

PODCAST 31 UNDER THE COVERS WITH STUART BACHE, BOOK COVER DESIGNER

James Blatch: The Self Publishing Formula is looking for beta testers for its 101 course on self publishing. After the success of the advanced Facebook ads for authors course, Mark Dawson is now creating a course aimed solely at authors who are starting out. If you're trying to launch your first book or trying to become commercially successful with your books, then this course is for you. It will cover everything you need to set yourself up for success as an indie author. Beta testers will get the course for free in return for feedback. You can sign up for your chance to become a tester at selfpublishingformula.com and we'll notify those selected. Hello and welcome to podcast number 31 from The Self Publishing Formula.

Automated: Two writers One just starting out, the other a best-seller. 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 Mark. Well we're in America, aren't we?

Mark: Are we?

James Blatch: We are because this is the 23rd of September and by the magic of podcasting, we're actually in America at the moment, although we're not.

Mark: Yes.

James Blatch: We're obviously in the UK because we're recording this just before we leave. I'm getting a flight tomorrow and Mark's getting a flight

next week, but we are going to be at NINK at the point that this podcast is released, and yeah, we can tell you we're going to gather some material. The last time we did out and about, our guest was London Book Fair, but we're going to get our microphones out, so to speak, at NINK. We'll always do what we always do, which is try and find, seek out, the value information, the tidbits that are making a difference to people's marketing and their book-writing and try and bring that to you in an episode. I guess that's going to be the next one, so we'll aim to have that out on the 30th of September.

Mark: Yes. You'll be editing frantically on the plane back home.

James Blatch: Yeah, exactly. I never stop working, as you know. The other thing we're going to do, John Dyer and I are taking the opportunity to visit as many writers as we can in the States. We're just going to talk to each one of those and ask them a similar set of formatted questions, really focused on what's working for them at the moment. A bit of where they're putting their money in terms of advertising and what sort of revenues they're receiving and also just little bits about what tweaks they've made that have made things better for them.

We'll also talk to people, the questions we always like to hear, about how people write, how often they write, or whether they plan, whether they're pantsers, and all that stuff.

We're going to bring you that episode, which should be a good flavor of lots of different writers and lots of different authors recorded in the States. We'll bring you that episode, around the 7th of October, so a couple of specials from America coming up in the next few weeks.

As I say, at the moment, we're still in the UK, and we have a great interview today. We've got a really interesting area, which is not one that perhaps naturally or comes naturally to writers. It's more in the creative side in terms

of artwork, and that is we're going to talk to somebody who does book covers, aren't we, Mark?

Mark: We are, yes. We're going to be talking to Stuart Bache. He's my cover designer and Stuart and I suppose we go back 3 or 4 years now.

A little story before we get into the interview. When I started doing self-publishing with the Black Mile and the Impostor, the first two books that I published myself, I got a very, very talented artistic friend of mine who actually painted covers for me based on the kind of pulp covers of the 1950s, and they're really beautiful. You can see how good they are. The artwork appealed to me. I thought it was great, but that didn't necessarily mean that it was translating for potential readers, and of course, that is the main goal of having a great cover, is to persuade people to give your books a chance and read them.

I stepped back and I decided that I'd try and find someone to do a re-jacketing job on these books for me. I came across Stuart Bache. I don't remember exactly where it was now. I think I probably saw another cover that I liked and then kind of reverse engineered it and found my way back to him.

I asked him to do the covers, or new covers for the two traditionally-published books that I'd had published in 2000. The originals are absolutely awful. I would swear apart from the clean rating for the podcast and I'd rather avoid that. But they were really dreadful. Stuart took a look at them, agreed with me, and then produced two covers that I just thought were stunning. I think he drew those ones for me. They were very very commercial.

The books immediately started to sell and I was very happy to commission him to work on those others that I mentioned and then eventually the John Milton books. He's done all of my covers since then. Probably, I don't know, 15 covers I guess? Something like that all in all.

