

Collected works of Michael Connelly,
author of *The Brass Verdict*, 2008, 422 pgs

Review by David Eaton Mauk

A perennial best selling author of psychological thrillers, Michael Connelly also happens to be an excellent writer, learning his craft as a journalist. His characters bristle with personality and pathos, even if they don't personify the button-down traditionalism of more dignified heroes. Harry Bosch and Mickey Haller are nonconformists. They stand ready to be played by the likes of a brooding, temperamental Humphrey Bogart or Clint Eastwood, who in fact played another of Connelly's characters in the film version of *Blood Work*, which Eastwood also directed.

Connelly introduced readers to Harry Bosch in the novel, *The Black Echo* in 1992. We are struck by the flaws and phobias of this Los Angeles homicide detective. Likewise, readers are drawn to his practical, determined intelligence, beneath which is a pure though conflicted soul. In quick succession were published *The Black Ice*, *The Concrete Blond* and my favorite of this early period, *The Last Coyote*, where Bosch's remaining veneer is peeled back to reveal the secret insecurity hiding behind his drive, competency and outsider persona.

More recently, in a departure from the Harry Bosch series, *The Lincoln Lawyer* is a popular legal thriller released in 2005. It welcomes Mickey Haller as another anti-hero with an unconventional approach to sticking up for the underdog. Mickey, with his intrepid team that includes one of two ex-wives and leather-clad biker as investigator, finds it more practical and cost effective to use a fleet of town cars as mobile office. With this set-up, there are predictably more laughs along the ride with Mickey than with Harry, though no fewer twists and flames rising from the ashes of anguish.

The thematic arc of Connelly's books is following a flawed, likable outsider as he overcomes the odds in dueling with the establishment and their vast resources, with decency, heart and resourcefulness. If you aren't already a fan, you'll likely become part of the cheering section for these literary thrillers. As entertainment, Connelly delivers original, character-driven stories weaving tight plots paced for action. You will be turning the pages to each dramatic end, ready to do it all over again with another installment.

The Brass Verdict is Connelly's latest best-seller, where lawyer Mickey Haller finds himself in an uneasy alliance with detective Harry Bosch to find the truth of one mystery, while immersed in another. The isolationist tendency of each man continues to push the other away. Yet it is this abrasive energy that propels the story forward. Mickey finds himself back in business after a prolonged absence from his profession as a result of the violent death of the original lawyer. He inherits a franchise client of notoriety and wealth who is accused of murdering his wife and her lover. Ethical lines are challenged if not crossed in the course of preparing for a speedy trial. We wonder how this case might be connected to the lawyer's murder. Harry becomes Mickey's unwanted accomplice in attempting to track down the complex clues. Will these orphans of the law and order establishment survive as teammates?

Go to the library or bookstore and read Michael Connelly. Pick any of the novels regardless of publishing order. You will be gripped by the noir world of Connelly's prose and the inner forces lingering as shadows often acting out as angels. And like angels, they remain hidden from view, illuminated when their humanity causes them to seek justice in a daunting quest for truth.