

James Martin - Made By James

Joke: Hi everybody. Thank you for listening to another episode. And today we will be talking to the amazing creative James Martin from Made by James. Hi

James Martin: James. Hello, my friend. How are you? You? Well,

Joke: I'm good. How

James Martin: are you? Yeah, really good. Thank you. We got, uh, it's a little bank holiday today. National holiday, ah, summer holiday in the UK today.

So you have got me off on the day off.

Happy to do.

Joke: I'm so happy you're here and wow. Thank you to be here for being here on your day off. more amazing. yeah. Okay. So we've been, um, chatting a while now, which has been great. And I was like, oh my gosh. Wouldn't it be amazing if James were to be on this podcast and you said, yes. Yay. so for the people who do not know you yet.

Um, which I don't think there are many, but, uh, tell us, who are you, what do you do? And do you have a big, scary, hairy goal?

James Martin: The big, scary, hairy goal. Okay. Yeah. Um, so yes, so I'll start. So firstly, my name is James Martin. Um, so that's for that doesn't know me and I. I am an agency owner. I'm a logo designer, brand identity designer, but I'm also through, uh, Made by James.

Um, a I dunno an Invigorator a motivator. I'm not too sure what I really am to be fair, but. My big mission is to just help other creatives, on their path to greatness, really, I suppose, living their best logo life. That's the way I like to put it. yeah, I'm trying to be a very honest

voice in a very, not so honest world when it comes, especially social media, you know, it's all kind.

Quick wins, six figures in a year, you know, unattainable goals. Whereas I like to just kind of bring the dial back a little bit and you know, a career, a career is a career for reason, you know, supposed to be 40 years, 30, 40 years. You're not supposed to have made it in year one or two. And I'm, I'm just trying to bring back a more even.

Calming voice to let everybody know that it doesn't all have to happen tomorrow. So that's kind of where I am. So yeah, brand identity designer for almost 20 years now. Um, but over the next decade, I'm definitely gonna be transitioning more into the role of educator, um, and coach for creatives around the world.

I think that's where I am. Right.

Joke: Right. That is so cool. And I love that you keep the honesty, keeping it real, being human, as you say, but also in your book, cuz you have an amazing book. Um, the honest guide to creativity and global design. So, um, which is amazing. Everybody, please go get it. So there's a shameless plug right there.

I love that

James Martin: this plug. Thank you very much.

Joke: um, so. You say, and you don't know what you are, which is actually really cool because you do so many things and you are so many things look cause you're human. Um, would you consider yourself to be a multi potential?

James Martin: I mean, I, this is a great question. I mean, when I say, I dunno who I am, I know exactly where I'm going.

OK. I think that's what I think there's a big difference, but. You know, at the moment, um, I think all creatives to some extent are multi potential lights, I think. Yeah. As a creative, you tend to find ways to

achieve things. you know, I would say if you own a creative business, you are a multipotentialite because you're having to do the work you're having to do your marketing. You're gonna have to do some social media content. You're gonna have to do your admin. You're gonna, so there's a lot of things. Are, is everybody in the world a Multipotentialite to some extent?

Joke: Probably, yeah,

James Martin: I would, I would say, I don't think there's anybody on this planet that is only doing one thing.

So I think, I think too, and I think if we all just did one thing all day, every day, we soon get bored. You know, I think there has to be, there has to be learning. There

has to be tough times. There has to be good times. There has to be balanced. Do you know what I mean? And I think being. You know, testing yourself on different things is I think the key to growth. So I think having an essence of being good at a few things is important, but depend, you know, there's so many different ways of looking at it, focus wise, is it good to be a Multipotentialite?

And I think. I think that you can still use, you know, as long as you're focus. Like for me, for example, I'm very much focused on logo design. That is my focus. Right. But around that, there's a lot of multipotentialite stuff going on. There's courses, there's client work, there's coaching there's communities, there's newsletters, there's social media content.

