a kind of culture, I think, of the self-publishing industry, of things help each other.

You're not a fan of the credit system.

Kevin Tumlinson: I'm not.

James Blatch: **You've thought this through, and you can't see any redeeming features.**

Kevin Tumlinson: Well, I can see some redeeming features. I use Audible credits, you know. What it did was make audio books affordable for everybody for a long time.

It's just that time has moved on, and things have evolved. It was not a bad system. It was a great system, because otherwise, at the time that they introduced it, you were having to buy CDs of books. You might pay 60 bucks for a book.

Whereas, I pay 22 dollars a month, and I can get two audio books per month. That was fantastic for its time. Sometimes you can stack those, you can kind of multiple credits. You get special deals. That's great, but we're in a different era now. We're at an era where media's consumed much more quickly, where people want things on demand. You have services like

Playster that have popped up, that offers a Netflix model for everything, but also audio books.

There are multiple opportunities for the author in all this, now that things are changing. We see that as an opportunity.

We need to get in there and push those buttons, break that credit model, so that both readers and authors benefit. I should point out, by the way, Findaway distributes to Audible and iTunes, as well.

James Blatch: I was going to ask that. Actually, from a consumer point of view, because one of the problems sometimes when new services comes along, is the lack of integration, and the fragmentation of using it, which ultimately can stop something being successful.

But Findaway, it's not a unique little app that you have to download and only listen to stuff through that.

Kevin Tumlinson: What's very cool is, Findaway has 170 plus markets. More distributors than I can really even keep in my head. The whole point here is to get your book as far and wide ... is a wide distribution model. Just like eBooks.

Of course, Audible is included in that, and so is iTunes, because those are the major markets where people get their audio books. You don't miss out on that.

You're going to be able to get the free promo codes, just like you do if you go direct Audible. All that is included and rolled in. There's no exclusivity, at all.

If you use ACX to produce your book, particularly if you use their royalty splitting model they have, you are essentially locked-in for seven years. You can't distribute your book anywhere but Audible for seven years. Not to

mention, if you do their royalty split, you're now locked-in to sharing that royalty for the lifetime of that audiobook. That narrator will always own a chunk of that book.

That's one of the reasons why Findaway opted not to go with a royalty splitting model, and instead working on lowering the overhead of initial production.

Yes, it's expensive to produce an audio book, which is exactly why you should own as much of the royalties as you can on the back end, so that you're not splitting this up with someone for the lifetime of that book.

Findaway pays 80% of their royalty. For everyone but Audible, it's based on the price you set for the book, so no matter where they're distributing it ... Short of Audible, Audible always makes things a little difficult ... but, wherever they're distributing it, whatever they make, if they get 25%, if they get 45%, whatever the cut happens to be, and I have a whole blog post that breaks this out, but you get 80% of that royalty.

In reality, once you start figuring things out, you're probably going to get around between 25 and 45% yourself. That typically beats Audible, the rate you get on royalty split, in particular, so you tend to make more back per sale.

Since you're able to control your pricing, you can use that, leverage that, to attract more listeners on more platforms worldwide. There's a real potential you can make back your overhead very quickly, which is great.

James Blatch: Yeah, yeah. You've got two types of people. People who know how they're going to get their book recorded. Whether they're doing it themselves, or they got a system, somebody they're paying, or whatever.

People who don't know where to start, or that maybe they haven't done this before, and they've got platforms, obviously, ACX, etc., available to them. Is that something that they've got to then work out?

Can they go straight to Findaway, and in addition to a guide, Findaway giving them a route to getting it recorded?

Kevin Tumlinson: Right. Yeah, okay. The process here, and I'm going to cover this from the Draft2Digital perspective.

The process through us would be, especially if you're already a Draft2Digital author, but whether you are, or not, you can upload your eBooks to Draft2Digital.

Set up your account, get all your information straight, and use our free conversion tools, whatever you want, even if you're not distributing through us. You do not have to distribute through us to use this service. That's something that's come up, so I want to make it clear. You do not have to use Draft2Digital as a distributor.

There's going to be an easy button, which is one of the things we love to do.

As soon as you've done your conversion, you'll be offered a couple different format options. You can choose to do a print layout, which is also free. You can also choose to start your production.

What we'll do is port over all your information, everything about the book, everything about you. We'll essentially automatically set up an account with Findaway Voices, and then the whole process of finding a narrator for your book, and getting things into production starts.

They'll qualify you, and your book. They want to know more about what type of book it is, the genre, the tone. They'll ask you a lot of qualifying questions.

Then they'll also talk to you about budget. You can determine what's your range. Then they'll take all this, and they have a pool of narrators, and they'll put this out there, and get some auditions for you, so that you can listen in to a clip of your own book being read, and determine who you like, who you don't, whatever.

There's a series of tools on their site. There's a calculator, which is pretty cool. They have a formula. It's based on 9,000 words per finished hour. Per finished hour is something you're going hear a lot in audio book production.

