

>> From the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. This is Cheryl Kennedy [assumed spelling] at the Library of Congress. Late September will mark the 12th year that book lovers of all ages, have gathered in Washington D.C., to celebrate the written word at the Library of Congress National Book Festival. The festival, which is free and open to the public, will be two days this year: Saturday, September 22nd from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and Sunday, September 23rd from Noon to 5:30 p.m. The festival will take place between 9th and 14th Streets, on the National Mall, rain or shine. For more details, visit [www.loc.gov/bookfest](http://www.loc.gov/bookfest). And now, it is my pleasure to introduce Michael Connelly, who's 25 novels, one to be published in a few months, have sold tens of millions of copies worldwide. Thank you so much for joining us.

>> Michael Connelly: I'm glad to be back.

>> Now, there are 17 Harry Bosch novels, soon to be 18. Why do you think that your protagonist is so popular with readers, especially since he doesn't fit the prototype of the classic crime fighter?

>> Michael Connelly: Well that's a good question. I think that's the mystery that I'm working on actually. All you can do as a writer is put your head down and write a story that you think you'd want to read, write about a character you'd like to spend some time with and then hopefully there's others who will feel the same way. And so I didn't have any kind of master plan on how to put together Harry Bosch. I just kind of wrote about someone who appealed to me, and I guess I've been lucky in that he seems to appeal to other people. I think the -- you know, there's some basic things like I think his ideas of fairness, he kind of follows this code that everybody counts or everybody should count or nobody can count. And I think that strikes home with a lot of people and I think that's probably the very root of what's made him popular with readers.

>> Why did you name your character Hieronymus Bosch after historic figure?

>> Michael Connelly: I think you go into this as a reader. You know, you've got to be a voracious reader before you can be a writer. And what I found was I gravitated towards the books that revolved around character. I wanted to explore character. And so if you believe that and I think most writers do, then you know to always give your character brushstrokes of background in the character -- and you never miss a chance. And so that would include a name. So I was always in those first couple years of writing about Harry Bosch, I was looking for a name that would have some kind of resonance, maybe some metaphoric thing. And so I kind of harkened back to my days in college when I studied this painter named Hieronymus Bosch and his paintings were very dark. They were about a world gone wrong, about chaos, and I kind of drew that connection that here I wanted to write about this detective who writes about a world gone wrong, about chaos, about how he tries to restore order to disorder. And so there was that kind of connection and I just kind of went with it. I knew it was a bit obscure, but I knew that could work for -- as well. If someone had never heard of the real Hieronymus Bosch, maybe that would get them intrigued. So it was kind of a - hopefully - a win-win situation.

>> Well it did turn out to be a win-win situation. At the 2012 National Book Festival, you will be signing and talking about your latest Bosch Book, "The Drop." But, 2012 is also a milestone for you because it marks 20 years since you first introduced the Bosch series, which will be celebrated with the publication of a new Bosch novel in November, "The Black Box." Give us a sneak preview.

>> Michael Connelly: You mentioned the 20 years. Well that has been important to me and I thought about that a lot. I guess no writer thinks they're going to write a second book, let alone stick around for 17 or 18 books with one character. And so I thought about that when I was composing this story. So it's a 20 year story. It starts in 1992, same year that we first met Harry Bosch. And the story does span 20 years. It begins in 1992. In Los Angeles we had the riots that follows the Rodney King Verdict and -- which was a - you know - quite a moment in the history of Los Angeles and a moment we're still recovering from to some degree. So it's important. And so I wanted to write about that. It's about Harry Bosch trying to solve a murder during the riots and all the things that were going on, all the danger and so forth. And he was unable to solve it and so in 2012, he gets an opportunity because of some advances in technology to go back and take a look at that case and try to solve it again.

>> Well certainly, I'm looking forward to reading "The Black Box." Although you've lived in L.A. for many years, you now reside in Florida. Why haven't you relocated your beloved Harry Bosch character to the Tampa P.D.? Why is this City of Angels such an excellent location for your stories?

