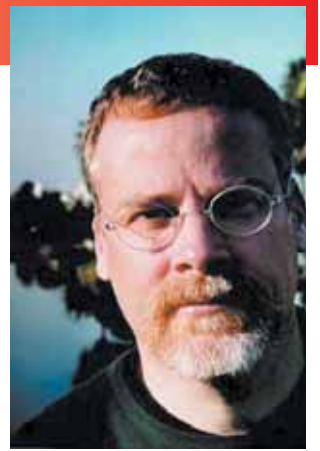


BEST
SELLING
AUTHOR

MICHAEL CONNELLY



MICHAEL CONNELLY'S L.A.: WHERE THE EARTH SHAKES THE SOCIETY SHAKES

By Ron Spence

They're North Hollywood and Brentwood - Bel Aire and South Central - polar opposites. They're mystery writer Michael Connelly and his detective character, Harry Bosch. One, an affable family man living in Tampa Bay, the other, a lonely detective marauding L.A.'s mean streets.

What the men share is a love for, and fascination with, Los Angeles. Connelly's initial fascination came from a distance. He spent his early years in Philly and later moved to Florida, where he finished public school, attended university and worked as a crime reporter in Fort Lauderdale.

The L.A. hook for Michael was Raymond Chandler and his hero Phillip Marlowe.

"What I got from the Chandler novels," he explains, "was that Los Angeles was a place where anything could happen - at any time - and that could be good or bad. That still aptly describes Los Angeles."

Another idol, Ross Macdonald, inspired Connelly when he wrote, "Chandler wrote like a slumming angel and invested the sun-blinded streets of Los Angeles with a romantic presence."

"That quote alone," he exudes, "is what helped me want to become a writer. I wanted to have that said about me as a writer. It was kind of like a pipe dream. But I just remembered that quote verbatim." Connelly's other impressions came from the movies.

"I had an ideal of L.A. largely through movies and TV shows. The one movie, *The Long Goodbye*, the Altman movie filmed in the early 70's, that was really my sense of the contemporary L.A."

Connelly worked on a survivor project, which led to a Pulitzer nomination and resulted in an offer from the L.A. Times.

"I came to L.A. fifteen years later [after seeing the movie]," he continues, "and there were still vestiges of that. But, I didn't come there and say, 'Man, this is vastly different than I thought. I kind of thought, 'Man, this is kind of like I thought it would be.' Downtown is empty after dark. And the real city is in the sprawl of the

community and not in the downtown. This sense of a kind of grimy defeatism about Hollywood, where people, especially from New York, come and expect glitz and glimmer and it's just not there. I think I kind of knew that would be the case when I got there."

Asked how L.A. differs from Florida, he replies, "Florida is another destination place, but not to the degree that Los Angeles is. You can definitely see the disenfranchised more visibly in Los Angeles."

Following three years as a crime writer, Connelly started his Harry Bosch novels.

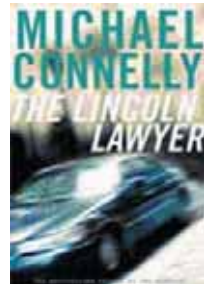
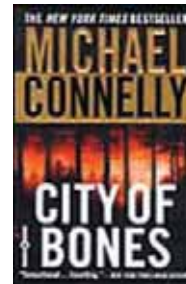
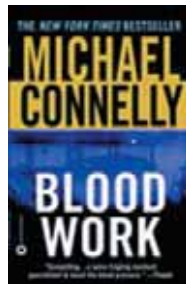
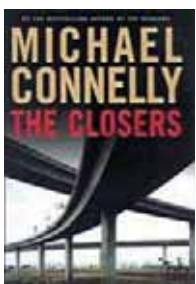
He changed Bosch's contemporary world from Marlowe's L.A. world of the 30's and 40's only slightly.

"It's changed, but a lot of things are the same. The unpredictable nature of it...the milieu that Bosch and Marlowe travel are similar, fraught with suspicious police, police politics and so forth. And that's a conscious effort on my part to emulate my hero, but I'm also trying to use my old journalism instinct and trying to be accurate, and the police department is heavily politicized and the police in the past have had some severe corruption."

American mystery writer James Lee Burke wrote of Bosch's first novel, *Black Echo*, "One of the most authentic pieces of crime writing I've ever read ...you're entering a domain of moral darkness that only Joseph Conrad could adequately describe. It's hard to believe that this is Connelly's first novel. I'm convinced that his career will be a major one."