The idea is, it's that final hour. If the book is three hours long, when it's completed, that's three finished hours, right? They have a calculator that will let you determine how much it's going to cost, based on the rates you get from your narrator, and how many units you have sell at what price, in order to make back your overhead. You'll be able to calculate that based on the royalties.

All this stuff is all tools geared towards making this easier, and more comfortable for the author, which is our primary mission. Every time a new aspect of this comes up, by the way, I get stupid excited about it. This is one of those missing pieces.

I have three audio books available. But I have 40 books, and I would love to produce all of them, but it's a nightmare. As great as ACX has been, for me it's a huge hassle to deal with it. It's a clunky system. It's not geared toward me. It's not really geared toward someone who doesn't have the time to babysit the whole project.

James Blatch: And there's no doubt, it has put off authors in droves, in the past. Some of them have started a project, and maybe got one or two done, as you say, and some have not really got even that far.

When you think, how many self-published authors are there, who knows a definitive answer to that question? But hundreds of thousands. A growing percentage of that suddenly finding this system accessible and enabling, and this could be a waterfall moment. Watershed, waterfall moment?

Kevin Tumlinson: Watershed, yeah.

James Blatch: Watershed moment, but I was thinking of a waterfall of gushing amounts of ...

Kevin Tumlinson: Could be that too. It's so much bigger than I am able to convey, honestly.

Because one of the biggest benefits to being an indie author, is this complete lack of gatekeepers. We have full control. If I'm so inclined, and so talented, I can not only write in my book, I can edit it, I can do the layout, I can do the conversions, I can do the cover, I can do the marketing, I can control, literally, every aspect of it, if I'm inclined to do so.

When I came to audio books, we had a gatekeeper again. There was always some form of barrier. If you wanted the affordable overhead, something that a lot of authors really need, unless you're already selling big, it's an expensive process to get your book produced as audio.

Now we're taking down that barrier, or opening it up. Price controlling allows the author to have all sorts of extended options they didn't have at their disposal before.

Working with a narrator, you don't have to use Findaway to find your narrator either. You can come in with your own audio files. If you are not

exclusive to Audible, you can take your Audible audio file and use it, as long as there's no exclusivity deal there.

You've got so many more options now. The cost of production is still going to be a barrier to some authors, but we're working on that too. We think that that's going to be reduced soon.

James Blatch: There's going to be a side industry that comes up. If there's enough demand for it, the industry will find itself, and people like I just mentioned, like John Loxton, someone like him could even start making his booth pay for itself by doing other people's VO and stuff, as well. I keep mentioning John. I'm giving him lots of work to do now.

Kevin Tumlinson: He's getting some love.

James Blatch: Yeah, he's getting some love. He's also got to get on with it.

Look, the time's flying by, lets get onto ...

What's the timetable on this, Kevin? Is this implemented now? Is it available now? Is it going to be launched soon?

Kevin Tumlinson: The official launch is July 18th.

James Blatch: After that. Because it's the 13th as we record this, yeah.

Kevin Tumlinson: Okay. So yes, it's already available to you, future listener. You don't necessarily have to go through Draft2Digital and do the conversions and everything, if you want to get into it.

If you want, and you still want to be kind to D2D, I do appreciate it. You can go do FindawayVoices.com/d2d. D, the numeral two, D. That will credit us for having sent you there. The point here is, it's not even necessary to be a Draft2Digital author to do this.

The partnership is, we want to make it easier for the authors, so if you come in through us, we can do all the account creation, transfer over ... I think we're even transferring over tax information, everything that's necessary for you to have your account set up, to just make it a one click kind of process.

At this point, as of now, as of listening to this, it's available. Of course, if you have any questions, we're all about customer support. We're all about author support, I should say. You can pop in and ask us.

Ask us on Twitter, email us, whatever, and we'll answer any questions you have. Happy to do that, of course.

James Blatch: Yeah. Just give us the URL for D2D.

Kevin Tumlinson: Draft2Digital is draft2digital.com. I think we got the near miss on everything, so even if you write it out, you should still get to us. You can pop in there, hit that support button, and ask us some questions if you like. That's fine by us.

Of course, you can follow us on Twitter at @Draft2Digital. Follow me, if you want @KevinTumlinson, I'll be happy to answer any questions that you have.

James Blatch: Super, Kevin. Well, we'll keep an eye on the social media, and our groups, and your groups, and see how the early adopters get on with it, and they can feedback into our group.

Kevin Tumlinson: Yeah, I'm excited. Especially your group. The authors who come to you guys to learn the ins and outs of this business, I really think they're going to appreciate this sort of new tool in their belt. This new ability they're going to have.

Audiobooks are a great additional revenue stream. We've never had this kind of control over it before. I'm so excited to see what the creative minds in your group are going to do with it. I know they're going to think of things that I didn't think of.

And when you do, please tell me, because I'll talk about it. I'll let other authors know, so ... Very exciting.

James Blatch: Absolutely. We'll do that. Kevin, thank you so much for joining us.

Kevin Tumlinson: Any time, man.

