

Buffet inspires anthology during recent Music, Film, Literature & Art Fest

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Broward College's two-week annual Music, Film, Literature and Art Festival was held virtually this year with the theme "Amidst the Chaos: Rise Up & Move Forward." The festival allows for students and the community-at-large to be exposed to free academic lectures, panels, discussions, live performances and author readings.

From the diverse list of events, one of the panels "Authors Inspired By Music" was held on March 11. The Zoom meeting, with about 40 participants, was hosted by Professor Neil Plakcy and the English Faculty.

The panel allowed for the authors of the crime-fiction anthology "The Great Filling Station Holdup" to discuss how their writing processes were inspired and shaped by music.

"Music inspires us; it inspires of to sing, dance, to work harder and faster and better," author and editor Josh Pachter said. "For some of us... music inspires us to write."

The anthology is heavily influenced by the discography of musician Jimmy Buffett. Each chapter of the book is a story based on a Buffett song, where



MFLA Festival Banner

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each song is from a different album.

"I had people suggest other artists (to base the anthology on)... as an editor I knew this was going to take a year of my time," Pachter said. "If I'm going to devote a year of my time to a songwriter, I wanted it to be someone I could listen to for a year."

The Parrot Head, a name for Buffett fans, invited 15 other authors to create this anthology: Leigh Lundin, Rick Ollerman, Michael Bracken, Don Bruns, Alison McMahan, Bruce Robert Coffin, Lissa Marie Redmond, Elaine Viets, Robert J. Randisi, Laura Oles, Isabella Maldonado, Jeffery Hess, Neil Plakcy, John M. Floyd and M.E. Browning.

All the authors are fans of Buffett and Buffett's music. They were able to choose which of his songs they wanted to create a short story based on.

"When Josh first asked me to write a story I panicked, I find it

hard to do stories on demand yet I still wanted to," Lundin, who wrote "Truckstop Salvation" based on the same-titled Buffett song, said. "I remembered hearing a Jimmy Buffet song off of his very first album... I found that there were a number of things on that first album that were very interesting... the one that finally caught me was this one called "Truckstop Salvation".

"It was a tricky song," Lundin said. "I found it interesting and challenging to bring those elements of mystery and romance and evil together (for the short story)."

The authors present at the panel all discussed their feelings throughout the writing process and why they wrote the stories they did.

"As soon as I sat down and printed out the lyrics, so that I can refresh my memory, I immediately found myself in the Arizona desert with an idea of where I wanted to take

the story," Coffin, author of "Incommunicado," said. "For me, one of the things I enjoy about the short story is that it was a very short period of time to do the set-up and I enjoy taking the reader down a road that will (make them) feel comfortable that they're heading in a certain direction. And as I wanted to pull the rug out from under them and have things go entirely different than (the reader) might imagine."

It was revealed that all the authors printed out the lyrics to their chosen song to refer back to while writing their short stories. Many also played their respective songs during their writing process.

"I definitely printed out the lyrics and I referred to them often," Maldonado, who wrote "Smart Woman (in a Real Short Skirt)," said. "I wanted to make sure that I stayed true to the spirit of the song and often did those clever turns of phrase that Buffett often puts in there."

Pachter had three important requirements for the authors to follow: they could not quote lyrics "because who wants a lawsuit from copyright violation", they should include imagery from the song and from the reader's perspective

it should be clear that their story was inspired by its respective song.

With these conditions, the authors were still able to create immersive and interesting stories while enjoying the process of writing them.

"A lot of the authors just had a great deal of fun writing their stories for this book and I think it really shows. The stories were fun to write but are also fun to read," Pachter said, repeating the sentiments previously stated by the other authors.

Maldano was even greatly amused by a challenge Pachter asked of her, to include the phrase "bimbo limbo" somewhere in her story.

"I've edited a dozen and more anthologies over the years, and I think that the quality of the work in this one is as strong as anything else I've ever done. Looking back, I've not always been proud of every book that I've edited but this one I'm proud of. That's entirely thanks to the contributions of (the co-authors) that have really given their all for this book," Pachter said.

With one-third of the royalties to be donated to charities that Buffett supports: Singing For Change and Save the Manatee Fund, "The Great Filling Station Holdup" is now available for purchase on online retailers such as Down & Out Books and Amazon.



Seahawk Writing Conference from a few years ago.
Photo from Broward College Website