>> Michael Connelly: You know what? I have lived here for quite a while now in Florida and it doesn't intrigue me the way Los Angeles does. I think Los Angeles is always going to be out there on the edge of societal change. You see things happening there that soon move around the world, or at least the country. So you know, wrong or right, you get this feeling that it's the happening place. And that makes it interesting to write about in fiction. I moved away from Los Angeles so I could see it from a distance but still write about it. I've always been fascinated by it, continue to be, and still want to write about it. Also, I have several -- I don't even remember the counts, but I was several Harry Bosch books into that series when I moved, and Harry was pretty much constructed as part of Los Angeles. The character of Los Angeles is in Harry. And so I don't think it would work to move him away and put him in another place. I mean I think it might be interesting to do a fish out of water story, maybe once, but I don't think the continuing arc of his character would be served correctly by moving him [inaudible].

>> Now you're no longer of course covering the Crime Beat as a reporter in Los Angeles. How do you keep your action and characters true to life?

>> Michael Connelly: I go back there a lot. You're right, I don't live there anymore, but I spend a lot of time there. I go there at least once a month. I've maintained contact with people who do what my characters do, whether it's Harry Bosch or Mickey Haller, "The Lincoln Lawyer." And

you know, and I was a reporter. I haven't been a reporter in a really long time, but I still have some of those skills and so I know how to research my books. I kind of know what is necessary. I know what inspires me and I put myself in positions in Los Angeles to get that inspiration. And it goes from there. And I think that kind of gives me -- first of all, it gives me the verisimilitude I want to have in my books, but it also gives me that kind of hidden thing, the character aspect that I can put into these made up characters like Harry and Mickey and so forth, and have them feel true.

>> Well how much do you depend on real life cases and situations to shape and create your crime or legal stories?

>> Michael Connelly: I depend on them a little bit but probably not in the people would expect. It's rare that I've taken a case and then kind of written about it, you know, and put in fictional characters and so forth. Usually I take a small stories and inspiration point. I seem to be inspired most verbal stories. People telling me a story. Not reading a newspaper or watching a television show about it. Someone like a detective or a lawyer will tell me about a case they had and there's something about -- you can read it in their voices. They have -- when they have an emotional connection to a case. And somehow in that where I find inspiration. And usually these are not stories that could go the distance as a whole, you know, 400 page book, but I take from that inspiration and it matches with something else I heard from somebody else and I start building things together and start seeing what could be a story.

>> Now have you ever had a novel that skirted close to reality?

>> Michael Connelly: I had one that kind of was inspired by something that happened to me. It was -- we've been talking about me moving from Los Angeles, so when I moved to Florida 10 years ago or so, I got you know, obviously a new phone number. And I started immediately getting calls for the woman who had that number before me. And she had apparently kind of just dropped out. And so I was getting calls from her friends. I even got a call from her mother. These were all people trying to figure out what happened to her. And in the real life case with this woman, it was just that she wanted to start over and she finally made contact but I was able to figure it out through some of these people who were calling me. But it really sparked an idea or a mystery in me, like you know, someone like me who starts getting phone calls for somebody else. And he of the personality that he can't let it be. And he gets drawn into this investigation of what happened to her. And that became a book I wrote called, "Chasing the Dime."

>> Your fans have been waiting a long time to see a Bosch book adapted for the big or small screen. It looks like that might finally happen. Can you tell us about it?

>> Michael Connelly: Well I hope so. He's in -- Harry Bosch has been tied up in what I call "Rights Hell" for a long time. I did not -- I lost control of the rights to Harry Bosch for over 10 years, and they've recently come back to me. And I so I took quite a long time and moved

very cautiously, because there were many suitors for Harry Bosch in Hollywood, but I wanted to hopefully make the right choice. And so I waited and waited and waited and I just recently in the last month or so, made an agreement with a production company and a writer for television. And we're going to try to hopefully get Harry Bosch on the air as a -- in TV so that we can explore his character over several hours instead of just a couple. And if all goes well, that will be on the air sometime next year.

>> Well, that would be terrific. Now, "Lincoln Lawyer," who was turned into a successful movie, but you're also adapting that novel into a drama series. How does writing a book differ from writing a screenplay? What do you like best?

>> Michael Connelly: I think because I came to this world or the attention of Hollywood through books, I kind of know that books are where I have my best shot and probably my best skill. And so books will always be my favorite thing. And you know, what I find is [inaudible] books, the path to go is that you have this wonderful ability to go inside character heads and describe what they're thinking, explore what they're thinking, and that to me is where some of the best for film and comes from writing. When you write a screenplay or a television script, you can never say what anyone's thinking. It's all about what they say and what they do. And from what they say and what they do is how the viewer determines what kind of character they are. So I feel like, you know, books have that extra step, that third realm, that these visual arts do not have. And so it's to me, easier to write a book than to write a good script.

