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PRESS RELEASE

**Writing Your First Work of Fiction Is a No-Brainer
According to Bestselling Novelist**

“The secret to writing is getting out of our heads,” says Alan Watt, best-selling author of the novel, *Diamond Dogs*. “If every word I wrote had to be perfect, I would never have gotten past the first page, which would have sucked because I would have missed out on one of the most personally and professionally rewarding experiences of my life.” So says Alan Watt who founded the LA Writers’ Lab in 2002 and has helped both first-time and seasoned authors unleash their creativity ever since.

In his book, *The 90-Day Novel: Unlock the Story Within*, Watt explains that the prevailing attitude is, “If you’re not great at something right out of the gate, then you shouldn’t bother.” This type of thinking, he contends, is what prevents countless creative people from ever getting started.

“Don’t sabotage your novel before you begin,” Watt says. “The desire to write is connected to the desire to evolve. We’re here to express ourselves. The workplace, for many, is not exactly an environment that nurtures the soul. But writing a novel or memoir, regardless of whether it sells, can supply the satisfaction and meaning that may be missing from our professional lives. Creativity is not an occupation; it’s our birthright.”

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Watt is an advocate of writing a novel for its own sake. “The story lives fully and completely within us. The paradox is that our ‘idea’ of the story is never the whole story, and when we accept this, we get out of our heads and begin to trust our imaginations, which is the seat of our genius.” Watt gets impassioned when he talks about the creative process, and tends to bounce a little on his chair when he speaks. “Einstein said: “Imagination is more important than knowledge.” Our left-brain is really good at doing one thing – it answers the questions we ask it. The problem is that we tend to ask it questions like, “Why can’t I write this story?” The process of turning off your logical centers and trusting your right brain to deliver the goods is not just common sense, it’s also liberating. There’s something about writing a novel that fulfills our most primal desires, and when we’re willing to let go of the result, our story has a chance to live. Our sole purpose as creative beings is to build a body of work.”

Watt counsels writers, “Set a realistic daily word goal and make it a habit, and you can write the first draft of your novel in 90 days.” Procrastination, in his view, is not an option, and neither is the excuse that your idea isn’t good enough. “Ideas are a dime a dozen. It’s the specificity through which the world is conveyed that engages our reader. When we drop our preconceptions about what good writing is and give ourselves permission to write poorly, everything changes,” he says. Watt asserts that, while it may sound counterintuitive, giving yourself permission to write poorly produces the opposite result.

“*The 90-Day Novel* was workshopped at LA Writers Lab over three years and has helped hundreds of writers complete their first draft. I have the writers log onto a group page and record their daily experiences. *The 90-Day Novel* is not only a guide through the hero’s journey, but also a direct response to hundreds of writer’s daily experiences. What I noticed is that, although our experiences are unique, there is also a uniformity to them. For example, on Day Two, following the initial high of beginning, virtually every writer panics and is riddled with self-doubt. When you understand this, and know that you’re not alone, you can actually use the experience to take you deeper into your story.”

His proof of concept is his own first novel, *Diamond Dogs*, that he sold at auction to Little, Brown and Company. “It took me just under 90 days to complete a first draft,” Watt says. After a six month rewrite he was soon rewarded with a phone call from his literary agent that she had just auctioned the

North American rights to his novel for half a million dollars. For Watt, penning his book was a dream come true. Even if it hadn't earned a cent, he would still have felt amply rewarded by the fact that he'd reached the finish line of his personal marathon. Authorship, Watt says, is not a get-rich-quick scheme. But one thing is certain: to complete a novel provides guaranteed satisfaction. Watt concludes, "The thrill of creation must be its own reward." Do you have 90 days to spare and an idea that might evolve into a novel? Boot up the computer, and don't think about it. Just begin!

The 90-Day Novel: Unlock the Story Within, Second Edition

By Alan Watt

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Author Bio

Alan Watt began his career as a standup comic, headlining extensively throughout North America and performing on dozens of television shows, including “Caroline's Comedy Hour,” “An Evening at the Improv” and performing his own one-hour comedy special, “Comedy Now,” at the Toronto Opera House for the CBC. He also appeared at the *Montreal Just for Laughs Festival*. He moved to Los Angeles in 1994 where he wrote for MTV, and appeared on “Seinfeld.”

Mr. Watt has written screenplays for numerous production companies and is the author of the bestselling Little, Brown novel *Diamond Dogs*, which won a number of awards including France's 2004 Prix Printemps (best foreign novel from the Independent Bookseller's Assoc.) and the American Library Assoc.'s Alex Award. In 2007 his first play, *Last Night*, was produced in Los Angeles at the SFS Theater to rave reviews. "Watt's gifts of structure, economy, characterization and humor are beyond reproach." - LA Weekly.

In the 1990's he spent six years as a consultant and speechwriter to the US marketing director of one of the world's top accountancy firms.

He recently sold his screenplay adaptation of *Diamond Dogs* to French film company, Quad Entertainment, and will executive produce the film.

Mr. Watt first taught a summer creative writing workshop at UCLA in 1998, and has been teaching and lecturing on the creative process in LA and at colleges around the country ever since. He spent three years teaching storytelling to inner city high school students through the non-profit arm of Spoken Interludes.

