

Author Interview

With
Tony Nesca



1. PLEASE PROVIDE A BRIEF INTRODUCTION, INCLUDING YOUR NAME, THE GENRE(S) YOU WRITE IN, PREVIOUS WORK AND WHERE YOU ARE BASED.

My name is Tony Nesca. I was born in Torino, Italy in 1965 and moved to Canada at the age of three. I was raised in Winnipeg but relocated back to Italy several times until finally settling in Winnipeg in 1980. I started writing prose and poetry at the age of 27 after several years of playing in an alternative rock bar band. I published my first chapbook of stories and poems in 1994 at the age of 29. I write literary fiction in the form of novels, short stories and poetry. I have published six chapbooks of stories and poems (which I used to sell straight out of my knapsack at local dives and bookstores), six novels, five books of poetry and stories, and one collection of short stories.

2. WHICH OF YOUR BOOKS / PIECES OF WRITING ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF, AND WHY?

*That's hard to choose - I think my favourites are my novel, *About A Girl*, and my short story collection, *Junkyard Lucy*. *About A Girl* is my second novel, published in 2005, and it was my 8th book. The reason why I dig this one so much is because it was the first time that my own complete voice came through, when everything finally coalesced and came together. Every writer and artist starts by mirroring their heroes, after a while, if you keep at it, your own voice starts speaking louder than the rest. My work was original from the beginning, but *About A Girl* is when it really spoke through me exclusively. *Junkyard Lucy* is a short story collection with subtly intertwining characters. I experimented with this one by writing the first person stories, the ones based on my life, in my free-flow, spontaneous, street-lyric, with sentences that go on for pages, and writing the other stories, the third person fictional ones, in a short, terse, straight-to-the-point, Carveresque style. And the two blended quite well, surprisingly. I was very satisfied with this book, it remains one of my personal favourites.*

3. HOW LONG ON AVERAGE DOES IT TAKE YOU TO WRITE A BOOK?

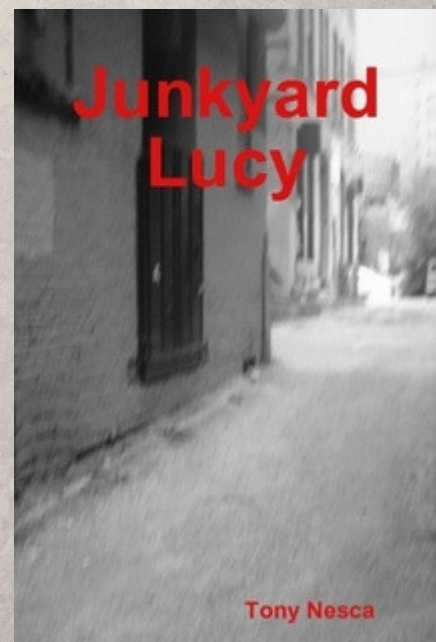
Like I said before, for the most part, though not always, I write in a quasi-spontaneous, free-flow style, which means I plan very little, no outlines, just a very basic idea and where it might go. Then I begin - spontaneously, without any checks and balances, without restraint, and when finished I give it my one-rewrite-method, go through it once then never touch it again. This is done to keep the writing natural, to keep the flow instinctual, to keep that "live" music feel. Thus, my books get written quite fast most of the time. My first novel was written in 5 weeks. My second in 8 weeks. But my third took me almost a year. I wrote that one in a completely different style - this one was planned out, and I rewrote it several times, I even got blocked halfway through, which never happened to me before or since. On average, I rarely spend more than 2 months on a book, though there may be breaks in the process of writing because life can throw some real shit at you and get in the way of anything.

4. WHAT IS THE MOST DIFFICULT PART OF YOUR ARTISTIC PROCESS?

I don't find the artistic process difficult - some projects have required more time and effort and may have gotten frustrating at moments, but that's the exception for me, not the norm. I find writing to be a natural experience, it comes out of me easily for the most part (not always). It's a great experience. On a really good night, it's like hanging out with a good friend - just shooting the shit, laughing, exchanging philosophies, listening to Lou Reed nice and loud. This doesn't mean that the emotions going down on the page don't wrench my guts out, because they do, I write about life, and life gets heavy at times. But the process itself is never difficult.

5. DO YOU READ YOUR BOOK REVIEWS? HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH BAD OR GOOD ONES?

I do read reviews and I deal with them the same way any sane man would - smile about the good reviews, frown about the bad.



6. WHAT DOES LITERARY SUCCESS LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

There are two different moments where I feel literary success - on the satisfaction that I am doing what I consider to be good work and having other people read it and agree. Then there's feeling of success on simply finishing a book and publishing it, seeing it in print. Everything else would be fantastic, money and a small fame might be cool, but they're extra things. The success is doing, completing, the work.

7. HOW MANY UNPUBLISHED AND HALF-FINISHED BOOKS DO YOU HAVE?

I don't have any unfinished books, it's rare that I don't see a project through.

8. WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE UNDER-APPRECIATED NOVEL?

Well, I don't have any under-appreciated novels that aren't respected in the literary fields, or in a cult manner. But it bothers me that the general public doesn't like, or perhaps doesn't even know, who Henry Miller is.

9. DO YOU WANT EACH BOOK TO STAND ON ITS OWN, OR ARE YOU TRYING TO BUILD A BODY OF WORK WITH CONNECTIONS BETWEEN EACH BOOK?

I write two different ways - either it's semi-autobiographical, first person, or it's third person fiction. The semi-autobiographical works are all connected because they are the ongoing story of an individual. Some characters repeat, locales repeat, etc.. But each novel, story or poem, can stand on its own as a complete work. The third person fiction has a few characters that have reappeared in multiple stories or poems, but for the most part they are not connected.