He's also commissioned by Amazon Thomasson Mercer to work on the books that I sold to Amazon and he's got loads of experience. He worked in the traditional industry for ages as he'll say in the interview. Then last year branched out, went solo, and has been just completely knocking it out of the park with his new business. We're delighted to be able to work with him and delighted to bring this interview as well.

James Blatch: Yeah absolutely, he's a lovely guy as well, Stuart, and couldn't happen to a nicer guy but he's very focused on commercial success. Just in case you're wondering, we've split the interview into two. Half of it is about using somebody like Stuart and how he approaches his work and how he ensures that the cover is going to do the job, as Mark was referring to, rather than just look pretty.

The second half of the interview is actually about people who haven't quite got the pockets yet to employ a professional like Stuart. Stuart brilliantly, and very charitably, talks through the process and the sort of things that you can do if you want to do a bit of design yourself.

Mark: One thing worth mentioning is that Stuart is involved in our Self-Publishing 101 course and he's delivering a module on cover design. I've looked at the bits he's put together today and it's absolutely brilliant. Almost worth whatever we would decide to charge for the course in itself so I suppose an excuse for me just to say that if you want to get on the wait-list for that, just go over to selfpublishingformula.com and you can sign up. That is definitely going to be something to look forward to.

James Blatch: Yeah we'll give you a little update on where we are with 101 if you're interested in that after the interview. Let's hear from Stuart. Well hello Stuart and welcome to the Self Publishing Formula Podcast. Thank you very much indeed for joining us.

Stuart Bache: Oh thank you James, thank you for asking me.

James Blatch: You are the... should we say the illustrator in chief to Mark Dawson?

Stuart Bache: Yes that's true. Yeah, his very own art director.

James Blatch: Yeah exactly. He's such a star now, probably has a trailer with makeup in it as well.

Stuart Bache: He does.

James Blatch: Let's talk in a little bit more detail about what you do and how you do it.

Two things I'd quite like to get out of this interview. One is the creative process, how you approach it, what sort of information you need from a client and how you create the end product. You know, how that whole system works.

Stuart Bache: Sure.

James Blatch: The other thing that we'd like to talk about, how people could do this themselves. Some advice from a professional about how they could approach this, because not everybody can afford a design service, certainly at the early stage of their careers.

Let's start first of all with you as working with and for an author. What information do you get from an author and then how do you translate that into something that they're going to be happy with?

Stuart Bache: It's something that I've had to learn over the years. I've worked in the industry for over 10 years now and the things I've picked up from briefs that were written when I worked at HarperCollins and places like that.

Other than the synopsis obviously, it's obviously very important to know what the book's about. But places and objects and character traits. It's very important actually to have an idea of what the landscape is going to be.

I would say most important to me is comparative and competitive titles. So other covers that are out there that fit within the genre of your book, your novel, or nonfiction even, because this gives me an idea of what I'm designing for. What I'm designing against, what I'm trying to stand out from, and also what genre I'm fitting into because the most important aspect about design, especially books design, is familiarity, especially when it comes to trade and mass market fiction.

James Blatch: You're thinking quite commercially from the beginning. Who's the competition? What are they doing and how is this design going to stand out and catch the eye ahead of its competition?

Stuart Bache: Absolutely. I know for the vast majority of people I'll be designing E-books so it'll be on places like Amazon, places like that. I have learned from places like Waterstones in the UK, bookstores like that, how they actually sell their books and how they place them on shelves and on their tables and they all base it on familiarity. A book will be sitting there next to books that are similar actually aesthetically as well as what's inside the books because it makes people who may have bought that book look around at those other books and think, "Okay. Well if I like this one then I'll like that one".

That's how it works when we shop. It's a split second emotion or thought when we see something that we like and if there's a familiarity to it. Things like Lee Child, there are many books that look very similar to Lee Child, for a good reason and that is because they have similar content. Or because someone wants someone to feel a similar emotion to it, that is, that if you like Lee Child, you will like this book as well.

James Blatch: So you start from that point of view?

Stuart Bache: Yes.

James Blatch: You also, presumably, you may also have a fixed idea of what they want. Or do they more than often come to you and look to you to generate some creative ideas from scratch?