Suggested Interview Questions

1. How long did it take you to complete the first draft of your first novel?
2. Why did you “rush” through the project, and what were the results?
3. You say that you’re not a perfectionist, and you’re proud of that. Why?
4. Is writing a first novel more difficult than writing subsequent works of fiction?
5. What would you say to those who want to write a first novel but are unsure of whether or not they’re ready to begin?
6. Why do most people want to write novels? Is it for the money, or is there another reason?
7. Is it true that everyone has at least one novel inside of him or her?
8. Do you recommend that people who dream of becoming novelists get a degree in Creative Writing as a first step on that path?
9. What was your route to becoming a professional writer? Would you endorse that journey for others?
10. If you could make one suggestion to aspiring novelists, what would it be?
11. What would you tell naysayers who believe that instant gratification is art’s enemy?
12. What rewards, both tangible and intangible, are people likely to gain from completing a novel in 90 days?
13. Why 90 days, as opposed to another time-frame? Is this a random number, or does it have particular significance?
14. What is the biggest stumbling block for writers, in completing a first draft?

ENDORSEMENTS

“Alan Watt's *The 90-Day Novel* is a treasure trove of insight, not only for beginners or aspiring writers but for grizzled old-timers like myself who can profit, always, from revisiting the fundamentals and First Principles of the writer's calling. Two thumbs up!”

-- Steven Pressfield, bestselling author of *The War of Art* and *Do The Work*

“I went \$64,000 in debt for my MFA in fiction writing. After reading *The 90-Day Novel* I wonder why. This book will provide you with tools that are missing from most writing programs!”

-- Frank B. Wilderson III (WINNER of 2008 American Book Award for his memoir *Incognegro*)

“For years I have been fascinated by the industry legend of how Alan Watt wrote his masterful novel *Diamond Dogs* in 90 days. Now, at last, he shares his secrets. *The 90-Day Novel* is smart, insightful, thorough and wise. It's also one of the best books on novel-writing I have ever seen. I feel confident that anyone who takes this program seriously will have a solid manuscript to show for the effort.”

-- David Liss (Edgar Award winner for his bestselling novel *A Conspiracy of Paper*)

"The idea of bringing a first draft of a novel to fruition seemed too daunting and overwhelming to even consider until I applied the principles in *The 90-Day Novel*. Al Watt's methodology is deep and precise, and helps unearth unconscious themes and characters in you that let the story almost tell itself."

-- Rebecca de Mornay (*actress/writer*)

INTRODUCTION

I wrote my first novel a few years back. I had been writing for years, mostly screenplays, but with little success. I was making a decent living touring the country as a stand-up comic before finally settling in Los Angeles where some managers had signed me in the hopes I would land a sitcom deal. I did get three lines on *Seinfeld*, but my dirty secret was that my comedy career was really just a means to support my writing habit.

I wanted to tell stories. The thrill of sitting alone in a room with my imagination continues to be the most satisfying experience of my life. When I started writing I was an eager student, reading every book on writing, and attending every seminar along the way. However, I never believed I could write a novel. It seemed too complicated, too overwhelming, and besides, wasn't there a special novel school that you had to go to? I'd never been a great student; I was too busy daydreaming, conjuring stories...writing. Always writing.

One day, while I was on a six-week comedy tour, and without a laptop to format a screenplay, I decided to write a novel. I went to the store and bought four yellow legal pads. Armed with a story that had been swimming in my head for a while, I set a goal for myself. I would complete the first draft before the end of my forty-five day tour.

I finished the first draft on the forty-fourth day. It was around fifty thousand words. I will never forget the experience of standing at the seventh-floor window of my hotel room staring down at the mid-afternoon traffic; the world looked different to me. I felt connected in some strange way, like for the first time in my life the world was no longer my enemy. I didn't know what I had written. I just remember standing at the window and wondering, "Where did that come from?" I had just accomplished something I'd previously believed was impossible. It was as if I were no longer me. When I returned to L.A., I spent the next six weeks typing my rough draft into a computer, improving it along the way. Eighty-eight days earlier I was buying paper at the pharmacy, but on that bright June day in my little studio apartment, I became a novelist.

I realized two things in retrospect: I didn't tell anyone I was writing this story, and I consciously gave myself permission to let go of the result. In fact, I had decided that I might never show this book to anyone once it was done. This freed me to write the forbidden, to tell the story I had always wanted

to tell without concerning myself with the opinions of others. After so many years of struggling to *make it*, and agonizing over “what the market was looking for,” I finally surrendered and just wrote the story, a dark tale of fathers and sons, of family secrets, of rage and redemption.

I did a quick rewrite while teaching a summer course on screenwriting at UCLA, and through a lawyer friend, the manuscript found its way to an agent in New York. A week later, lo and behold, the North American rights were sold to Little, Brown for half a million dollars in a bidding war. I learned an important lesson: when we make the story more important than the result, the story has a chance to live.

I used to think that I required more confidence, but now I believe that faith is the requisite ingredient for a writer. A few years ago, *Diamond Dogs* won France’s Prix Printemps (best foreign novel) and I was flown to Paris for Festival America. I sat onstage with four other writers, a Pulitzer Prize Winner on my left and a National Book Award Winner on my right, in front of a thousand French people, and was asked lofty questions about the author’s role in the modern world. *How did I get here?!* I knew in my bones that any success I’d achieved was not the result of an intellectual process, but a willingness to surrender to the full reaches of my imagination. What the hell did I know about the novelist’s role in modern society? My job was to inquire and take dictation.

One of the greatest struggles for the novice (hell, even the seasoned) writer is that we all, at times, feel like frauds. In a way, this is a good thing, because it keeps us humble. It reminds us that we are simply channels for our story, and that when we listen and inquire, real truths emerge.

The 90-Day Novel is not a book about how to sell a novel, nor is it a course designed to fine-tune your pitch, perfect your book proposal, get an agent, or meet a publisher. All of those topics are valuable, I’m sure, but as my agent says, “Until you have written your novel, you have nothing to sell.” *The 90-Day Novel* is an opportunity to go deep, to let it rip, to write the story you have always wanted to tell. When we allow the thrill of creation to be its own reward, we are often surprised by the result.

AL WATT

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