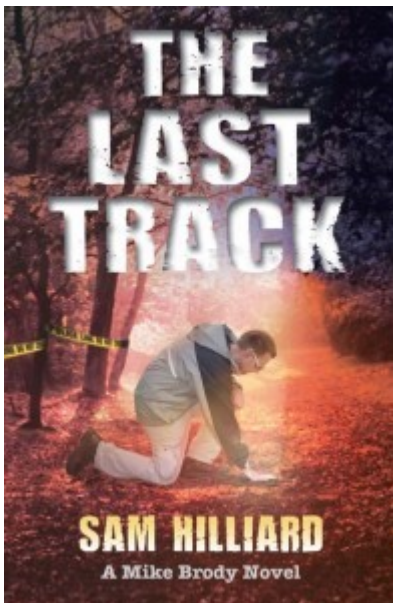


TURNING THE SPOTLIGHT ON SAM HILLIARD – June 20, 2010

Book Marketing Buzz

<http://bookmarketingbuzz.com/2010/06/20/shining-the-book-promotion-spotlight-on-sam-hilliard/>

Born in Kansas City, MO, near the center of the United States, Sam Hilliard arrived during a very scary period of the 1970s. He has lived on both coasts and quite a few places in between. Currently, Sam lives outside New York City with his girlfriend and an army of four cats—one feline under the legal limit. His first book, [*The Last Track: A Mike Brody Novel*](#), a mystery/thriller, released in 2010. When not writing, he's the Director of IT at an all-girl boarding school and observes world class drama first-hand. It's also the reason he studies Krav Maga and Tai Chi. You can visit his website at www.samhilliard.com/wordpress.



Welcome to Book Marketing Buzz, Sam. Can we begin by having you tell us a little about your book?

First, thanks so much for this opportunity! The Last Track is the story of Mike Brody, a tracker who can tap into the memory and emotional state of those he pursues. More than just a master tracker, Mike is a former Special Forces operative, smoke jumper, and now extreme adventure tour guide. He is recruited to find a missing, asthmatic boy (and unwitting murder witness) in the rugged terrain surrounding a dude ranch in Montana where Mike and his family are vacationing. As Mike tracks the boy, the killer pursues them both. Meanwhile, his ex-wife—a well-connected journalist—uses her contacts to unravel the killer's identity. Her discoveries ensnare them all in a treacherous conspiracy.

What is the first thing you did to promote your book once your publisher accepted your manuscript?

Does buying rounds for my friends count?

Promotion is the art of saying the right thing about an idea in the hope that the right person is listening. In the interest of drawing closer to a moving target, I am always trying new approaches.

But the first thing I did was reach out to friends and family and then built outward from there. One way I did that was to blog throughout the process of writing the book, sharing the experience along the way. This process continues today. For instance, I'm almost positive you and I are not related.

If you had to pick just one book marketing tool that you've used to promote your book, which would you say has been the most effective?

With any luck it could be this interview!

The most elusive thing about promotion is determining what is or is not working midstream. That kind of analysis often requires hindsight which only comes with time. It's also hard to zero in on the one factor that tipped the scales in the right direction; success in any endeavor often results from a combination of factors, rather than a single one.

Getting copies to readers through giveaways and reviewer sites has been very helpful. I think the trailer worked as intended, too. The greatest idea can come from the most unlikely source, so I am always open to feedback and advice.

Do you do more promoting online or offline and which do you prefer?

Making face to face connections will always be extremely important. Recently I led a workshop on creating memorable characters at a high school. The result – a nice sized room of students who didn't know about *The Last Track* before the class, do now.

But online can be easier because it is a more passive; I decide when to tweet, post, or respond to an email. There is also a permanence to the Internet. Better than my memory, anyway.

Do you use social networks such as Twitter and Facebook to promote your books and have you had any success with it?

I use Facebook and Twitter, and in the case where someone really wants to reach out to an author, that sort of mechanism can be a great thing. With the web in general, you never know who might stumble across a post or article, so it can help in unexpected ways.

As of late, many of my new FB friends and followers are readers. The author page at the end of the book lists my Facebook name and Twitter address, so if they got to that point and added or followed me, I have to believe they liked the 274 pages that preceded it.

Do you own a blog and how often do you update it? Did you set up your blog solely to promote your book and what is its effectiveness?

I blog one to three times a week at <http://www.samhilliard.com/wordpress>. I set the blog up years ago, largely because I wanted to get better at writing short pieces with definitive endings. This has proven to be a great relief from the drain of working on long projects with no clear deadline, like novels.

I enjoy posting on the blog, so it will remain in operation.

Do you recommend authors getting publicists to help them promote their books? Do you have one?

I think publicists can help, especially if they are genuinely passionate about the book. Marketing takes a steady stream of great ideas plus the conviction to follow through with them. I am open to the idea of a publicist in the future, **especially if it frees more time for writing.**

If an author prefers to do it alone rather than hire a publicist, where should they start?

Like all those who approach an overwhelming task: Take stock of what you already know, admit what you don't, and be ready to ask for help. I think most people would be surprised how often someone might assist them—if they are willing to listen and understand that help takes many forms.

Writing is my one true love in life, and when I don't make time for writing everything else falls into utter chaos. I suspect a lot of authors harbor a similar character defect. Promotion does not come naturally for me, even though I rather like some aspects of the discipline.

Start with your circle of friends and family, and then build outward from there. Go indirect. Offer help before asking for it and soon assistance and new ideas will start coming your way.

Thank you for coming, Sam! We wish you much success!

Thank you so much! And right back at you!