



Maddie James

FEATURED AUTHOR - MARCIA JAMES

At Her Command
Cerridwen Press



Wow, do we have a treat for you today! For the next couple of weeks my feature author is my twin sister. NOT! Well, considering our names you might think that. Marcia James has some great insight to promotion she'd like to share with you in her interview. Enjoy!



Maddie - Tell us a little about yourself.

Marcia - My background is in communications – particularly promotion and marketing. I've worked as a corporate video scriptwriter, advertising copywriter, and journalist. The latest and most fun addition to my resume is "romance author." Penning love scenes sure beats writing shoes ads or shooting videos on how to install neon signs! ;-D

Maddie - You have a new book out. We'd love to hear about it.

Marcia - *AT HER COMMAND*, a comic romantic suspense, is my debut book from Cerridwen Press. It explores the question: What if the DEA, FBI and Washington, D.C. police put operatives undercover at the same hedonistic club without telling each other? The comic possibilities of such a situation were too fun to resist, and I particularly enjoyed writing the character of Smokey -- a Chinese Crested hairless dog who is my DEA heroine's tiny, drug-sniffing canine partner. *AT HER COMMAND* is available in trade paperback or e-book.

Maddie - What does your writing schedule look like? Are you a morning writer? An all day, for the long haul, writer? Or are you a night owl?

Marcia - I have the great good fortune to work out of my home, so I can write when my energy is highest – usually afternoons and evenings. I'm definitely not a morning person, so I usually handle e-mail in the mornings and write after lunch.

Maddie - What advice do you have for aspiring writers?

Marcia - Here's a few suggestions -- mostly in the PR arena, since that's my field: Lock in your author domain name, create your Web site (at least on paper), and start to brand yourself BEFORE you sell. Google your proposed slogan (mine is "Hot, Humorous Romances") BEFORE you commit to it to make sure it's unique. Create a Web site and slogan that support the "author brand" you want – something with the tone and look that will let your readers know what to expect from your books.

Power-schmooze – with other authors, agents, editors and readers -- whenever you get the chance. Don't make the mistake in underestimating the power of networking. The author you meet today could be someone who hooks you up with her agent or gives you a cover quote in the future. If you are too shy to network, see if you can find ways to get past that hurdle, even if it means learning relaxing self-hypnosis or public speaking. And remember that people in the romance industry are some of the nicest in the world.

Believe in yourself, be proud of your writing, and don't let anyone – including family and friends – be dismissive of your accomplishments.

Maddie - What is your next project?

Marcia - I just finished writing the first book in a comic romantic mystery series featuring a sex therapist/amateur sleuth heroine and a hunky but uptight cop hero. This manuscript is currently at Berkley, Kensington, and St. Martin's. It was incredibly fun to write, and I fell for the characters. On my Web site, instead of a blog, I have a light-hearted sex advice column "written" by my sex therapist heroine.

Maddie - Today, writers need not only write great books, but be great promoters of their books, too. What kinds of things do you do?

Marcia - Thanks to my PR and marketing background, I've been applying what I know to author promotion. That said, I continue to learn all I can from established authors and creative newbies on my Romance Writers of America email loops. I'm co-presenting a PR workshop at late September's Central Ohio Fiction Writers' conference and at the April 2008 Chicago "Spring Fling" conference. For those events, I've developed a "living document" on author promotion, which is free to any author who'd like it as a seed file to start their own. Just go through my Web site (www.MarciaJames.net) and request it using the "Contact Me" page.

Here are several more PR suggestions for published authors: Take advantage of the many free promotional opportunities for authors out there – especially the chance to be interviewed (like this!), guest-blog, and participate in online chats. If you have the time, post comments on other authors' blogs. All of these things increase the number of hits you'll get when Googled. Come up with a creative idea for bringing people to your Web site. An example of this is author Paige Cuccaro's "Writer's Cave" Web site pages. (http://www.paigecuccaro.com/html/the_cave.html) She puts photos of authors' offices on her site for free and has pages of them now. Readers love to see where their favorite authors work. The Writer's Cave is a great PR idea!

Depending on your finances, you can check into the many online sites that will promote an author for a fee. I haven't tried any of these, but I wouldn't rule it out for the future. And don't forget to promote to the general public, not just to established romance readers. You can send press releases to your college's alumni association and to your home town newspaper, as well as to trade publications and newsletters of associations that would have an interest in your book. For example, since I have a crestie dog in my books, I have posted on a Chinese Crested dog owners' message board.

You can also come up with a creative tie-in to your books for your promotional giveaways. For example, I give away thumbcuff keychains that relate to the law enforcement protagonists in my books and also remind readers that my books contain some kinky elements. I have my Chinese Crested hairless dog logo on all of my PR items and on my Web site, which ties into the fact that I have cresties in all of my books. So your PR materials can be part of your brand vs. just being something that contains your pen name and Web site URL.

Maddie - Now, here is the totally off-writing subject question. What's the coolest, wackiest, most risk-taking thing you've ever done?

Marcia - That's a tricky one. I think participating in a March of Dimes celebrity downhill ski race when I was barely off the bunny slopes was probably pretty nervy or nuts, depending on your point of view. ;-D My team captain, Olympic gold medal pole vaulter Bob Seagren, told me our team could win if I would just snow-plow around the gates and not miss any or fall, since he didn't want me to be disqualified. I made it down and past the finish line just fine, then I fell at Bob's feet.

Other than that, I've done some interesting things in my life. I worked for a military subcontractor, shooting training videos aboard submarines. As a special events volunteer, I've met dozens of celebrities. (There are photos on my Web site to prove it.) ;-) My wedding was covered by *People Magazine* because we raised money for several charities. And most recently I petted a dolphin.

Thanks, Marcia! A great interview and what wonderful promotional tips for all of us. Thank you so much for visiting. If anyone has questions for Marcia, please leave a comment. She'll be checking in and out. And be sure to visit her on the net at <http://www.marciajames.net>

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