Stuart Bache: I think it can be a mixture, I mean a lot of the time people when they're hiring any professional, you want them to be the person who comes up with the ideas and to actually puts the whole thing together. But you do occasionally get someone who has already got a very firm idea in their mind of what they want because they obviously, when you're writing one of the reasons you start writing probably is because you enjoy a certain author or a certain genre and you want to be part of that and of course you're going to have a lot of those books and a lot of those covers. So you've probably got a good idea yourself what sells and what works well and what you like.

From my perspective, I think that's great. I like to have ideas and obviously who's going to know a book better than the person who's written it? I also would always throw in my own concepts as well based on what I think is working and what's doing really well this year and what's popular.

James Blatch: Then your next step. You've had this conversation, you've done a bit of research in the market, you then will do what?

Do you put together one design and get some feedback at an early stage or do you put together three or four ideas for somebody?

Stuart Bache: Always, always a minimum of three. That's how I work too. I mean sometimes it'll be more but I always do at least three concepts and they will be different as well. So they'll use different typography, different colors. A completely different concept.

I try my best to give a variety and hopefully if maybe one of the ideas isn't exactly right then maybe there's something in one of them or all of them which will spark the next stage of the process.

James Blatch: You've got a great website stuartbache.co.uk and you've got quite a selection of designs. There are some, I have to say, really stand out fabulous designs that you've worked on in the past.

The one that really catches the eye is the twin girls, the SK Tremayne Ice Twins novel and one of them is slightly fading and it's a beautifully put together cover. Had did that come about?

Stuart Bache: It was quite lucky really. You never know how things are going to work. I was working at HarperCollins at the time so I was senior designer there and the brief came on my desk. And occasionally we'd all work on a few similar projects. The main crux of the novel is, it's not quite thriller, it's not actually supernatural, but there is a sense of both of those things.

I looked as I always do at what was out there and what I'd be fighting with and against and there's people like Peter May and Peter James and people like that who the typestyle is very bold and there isn't a lot of effect on it, it's just very strong bit of typography. Then the image is usually muted with a strong color. So it's very very basic stuff but that's where I started from. The story is about these two girls, twins, who one passes away and the family move to an island up in Scotland, I believe, to a lighthouse and there's a twist. And this is on the back of the cover so I'm not spoiling anything here. There's no spoilers. But the one girl, it's a case of where which one died and why did the one twin die over the other and that kind of thing. I felt it had a bit of a TV feel to it. There was that movie, BBC drama feel to the design, that's what I tried to add anyways. An extra element and a bit of narrative which I think is important.

James Blatch: I absolutely love that design and I'm sure that SK Tremayne would have been delighted with it as well.

Stuart Bache: It was a bestseller, it was bestseller twice.

James Blatch: Well you know I'm going to say Stuart, I think your design probably contributed to that because it's difficult to take your eyes off of that and not think that you want to know more. Which I guess is a key message you want to give out in a book cover.

Stuart Bache: Yeah of course.

James Blatch: I also should mention you've got some pretty big names on this.

John le Carré, which I guess you were doing through HarperCollins?

Stuart Bache: I was when I was a Junior actually so it was a long time ago.

James Blatch: But you did the cover for one of his most famous novels, Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy?

Stuart Bache: Yes.

James Blatch: That's a big responsibility isn't it, someone hands you that?

Stuart Bache: Yeah it was massive. Like I said, I was a Junior at the time, my art director had been working on John le Carré for years but he, being the art director, had loads of other things. He'd worked with him several times so he just wanted to get a fresh approach I think. So I got a chance to work on the list, it's quite a large list as well, but it was great, it was actually fantastic. I got to meet him, David Cornwell, which is John le Carré's real name but I'm sure everyone knows that. But I got to meet him and have one of the books signed which just was fantastic, so yeah that was really good.

It's kind of different. I think it was probably the first project that I'd ever worked on that took me from being brand new in the industry to actually a couple of people talking about my project.

James Blatch: Just coming onto the radar within your field?

Stuart Bache: Yes, exactly yeah.

