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# Writing proves a life-changer for poet Felix

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**PUBLISHING mogul Felix Dennis discovered poetry later than most - he was past 50 before the verses started to flow.**

In fact, the self-made millionaire was languishing on a hospital ward 14 years ago when he wrote his first lines on a post-it note.

But he's certainly made up for lost time as since 1999 he's gone on to write seven books and some 1500 poems.

"I'd never ever thought about writing poetry before," he admits. "It was a revelation when I did. It changed my life.

"I admit I was a late starter, it's the sort of thing you're supposed to do when you're 20-25, I was 52 before I attempted it."

He jokes that his poems take between 30 minutes and nine years - he puts first drafts in a drawer and won't return to them for at least a couple of years.

"When it comes to writing I agree with Mark Twain - the backside on seat principle is very important if you want to get something done," laughs Felix, who now lives in Warwickshire.

"I try to write for around three hours a day no matter how busy I am. Writing poetry is like getting rich, it's about a lot of hard work."

He's a firm believer that poems needs to be heard, including an audio CD with each of his anthologies and regular touring the UK to perform.

"You may have heard of these poetry evenings that are eight or nine people sat at the back of

the library - perhaps you've even been to one, though I hope not.

"My shows are nothing like that. In fact I tackle that head-on, I really enjoy converting people who are sceptical.

"There are often men there who admit that they were dragged along by their wife and girlfriend and were dreading it. But actually they've loved it.

"I mean, it's poetry, it's very cultured, so they'll get brownie points from their partner.

"And I serve some of the best French wine they've ever tasted!"

But Felix's live performances were thrown into serious doubt last year, when he was diagnosed with throat cancer.

"My poetry at that time changed a great deal - I thought I'd been handed a death sentence. And I kept asking doctors about my voice.

"They, perhaps understandably, said that the important thing was to keep me alive.

"But I felt that in some ways if I couldn't read my poetry, there was no point. Eventually I found a doctor who was confident he could perform the surgery and ensure my voice wasn't affected - but it meant a six and a half hour operation.

"I've jokingly called this the 'cut throat tour', because if you look closely enough there's a scar on my throat that looks like I've been in Sweeney Todd's chair!"

Felix Dennis' *Did I Mention The Free Wine? The Cut Throat Tour* visits Birmingham's Crescent Theatre on June 18.

For full tour dates visit [www.felixdennis.com](http://www.felixdennis.com)

