

Interview with Brandon Sanderson & Isaac Stewart

This interview was held on the 14th May 2019
in the Lettrétage in Berlin, Germany

Questions for Brandon Sanderson

- **As you started the *Stormlight Archives*, had you planned this length? Oder did the story made its own way?**

I did. I have always wanted to do a big series. I grew up reading Robert Jordan and other people who wrote big epic books. When I started, my first books were standalones or trilogies because I thought it's easier for readers who want to try me out. A trilogy or a standalone is a better introduction to an author. So I can proof them that I can finish something. But in my heart the thing I wanted to do was a big series and so that's the *Stormlight Archives* I've been planning for years.

- **Okay so a standalone like *Elantris* or the *Mistborn Series* are for trying...**

Yes, or *Warbreaker*, which is also a standalone. I intentionally started with things that are easier to try out. *Stormlight Archives* is the one you have to trust me on, right? Because it's a big series and beyond that it's much harder to get into. It's got lots of characters; it's a very different world.

- **I think that's a good idea, because when a possible reader comes into a bookstore and he sees the first one from *Stormlight Archives* (*The Way of Kings*) and then he googles it and sees, oh, there are 6+ books from the series...**

I love big series but I grew up reading them and know that it's really frustrating to have to wait and wait and wait... and I thought, it would be better to start with a finished series like the *Mistborn Trilogy*, which is already done. So you can read the whole series and don't have to jump into something that's not done, when you first try to read something from me.

- **The *Stormlight Archives* are very complex and the story is not over. How do you keep the track? Is there something like a „Roschar-Lexicon“?**

I have my own Wiki and a full time continuity editor. Her name is Karen, she is amazing. And her job is every time I write a book she goes and she takes everything from the book and puts it in the Wiki, so that I can look up references – everything I have written before. And then when I write a book she also compares it with all the stuff I have written before and says: „Ahh, you said his eyes were blue in this book.“ and other stuff. She is also the one who works out a timeline for every book to make sure that I'm not getting too many days or things like that. She is wonderful. And that Wiki is huge, it's enormous. Before I handed it after her, it was already longer than *The Way of Kings* and now it's... yeah, longer. That's nothing that fans can read yet, because it's got lots of spoilers but hopefully we can turn that into something for the fans.

- **Which perspective do you like the most in the story to tell from? Do you have a favorite character?**

So, I don't pick favorites. Robert Jordan once answered to this question: „My favorite is whoever I'm writing right now.“ And I like that answer. Right now I'm writing Venli for book four so she is my favorite for right now. But I try not to take favorites. When I'm

writing someones viewpoint that has to be the most important story for that time I'm writing that. Every character is a combination of something very like me and something very different from me. So put that together and it's me trying to explore the world through those eyes.

- **Okay. But are there maybe some perspectives that are easier to write?**
Yes, some perspectives are a little easier to write. The characters who know themselves very well tend to be easier to write for me. There is someone like Jasnah knows the world and knows what she is doing tends to be a little easier to write then sometimes someone like Kaladin who is kind of lost...
- **And how easy is it to write Shallan with all her different characters?**
Shallan is a little on the harder side because she melts in and out of three different people and that makes it a challenge to write. She sees the world three different ways which is a lot of fun but is harder to write.
- **I really like Rock from bridge 4 as a side character. Why did you write him as a cook who doesn't want to fight?**
Part of this is, when I sit down and write a character I really want to explore who they are and I want them to have some autonomy, a chance to make decisions and change the world around them. As a writer I mostly am an outliner. I like to have a neat plan. But if you are too orderly with your plan start to feel stale and so I try to let the characters grow and become, what they want to be. And Rock is one of these characters like Lopen, when I start writing them I have to let down how they want to be and not only, how I outline them. And so he is a cook because that's just who he is, who he became when I was telling the story about him. I like it when people don't always fit their own culture because none of us are perfect examples of our culture. And so someone like Rock who is very different from the way that people view in world his people is really interesting to me. He will get his own story theoretically like *Edgedancer*, it's not in German yet but they will publish it later this year.
- **All your worlds have their place in the Cosmere. Does this mean that in theory characters from different worlds can meet each other?**
Yes, they could. People ask if I'm pushing the Cosmere like the Marvel universe but I don't view it the same way. It's more about the different cultures interacting, that's what I want to do. It's gonna be less about grabbing this character from this book and this character from this book... but some of the characters will interact moving forward. But more my goal is how each of these cultures eventually become space faring cultures and interact in an interesting galaxy. That's where I want to go with it. So it's more like Star Wars than Marvel.
- **If the Stormlight Archives would get into a film, do you have some favorite actors for characters?**
I would love to get Dave Bautista, he plays Drax in Guardians of the Galaxy. He has the exact right look – if you go watch him in interviews I see him and think that's Dalinar. I would love him as Dalinar. If you have only see him as Drax, they won't match. But if you go watch him in interviews, he is a really interesting guy, I really like the way he talks and the way he looks. So I think he would be a really good choice.