Do you know what I mean? So even though I'm focused on a niche, which would classify me as not a multipotentialite in and around that. There's a lot of things going on. There's an ecosystem. There's as you say, there's books, there's all sorts of other stuff as well. So, you know, those things keep me motivated because if I was just doing client work all day, every day, I would fall outta love, right.

Logo, design. I don't care how much I love it. I would. so yeah, I think it's a good question. So I think, I think we are all multipotentialites to some extent. I think maybe some of us just have the focus that some people don't. I think maybe that's a quite interesting conversation, but, you know, cause I definitely know what I'm gonna do.

I definitely know what the next decade looks like for me. Wow. And I know it's focused around logo design, and helping people. You know, but that could come in so many different forms that can be speaking gigs. That can be more books. That can be more courses that can also be helping less clients, but with bigger budgets, that can be also building my community, that you are great member of, you know, and all these kind of things.

These are, these are all different things that I'm doing with focus. So I think focus is. Is a, is a big word. And I think it's something that a lot of creatives struggle with, I think sometimes as well, is the focus and routine and all of that.

Joke: Why do you think that is all that jazz? Why do you think that is?

James Martin: I think, I don't think social media helps. I think, that we are constantly being shown different ways to do this, do it this way, try it this way. Um, this isn't working, you know, like I I've got this, I got this, always use this great example. Like there was suddenly, I dunno, who can't remember who it was?

I think it was my buddy Chris Do, actually, I think he did a, a post on like a few years back now on like brand strategy, you know, and like overnight every logo designer. Change their bio to brand strategists. Do you know what I mean? That's not, that's not Chris's fault. That's because everybody's like, oh, I can make more money over here.

I'm gonna go and be that. Or I think people struggle with they, they, they're not willing. I don't like to generalize too much, but I think because social media's so on all the time, it's so accessible, information's so accessible. it's difficult not to get distracted by what

people are saying. So, if somebody's saying over here, or you can make 10 grand as a brand strategist and logo, design's not enough.

Or this isn't enough automatically people who are trying to figure out who they are, are gonna go. Oh, Money. I don't know strategy is, but I'm gonna call myself strategist and that's, you know, I think that's, I think it's the big, I mean, I was lucky enough to up in a creative world without social media, where it was, get yourself a job, start at the bottom, take your time, learn everything over time, find out what is you like develop it, kind of funnel yourself down into a, a place where, you know, you wanna be and you.

Careers are, you know, you are there and you're there forever. You know, obviously, you know, you don't, don't have to stick to that, but in your mindset should be, this is my life. You know, I've got a big believer in that. If you are not willing to commit 20 years to your creative career, don't even bother starting it, you know, who knows what's gonna happen in the future, but if you're not willing to commit.

You're not in it for the right reasons. And I think like design's quite trendy now. You know, when, when I was growing up, you know, creativity was more of a side passion. It was something you did on the weekends at school, it wasn't pushed. It was, you know, languages, you know, maths, English, languages, sciences.

Art and design were at the bottom, there was something that you hardly ever did. so it was, I grew up in it very different world and now fast forward 25 years or whatever it is, 30 years, it's, it's very different. It's now

the problem is with that is that everybody's looking for shortcuts. Everybody's looking for quick ways to win. You know, I think people. You know, I say with the growth of social media and influence and all the rest of it, you know, you've got people who have been designing logos for a year, calling themselves a logo coach, and they can't even design themselves.

And you just kind of it's, it's quite scary, you know, as somebody who is, you know, like 20 years in the industry now, pretty much now watching what's happening. People are learning from people who don't know what they're talking about, and then they're gonna go and tell that to somebody else, which is why I'm kind of like, you know, I think that's why I'm very passionate about teaching people the right way.

not necessarily what I do is right, but I know it's based on. Decades worth of experience of actually working with clients. There's people who are teaching people, how to get clients and they don't have any clients themselves. It's, it's absolute mad, but this is what the facade of social media does. If you can build a following, you know, you can build an audience and people suddenly start to think, well, you've got X amount of followers.