James Blatch: Well deserved as well and a master storyteller John le Carré. I know that Mark holds him in great esteem as I think all the authors in that genre do so, one of the grandes of it. Okay well let's move into a little bit more detail then. So you've done quite a few book covers now for Mark, in fact, not too dissimilar to the concept of the Tinker Tailor Soldier spy cover.
Stuart Bache: In a sense, yeah.

James Blatch: You use this central figure, there's a slight mystery about him, and we know that Mark's main character, certainly on his John Milton books, he becomes an increasingly conflicted and flawed character. I've noticed in some of the later covers, there's a slight dishevelment to him as well. This is not the James Bond guy this is the slightly in the shadows of humanity almost flawed guy and that even comes across.

I guess those little bits of detail where they try and tell the story as well.

Stuart Bache: Yeah absolutely. I try to get the setting and Mark's very good at that. I think we've learned from each other in that respect. He knows very much what he wants but he's always very happy for me to create and to try something new and different and there is an evolution in his covers.

From the very beginning when we worked together many years ago to how they are now. Now they are so much more refined. And then a lot of that is because we know what our conversation is going to be. We know how to communicate what we want and what he wants and how I can do it. It's got

to the point now where he pretty much tells me a brief synopsis and tells me the places and how he wants John Milton to be.

And, as you say, he was suited and booted very very early on and a lot of that's to do, it's probably a bit of a tangent I'm afraid, but that's to do with where I can source my images from. When you're working with independent authors there's a price limit unfortunately because the big stock image sites like Archangel are fantastic, but they are expensive and there's a limited use on what you can do with the photographs. Where Shutterstock is global and it's reasonably priced and that's where I tend to go.

However, we have now got to a point where I know exactly what he wants and I know who John Milton is, I think. So he gives me a few details and there is a familiarity, there is a similarity to John le Carré. There also is a similarity to people like Joe Nesbo and other authors like Lee Child. The figure, the lone wanderer and the landscape. But I think what we try to do is maybe add a little bit more narrative than they do.

James Blatch: I notice you use the weather. In fact I was thinking there's a strong similarity between the way you approach a book cover that a good director of photography or a good film director will do in using things like landscape and weather to tell the story. So everything visually is telling a story.

The weather's very emotive isn't it? Can be very emotive.

Stuart Bache: Oh yeah completely. I've got folders of all sorts of different skies. Thunder, mostly cloudy, dark and ominous. That sets the mood straight away.

James Blatch: Is that because an author never comes to you and says, "I've got this great book. It's a beautiful day. Everything works out really well and

everyone lives happily ever after. Can you do a cover?" That never happens, that conversation?

Stuart Bache: Never. Never, never happens. I was known for a while for doing the thrillers and crime so pretty much I am set up and ready to put any thriller or commercial crime fiction together in not very long actually. I've got folders worth of clouds and landscapes and mountains and guns-

James Blatch: Ominous.

Stuart Bache: Yeah ominous.

James Blatch: Portentous.

Stuart Bache: Exactly yeah.

James Blatch: Let's move into the practical side a little bit where you touched on using stock libraries. In terms of your assets. I mean it's also, in the old days you used to say to an artist, "What medium do you work in?", so that's watercolors or oil or photography. But of course it's done digitally now and that means that really any kind of aesthetic is available to you and some of your covers are almost cut out I noticed. Looked like sort of cut out prints. Others are quite clearly photographs, at least in the early stage. You've sourced these assets from elsewhere or do you create some of these from scratch?

Stuart Bache: I'm probably going to be hated for this because I love Photoshop. I absolutely adore it. I do a huge amount of my work in there and if I need to I can cut out things and I will draw things and I will paint things but I'm not a traditionalist.

I am a commercial designer so when it comes to digital I will try my best to create something that looks as realistic as possible using photography or

print techniques or anything like that but it will be almost entirely digital. And I probably shouldn't, like I say, admit that.

James Blatch: When you say that, for those of us that are uninitiated in this creative process.

The less commercially minded, the more traditional competitors. Are they working at a drawing board? Moving bits of cardboard around?

Stuart Bache: I'd say some of them are. There are a lot of very very talented book cover designs out there and very well known ones as well who, they will paint every bit of typography. They will hand draw every illustration and that's fantastic.

