

It's Hard Changing Genres: Why do it?

By Daryl Wood Gerber

When I was an actress in Hollywood, a casting director tried to pin me down by asking me what I did best. He knew I liked to do both drama and comedy, but what was my specialty? At the time I was resistant. I believed I could do it all, and, truthfully, I *liked* doing it all. In the end, it was tough to cast me. Casting directors (and directors) wanted to pigeonhole me as a dramatic actress or a comedienne. I worked a lot, but I never “broke out”. In retrospect, I should have chosen comedy. I can be a goofball and a good “straight man.” Plus comedy makes me laugh, and laughter is the best medicine.

As a writer, agents and publishers have asked what I write best. Well, I've been published as a cozy mystery author, so I guess I write that *best*, but truthfully, I'd like to think I have more genres in my wheelhouse. I love reading suspense and thrillers. I love writing them, too. I love the pace. I love the bigger story. My latest book, *Girl on the Run* is a suspense. I also like writing and reading romantic comedies. If you have heard of the book (also a movie) *Must Love Dogs*, you'll get the idea.

However, publishers have not yet been willing to give me a shot in those genres. In fact, my agent tried to sell my latest suspense, *Girl on the Run*, to a publisher, but he faced resistance. One editor said, “It's good, but this isn't what she usually writes.” The editor, like the casting director, was probably trying to figure out how to market me. My agent received a similar response from another editor: “I'd rather consider her next cozy.” My editor at Berkley liked the suspense a lot and wanted to offer a two e-book deal, but then Penguin and Random House merged, and suddenly the offer was off the table. The times they are a-changing.

Why did I self-publish *Girl on the Run*? A while ago, my husband made me promise him that I would self-publish the book if publishers didn't snap it up, so I decided to fulfill that promise. What could I lose? It would be a good challenge. Others had done it. How hard could it be?

Hard.

Luckily I know a virtual assistant who is savvy in the self-publishing world. She has helped other authors self-publish. We worked out a deal and got started. While I figured out the financial process on specific sites, she created my wonderful book cover. Then she formatted the book (sites require different formats) and uploaded the book to them. In the meantime, I started watching webinars about self-publishing. I studied what worked and what didn't when it came to PR, Facebook

Ads, and the like. I learned how NetGalley could help raise awareness and offer review copies. I learned about IBPA (Independent Book Publishing Association). I asked a few of my review crew to give me a quick read. Their comments really helped. I submitted the book for a Kirkus review, which turned out to be a great idea. The review is terrific. *FYI, for authors who would like to know more about the step-by-step process, I wrote about my journey and posted it on my website (a special file in my fan club).*

People ask if I'm happy that I self-published. Yes, I am. *Girl on the Run* is selling pretty darned well, all things considered. Many of my cozy audience have become crossover readers. I advised them that this particular suspense is not hardboiled. I kept bad language, brutality, and sex to a minimum. And I have found NEW readers, which is terrific! The logline: *When a fairytale fantasy night becomes a nightmare, Chessa Paxton must run for her life, but will the truth set her free?* Chessa is suspected of killing her husband. Unable to explain why her princess gown is covered with blood, and with her father already in prison for murder, she runs.

Now, I must say that a few fans were worried that if I started writing suspense, I wouldn't write any more cozies. Not true. I will continue to write my *Cookbook Nook Mysteries*, and I will enjoy every minute. I love the cast and the location, and I love writing an intricate whodunit. Plus, I hope to land contracts for more cozy mysteries.

Does writing in multiple genres mean I'm scattered? No. It means I have a lot of ideas. I'm creative. I like to entertain a wide audience. I imagine you know authors who write for adults as well as children (like Chris Grabenstein). You probably know authors who write romance as well as sci-fi fiction (like Nora Roberts aka JD Robb). It can be done. By the way, I now understand why James Patterson has a team of authors writing for him. He has a lot of stories he wants to tell...which cross genre!

What's next for me? I'm going to write another suspense because I love the genre. I'm going to continue writing cozy mysteries, too. And who knows? Maybe I'll write a romantic comedy or an adventure or a sci-fi young adult novel. What will I do if a traditional publisher doesn't pick them up? I'll self-publish again. I've enjoyed the process.

No matter what, I'm excited about the journey. I'm at the edge of a precipice and I have wings.