Comparisons with Conrad aside, Connelly doesn't believe that he recreates Chandler's L.A. He sees himself as a writer of character rather than atmosphere. But he agrees that he creates a mood that can have the same effect as a Chandler-like atmosphere.

"Maybe it all comes out of character," he shrugs. "I had this hope or idea from the start that I would build this character to be emblematic of the city. I really tried to meld place and character together, and I used character to say stuff about the place and vice



versa, and maybe that creates a mood. It's my journalism - where I feel that less is more. I don't spend a lot of time using descriptions of places to set the mood."

Connelly acknowledges that his narrations of Bosch's freeway travels form a grid for L.A.'s "fouled city and brood [Black Echo]."

"I don't know what that is," he ponders. "I don't know why. Maybe it comes from my taste as a reader. I always feel more plugged into books, even if it's a city I've never been in. I just like to hear, 'He went down this street, he took a left there...'"

Connelly agrees that "California dreaming" helps create a "domain of moral darkness."

"It's a destination city," he explains. "People go there to achieve dreams that they couldn't achieve wherever they came from. It takes a certain personality saying, 'It's not happening here, I'm going to find it somewhere else.' And so, that's maybe something that holds a lot of the people together in Los Angeles. They decided to move to get it. And then when they get there, they don't get it. It's a small minority, I think, who achieve everything they hope for. It becomes a city where there's the haves and the have-nots - the ones that made it and obtained their dreams. It's very visible. You can just see it. It's not hidden at all. And I think that adds to the aura of an edge - the edginess of the place."

You mention Blade Runner, and that's a futuristic story, but what they did in that movie, I think accentuates or multiplies that feeling of edginess and anything can happen. Maybe that's one reason I liked that movie so much."

Harry Bosch is a man of hope. And, although not conceived in the City of Angels, he has become an L.A. guy."

"Before I moved to Los Angeles, I wrote a couple of crime novels that didn't go anywhere. They had the beginnings of this character that would take the form of Harry Bosch, but he moved to Los Angeles, so it's hard to look back after eleven books at him from any other place. But some of his attributes, his cynical hopefulness, were in this character...it was a guy who was a private eye in Fort Lauderdale. And that was something I took with me to Los Angeles, to write about Harry Bosch."

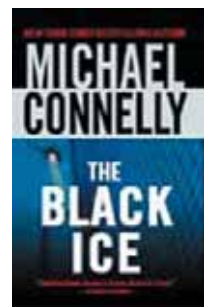
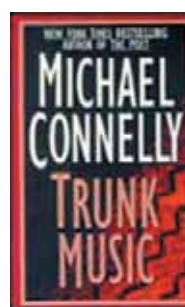
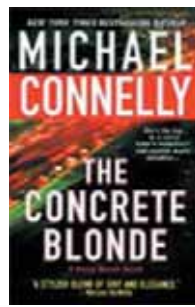
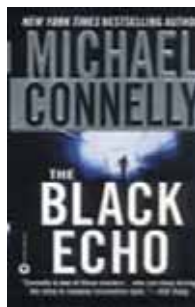
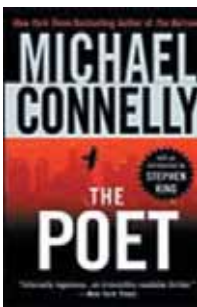
It's like revisionist history. I don't know. He could be what he is now, but I kind of doubt it. I think that he needed the kind of stuff that happens in L.A. to be who he is - the kind of place where the earth shakes - the society shakes."

In his second novel, *Black Ice*, Connelly describes the garden of earthly delights in which Harry Bosch works. "It wasn't a bad record, considering the transient nature of homicide in Hollywood. Nationwide, the vast majority of murder victims know their killers. But Hollywood was different. There were no norms. There were only deviations, aberrations. Strangers killed strangers. Reasons were not a requirement."

Harry Bosch's life has always been surrounded by aberrations. F.B.I. agent Eleanor Wish, his partner and later his lover [*The Black Echo*], tells Harry, "Your [hooker] mother [who was murdered] was alone. She had to give you up. You grew up in foster homes, youth halls. You survived that and you survived Viet Nam and you survived the police department. So far at least. But you are an outsider in an insider's job."

It's probably Bosch's alienation that endears him to many readers.