>> Now you received numerous honors and of course awards for your work. This year you received the 2012 Harper Lee Prize for Legal Fiction for your book, "The Fifth Witness." What makes this honor extra special?

>> Michael Connelly: Well I think you know, the bottom line is that I'm not a lawyer and I'm getting honored by a, you know, the American Bar Association. So it makes me feel that my research and so forth pays off. That it's appreciated by people who actually do this work. And then you know, on another aspect, Harper Lee's novel, "To Kill a Mockingbird," was a key influence on me. I read that when I was about 12 turning 13 in the summer of 1968 where I was spending a lot of time in the library and the librarian made me read it. And it -- it's just been very important to me because I -- you know, all these years later I sometimes write about this lawyer named Mickey Haller and in many ways I would hope that he's a descendent of Atticus Finch who's the key figure of "To Kill a Mockingbird," in the way that they're quite different but bottom line is, both are willing to do the right thing, even at a great risk to themselves and those they love. And the two characters share that I think. And so that was what made a story I wrote about Mickey Haller, to have that receive this award is pretty cool to me.

>> I also understand that the prize comes with a special edition of "To Kill a Mockingbird," signed by Harper Lee. How cool is that?

>> Michael Connelly: That is very cool. You know, a long time ago, I dedicated one of my books to the librarian who gave me "To Kill a

Mockingbird" to read. And you know, I was a little kid so I don't even know her name. It's just somebody who's out there in my past that really was important in the terms of me ending up doing what I'm doing. But you know, to have the book signed by the author, is something I'm certainly going to treasure.

>> What do you have in common with your characters?

>> Michael Connelly: I think I probably share the same world view of Harry Bosch at least and maybe Mickey Haller to extent, and you know, it's a weird mix of cynicism and hopefulness which would seem to be contradictions but you know, in a character's makeup, they're really not. Everyone has a little bit of everything. And you know, Harry Bosch hopes for a better day but he has a cynical bone that says you know, "But it probably won't happen or it won't happen for a while." And you know, I think that he probably gets that from me.

>> One thing you and Bosch have in common is that you both like jazz. Now you're producing a documentary on Bosch's jazz idol, saxophonist Frank Morgan?

>> Michael Connelly: Yes.

>> How did that come about? Well Frank and I spent two days in Boston at the Berkeley School of Music. And he did some master class teaching and I did some appearances where I talked about the connection between words and music and the inspiration and so forth. And Frank and I were on stage together. We stayed at the same hotel together. We took our meals together. So it was like about I don't know, almost 48 hours of us together. And we became pretty good friends I think. And it was a really fulfilling moment for me. And you know, our plan was to do this in other colleges as well, but he got ill and that never came to be. And in a way, I think the film is going to try to fulfill that promise and bring Frank's music to people because he's pretty obscure and I think people should know his music and they would benefit from knowing his music.

>> The Library of Congress is celebrating the book and is examining books that shaped America, and also looking at how books influenced people as individuals. Is there a particular book that most influenced you as a child or as an adult?

>> Michael Connelly: I think -- you know, we've been talking about the -- "To Kill a Mockingbird" was you know -- I don't think we'd be talking if I had not read that book at that time, you know? It's a matter of things happening at the right time. The book helped launch me into a reader for myself. At that point in my life you know, the reading I did was by assignment. And here I was spending a summer -- it's a weird story. I was spending the summer in a library, mostly because it was air conditioned and I lived in South Florida and didn't have air conditioning. So that was a retreat for me. And the librarian said, you know, that, "You're welcome here but you should be reading." And this was the book I read and it was just a start of a lot of reading where I went into the stacks or the shelves and found stuff for myself to read. And if that didn't

happen, then I wouldn't have happened as a writer. So I would say that book is the one that's most influential on me.

>> Well thank you very much. All of your fans are looking forward to your participation at the National Book Festival in September. We've been hearing from author Michael Connelly, who will appear on Saturday, September 22nd in Fiction and Mystery Pavilion at the 2012 National Book Festival on the National Mall. Mr. Connelly, thank you for an enlightening conversation.

>> Michael Connelly: Thank you for having me.

>> This has been a presentation of the Library of Congress. Visit us at [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov).