



Back Issues
Current Issue



HOME NEWS PSYCHOLOGY HEALTH FOOD FEATURES SEX TALK LIFESTYLE COMMUNITY SHOP

Uncovered Report Mental Health News

Author of Virtuality speaks to Mental Healthy

By Charlotte Fantelli

Virtuality is a fictional story, but one that tackles the very real topics of PTSD, sanity and indeed reality itself. Being a fictional work, Andrew Don, the author, could explore these hard hitting topics outside the confines of 'real-life' and take the reader on an exploratory journey through the central character's psyche and in turn on a voyage of self-discovery.



I caught up with author Andrew Don and asked him a few questions about what we can learn from this book.

The book in brief

War correspondent Jack Connors flees to the Far East to try to forget the horrors of Iraq.

Awaking one night from the flashbacks that mercilessly haunt his sleep, Jack aimlessly wanders the streets of Chiang Mai, in Thailand, the thunder of explosions and gunfire still playing in his head in a tormenting loop. Something so many veterans are all too familiar with.

Jack stumbles upon a market and is drawn to an item on a stall: Virtuality, a computer game that transports players to their Soul Zone, a time and place in harmony with their very essence.

In his Soul Zone, Jack falls in love and finds himself, however he is ejected from the game and has to face the reality of life once more. Jack desperately searches for a way back in but it is not long before Jack starts doubting whether Virtuality existed and even his own sanity.

PTSD

When asked why he chose PTSD as a subject matter Andrew told me 'I have always been interested in the issue of post-traumatic stress disorder from reading books about the First World War, Vietnam and news reports about veterans from the Falklands and Iraq conflicts.'

It is obvious that Andrew wanted to create a strong, masculine character that had many depths. Throughout the book it isn't fully clear whether the character has PTSD, or other mental disorder. This mirrors many 'real-life' experiences of those who suffer with the aftermath of trauma, not fully aware of why they feel the way they do and are left questioning.

Andrew explains 'Jack's plight teaches us how much traumatic experiences can affect our lives no matter how strong we may think we are. It teaches us that we are all vulnerable, even those you would not imagine in a million years would suffer a mental health issue.'

Inspiration

The inspiration for this book came from a place inside the author that longed for escape. At the time the narrative came to him Andrew was suffering with a slipped disc, he tells me 'I was in excruciating pain and at the end of my tether emotionally. I was watching a film called *Ladies in Lavender* and found a beautiful, wild beach scene so evocative and peaceful that, for a moment, I had no pain, physical or emotional.'

It is this place or 'Soul Zone' as Andrew calls it in the book, that Virtuality is based on. The book demonstrates how all of us can find a place where we can be in tune with our own souls, where we can be at peace with ourselves. But often we have to go through unspeakable mental torments before we can find that place for, I suspect, you must have to know great torment before you can recognise great peace.'

Well I for one agree, if you want to explore Virtuality you can buy Andrew's book [Virtuality](http://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/product/B00692770U/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=uncoveredmaga-21&linkCode=as2&camp=1634&creative=6738&creativeASIN=B00692770U) [here](http://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/product/B00692770U/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=uncoveredmaga-21&linkCode=as2&camp=1634&creative=6738&creativeASIN=B00692770U):