

You Can't Judge A Book By Its Cover By: Michelle Cuttino

I was recently at Déjà Vu Book Lounge in East Harlem attending K'wan's *Eviction Notice* book signing, when I began to notice a trend amongst the readers who ventured inside to peruse the shelves. When a book caught their eye, they picked it up, stared at the cover, read off the title and the author's name, flipped it over quickly and then returned it to its place. They did this with a few books until they found one that stood out. This coveted selection received their full attention. They checked out the full book jacket then read the synopsis plus the first few pages. A book sale followed as the title was paid for within minutes of their selection.

After their purchase, they held animated conversations about all the familiar books displayed from authors they followed and why those particular titles were being overlooked. The reason was that they had already read them and were now looking for something new. So how does an unknown author get their book noticed among a sea of countless others and become the next hot commodity of the day? The unanimous response was that book cover design is key. The book cover is the "hook". The synopsis is the "line". The purchase is the "sinker".

Kisha Green, Publisher at DivaBooksInc says "I think the cover plays a major part since society does judge a book by its cover. If a reader looks at a cover and it looks cheap and low budget they are likely to pass on purchasing, but if it's bright, appealing and overall looks like a million bucks—it's being purchased."

Follow these three P's for producing an effective book cover design and half the battle is won.

Price: Book cover designs can range from \$150 to \$5000 depending on the graphic artist you select, design style, images and graphics, book type, book size, text and a number of other components. This fee usually includes the front, back and spine art (and inside flaps for Hardcover), but there are some who may charge separately for each. You may receive a discounted rate if you already have artwork selected, or have a good idea of what you want the cover to look like. However, price isn't everything. Don't be fooled into thinking that the more you pay, the better it will look, because this doesn't always hold true. Book cover design is like buying a car, shop around until you find one that not only complements your personal style, but also matches your budget.

Precision: Make sure your book cover doesn't deceive the potential reader. The cover design should correspond with the book's theme. If your cover art shows a naked lady in a seductive pose lying on a bed and your synopsis is all about gardening, then the cover is misleading and the reader feels betrayed. This will not only affect the sale of this book, but will influence future book sales, as readers do not support authors they cannot trust. You should also have a copy editor go over your synopsis for grammatical mistakes, incorrect punctuation and

spelling errors. If your cover is unedited, nine times out of ten, your book will be too. No one will purposely purchase a book that lacks editing. Also, take a look at the books in your own personal library, and figure out what made you purchase those titles. What grabbed you, was it the title, the cover design, the colors, etc.? Whatever it was that made you like that book, try to emulate it and make it your own. Remember: Emulate DON'T duplicate. Strive for your own personal excellence and it will be returned to you in royalties.

Patience: You cannot rush perfection. Take the time to research book cover designers. Check to see if they designed books in your genre, or similar to the style you're looking for. Make sure they understand your vision and will work with you to ensure your cover conveys it. Ask for referrals from authors, literary groups, friends, etc. You want a book cover that you will be pleased with, and not one that you have to make excuses for. Think about it this way: Remember all the blood, sweat and tears and weeks, months and years you put into your book? Building believable characters within an impressive storyline, fine tuning each word, editing then re-editing, writing, rewriting then rewriting some more and making sure everything was to your liking down to the very last punctuation mark? Knowing that once your book is published and the reading public gets a hold of it, you may become the next best-selling author? The truth of the matter is that your dream will never come to fruition if no one reads the book. If the book cover is lackluster and doesn't attract their attention, or entice them into wanting to know more about the book, you will never reach the status you feel your book deserves. It's that simple.

Many say you can't judge a book by its cover, but in this industry, if your cover is the reader's first impression, that is the first thing it *will* be judged by. So make sure your book cover allows the reader to judge your work accordingly!