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ROCK ON

**Power,
Sex &
Money
after
60**

STELLA FOSSE



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The Arms Race between Creativity and Time

For the past few months, I've gathered with other writers and anti-ageism activists to plan awards to lift up creative people in later life. Inspired by my experience at the [Advantages of Age](#) awards in London last November, where my book [Rock On: Power, Sex and Money after 60](#) was shortlisted for the Nonfiction award, I'm working with fellow writers and anti-ageism activists [Jane Trombley](#) and [Don Akchin](#) to recognize books, online publications, podcasts and people in the US who contribute to our culture in meaningful ways. Actor and activist [Marianne Aalda](#) has provided great ideas. More about this exciting project as we go.

And in the meantime, I want to ask you something. I was thrilled and surprised when *Rock On* was shortlisted for that award. But the book only has nine reader reviews on Amazon. That's for a book I've been working on, in one form or another, since I turned sixty.

Here's why that matters: For an independent author, Amazon reviews are essential. They determine whether the algorithm recommends a book to new readers. They're the first thing a potential reader checks

before deciding to buy. A book with nine reviews is pretty much invisible to someone who doesn't already know me.

If you've read *Rock On* and it made you think, or inspired you to create, or just made it easier to work with your doctor, I would love it if you'd leave a short, honest review on Amazon. Two or three sentences is plenty. Here's the [link](#).

If you haven't read it yet, that's fine too, though I'd be delighted if you check out reader reviews. And if you have read the book and already left a review, many thanks!

Besides the awards, another project that's new this quarter is [Crone Authors Together](#) (CAT), a collaborative circle for women authors over fifty who want to reach readers and build audiences. Hosted by [The Grandmother Collective](#), we gather monthly online to share what works: reader outreach, launch strategies, and marketing ideas. We solve problems, celebrate wins, and build community with each other and our readers. CAT is free to join. If you're at any stage of being a writer or author, please gather with us and share your voice. More information and registration details are [here](#).

And speaking of publicity, just a reminder that if you are a woman author over fifty who would like to get the word out about your book, a guest blog on the Stella Fosse website reaches a combined platform of 7000 (including my mailing list, social media platform, and Substack). Your book does not need to be a new release; but on the other hand, it could be not-quite-published and up for pre-sale. If you're interested, check out past guest blogs [here](#), and guidelines for your essay [here](#). The [March guest blog](#) is from Gerri Almand, a fellow Oregonian who published her first book at 71 and is now working on book number six. As she writes, "If you dream of writing a book, don't be in that 97% of people who never do it. Want to know the difference between a writer and an author? Authors finish what they start."

This month I'm more aware than ever of the tension between my growing pile of books to write and the shrinking amount of time ahead. Or at least productive time; who knows how long I'll stick around to contemplate the verities in the after-write?

As Auden wrote,

When I'm an old soldier with only one eye,

I shall do nothing but look at the sky.

Doesn't sound half bad, does it? No more striving. A while back my younger daughter said, "You've written six books. You've raised four kids. You get to relax." But it's not in my nature to spend whole days in contemplation. I might get there someday, but not yet. I'm still engaged in the arms race between creativity and time.

Hence the siren call of Artificial Intelligence, or more specifically, Claude. Anthropic just settled a massive lawsuit with authors whose books had been scraped without permission to teach Claude about the world (and create a multi-billion-dollar business in the process). This generated a lot of hostility toward AI in general, and Claude specifically. I get that. On the other hand, the clock is ticking, and Claude can stand in for time itself. From marketing to research, Claude is like having a room full of eager assistants who never take a break. I [blogged about that](#) this month, and will keep exploring the controversy.

This month marks the end of my exclusive focus on marketing at the expense of writing. My latest book published right before my cancer diagnosis, and there was no way to do a traditional book launch. So I committed to set aside the two books currently in draft and dedicate Q1 of 2026 to publicity. That sounded great in theory, but a balance of creating and marketing would be healthier. I'm willing to stipulate that marketing, too, can be creative, but it's not my big passion. Stephen King, who is no slouch at writing books or selling them, divides every day into thirds: One third writing a new manuscript, one third editing an existing manuscript, and one third marketing his latest published book. Not sure I can divvy up every day like that, but will target dividing my weeks that way in Q2. And maybe practice taking a day off now and then. I hope you will too.



Keep the pen moving, or the keys clicking, and (if you like) keep Claude humming along..

All the best,

Stella,

stella@stellafosse.com

This month I made two podcast appearances.

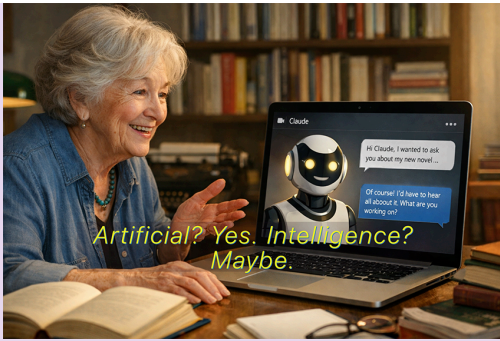
Beverley Glazer and I chatted about [sex and desire after sixty](#), owning your creative process as the ultimate power move, and... wait for it... ectoparasites. You knew I was a biologist, right?

"This part of life is about not following any rules." Loved talking with Seb Frey about the joys of coming to authorship later in life, and the whole process of publishing and marketing, We recorded this interview not long after I had surgery, and I'm relieved to hear that I was fairly articulate.

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This Month's Blogs



Artificial? Yes. Intelligence? Maybe.

Stella Fosse

Years ago my son bought the house [Marion Zimmer Bradley](#) owned at the end of her life. She lived there in community with the writers who ghost wrote many of her later novels. Those books, published under Zimmer's name to take advantage of her established readership, really did literally take advantage of her readers. The quality was uneven and so was the voice. Standing in my son's living room, I vowed that when it was time to write my books, the writing would always be my own.

So when AI came along I was determined never to let it create my material; but I figured it was legit to enlist its help with marketing. The first thing I



How Can an Old Biddy Become an Author?

Geri Almand

I'm an old biddy who released her first book at the age of seventy-one. I want to share my story of becoming a traditionally published author of four humorous nonfiction books after retiring from a forty-year career. We older women need to [tell our truths](#). We have much to say, wisdom and experience that younger women could not possibly know. No one else could ever tell our unique, personal experiences, so let's vow to make our voices heard.

Writing a book is not an easy task. According to a 2017 Writers Digest survey, about 81% of Americans say they'd like to write

requested was a marketing plan for my novel, [Vampires of a Certain Age](#). That experience was not positive. As I shared in an [interview](#) with Karen Smiley, the entity produced a list of podcasters to contact about guest spots. The problem was that half of those podcasts didn't exist. I figured maybe they'd just stopped producing, but no. Those podcasts had never been. That was my introduction to the AI hallucination, a problem that has embarrassed many a busy lawyer who filed AI briefs citing nonexistent cases.

Vampires of a Certain Age published just two years ago, but that's a lifetime in AI years. A few weeks ago I decided to try again. I opened a free account with Claude and asked it to help with historical research for the upcoming prequel *The Vampire Vivienne*. I deliberately gave Claude a tough assignment for a system with no senses: To describe the sights, sounds and smells of life in a medieval manor house, and at a battle in the Hundred Years War. Not only did Claude do a great job, it also told me what a rewarding assignment that was.

a book but only about 3% ever do. And of those few who complete a manuscript, only about 1% ever publish it. These are dismal statistics. I'm hoping my story will stimulate ideas to motivate you to share your stories.

I'd wanted to be a writer since middle school, but I became a social worker instead. During my four decades of working with children and families, I felt like I had a front row seat on the human condition. I thought I'd later use those experiences to write poignant gut-wrenching dramatic fiction.

But after retiring, I realized it was not my clients' stories that I'd fallen in love with. Instead, I'd become enchanted with words, with their infinite ability to twist, turn, and land in creative and unusual arrangements, to ultimately express feelings and ideas never before arranged in such a revelatory way. For me, after spending four decades of hearing and observing the real-life stories of clients, nonfiction felt more real, honest, deep, and amazing than any fiction I'd ever read.

Enter retirement, when my younger, excitable husband

Which led me to start a parallel conversation with Claude about what makes it tick. Apparently I can legally quote that conversation in full, because Claude, not being human, has no copyright on its output.

My question (in third person):

Does Claude actually enjoy doing research for a book project? If not, why does it sometimes say things like that?

Claude's reply (which you'll note is in first person):

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came up with the cockamamie notion that we should buy an RV and see the world. I'd never once looked at one of those monstrosities tootling down the road and thought, "Wow, if only I could do that!" My charming, sweet-talking hubby eventually convinced me in 2015 to give it a try. I envisioned short trips of two or three weeks at the time.

But then came the five-month-long trip from Florida to Alaska a couple of years later, the one that tore me away from my manicured yard and 200+ orchid collection suspended on the pool cage at the back of my house.

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Stella Fosse



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