You must know what you are talking about, but it's such a different game. You. So, yeah, it's I think that's maybe why I'm definitely leaning in over the next decade into more of the educational kind of space because mm-hmm I want to. Try and bring back some, and there's lots of people who do do it. I think the Futur, I think Chris Do do it very well as well.

I think there's, you know, my Mike Janda's a great leader. I think when it comes to kind of, talking about design as some, I mean, there's some fantastic designers out there who are, who have been designers, who are now coaching. And I think, you know, I think they're the people that we should be listening to rather.

Some other people, but I think like with the rise of like educational content, I really feel like I there's this place for me where I wanna tell people how it really is, you know,

Like, it's not all gonna happen overnight, you know, it is not, it didn't, it didn't, you know, it's only. Made by James is kind of doing well now, but that's 20 years the making you knowing, all of like

all these people, they've doing it for decades, you know, and what people see now is the kind of reward for determination, hard work and. Just getting on with it, even when it was tough. So yeah. Yeah. That's kind of my rant over, I suppose.

Joke: so have you always been, um, clear about wanting to zone in on if we speak about zoning in or so much thinking, but have you always realized that this is it like I wanna be in logo design and you know, or have you had. Winding road

James Martin: yeah. I mean, why, you know, my road, it was very, very winding, you know, in the early twenties.

I was a druggie, stealing shit from people and getting kicked out of schools and all sorts. And, you know, I think I, I, I truly don't believe in the kind of follow your passion. Kind of narrative. I don't think it's healthy. Like I said, because yeah, if I was following my passion in my early twenties, I would've been a, a rugby player with, I'll be a rugby playing whiskey, drinking, weed, smoking.

I don't know, know whatever else. Those were all my passions. So I would've got absolutely. I mean, I think, you know, I think passions and I think passions are rewards for perseverance, you know? I was in design for like 20 years. you know, I started the bottom, like I said, I worked in, in an agency, found myself a little agency job, and I did photography.

I did Photoshop. I did animation. I did web, I did very little branding. I did print. I did all sorts of stuff for five years and you know, I, I kind of enjoyed it. You know, at that time I was getting some money. I didn't know if it was something I wanted to do forever, you know? And in fact, I was doing things like teaching as well.

You know, I was also did a tattoo apprenticeship, you know, I was finding, trying to find something that I wanted to stick to, you know, and just funny enough, you know, if I had given myself that, if you said to me 20 years ago, can you see yourself in design for 20 years? I might have said, I don't really know do you know what I mean, and

that's why it's such a difficult thing to answer. Cause I know what it takes to find those passions, but yeah, through working on all those things, I started to understand that I really, you know, I, I, my trust started to train my creative brain. I could start to see things slightly differently.

I started to really enjoy typography and, you know, I really enjoyed branding, you know, one of my, kind of managers at the early agent. Well, my first agency, he, he always said things like a great way to learn is to just watch adverts. And when they're doing like animation adverts or there's kind of CGI or there's something.

Think about how they built that. So whenever I'm looking at an advert now I'm always going well. They probably used that animation tool. They probably did that. That's quite, when you look at, when you break things down and think about how they're made, you know, you start to see the world a little bit differently and you start to bring things down and work things out.

So that's something I've always done. And then I start to find a bit of love. Yeah, like branding I've always been into my brand. You know, I've always been a big kind of lover of like, you know, I've like bought and worn and, you know, invested in the same brands that I have for the last 30 years. You know, I've always loved the kind of slightly tattoo skate culture, surf culture vibe.

Kind of really leaning into those passions and those things that I loved as a kid, you know, and you know, those brands were always, those brand identities were around. Their were always pushing boundaries. You know, they weren't safe, they were quite illustrative like super edgy, you know, and. You know, over time, you know, since I've kind of developed as a logo designer and decided to niche, niche into brand identity design, I've brought those passions and loves into my work.

