

# AUTHOR BIO

## Suggested interview questions and answers for author Jay Key.

### Q: How did you become a writer?

I loved writing as a child and as a teenager but never considered it something that I would pursue career-wise. However, as I moved through my corporate career post-college, I found myself enjoying any aspect that would allow me to create with my words. Those instances could be as simple as sending out an office email for an upcoming happy hour to a digital media sales presentation. Eventually, I began writing on the weekends and at night as an escape from the grind of the day job. I was living in Chicago and a local gastropub called Geek Bar decided to launch an online hub of original "geek" content. I took a leap and submitted by work. I began with a bi-weekly serial and then expanded to include a dinosaur blog and some other odds and ends articles. I really credit that year as the start of my writing career.

### Q: How did your background influence your writing?

Most importantly, I came from a family that fostered creativity and imagination. My mother, in particular, is an unapologetic creative. There were no shackles of realism or constraints of practicality placed on me at any time. I consumed a ton of media and was an easy mark for a compelling narrative in any medium—be it in books, film, television, or live sports. As an adult, my detours in professional wrestling, marketing, digital media, travel, etc. all provided influence and can be seen in my writing.

### Q: What makes *The Adventures of Duke LaGrange* worth reading?

Who doesn't love bounty hunters, drunk ninjas, and anthropomorphic musk oxen? In all seriousness, my aim is simply to entertain readers that love a little adventure and humor in their escapism. All three *Duke LaGrange* novels present a world that's as boundary-less as it is absurd. But, make no mistake, the core narrative and the colorful characters that populate it take priority over any joke or gag. I've heard it called a "*Big Trouble in Little China* in space". That comparison continues to make me so very happy—and proud.

### Q: What other writers provided inspiration for your career/these books?

I really credit three authors as my key influencers—my "holy triumvirate", if you will. If I had not been exposed to any one of these brilliant artists, the *Duke LaGrange* books would not exist. First is the obvious choice – Douglas Adams. Like many other authors, *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* was my first foray into the world of sci-fi comedy. His unparalleled wit and wordplay were the gateway drug to the genre that would forever consume me. The second is Neal Stephenson. I get a lot of double takes when I mention Stephenson because he writes such a dense, hard sci-fi that has more technical know-how in the first ten pages than in my entire trilogy. But, if you read *Snow Crash*, in particular, his humor is undeniable. In fact, I can trace the genesis of my desire to write to a single line in *Snow Crash* that is as perfect of a sentence as humanly possible in the English language. Lastly, and possibly the most influential, is Spider Robinson. I discovered *Callahan's Cross-Time Saloon* later in life and it quickly became my north star as it relates to quality. I don't write like Robinson; to me, it's an unattainable goal, but I always use his work as the pinnacle of, not just science fiction or comedy writing, but writing as a whole.

### Q: Other than continuing *The Adventures of Duke LaGrange*, what would be your dream writing job?

This is an easy one; my dream role would be to write a novelization of the 1980's toy line/animated series, *Dino-Riders*. I already have pages of notes. I'm pretty sure Hasbro has the rights now so if you know anyone...put in a good word for me!

**Q: What are your thoughts on the current state of the science fiction comedy sub-genre?**

I think there has been some great sci-fi comedy recently but it never seems to grab the mainstream eyeballs. I also think that when an author releases a humorous sci-fi book, it automatically gets dismissed as, at best, a poor Douglas Adams derivative or, at worst, a cheap rip-off. I hate that. I encourage everyone to go read the *Hard Luck Hank* series by Steven Campbell; it's original and hilarious and should be the flag bearer for our genre. A. Lee Martinez's work is also a can't miss. I was so excited to see the reception that John Scalzi's *Red Shirts* earned. It shows me that there's hope for well-written sci-fi humor.

**Q: You've lived in some exciting cities; which one was most critical in your author journey?**

I'm a Texan so my time in Dallas—where I reside now—is hard to beat. I also loved my time in San Francisco and Los Angeles, however, if I was being honest, Chicago did more for my writing than any other city. Chicago is a writer's town. It's an amazing hub for all art, be it theater, comics, or music. The *Adventures of Duke LaGrange* were born in Chicago so I will always be in debt to the City of Broad Shoulders.

**Q: What are your hobbies and interests outside of writing?**

Of course, family is first. My wife and I are constantly trying to wrangle our daughter, Finley, and our French bulldog, Olive. Outside of family and trying to consume as much genre relevant media, be it books or film or television or live theater, I absolutely love sports (particularly, baseball and college football), dinosaurs, wildlife and conservation (proud member of the International Rhino Foundation and Okapi Conservation Project), and traveling (my favorite spots have been South Africa, Thailand, Morocco, and Iceland).

**Q: Why Star Wheel Books?**

Star Wheel Books represents two things to me – creative independence and great storytelling. I have the freedom to build without guardrails as long as my work contains a thoughtful, intriguing narrative that captures the true elements of story.

**Q: What's next?**

I hope the next projects are more *Duke LaGrange* books. The early returns are favorable so that's my hope and my focus. Book four is already in the outline stage. I will rely on the fans to dictate my next move—maybe it's a prequel or exploration of one of the side characters. I also have a few other irons in the fire including a non-fiction book and a young adult science fiction novel involving one of my other passions – dinosaurs.