"I think that's a possibility," Connelly agrees. "I think if you look at it from the standpoint of police detectives who read my stuff, I write about a guy who's got a lot of flaws, makes mistakes, but he's trying



LEARN TO SPEAK RUSSIAN

University educated former teacher is ready to teach you the Russian Language in a one-on-one tutorial setting.

Learning materials available. Great for beginners – or brush up your skills in Russian language conversation.

Excellent rates and a lot of fun!

Call 250.414.0299 or email NataliyaV@shaw.ca

MICHAEL CONNELLY'S L.A.: WHERE THE EARTH SHAKES THE SOCIETY SHAKES

to do a good job under these difficult circumstances, and write about a police department that's a bureaucratic maze and is politically corrupt, and so forth. And yet I have lots of people from LAPD who like these books. And I think it's because Harry wins them over for me. Because they see something about themselves in Harry, and I think that could extend to anybody who sees this guy as someone who kind of won't suffer fools gladly. Who won't stand for the bureaucratic roadblocks that are put in our way every day of our lives."

People also relate to Harry's vulnerability, revealed in *The Black Echo*, "He searched her face and found what he thought was sympathy. He didn't know if that was what he wanted. He was long past that. But he didn't know what he wanted."

L.A. has long been politically corrupt, but Connelly and Bosch believe that things are getting better.

"You know things are changing and that hopefully comes out in *The Closers*," Connelly adds. "Harry comes back to a different department. There are a lot of reforms going on in the real department and therefore in the book as well."

When Harry had a two book hiatus from the LAPD to work as an independent investigator, Connelly had the opportunity to emulate Chandler's first person private eye style. However, he missed the police department and writing in the third person.

"I came to realize in writing these books that what intrigued me the most about Harry - and therefore I think maybe the readers as well - was in the third person books, you weren't exactly sure what he was up to because he wasn't telling you everything. When you're going to first person, you can't do that, you've got to pretty much tell the reader what you've got. And I missed that...I missed that little



From "THE CLOSERS" Chapter 21
"They crossed the street to the train station, its clock tower rising in front of the them."

Union Station was designed to mirror the city it served and the way in which it was supposed to work. It was a melting pot of architectural styles—Spanish Colonial, Mission, Streamline Moderne, Art Deco, Southwestern and Moorish design flourishes among them. But unlike the rest of the city where the pot more often than not boiled over, the styles at the train station blended smoothly into something unique, something beautiful. Bosch loved it for that.



From "THE CLOSERS" Chapter 2:

"Bosch knew the Pacific Dining Car was a longtime favorite with LAPD brass and the Robbery-Homicide Division. He also knew something else.

"Twelve bucks for a plate of eggs. I guess that means that this is an overtime approved squad."

Rider smiled in confirmation."

From "THE CLOSERS" Chapter 36:

"Bosch got to the squad meeting at the Pacific Dining Car late because of traffic coming in from the Valley. Everyone was in a private area in the back of the restaurant. Most of them already had plates of food in front of them."

Outside the restaurant she gave Bosch the silent treatment while they waited for his car from the valet. She stared at the large plastic steer that was atop the restaurant's sign.

hiding spot that third person gave me. And that played a part in Harry going back into the police department and into the third person."

In *The Closers*, Harry joins L.A.'s new open-unsolved unit, trying to answer the "chorus of forgotten voices."

This career opportunity gave Connelly a new lease on Bosch's life, as Harry can now travel back in time and out of the city while solving cold cases.

"I've got a glass ceiling," Connelly says. "I've revitalized the series with this clip, but that doesn't mean it can go on forever. I think I've got five years."

Los Angeles has changed during the decade and a half since Connelly arrived from Fort Lauderdale. In *The Closers*, he observes that the City of Angels is trying to reinvent itself.

"It's hard to reinvent the whole city because it's such a sprawl," he qualifies. "I see Hollywood trying to reinvent itself and I see tiny microcosms of it happening. One of Harry's favourite areas is my favourite area, the Farmers Market. And that's kind of a completely different place now because they rebuilt it and enlarged it and that's almost like a city centre now because so many people go there. So you see that and you sit back and say, 'I thought I was new to L.A., and now I'm one of the people who remembers the way it used to be.' And that's something that kind of changes your way of looking at it."