You know where your limits are and I know, as a previous freelancer, when I was a freelancer a long time ago I had to learn how to be more than just a commercial designer, I had to be a bit of an illustrator as well. When I couldn't physically do those things, I taught myself how to get as close as possible to those versions of illustration, whether it's a painting technique or an illustrative technique, using Photoshop or Illustrator and other Adobe applications.

James Blatch: We use them as well if it makes you feel better. I'm a big fan as well and obviously nowhere near as expert as you are in Photoshop but that does bring me on to the final part really of nuggets from you. It's been fascinating so far by the way Stuart, and that is how people can perhaps do this themselves. I mean Photoshop is a very accessible bit of software

Stuart Bache: Yes.

James Blatch: Particularly the subscription option; fairly low monthly payments and have access to it all.

Is this something that is accessible to an author? I guess it does depend on their level of competency and competence with this sort of thing that you're talking about, Photoshop.

Stuart Bache: Yeah absolutely. Confidence, as with anything, comes with time and experiences so I think to start off, I would always recommend simplicity. Not to push themselves too much. Do what I mentioned earlier and have a look at what your comparative and competitive titles are and see what's out there.

Shutterstock is available to everyone and just start to pick out things that you think are relevant. I'd say don't dive in into the deep end and think that you are going to create something that's exactly the same as a professional could do but have two things in mind which is simplicity.

Know what your typeface is. Don't try and be too creative with it, it doesn't need to be that. All you're doing is trying to inform people. Familiarity again, layouts and everything, they're all out there you just go into a bookshop and you can see what works and what doesn't work. What stands out to you. And then try and emulate it.

James Blatch: That simplicity, that comes across with a lot of your covers. There is this beautiful clear, clean aesthetic isn't there? That's obviously something you favor.

Stuart Bache: Yeah absolutely. From when I was at university I was always into type, but I was into typing in a very traditional way which was, the whole point of it is to tell a person something.

I worked in branding for a little while as well and it's all about communication and these beautiful fancy type fonts are lovely but, especially when they're brought down to the size that you'd see on Amazon, you can't read them. So if you want to sell your book then be

clear, make it simple, and use images that work within your genre. I think that's probably the best thing to do.

James Blatch: On a more practical level Stuart, what resolution, what sizes are you working in?

Stuart Bache: I personally work in 350 DPI, which is more than enough for anyone really. Print, if you're ever going to go to print which can happen and often does, you start off and then one day you decide that you want to make it print on demand whether it's with CreateSpace or someone like that.

300 DPI is print resolution. It's the option you get when you open Photoshop and you start a new file. It depends on who you're working with with your E-book. Who you're publishing through and who's creating it and everything, but they will tell you what format they want it to be. You work it to those dimensions. They usually give you pixel dimensions because of it being an E-book, which is RGB.

However, I would always and I always work in CMYK, which is the print colors, because when you switch from RGB to CMYK you lose the vibrancy of RGB. You can have fluorescent colors in RGB but you will never get in print. If you don't want to be disappointed, work in CMYK as much as possible.

350 DPI is 50 DPI more than you need but it also means that if you ever need to make it larger then you can. It just gives you that little bit of leeway and that's just a person preference that I've been using for the last couple of years. Seems to work so far.

James Blatch: Do you work in a larger size? If your image on Amazon's going to be 400×100 let's say, do you work in 4000×1000 and then reduce it afterwards so you've got that detail? How does that work?

Stuart Bache: I work in a slightly larger size. I've found that most publishers or most online retailers require, I think the height has to be 2500. So two thousand five hundred pixels. That seems to be the average minimum. I tend to keep everything to that size, to that height at least, or larger and then cut down, and once again like I say, 350 DPI which works. Because you can use 72 DPI but it really doesn't matter when it's based on pixels rather than dots per inch.

James Blatch: Because they are what they are aren't they? 300, 400, it is that. So and I guess working slightly larger does give you those options if you as you say, you want to become a print author at some point, you've got the size to work with. The CMYK, that's interesting.

