

AuthorViews: Two-Minute Videos for the Web

On September 1, Patron Saint Productions announced a new service for book publishers: **AuthorViews** digital videos (*authorviews.com*). AuthorViews are two-minute author presentations designed for two major uses: media pitching and sales collateral. You can view a promotional video about the service and five sample AuthorViews at the web site.

AuthorViews for The Media

Most television talkshow producers ask to see video before they commit to booking an author. However, most authors don't have a quality video, and many publishers don't have the equipment, facilities, staff, or budget needed to make one.

AuthorViews help fill the gap by providing a professional yet affordable video production service. When publishers pay to create a video, they get more control over the content. Instead of offering a talkshow host a poor-quality home video or a clip from a TV appearance for a previous book, publishers can provide a broadcast-quality presentation on the author's forthcoming book.

The AuthorViews cut used for pitching the media can run anywhere from two to five minutes. It fits on a standard CD in ultra-high-resolution format. The CDs can be duplicated in-house or purchased in bulk from Patron Saint Productions and put into press kits that are mailed to talkshow hosts.

Publishers also receive a streaming version of the press kit cut for use in online news rooms. The streaming version is optimized for a broadband Internet connection and plays on most platforms: PCs, Mac, Unix, etc.

AuthorViews as Sales Collateral

The shorter, web version of the AuthorViews video is designed to be viewed at sites that already contain ample information about the book. Instead of answering questions such as, "What is your book about," authors are asked, "What does this book mean to you, personally?" The goal is to establish a brief

emotional bond with viewers strong enough to push them over the threshold from browsers to buyers.

AuthorViews fit well on author sites, fan sites, special interest sites, and online bookstores. They work well on the publisher's catalog page for the book. AuthorViews are also well-suited to sales conferences, especially when sales reps use laptop computers to present new titles.



*Poppy Z. Brite talks about her new book, **Liquor (Crown)** in AuthorViews video.*

One More Tool in the Kit

Patron Saint Productions' Executive Director, Steve O'Keefe, says AuthorViews are really nothing new. "Online author videos have been around for several years. Bookstream has a product called Bookwrap which many publishers use. The web site bookpresenter.com also offers a multimedia product. The only thing different is our approach.

"I have been developing AuthorViews for almost three years. These videos were built using an intimate knowledge of how people behave online. Here are some things we do differently:

Two Minutes Maximum. People have been trained by television to expect a quality viewing experience that simply can't be duplicated online. We recognize that no matter how good the videos are, they're going to be viewed at 72 d.p.i., at roughly the dimensions of a business card, probably with inferior audio. Most people simply won't sit still for more than two minutes in the multi-tasking world of the Internet.

Emotion, not Explanation. With only 90 to 120 seconds to work with, what can an author say that connects with a viewer? In almost all cases, the AuthorViews video is on a web page that already contains basic information such as jacket copy, table of contents, sample chapter, critical reviews, and bibliographical information. We don't want the author to repeat what's already there. So we ask unusual questions designed to catch the author off guard, whether that means making them laugh or making them mad. We watch for their eyes light up. When they do, that's the cut we build the video around. When the author is emotional, the impact on viewers is immediate and can be profound, pushing them to tap the 'buy' button — which is right there on most web pages featuring books.

Physical Language. We always ask an author, "What does your book feel like?" The web is two-dimensional. A main impediment to sales is that you can't actually hold the book in your hands. So we ask authors to hold it for you, to comment on any production values that stand out: quality stock, sewn binding, deckled edges, interior color, oversized dimensions. This segment has been a huge hit in test markets, even for books that have routine production values. It makes people lust to own the book — to possess it and to touch it.