MICHAEL CONNELLY'S L.A.: WHERE THE EARTH SHAKES THE SOCIETY SHAKES

L.A. has changed and so has Harry Bosch. A decade and a half ago, Bosch was an angry man. When hassled by an Internal Affairs cop, Bosch barks [Black Echo], "Go back to the leisure suits you used to wear before you became Irving's bendover. You know, the yellow thing that matched your teeth. The polyester does more for you than silk."

And later, when his boss was in his face [Black Ice], "He wanted to throw the guy through his glass wall but would settle for a cigarette out behind the drunk tank."

Harry now has a daughter, quit smoking, and has become a more caring person.

In *The Closers*, Connelly writes, "Bosch was thinking about offering to walk out with [his new boss Abel] Pratt, maybe have a conversation and get to know him better, but his cell phone started to chirp."

Connelly agrees that he and the new and improved Bosch are getting closer. But not too close. Connelly isn't interested in a character similar to himself.

When asked if he'll be writing about reporter Jack McEvoy [The Poet] again, he replies, "I'll bring him back at some point. But I've been reluctant to, simply because that guy is very much like me and it's not as much fun to write about someone like yourself."

Michael Connelly has returned to Florida and now lives in Tampa Bay. Yet L.A. remains his literary home. His latest novel, *The Lincoln Lawyer*, scheduled for release in October, is as L.A. as it gets.

"I met a lawyer about five years ago in L.A.," Connelly recalls, "a stranger who I sat next to at a baseball game...there's 39 court houses in L.A., it's a huge sprawl...you know, most lawyers have an office near a few of them. They specialize in those court houses. But this guy says he goes anywhere and pretty much his office is his car, so his filing cabinets are in his trunk. He's got faxes and printers and he just drives from court house to court house - sitting in the back of his Lincoln while a client drives him and works off his fee."

Michael Connelly admits that without his and Harry's years in L.A., he wouldn't be signing books in Victoria.

"I don't think we'd be sitting here [at the Laurel Point Inn] talking if I'd stayed in Florida and created Hieronymus Bosch in that area," he smiles.

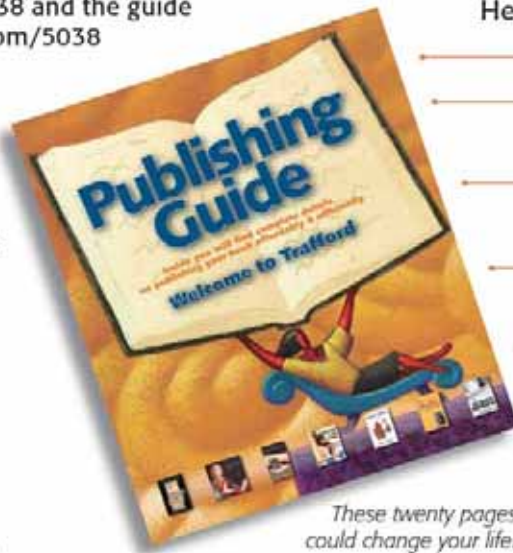
Authors!

At last... an easy, affordable way to get your book published! Find out how in Trafford Publishing's FREE guide!

Call toll free 1-888-232-4444 ext 5038 and the guide is on its way, or visit www.trafford.com/5038

If you've written a book, or are writing one now, this fact-filled guide from Trafford is for you. You see, it explains how Trafford's unique On-Demand Publishing Service™ can help you get *your* book published quickly, affordably, and painlessly.

That's right. With Trafford you can say goodbye to conventional book publishers who accept few new manuscripts, pay tiny royalties, take all the rights to your book, and do whatever they like with it. There is a better way and it's explained in our free guide. As you'll discover, our state-of-the-art digital printing process allows us to print your book one copy at a time. This means Trafford can fill customer and bookseller orders *as they arrive*. So you don't have to!



These twenty pages could change your life!

To find out how Trafford can help you, just as we've helped thousands of authors in over 90 countries, request your free guide now with no obligation.

Here's What You'll Learn...

- How on-demand publishing works!
- Why you don't have to invest in any inventory!
- How you can control the publishing process every step of the way!
- How your book is sold through Trafford's on-line bookstore!
- How our global trade distribution system lets readers buy your book through resellers like Amazon and tens of thousands of local bookstores!

For your **FREE** Publishing Guide,

Visit our Web site
www.trafford.com/5038

or call now
1-888-232-4444 ext 5038
or 250-383-6864 ext 5038

TRAFFORD PUBLISHING

