

A Pirate Goes Promotin': How I Used a Hot Movie Release to Promote My Older Backlist Book

By Jacqueline Church Simonds, Beagle Bay Books

An account of my efforts to promote my 6-year-old (pub date 2000) novel, *Captain Mary, Buccaneer* as a tie-in to the release of "Pirates of the Caribbean II."

Folks who attended my part of the PMA-U class "Marketing Your Fiction Dreams" will be horrified to hear that I got behind in promoting my own book. That's because I was promoting other titles and all sorts of other book publishing activities in the intervening time. The morning of June 27 I leapt out of bed and hollered, "Holy ___! I've got to get a press release out to hook CMB to PotCII!" My husband is used to me going from deep slumber to full-on panic—and also the fact that I talk in acronyms—and so rolled back over.

For those who have not gotten into the swing of promotion, the accepted method is to send out a press release a month before an event for which you want notice. Then one sends it out again two weeks before the anticipated date. I was WAY late!

By the time we'd finished the morning Board of Directors meeting (which consists of my husband and I walking the CBO (Chief Barking Officer), Bertie the baying beagle of Beagle Bay, his usual mile), I had pretty much decided how I was going to pitch the release. About 2 hours later, I had a finished press release, which looked like this: (see "Women Pirates of the Caribbean") <<http://www.beaglebay.com/news.htm>>.

New folks will note the press release barely talks about my book. That's because the media could care less about Captain Mary or me. They need NEWS to fill the airwaves 24/7/365. A novel by someone not as well-known as Stephen King is not news. Tying mean-nasty girl-pirates to the release of a much-anticipated Disney pirate sequel *is*.

Then I went over to PRWeb <<http://www.prweb.com/>>, posted it on their wire service and paid \$120 for extra distribution. They informed me it would be released on Friday (June 30), a week from the release of the movie. But also, the start of a holiday weekend. I'll admit, I was a lot worried about the results.

On Friday, I checked how many page views of my release I'd gotten—it was just under 30,000. I've done enough press releases with PRWeb to know that was pretty good— But am still a bit iffy on how that turns over to results. My phone wasn't ringing off the hook. My Amazon numbers hadn't budged.

By 11:30, I was talking to a (my one and only for that day) media person. She worked for Wireless Flash News—a news service out of San Diego that puts up 130-150 word "flash" news on pop culture and entertainment, sending it out to radio, TV and newspapers all over the world. It was sort of a non-interview-interview, as we covered every topic relating to pirates and women pirates. Later she called back and her editor was shouting questions across the room at me (someone please get that poor man his own phone!). She told me the release would go out on Monday.

Meanwhile, I found a website that had my PRWeb press release—and it looked great! <<http://www.a2mediagroup.com/?c=124&a=7792>> And it was a media distribution node, so that seemed cool.

YahooNews ranked my release #22 of the most read stories of Friday!

I spent the weekend working on my Amazon blog <http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0967959179/qid=981491103/102-2359035-942570_4?n=283155> and my website <<http://www.captainmary.com>>, making sure all the books, movies and facts were correct and "live."

Monday, things started happening. My PRWeb stats were up over 40,000. The Flash Media release had gone out, entitled "Original Women Pirates Of The Caribbean Were Anything But Hotties" (since I'm not a paying member, I can't see the content). I got four calls:

At 7 am, SPIN 103.8 <<http://www.spin1038.com>> of Belfast, Ireland rang me. They wanted to schedule an interview for Wednesday, July 5 at 7:30 a.m. (I am not a morning person, but I agreed to it). They said they'd seen me on Wireless Flash News.

I heard from CJAD <<http://www.cjad.com>> in Montreal for the Peter Anthony Holder Show <<http://www.peteranthonyholder.com/>>, who wanted an interview *that night*, at 11:30 p.m. my time. He cited Wireless Flash News as his source.

A fella called from the New York Post. He was looking for a tie-in with women pirates and New York. I told him about Sadie the Goat (a NYC-based Hudson River pirate in 1869). [ALWAYS try and tie your story/news bit into the local media!] He got very interested in that. But e-mailed me back later in the day saying that an expert he'd consulted said it was probably a myth, and he couldn't do the story.

I was called and asked to be on Canberra, Australia's 1206 2CC, the Mike Jeffrey's Breakfast Show, July 5, at 3:40 pm my time. Again, they referenced Wireless Flash News.

