

Ink It When You Think It

By **Sam Horn**, author of *POP! Stand Out in Any Crowd* (Perigee, Sept. '06)

I was watching *CBS Sunday Morning* (one of my favorite weekend rituals) and Billy Joel, composer of such classics as *The Piano Man* and *New York State of Mind*, was discussing how he “came up” with his lyrics and melodies.

He said he was designing a boat (something he does in his free time) and the lyrics, “In the middle of the night, I was walking through my dreams” kind of POP’d out. Then he thought, “Naw, that’s too simple” and rejected it.

He went to take a shower and couldn’t get it out of his mind. He wrote it down later that day and it eventually evolved into one of his 40 hit songs, “River of Dreams.”

If there’s anything I’ve learned in years of writing, consulting and speaking on creativity, it’s that *this* is how our best thoughts occur. They POP! into our mind. And if we don’t write them down, they’re gone. Worse, if we allow that inner critic to kick in and tell us all the reasons this won’t work, we snuff out these sparks of genius.

From now on, pay attention to what Ralph Waldo Emerson called, “the gleams of light which flash across the mind from within.” You may not know how or where this idea, lyric, or phrase fits into your work. Just trust that it will.

Our greatest minds from Mozart to Einstein have understood and honored the power of the “muse.” If they were gifted with a revelation, they knew it was their responsibility to *write it down*. Or what I call, “*Muse it or lose it*.”

I have been collecting quotes on creativity for years. Many are featured in my book *POP! Stand Out in Any Crowd* (Perigee, Sept. '06). They are eloquent attempts to articulate how ideas are “birthed” and built upon. Some favorites include:

“A hunch is creativity trying to tell you something.” - Frank Capra

“Often an idea would occur to me which seemed to have force. I never let one of those ideas escape me, but wrote it on a scrap of paper and put it in a drawer. To save the results of such mental action is true intellectual economy.” - A. Lincoln

“I never had to change a word of what I got up in the middle of the night to write.” - Saul Bellow

“The song was there before me. I just sorta came down and took it down with a pencil, but it was all there before I came around.” - Bob Dylan

“Words are things; and a small drop of ink, falling like dew upon a thought, produces that which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think.” – Lord Byron

What’s this got to do with you? First thought = best thought. The instant an idea “crosses your mind,” write it down. It will make your material more original by providing a “Eureka Moment” for your readers or listeners. They will appreciate you introducing something new instead of the same old platitudes they’ve heard before.

Want more ways to pleasantly surprise people with your originality? Visit www.SamHorn.com for free articles on how to make your ideas POP! out and get noticed . . . for all the right reasons.

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