You know, a lot of hand drawn stuff, a lot of like trying to do stuff, but other people wouldn't do because it doesn't fit the rules of logo design. So I'm always trying to kind of break the boundaries a little bit

when it comes to obviously. , remaining with, making sure that the rules are followed, you know, it has to work, ultimately

so, um, you know, no point just doing something doesn't work anywhere. So yeah, for me, I think, you know, time is, logo design for me, you know, brand identity for me is a reward of, close to 15 years in the design industry. Finding my feet and finding my passion, my pattern logo does out design found me through hard work, I would say so.

Joke: Wow. That's amazing finding, finding yourself through how hard work. I think that is, uh, yeah. Nice.

James Martin: But I think that's like one of the biggest problems today. Cause everything is like, I got to a hundred thousand followers in four weeks, I made seven figures in a year, you know? And the problem is with that is that there's no real background context to that.

So that person who made maybe seven figures in a year, they, they might have been working. Every single day for the past 15 years to get to that. Do you know what I mean? It, I think what it's, what you see and what you don't see is what scares me. People are just showing wins and not all the failed businesses behind them.

For example, that hasn't worked. That's the problem problem, you know, the, you know, as creators, especially, you know, self doubt, Comparison, you know, um, it's a natural thing and it's only heightened by the accessibility of watching PE people being able to succeed and people making money and them only showing that side rather than the difficult stuff, you know, and that's fine. I understand, like you don't want social media to be this big old misery guts. , you know, I think it's, I think it's important to share the wins and the losses, challenges and the, yeah. Cause we all have them. We all have them and I. I've shared some very dark times, you know, with the world on social media and people have like been like, why would you do that?

You know, that's gonna stop people, getting clients. That's gonna stop people from doing that. And it's done the opposite. Yeah, it's literally

done the absolute opposite. It's probably tripled if not quadruple my client roster. so sorry, my phone's going off. I'll sorry. That's OK. Um, so yeah. Um, yeah, I think it's really important to, yeah.

I mean this, and this is kind of when we were talking about focus and when we were talking about kinda clarity early on, I think, you know, what we need to all do is to really figure out what happiness and success look like, like inwardly to us.

Joke: Yeah.

James Martin: Do you know?, imagine there's no social media. Imagine there's no anything else, you know, getting in straight in your mind, go like what I'd like to earn 30 grand a year, or I'd like to have 10 clients a year, you know, and I'd like to turn over this.

Um, in five years time, I'd like to grow my business, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, making these kind of, like winning aspirations for ourselves. Let's call them, What they do is they allow you to have, like, the idea is that you got have goals, or you gotta have a winning aspiration to know if you want, there's no point being involved.

And not winning, you know, you, if you, if you earn 20 or 30 K you know, if you earn 25, yeah. It's you, what things could have differently to get to that kind of thing, d'you know what I mean goals like goals and things that you want achieve in life are really important, but, and don't and not getting distracted by what somebody else's goals are.

Is the key. I think that's what a lot of people are doing is a lot of people may, again, I hate to generalize. I keep doing that..

I speak to a lot of creatives online, all the time.. They're actually living somebody else's dream. You know what I've they've seen it work for them. They've seen, they've seen the success now, not the 20 years of hard effort prior. And they're thinking, that's what I. Yeah, but it's not, you just want maybe their following or you might want their successful course, or you might want a book out, but that's not, that's not necessarily your journey.

think we have to, one, the best thing I ever did was when I say I'm gonna do something, I do it. You know, when I say, you know, I'm. Do my God damn best, you know, work for my clients. I do it when I say I'm gonna launch a course. I do it. When I say I'm gonna launch a community. I do it. When I say I'm gonna launch a coaching program.

I do it. I don't talk about it. I don't get distracted by stuff. You know, um, I like to call myself a doer, not a talker. There's a lot of people talking on social media, talking a great game, but they're doing fuck all. Do what? I mean, I know people with hundreds of thousands of followers with no clients, you know, I know people, like I said, who've got tens of thousands of followers.

Coaching people and they're awful. They are awful of what they do. And I'm trying not to be rude here, but they're, they've only been doing it for like 18 months. You cannot be an expert in anything if you've been doing it for 18 months. So, but I think, like I said, it's like, what people are trying to do is they're like, well, why would I want to work when I can get money as an influencer or.

