

Chick-Lit Authors Don Walking Choos

by Raya Kuzyk | Sep 23, 2005

It could be the start of a tired joke: an Avon author, a Red Dress Ink author and a Downtown Press author walk into a bar. But as marketing strategies go, it's not so bad. This week, 12 authors from six chick-lit imprints will embark on what Avon author and organizer Josie Brown calls the Fictionista Chick Lit Tour. It includes readings and discussions in 17 cities, most of which will be sponsored and hosted by the Hard Rock Cafe.

It's no coincidence that the tour sounds similar to the 2003 Bookapalooza tour engineered by Tempe, Ariz.'s Changing Hands Bookstore, in which five debut fiction authors from different houses cross-promoted their work. "The Changing Hands tour was totally inspirational," explained Brown. "I read an article about it and thought, 'Wow, how perfect for chick lit!'"

What began as a five-city tour for Brown and three other Avon authors grew bigger when writer Jennifer O'Connell (*Off the Record*, NAL., Sept.) heard about it and persuaded the others to hire the freelance publicity team Jocelyn Kelley and Megan Hall to promote the tour. As the number of authors grew, and because many were covering their own travel expenses, they decided to set out in groups of three or four, each group touring in up to four cities.

In 10 of the 17 cities, they will appear in a bookstore as well as in watering holes, where the booksellers will also have the option to sell books. Mark Johnson, community relations manager of the B&N/Wolf Chase store in Memphis, will host an October 25 reading with O'Connell, Brown (whose

True Hollywood Lies is coming from Avon next month) and Johanna Edwards (The Next Big Thing, Berkley, Mar. 2005). To ensure that a lot of women turn out for Johnson's event despite another appearance by the authors that day at the local Hard Rock Cafe, he plans to invite the local NOW branch, the Junior League and all the sororities of the University of Memphis. "I mean, that's chick-lit central right there."