To lots of people and we are all of us want to be authors as well and we are all of us having to learn in this day and age, having to learn lots of specialist areas. Little bits of specialist areas to try to survive and grow and flourish in this day and age. The old compartmentalized lives that perhaps our parents lived are gone aren't they?

Stuart Bache: Yeah.

James Blatch: Still a lot of people will not have heard RGB and CMYK necessarily before so it's a lot to learn. In fact I hadn't really properly clicked what CMYK was until earlier this year. In another life I do some work at a school where I had to prepare an advert to go in a newspaper and they asked for CMYK and, funnily enough, I without thinking about it created the layout in RGB and exactly what you just predicted happened. I was suddenly looking at this very washed out version of the advert I'd created and I couldn't work out why but listening to you talk about it.

I thought it was because I had started in RGB and done the conversion afterwards, which it actually might be, but actually CMYK is a different set of colors that are just not as vibrant as the ones you're going to get in RGB. I guess?

Stuart Bache: Yeah absolutely, because RGB, all it's ever going to need is your screen and your skin has, as anyone will know when they're working on the computer, when you're playing games or whatever, it's all sorts of different colors. But unfortunately CMYK is four colors. So if anyone doesn't know it's cyan, magenta, yellow, and the k stands for black. I think maybe because if it was b, people would think it was blue, I don't know, but that's what it is. And that's just been the standardized print for many years. On a side note if you ever go into a bookshop and you see vibrant colors, that color is a separate color. They're called pantone colors. They are picked and mixed especially, it's technically a fifth color along with CMYK. They cost more money and they're rare and most independent authors unfortunately won't get the chance to use something like that, especially if they're just printing print on demand so it will be the standard CMYK.

James Blatch: I think this stuff's important because when you know they're the tones you're going to get, working with that for design from a creative point of view right from the beginning... Because they can look great, those slightly suppressed colors. They can work very well to create the atmosphere that you want but not necessarily if it's surprised you at the end, having designed something.

I can see, looking at a lot of your book covers, you can see that slightly flatter version of colors but it works very well and very atmospheric.

Stuart Bache: I think obviously there is a time and place for RGB. A lot of Mark's covers, in fact, because it has to be RGB when you convert it for an E-book. You have to convert it to RGB because CMYK just wouldn't upload properly.

I hope that doesn't confuse things but I work in CMYK in the main file but when I'm actually creating the final JPEG for the E-book, I will convert it to RGB because JPEGs have to be RGB when you're uploading them to the internet. Even if it's just onto your computer or onto your Facebook page it has to be RGB, CMYK wouldn't work.

I always do it for the main reason being, one the colors but two, in case we ever have to do a print version of anything. I will boost the colors for some of Mark's. The Night Step for example is a very vibrant green that you would never get with CMYK but that's because it looks wonderful as an E-book. It won't look like that in print, I can promise you. But yeah there's times and places for it.

James Blatch: Stuart thank you so much indeed for joining us.

Stuart Bache: Oh thank you James.

James Blatch: Without question we'll be speaking with you again but yeah, we always look forward to seeing your work and your covers.

Stuart Bache: Wonderful. Well I enjoy it and I look forward to working with everyone. Everyone I've worked with so far on SPF have been fantastic, so. I hope you enjoyed me rambling for a little bit.

James Blatch: No rambling at all, it's been golden. Thanks.

James Blatch: I think it's very easy to hear now, listening to Stuart, why his covers are successful and it's not about, as you say, it's not self-indulgent. You think some people paint and use Photoshop in his case to create graphics and they're doing it out of a sort of sense of, "This is what I want", like a sculpture, "I created this lovely sculpture", but actually that's no use to us.

As you said before the interview and what Stuart does, is he thinks, "How is this book going to work? How's it going to work in a bookshop? How's it going to work on a shop front?". In fact I've got a privileged position because he's designed a cover for my as-yet unfinished book and the way he started that straight away is he said to me, "The readers that want to buy your book, what books do they read at the moment?", and we started there

and we started looking at those covers. That process right from the beginning focused on sales.