The rise of YouTube, you know, the rise of TikTok the rise of Instagram. You know, people don't want to work anymore. They want to grow an audience and then they want to make money off that audience that is. I think the biggest problem within the design world today is people want to grow an audience, not build a career.

So, um, that's again, you know, old man rant, but know it does worry me and there's so many talented people out there. and there's so many fantastic, designers who do struggle with. Social media or putting themselves out there and all the rest of it. And there's so many shits designers yeah. Who are confident in their shitness, but growing audience and doing OK.

So, you know, its just something. Yeah. Like I said, it's just, I mean we have to evolve or die is what I say, you know? You've got to, you've gotta kind of evolve a bit and you've got to push yourself out of the comfort zone, but, you know, I just, I dunno.

I just, I do worry. You know, because I think maybe I, I don't almost guarantee that 70% of the logo designers, for example, you see. Online or on Instagram today will not be there in two years time.

Joke: Right.

James Martin: Because they would've made no money. They've realized that it is tough and they would've gone to find the next trend.

Joke: Yeah.

James Martin: You know, I think that's the problem is trend hopping.

Joke: yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. But you, um, have an amazing following now after years of hard work , um, and being amazing. Of course. So, and your course is all about. Showing the real deal behind logo design mm-hmm would you feel like you're also tackling having many ideas?

mm-hmm um, in your course you're tackling this. What would your biggest tip and take-away be in how to deal with this

James Martin: Well, how to, as a creative person? Great question,

what am I trying to say? So I, I think it's okay to have many ideas. I think the problem is, is trying to do all those ideas at once. Right? So when, for example, I did my course, I knew I wanted to do a course. Uh, so to do that, I knew I had to do. Nothing, but that course, so I stopped all client work. I said no to thousands and thousands of thousands of pounds worth of money to make sure I got that course done.

You know, I said no to podcast. I said no to any other opportunity coming in because I knew I had to focus. I wouldn't be able to do that unless I focused on the course. And it was the same with the book. I took time off as much time off as I could. I probably should have taken off more time, but it was during COVID and all the rest of it, so we all had a little bit more time on our hands. but I, I think like I'm a

big believer in, you know, I've got loads of ideas. I've got loads of things I wanna do. but I have to do them one at a time. So for example, number one was the book for me, you know, then it was the course recently, the course kind of launched as you know, like a few months back now.

Um, over the last few months I've had client work again, which I booked in before the course now it's stopped. You know, I'm not taking on any more client work. Cause I'm just about to start my 12, um, 12 week coaching program. So that's now my focus, you know, so. Then, like next year, I know that, you know, I'm going to be building, you know, I'm gonna be really leaning into, I mean, I own the trademark logo life.

So logo life is gonna be, a bunch, you know, my aim is to create the best. And most accessible content on the planet for brand identity designers. That is my dream. That is what logo life is. So that is gonna be documents, resources like mini mini courses between 30 and 50 on a specific topic. like mastering client calls or.

Kind of questions for clients or, building out presentation decks or add everything focused on. Brand identity and design. Like that is what logo life is. And I know, so I'm gonna be building that changing. I need to change my website. I need to get my funnel sorted. I need to start automating some stuff.

Yeah. But that is my focus now. So I'm saying that this morning, I said no to 15 K's worth of work from a couple of clients, because I know I need to say no to that to get this done. Right. You know, I think. I think that's the biggest, the biggest thing I ever learned since kind of focusing a little bit more on Made by James and helping other creatives is that you need to say no to stuff, to be able to say yes to yourself sometimes.

Yeah. You know, I've said yes to clients for 20 years. Almost. Like I said, it's, I've loved it. It's great. But I've got big dreams for myself. Yeah. I know. I can help a lot of people. So. Over the next quarter, you, the next six months or three, like four months or whatever, you know,

I'm gonna be doing my coaching program, but I'm also gonna be building assets that are gonna help people help more clients.