– **Do you have some actors maybe for Shallan?**

I don't have anyone chosen for Shallan. I don't really think of actors when I write my characters most of the time. It's more something like „maybe this person can do it“. A lot of the people in Roschar are hard for me to even cast in my head because Roscharians are a very non-earth-like ethnicity and so in my head the way they look... they aren't a lot of redheaded asian people in our world. I don't see half irish, half japanese people – there are not a lot of actors like that. And that's what Shallan looks like in my head.

– **Would you like to get a film from the series?**

I would love to have a film. I think *Stormlight Archives* is gonna be hard to make into a film, a television show is probably a better match. I think, *Mistborn* would work really well as a film and I would love to see it done.

I'd love to see it happen. I think this next year will telling, because we have „wheel of time“ coming out, we have „name of the wind“ in development and we have Narnia and we have the Witcher. And so if these things take off and are popular I think our chances to get a TV show or a movie go up so I am really hoping that these ones are really good. So right now we only have Game of Thrones and Lord of the Rings which are the two successful fantasy adaptations. If we can have some more that will help us.

– **Where would you like to live? On Scadrial with some allomantic skills or on Roschar with a spren?**

I probably would pick Scadrial, they are closer to having instant noodles and the internet [Note: the future scadrial with the cowboy scenery]. Roschar is way off. I like things like air conditioning and electricity. Of course Roschar has stormlight which is almost the same. If I could just live on even one I would probably pick Scadrial but if you promised me I could be a Knight Radiant I might pick Roschar. But if I won't have any powers, I would definitely be on Scadrial.

– **Finally, I have some more general questions. What was the latest book you read? Did you like it?**

„The truth“ by Terry Pratchett. And I just love Terry Pratchett. After that my reading has been a lot of my students books because I had to finish up with a few of those, because now I have a new batch of them. So I read a lot of student works and „the truth“ [dt. Titel: Die volle Wahrheit]

– **A teacher has brought you to read again. As I am a teacher too, I think, this is very interesting. What would you tell children or your younger self today about the meaning of books and reading?**

I would say that the thing to know is that books are like shoes. Not every book will fit every person. And if you have the wrong fit, you might think „I just don't like shoes. I'm not gonna put on any shoes anymore.“ But the truth is if you find the right book for you it makes your life so much better like a good pair of shoes. So even if books have not worked for you so far there is some out there that will. Keep trying, discover them, and they will change your live.

– **And the last one: How does your perfect place to write look like?**

I like to read in an easy chair with my feet up and a laptop with a desk. I like cool music, usually epic instrumental music play, a nice cup of ice water with lots of ice and people leaving me alone. If you can get me a good scenery, if I can look throughout the window and see the ocean or something cool and dramatic I will like that.

Questions for Illustrator Isaac Stewart

– **How is the process of the cardmaking going? Do you read the books by yourself and draw what you read? Or do you get a sketch or a template?**

We have done it many ways. Early on Brandon had give me an image that he had drawn on the computer and that was *[BS: very poorly!]*, but it was enough. And when I have that, then I read the book and sketch things trough that book. But nowadays I read the book and I draw out something and then I bring it to Brandon and say „it this right?“ and then we adjust it until it's just right. Or sometimes we adjust the text to match the map. Or we adjust the text and the map to match what is in Brandons head.

– **How many takes does it need until a map is ready?**

It just depends on the map. Some maps I show to Brandon and he say „that's right“ and some of them go back several different times because if we need to fix the text or we need to match things that didn't really come out and we need to adjust it somehow, that can take a lot more back and forth.

– **Do you work traditional with a pencil? Or only with digital medium?**

I like both. It just depends on where I am at. I have a sketchbook with me at times and if I get an idea I am drawing that. We were at a piano concert one night and I was drawing things in a sketchbook because if I have an iPad out my children want to play with it. So but if I have a sketchbook out, sometimes they want to play with that too. But it's less likely. So, if I do something in a sketchbook I scan it and then adjust it digitally. Some designs are easier to do digitally, because then I can erase things or if there is some kind of symmetry going on there are tools to make this. But it's nice to have physical things to show people and sometimes buy those too. So that's a nice benefit to have.

[BS: I saw him sketching on a table the first time. We were in one of those restaurants where they have paper on the table and crayons and we were just to rush out and I see this and said: „You are great at art. You wanna do something on my books?“]

And it was funny because I was drawing a face and he said: „Do you wanna draw maps?“ And I haven't done fantasy maps before in my spare time. But I do tell people sometimes that I got my job from doodling. Which I never thought that would happen, because I was 18 in chemistry classes was drawing fantasy things on my notes and thought, that I need to stop this, this is not gonna bring me anywhere. But in fact, doodling got me a job.

– **What sort of maps do you like to draw the most?**

What really gets me with maps is when they are done in graphically well shapes. That's not really symmetry, I love it when there are big shapes and you can get more detail into it.