Mark: He really is exactly focused on sales. He did the same thing for me with the Milton book so he actually presented me with a 10 or 15 page PDF with analysis of all of the key players in my genre. So we looked at Lee Charles, Peter James, Vince Flynn, guys like that and Stuart then pulled from those common tropes that were obviously being effective in selling those books and then put them together into something... let them become unique.

The effect of that has been fairly marked, it was one of the things that led to me having an extremely good last year, is when I had this line of books that are clearly branded as being by me and also fulfill all of the genre current conventions of books that I can beat it with. That was a really big moment for me and you know Stuart, as you said before, is just extremely good at this kind of stuff.

James Blatch: Such a huge part of your book marketing and book sales is your book cover so it's an interesting subject.

I promised earlier that we'd have a little update on 101 and we do get regular emails from people saying, "Have you selected your beta testers? Can I be a beta tester? Here are my qualifications", etc. A lot of enthusiasm for these spots.

Just to say, we have not even begun that process. We are just transitioning, literally this week, from the pre-production, I would call, for my video, "World of Planning: Working Out What's Going to Be When."

Mark is getting busy, even busier than he normally is, at turning that into actual material. Generating the content so the presentations and screenplays and stuff's coming in from third parties. It's not just, as Stuart has mentioned, we've had stuff in from website developers this week as well which is going to go into this course.

Then after that, when we've got that ready, and that's not an easy task as you can imagine, we will then be ready to move towards testing so that's the point at which we're going to start selecting people to beta test. There's still an opportunity to get your name into the hat for that.

I know it takes a while but we've been meticulous about the courses we've produced in the past. They've got to be thoroughbred. Courses that stand out on the platform of anything else that's available and that's what happens at this point. When we research, when we build the course in the first place. But we're getting there aren't we Mark? Well you're getting there.

Mark: We're getting there, yes. I've been working on the course structure for the best part of two or three months. We've secured some really fantastic, additional instructors. Mostly it will be me but Stuart is doing covers, Bryan Cohen is doing copywriting. We've got guys on website design. There'll be some other additional people coming along.

I've started to collect some really valuable bonuses that will be added as well. It is a question of me now finishing the novel that I was supposed to have submitted about two weeks ago but that should be done tomorrow. Then from that point on, I'll be focusing 100% on actually recording the course. Taking the content that I've produced and then committing it to screen. Looking forward to getting into that because it's been bubbling away in my mind for quite a while now.

James Blatch: We're giving birth to the course now. Okay good. It's the 23rd of September, the release date for this. I'm about to get on an aircraft to Los Angeles and I think you're about to go home?

Mark: I suppose I probably am. Yes that's right. I would be on my way home tomorrow.

James Blatch: Bit tanned, hopefully from the Florida sunshine. Not hurricane... They have had a hurricane already, you noticed that?

Mark: Thank you. I didn't know that. I've been avoiding looking at the weather.

James Blatch: Yeah they've had one. It was a Category 1, sort of a stiff breeze in Florida terms. Just before we go, one more thing.

Stuart has started a new venture which is to use his artwork that he's produced as examples or testers for people and hasn't ever seen the light of day and he's starting to upload that to a website. To make his artwork and his book covers a little bit more accessible, a little bit more affordable to a wider audience so that you can go and pick those off and you will obviously add your title and your author name to it but it won't be bespoke for you. It'll be something that's not been used by anybody else but it's been sat there in his folder. That's, apparently Mark, I think it's working really well for him but we should give out the URL for that shouldn't we?

Mark: We should. These are called pre-mades in the business and Stuart's pre-mades are better than most people's bespoke covers so highly recommended. The price is very very reasonable and I'm saying that with absolutely no horse in that race or no dog in the fight. It's something that's just for Stuart and you can, I think the URL is bookscovered.co.uk.

James Blatch: Yes that is it. Bookscovered.co.uk is the affordable part of Stuart Bache and as we say, thoroughly recommend Stuart. Lovely guy, fantastic covers, and very commercially orientated which is what you want from your cover designer. Okay that's it. Thank you again for listening. We'll have that special from Florida next week and we look forward to talking to you then.

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