I can only help, like, let's say 30, 40 clients a year at the moment. Yeah. but if I help maybe 40 50 designers. I can start to 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 times that help clients. So it's kinda like if I can help designers win, I know I can help their clients win as well. So that's a win-win. It's a win-win and I get to kinda, really focus on, you know, I, I love helping people.

I, I, I, you know, I, I feel like I'm good at it. I feel like I, I have a, I have a different approach. It's it's not particularly rigid. It's quite fluid as you know, so, but I think it's, you know, I, yeah, I, it's something that, you know, this is the next challenge for me. Yeah. That's what I think is, is like, Logo does built my agency.

Great. Niching into logo design, great book. Great. Course, great.

Joke: Right.

James Martin: What's next. Right, right

next. Yeah.

So that's, that's the thing I always like to be a little bit uncomfortable. It makes me

Joke: more well, yeah, you can you grow when you, when you're a little bit uncomfortable, you grow, if you don't and you're yeah, exactly. You're not evolving then. That is so cool. You have so many amazing things already. You already done a lot of things and you have so many amazing things ahead of you and. Can't wait to see everything that's that's coming up. Um, so where can people find you best with all this amazing.

James Martin: Great question. So if you, I mean, you can luckily just type in, Made by James into Google now, and this beard face turns

up, which is made.by.james on, on Instagram, you know, Made By James YouTube, James Martin on LinkedIn.

I think LinkedIn's quite a powerful thing for anybody listening. So if you are a creative. And you are in business. Get on LinkedIn. It's it's powerful. Yeah. Pinterest Made By James. you can come and check out my website, themadebyjames.com and join my newsletter. I've got some epic giveaways are literally just dropped your, your know mate, uh, the yeah.

Um, free it's a 27 page document for, for free. All you gotta do is sign up when you get it on, um, intellectual property, a lot of insights on trademark, copyright patents and all the rest of it. So, you know, go and get that for freebies. You know, I dropped that yesterday on Instagram. Um, not what you call it.

Yeah. On Instagram. I just did a quick little page about it. I didn't really think about anything cause I'm just giving it away. I had like a thousand people sign up to my new, oh

Joke: my God. Wow. So you got a lot of new subscribers.

James Martin: it's great. It's great. I've got more people to entertain every week

Joke: yeah. Yeah. But you like, honestly, you are dropping some gems.

You have so many amazing and I'm saying it again. Amazing but there's just literally no other word for that. Um, you, your content is so good and so refreshing, you have a real unique approach to everything, which is fantastic.

James Martin: Appreciate that mate. It's all. I think I've always said, you know, it's much easier to be yourself than to try and be somebody else.

Joke: Yeah.

James Martin: Uh, and lots of people don't like it. You like it?

Joke: I like it.

James Martin: There are lots of people. There are lots of people who don't and that that's and that's fine. Yeah. We've got to stop trying to please everybody, because it's stopping us fulfilling our potential being yourself. You know, and you'll win, you know, you don't have to have the whole pie, just a tiny little piece of bit nice, like crumbles yeah.

Little crumbs on the end. Little crumbs.

Joke: Yeah. So would that be your quote of the day?

James Martin: Yeah. Effort is free. You know, my quote oh yeah. Effort is free, you know, I think it's. When you break it down, you can either do nothing or do something. And I'm like, you know, if you wanna launch a course.

You can do it.

Joke: Yeah. Do it.

James Martin: But you have effort. If you wanna get more clients, you can do that, but you have to put more effort in. if you wanna do anything, it takes effort and it only takes time. So, um, yeah, it's all good. Effort is free.

Joke: Effort is free. I love, love, love that. And I love everything that you've been mentioning today.

And I am so grateful. Thank you so, so much for being on the show. Everybody's listening, please check out James. He is wonderful. As I said, he's amazing. And he honestly has so many gems for you. So definitely check it out.

James Martin: Thanks mate. It's been a pleasure. Thanks for having me.

Joke: Thank you, bye.

James Martin: Bye