Net-Friendly. The most difficult facet of producing videos for the web is making them accessible to people no matter what computer platform they have or how fast their connection speed. Almost no one does a good job at this, but we do better than most. We render each video in RealMedia, Windows Media, QuickTime, MPEG-3 and MPEG-4. And we offer both high-resolution/broadband and low-resolution/dial-up for every video. In most cases, the viewer sees a link that says, "Click here for a two-minute author presentation," and the software determines which version of the video

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to launch based on the viewer's platform, software and connection speed. In other words, the mechanics are invisible—the viewer hits a button and the proper video begins to play. One problem with other author videos online is that they're available in only one or two formats. A lot of potential viewers are locked out by the technology. We work very hard to make these videos as close to universal as possible.

Syndication. All of our campaigns are based on moving content to the target audience—rather than pulling the audience to a site—and AuthorViews is no exception. We want these videos installed wherever people are interested in the author or the topic of the book. The videos are short, the file sizes are small, and we have the ability to serve them, we have eliminated many barriers to getting the clips installed on other people's sites. Plus, my staff is extremely good at finding sites where the target audience hangs and contact information for the people who control those sites. That's what we do, day in and day out, and have done for a decade now."

Tested and Refined

O'Keefe took his laptop and demo AuthorViews to the Book Expo America in Chicago and solicited feedback. "I made 30 appointments over two days to preview AuthorViews videos. I showed them to publicity people, marketing people, wholesalers, distributors, media contacts, booksellers, and authors. The response was discouraging, in a way.

"Publishers want the videos, alright—but they want them for pitching talkshow producers more than for the web. Most of them would not pay the asking price for a web video alone. But they will pay for a press kit version, and a smaller amount to have a web version produced and syndicated.

"To satisfy publishers, I must produce two cuts from the same video shoot: a longer press kit cut that hits the talking points for the book, and a shorter, more emotional cut for the web. We've re-worked our scripts to get both edits out of one shoot, and we've had to do additional work in rendering to get

an ultra-high-resolution version that fits on a CD for talk show producers."

Scheduling an Author Shoot

Patron Saint Productions is charging \$7500 for the complete AuthorViews package. However, the company is offering an introductory rate of \$4500 to tempt publishers into trying AuthorViews. "We need the practice," O'Keefe says, "and we're willing to give publishers a break for being early adopters."

AuthorViews will be traveling in the coming months to New York, Chicago, Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C. Authors touring through New Orleans can usually shoot their video with at Patron Saint Productions' studio with a minimum of advance notice. To schedule your AuthorViews shoot, or for more information, please contact Steve O'Keefe at Patron Saint Productions.



LAST CALL !

by Steve O'Keefe

Since 2001, I've been trying to bring publicists and authors to The Big Easy for intensive training in book publicity. Once again, I'm hosting a workshop on Thursday and Friday, October 28 and 29, with the lovely and talented Alice Acheson. Once again, I will have to cancel unless I get ten registrations by September 30. You have just a few days to call or e-mail if you're coming.

I'd like to do this seminar every year, and I'd like to do it without spamming people via e-mail to attend. I think I've got a terrific program with Alice Acheson, and the price is fair. So please, if you've been thinking of coming down, check out the info on my web site and call or e-mail today.

Thank you.



~ About ~

Patron Saint Productions

Patron Saint Productions is a publishing consultancy specializing in online marketing strategy, campaigns, and training. It was founded by Steve O'Keefe, a 20-year book publishing veteran who has launched online marketing campaigns for more than 1,000 books and dozens of publishers.

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Online Marketing Campaigns

Patron Saint Productions provides the following services, all designed to light a fire under a book during the month of publication. Ask about discounts for series promotions.

New Book Launch

A comprehensive campaign including a media component (e-mail news releases), excerpt distribution, discussion group postings, and online bookstore displays. Price: \$3,500.

Chat Tour, Blog Tour, or Seminar

All the services of the New Book Launch Campaign, plus a week-long author chat tour, blog tour, or online seminar. Price: \$7,500.

Web Site Promotion

Includes directory registration, writing meta tags, linkage campaign, e-mail news releases, discussion group postings, and site-of-the-day submissions. Price \$3,500 + registration fees.

Ask About These Other Services

~ Author Videos ~
~ Employee Training ~
~ Online Marketing Plans ~