Meantime, I was watching something strange happen with my press release— It was morphing and spreading over many of the independent TV stations' websites (UPN, WB, Fox, etc) in the country—27, to be precise, from Alaska to Springfield Mass. (Also, 10 other media distribution websites.) The title had changed a bit, "Women Pirates of the Caribbean: Scarier Than the Movies," and there was a nice picture of a sailing ship's rigging. See an example here: <<http://www.aksuperstation.com/entertainment/3262166.html>> I have no idea who changed it. I'm not upset. Just curious.

The Canadian interview's time was changed twice: I went on at 10:10, rather than 11:30, as expected. No problem. I was on for a 1/2 hour. I think it went well. The host was easy to work with and must have mentioned my book and website 50 times. Result: I got a slight blip on my Amazon.CA page (about a 50,000 point improvement). But then, what did I expect? It was 1:30 am their time! Here is the MP3 clip (yes, it is ALL of the 1/2 hour): <<http://www.beaglebay.com/aboutjcs.htm>> (middle of the page)

Wednesday, the phone was already ringing at 6:15 when I got out of bed. The folks at the Dublin station had gotten Pacific time mixed with Mountain time and wanted me to be on the air—RIGHT NOW. "Um, I just woke up. But I'll certainly give it a go," I mumbled. They compromised and asked to call back in 1/2 hour and tape an interview. Hoorah. I went down and set up the IV coffee, praying it would kick in before 20 minutes were up. When they called back, I was more coherent, but I don't feel it went very well. We talked a lot about the Irish pirate, Grace O'Malley, but I don't think I was saying anything the young woman who

was hosting didn't already know. Well, duh. She's from Grace's hometown! The interview only lasted 15 minutes— About 5 minutes longer than it should have, from my perspective. They mentioned my book at the opening and close of the interview.

Later that day, I got a call from WJIM, Lansing, Michigan Talk Radio, to schedule an appearance on their morning show July 7. The only problem, they want me to be on at 5 am. I said I would, but also mentioned that I am NOT a morning person. Later they called back and rescheduled for 6:15 am my time. They cited Wireless Flash News as their source.

In the afternoon, I had a 10 minute interview with the folks in Canberra. That went pretty well, I thought. I was able to work in the 2 Australian women "pirates" (they weren't really. Just poor deportees who participated in a mutiny, and the law-folk saw fit to call it piracy so they could be hanged on sight), my book, the two women pirates my book is based on and some laughs about the movie. They mentioned my book and website 4 times.

Thursday, nothing was scheduled. I got an e-newsletter from No Quarter Given <<http://www.noquartergiven.net>> which is the source for all things pirate and pirate re-enacting worldwide. They listed my release in the "30 media stories about PotCII." The gal who runs this, Christine Lampe (alias Jamaica Rose), and her husband work REALLY hard at promotion. She was on NPR 2 days ago (wish I'd gotten that gig!) and they were both in the History Channel and Discovery Channel's specials on pirates (as experts and ratcheting around a period ship).

Friday morning dawned at 5:45 and I stumbled around trying to get in enough coffee to be, ahem, perky. Only the phone didn't ring at the appointed hour. I wandered around the office filing until 7:30, but they never rang. Shiver me timbers! Those lily-livered landlubbers ought be made to walk the plank. Har! [This was a test of the emergency Talk-Like-A-Pirate-Day system. Should Talk-Like-A-Pirate-Day arrive (Sept 19) and you and your parrot are not conversant, please see this website <<http://www.talklikeapirate.com/>> for completely silly, not-historically-accurate fun.]

Conclusions

I might have gotten more direct airtime if I had started earlier (A month ago, I might have gotten gigs on major radio and TV that the short turn-time made impossible for producers to schedule). However, a week in advance got me a lot of media time. I think the old standard of the month prior is advised, but the week before may get more media "panic calls."

The PRWEB ranking as of this morning is 55,200.

The book has not moved much on Amazon. In fact, my stats tanked in the last 3 days— what's with THAT? Ingram just placed an order for 20— But I have no idea how many are for direct customers. B&T's next order is Wednesday. We'll see if I increased awareness among readers.

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Advice for Radio Guests

By Jacqueline Church Simonds, Beagle Bay Books

1. When they call to book you, make sure you get the call sign, the city, the name of the show, the host's name, what time (and time zone) you will be on, and ask how long you will be on. Also ask if it will be possible to get an "Air Check" or MP3 file of your interview.

—You want the call sign so you can feature a link to their website on *your* website. Same with the title of the show and city.

—You'll also want to put your interview link (the MP3 file) on your website—unless it's terrible. (If it was terrible, listen to the recording several times to try and learn what NOT to do).

—You'll want to write down the host(s)'s name so you can say something like, "Thank you for having me on, Mike."

