

Telling Los Angeles' Dark Tales

DISTINGUISHED STORYTELLER
AWARD RECIPIENT
MICHAEL CONNELLY IS
KNOWN FOR HIS
'BOSCH' BOOKS, BUT HE
STARTED AS A REPORTER

BY LISA RICHWINE

MICHAEL CONNELLY has brought Los Angeles to life like no other writer.

The best-selling author of 32 detective and crime novels is known around the world for his stories featuring Harry Bosch, the persistent Los Angeles Police Department detective who investigates the city's most perplexing murder cases. Connelly's books have sold more than 74 million copies worldwide and have been translated into 40 languages. They are the basis for the Amazon Prime Video series "Bosch."

The Los Angeles Press Club tonight is presenting Connelly with its Distinguished Storyteller Award, an honor bestowed for excellence in storytelling outside of journalism.

Connelly's work, however, is rooted in journalism. His gripping narratives are informed by his early career as a reporter, and they feature the type of vivid details that journalists strive to include in their writing.

"My success as a guy 'who makes it up' came after a career as a journalist who covered law enforcement and crime for newspapers on both coasts," Connelly says on his website. "No matter what success I achieve as a storyteller I have always and will always feel I am still a journalist at heart—I put the truth in my novels and I research them like a reporter on a story."

From "Angels Flight" to "Echo Park," Connelly makes Los Angeles a central character and takes readers into the unsung corners of the sprawling metropolis. Bosch stakes out criminals in Montecito Heights, meets a date for dinner in the Arts District and searches for evidence at shady





Hollywood motels.

“The Haven House was an aging two-story motel with neon promises of free HBO and Wi-Fi,” Connelly wrote in “The Crossing.” It was the kind of place that probably looked shabby on the day it opened in the 1940s and had only gone downhill from there. The kind that served as a last-stop shelter before the car became the primary domicile.”

Born in Philadelphia, Connelly became a fan of crime novels when his mother introduced them to him as a child.

At age 16, after his family moved to Florida, Connelly gained insight into the world of police work when he saw a man throw something into a hedge. Driven by curiosity befitting a detective,



Glimpses of Connelly's life as he holds his daughter; growing up to be an American in Paris; graduation with his family; with Linda; and with Linda and Callie during a red carpet event.



he plucked the object out of the bushes and discovered it was a gun wrapped in a lumberjack shirt. He put the gun back and contacted the police, who later asked him to try to identify the person in a lineup. Connelly couldn't—they didn't have the right guy—but the glimpse into the workings of law enforcement fascinated him.

Connelly studied journalism and creative writing at the University of Florida. During that time, he found inspiration in Robert Altman's film *The Long Goodbye*, which was based on one of Raymond Chandler's classic novels featuring iconic detective Philip Marlowe.

After graduating in 1980, Connelly worked at newspapers in Florida, covering the violent cocaine wars among other assignments. In 1987, he moved to California to work for the *Los Angeles Times*, and he wrote fiction on the side.

Connelly's debut novel, *The Black Echo*, was published in 1992. The book was the first to feature Bosch, a character the author said was based on several real cops he knew as a reporter. The author penned three more novels before quitting his reporter job in 1995 to become a full-time novelist.

His nearly three dozen books since then have followed the career of Bosch, now a weathered veteran working out of the San Fernando PD.



Along the way, Connelly has introduced new main characters including defense attorney Mickey Haller and night-shift detective Renee Ballard.

Two of his novels, *Blood Work* and *The Lincoln Lawyer*, were adapted into movies.

Critics have praised Connelly for finding ways to make his stories fresh even after more than 30 novels.

His latest work, *Dark Sacred Night*, "is one of the best and most affecting Bosch novels since Mr. Connelly began the saga in 1992, under-



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dear friend and colleague

**MICHAEL
CONNELLY**

*on the
Distinguished Storyteller
Award*

And supports the LA Press Club

Henrik, Melissa, Abbey & Paul

Clockwise from right: Titus Welliver, who plays Bosch on the TV show and Connelly at Dodger Stadium; Clint Eastwood directed and starred in the 2002 movie based on *Blood Work*; Matthew McConaughey portrayed criminal defense attorney Mickey Haller in 2011's *The Lincoln Lawyer*; on tour with the USO's Operation Thriller III.



scoring the growing and unsettling ambiguity surrounding its central character," wrote Tom Nolan of the *Wall Street Journal*. The book was released in October.

"Michael Connelly is superhuman," said Charles Finch of *USA Today*. "His hallmark has been his precise, faultless plotting" and he "has always been especially good when it comes to truly creepy killers."

Connelly also is reaching new audiences as executive producer of the "Bosch" TV show, which stars Titus Welliver in the leading role. Connelly told the *LA Weekly* that his contract requires that every Los Angeles scene be shot in the city to make the show authentic. The series has filmed everywhere from Downtown's Millennium Biltmore Hotel (site of tonight's National Arts and Entertainment Journalism Awards) to a vacant lot on Mulholland Drive in Encino.

Amazon recently renewed "Bosch" for a sixth season.

Next year, Connelly will jump into another storytelling medium with a true-crime podcast called "The Murder Book," which will explore real homicide cases not covered by mainstream media. It will debut in January.

"In the last couple years as I have seen a growing threat against the integrity of journalism and law enforcement, it has awakened a desire in me to return in some way to telling the real stories of the unsung heroes of law enforcement," Connelly said.

"What better place than in a podcast, which I view as the new arena of journalism. It is not the written truth but the spoken truth."

Now 62, Connelly has won nearly every major award for crime writers, but said his Los Angeles Press Club award stands out.

"I've been telling stories true and made up about L.A. for a long time," he said. "To receive this award gives me such fulfillment. I will treasure it and always live up to it."