James Blatch: Kevin Tumlinson. So first of all, Mark, how do audiobooks go for you? Is it an important part of your business?

Mark Dawson: It is, actually. I've got royalties from Audible, they pay quarterly, and I got royalties last week. I make decent high five figures a year from audiobooks.

James Blatch: As in high five.

Mark Dawson: High five, yeah. It's pretty good. I've done some books with ACX when I got started, which is a pretty good platform to use. Because I got a bit too busy, I decided I'd just sell them all to Audible, and they could produce it. Also, because I'm fiendish.

I think if they paid me a bit of money to buy the rights, they'd also have skin in the game, so they've been promoting. Of course, Audible is also their store, so that has worked out quite well.

Most of my Milton books usually have bestseller tags at Audible. Yeah, it's a big and increasing sort of revenue for me.

James Blatch: At the beginning, did you know how to start, and where to go with it? In fact, I don't think you did, because I think at the very beginning, you asked me to voice one of your books.

Mark Dawson: I did. I had no idea, doing that.

James Blatch: You didn't know where to start.

Mark Dawson: I know. I did. No, that's very true, I did ask you to do that.

In the early days, I went to ACX, because I'd seen the Blatch performance, and wasn't impressed, and decided to go to a pro.

To be honest, that pro wasn't the best. He wasn't the best job I had for that particular book, but then I found someone else, who did my Beatrix Rose books, did a really, really good job on those, and subsequent to that, I went to Audible.

Ever since, we've had the same narrator for the Milton books. A guy called David Thorpe. He was a really talented artist. He could do all the accents. When I'm writing the books now, I'm kind of thinking, "Which accent should I try and get David to do next?"

I haven't managed to trip him up yet, so he does that. They take care of the production, they take care of the quality control, and the promotion, as well, so that's worked quite well for me.

It's not something that everyone can do. I was selling strongly when I went to Audible, so it wasn't a pundit for them, really.

So what Draft2Digital have done, and what's possible with ACX, is to make it much easier for all writers to get their books up on audio. I would recommend that people look into that, because it's one of the fastest growing areas of the book industry now. We can all go to our phone, and

we can download books and listen to them, within 30 seconds, so it's a really excellent platform to get on.

James Blatch: Yeah. Excellent. Well, I love Draft2Digital. I love the energy of the place, and Kevin exemplifies that.

Mark Dawson: And the beards.

James Blatch: And the beards. There are a lot of beards in Draft2Digital. There's a lot of beards in SPF.

Mark Dawson: Actually, John's just not shaven, he's just unclean. Yeah, I've got a beard, I've grown a beard.

James Blatch: I picked you up from the railway station and said, "Mark's crossed the line from unshaven to a beard."

Mark Dawson: It's intentional now.

James Blatch: Yeah.

John Dyer: Go team.

James Blatch: That's because everybody in GQ magazine now has a beard.

Mark Dawson: Well, it's only after I had one.

James Blatch: I see.

Mark Dawson: I'm setting trends, as you.

James Blatch: Okay, good. I just want to mention before we go, we have a range of books available to try and help you with your writing, with your

selling and marketing, and one of them in particular we're going to mention, because it's gone incredibly well.

I look at the download stats, and one book does stand out, and that is the Five Editing Maxims. It's not difficult to see why, when you read the book. It's a really insightful look.

We had a fabulous interview, I think, with Jenny Parrot a few weeks ago, on the Podcast, which went down extremely well, as well, because it goes right to the heart of what we do, in terms of writing. Listening to somebody talk about the nitty gritty, and cutting through all the question marks we have in our head about what you should be doing, and how you should be developing a story.

That book is great for that, and it's gone down really well. It's called Five Editing Maxims. It's got a sub-title, as well, which I can't remember now.

Mark Dawson: Me neither.

John Dyer: How to write a page-turner.

James Blatch: How to write a page turner. Well, done, John Dyer. If you want to download that, you can get it at SelfPublishingFormula.com/maxims. M-A-X-I-M-S. If you haven't done so already, I'd thoroughly recommend that.

Mark Dawson: I hate doing this, but I've correct John. He very rarely says anything. But he's actually got it wrong. It's Mark Dawson's self-publishing formula, that's me by the way, on writing a pager turner. Five editing maxims to make your book irresistible.

James Blatch: Ooh.

John Dyer: Irresistible.

James Blatch: Yeah. It was pretty close.

Mark Dawson: It was close.

James Blatch: You know, for JD, that was quite close.

Mark Dawson: Close. Close only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades.

James Blatch: Oh, there we go. Is that like a management speak? We're cooking on gas.

Mark Dawson: Probably.

James Blatch: Second place is first loser.

Mark Dawson: I feel dirty now. That's horrible.

James Blatch: Well, thank you very much, on that dirty note, for listening to the podcast this week, and watching us on YouTube. You can find us on all of the usual places.

It would be lovely if you left us a review, either on YouTube ... or comment on YouTube, or a review on iTunes. We always love to hear that.

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