—Make sure you know what time zone the show is in. From my experience, you can see that letting others try and figure it out can be a problem. Make sure you and whoever books you knows exactly what hour everything will happen.

—You need to know how long you'll be on so you can have enough material to be interesting. While I can do about 90 minutes straight on pirates, women pirates and my book, not everyone has that kind of shtick semi-prepared. Often, you only get 10-15 minutes, so you may have to trim your remarks.

—Understand who is calling whom. Are they calling you or you them? Most will initiate the interview call. My rule of thumb is, out-of-country interviewers must call me.

2. Say yes to any time suggested.

Remember, they are doing you a favor. They only have so much time on their show. If you agree and then say, "Wow, that is early (late) my time" they may be able to accommodate you. But don't press the issue if they can't change it.

3. Be flexible.

The interview time may change. Be ready to drop everything and do it if they call an hour earlier. Don't complain if they want to move the time to later.

4. Take the interview call on a landline—don't use a cell phone.

Cell phones can drop calls and get interference. I use a phone that I can connect a headset to—that way my hands are free and I'm not sitting there pressing a phone into my face for a lengthy time. Phone headsets aren't expensive.

5. Sit. Stay.

One of my authors tried to do an interview on her cell phone while driving through the Sierra mountains. Obviously, it did not go well.

Fifteen minutes before scheduled air time, go into your office, or a room where you can get some quiet. Tell everyone in your house not to bother you for the required period of time and

close the door. Review your material. Have a glass of water handy—but remember not to drink until the commercial break (who wants to hear you swallowing?).

6. Your mother told you—

—To sit up straight, and I will too, but for a different reason: you will breathe deeper and speak from your diaphragm, thus enabling you to speak for longer without going hoarse. Also, it will give your voice a bit of depth.

—Smile when you say "hello." While a smile is a visual cue, it also tightens the muscles in your face and throat, lifting your voice just a tad. Studies show that people can actually hear that smile. Weird, I know. If you are discussing a topic that has something to smile about, do so; not all the time, just occasionally.

—Blow your nose 10-15 minutes before you go on. A stuffy nose will make you sound odd—and a really stuffy nose will make you sound down-right dopey. If you have allergies as I do, use a nasal spray 1/2 hour before you go on (no one wants to hear your post-nasal drip, either). If you must clear your throat, sneeze or cough, cover the mouthpiece of the phone.

—If the host tells a joke, chuckle appreciatively. Stay in the moment. This is not all about you. Successful guests interact with the host (and callers) instead of being relentlessly focused on their message, ignoring what is going on in the show.

7. Content is king

—Most radio and TV hosts are not interested in talking to you about your book (there've been some notable exceptions among the shows that had me talking about PotCII). What they want to hear about is the news that your book ties into or expands on, and your take on it. Presumably, your press release gave them a pretty good idea what your topic is and they want to hear about it.

—You can ask to mention your book in the initial booking conversation. Some will not allow it, some will. What will usually happen is that the interviewer will state your name and your book at the beginning and end of the interview. Some will also state your name and book coming out of, and going into a commercial if you are on for longer than 10 minutes. If you feel you can manage it, in response to a question, you might say "I have a chapter in my book, [name the book], devoted to just that idea, [host's name]," and then elaborate.

8. Try and find a local angle

It will be more interesting to the show's listeners if you can give them some sort of local tie-in (and will more likely get you the gig in the first place). If the subject is very broad, you can probably come up with something. Don't forget that being born or having lived in a state, county or town counts as "local."

9. In the end, thank the host.

If possible, send him/her an e-mail thanking them afterwards, and extending your hope that you can work together again. One of my interviewers wrote ME a thank you. I'm putting that in my promo file. It will help when I next try to get myself a radio gig ("Peter Anthony Holder of Montreal's CJAD says—").

10. And if they fail to call or cut you off—

—Do not call and demand to know why you were dropped or cut off. News is news. If there is a big fire at the Mayor's house, that takes precedence over you. Most will let you know they can't do the interview—but from my experience, you can see there's a possibility you'll simply never hear from them. Shrug it off and move on.

—If they drop you after a few minutes of a planned 1/2 an hour interview, you may need to work on your skills. Were you being shy? Did you get confused? Did you somehow offend the host (which on some stations is a good thing, but not on all of them)? After the interview, think carefully about how it went—was it something you said?

Most of all, have fun!

To contact J.C. Simonds Beagle Bay Books, visit

<http://www.beaglebay.com> Book Packaging <http://www.creativemindspress.com/bkpckg.htm>

Self-Publisher's FAQ <http://www.creativemindspress.com/newbiefaq.htm>