Tim Trott, author of The E-Team: Project Mogul

1. "The aliens aren't the problem. We are." What does that mean for the story?
The visitors in the E-Team books have been here a long time, and they've been patient. They don't invade or demand anything. The danger comes from us: people who see contact as a market, a weapon, or a threat to their power. Every crisis in Project Mogul starts with a human decision. Someone hides something, sells something, or shoots first. Renn's job isn't really to protect us from them. It's to keep us from wrecking the relationship before it has a chance.

2. Why build your fictional unit on the name Project Mogul?
Project Mogul was real. It was a classified Army Air Forces balloon program, and in 1994 the Air Force named it as the source of the Roswell debris. I loved the irony. The official explanation for the most famous UFO case in history was itself a top-secret program. So I asked: what if the name never went away? What if it became the cover for the very thing it was supposed to explain away? Once I had that, the series had its foundation.

3. How much of the book is drawn from documented events like the Nimitz Tic Tac encounter?
The framework is real and the story is fiction. The 2004 Nimitz encounter happened. Navy pilots tracked an object they couldn't explain, and the Pentagon later released the video. Groom Lake is real. The JANET flights out of Las Vegas are real. The aircraft are real tiltrotors. I wanted readers to be able to look things up and find that the ground under the story is solid. What happens on top of that ground is mine.

4. How did you approach writing a lead character whose inner life stays mostly off the page?
Renn grew up inside a secret, so she's learned not to explain herself. Spelling out everything she thinks and feels would have betrayed who she is. Instead she's revealed through what she does: the calls she makes, what she holds back, and when she chooses not to use what she knows. Readers learn her the way her team does, by watching. I think that makes her more interesting, and it leaves room for the series to show more of her over time.

5. How does your aviation background shape the flight scenes?
Teaching Part 107 means teaching airspace, weather, aircraft limits, and the discipline of planning before you fly. That mindset is all through the book. When Pandora goes out on a mission, fuel, range, and conditions matter. If a pilot does something impossible, the reader should understand why it's impossible. I'd rather earn the excitement through accuracy than skip past the details. Readers who know aviation notice, and they tell me so.

6. Why a team of three instead of a large military force?
A large force leaves a footprint. A unit that doesn't officially exist can't have a hangar full of people. Three is small enough to stay invisible and small enough that every member matters. Renn commands, Garner flies, and Delaney gets into the systems. Take any one of them away and the mission fails. It also keeps the story personal. I'd rather spend time with three people under pressure than move troops around a map.

7. The villain in Book One is a defense contractor, not an alien. Why?
It goes back to the tagline. If the visitors aren't the threat, someone has to be, and the most believable threat is someone who profits from fear. Prometheus stages incidents to create demand for the weapons it sells. That isn't much of a stretch. When the people selling protection also get to define the threat, things get dangerous fast. A greedy contractor scares me more than a mother ship.

8. You write military thrillers and speculative romance. What connects them?
Both ask the same question from different directions: what happens to an ordinary life when the truth turns out to be bigger than anyone admitted? In Star Child, Cass Hollis finds out her DNA doesn't match any known human lineage, and the story is about identity and love. In the E-Team, Renn has always known what she is, and the story is about duty and secrecy. One looks inward and one looks outward, but they come from the same curiosity.

9. What's next for the E-Team after Disclosure?
Book Two, *First Contact*, picks up after the secret is out. Containment is over, and the old rules don't work anymore. The world is watching, governments are scrambling, and not everyone wants to keep the peace. The E-Team has to work out what it's for when it can't hide. Renn is changing too, in ways she hasn't told her team about. That's all I'll say without spoiling it.

10. What have other writers taught you about the indie path?
Mostly that there's no single path. Every guest on Author to Author has found their own mix of writing, marketing, and stubbornness. The most common lesson is that consistency beats luck. The authors who keep going are the ones who keep publishing, keep learning, and treat it like a business without losing the reason they started. I've also learned that indie authors are remarkably generous with what they know. Nobody has it all figured out, and most people are glad to share what they've learned.