

A Conversation with Matt Coyle about *WRONG LIGHT*

TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF, HOW AND WHEN YOU STARTED WRITING.

I almost started writing too late. I've read crime fiction my whole life and always had the goal of becoming a writer. It just took me a while to actually start writing. I finally did about sixteen years ago when yet another one of the golf companies I worked for went under. I told myself I had to either take the time off to write a book or quit talking about it forever. All the years of reading crime made the choice of genre easy. The rest was hard, but after five months I'd written the first draft of my first novel, *Yesterday's Echo*. About six drafts and ten years later, it was ready to be published.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO WRITE YOUR NOVEL?

I've long had an interest in and have listened to various forms of talk radio and have a friend who's been an on-air talent in sports talk radio for years. I wondered how a host and radio station management would react when receives a menacing letter and voicemail from a mysterious listener.

HOW DID YOU USE YOUR LIFE EXPERIENCE OR PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND TO ENRICH YOUR STORY?

No, but I always try to find the true emotion in whatever I write. When you get to a certain age, you've experienced the wide range of emotions that life pulls out of you. The highs and the lows. I tunnel into those feelings when I'm writing scenes that call deep emotion. I've experienced enough loss in my life to feel what Rick does when he thinks of his deceased wife or when someone close to him dies.

ARE ANY CHARACTERS BASED ON PEOPLE YOU KNOW?

Not really. I think every writer takes pieces from people he's known and puts them together to create unique fictional characters. We all have a bit of Dr. Frankenstein in us.

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE OR MOST SYMPATHETIC CHARACTER? AND WHY?

Audrey Hastings, an "exotic" dancer. She has a small role in the book, but her struggle to earn enough to give her son a good life and her desire to do the right thing struck home with me. I tried to move her beyond the stereotype of a stripper.

WHO IS YOUR LEAST SYMPATHETIC CHARACTER? AND WHY?

Tatiana Volkov. She's the sociopathic daughter of a Russian mob boss. Although daddy's girl, she has a nasty violent side that makes her unsympathetic, but a lot of fun to write.

WHAT PART OF WRITING YOUR BOOK DID YOU FIND THE MOST CHALLENGING?

As my books are all chapters in Rick Cahill's life, I find the balance of giving closure to continuing readers to ongoing issues in Rick's life without spoiling things for new readers who may want to pick up book one after reading # 5.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE THAT READERS WILL TAKE AWAY FROM YOUR BOOK?

Entertainment and a deeper appreciation of Rick Cahill and all his flaws.

WHAT WRITERS HAVE INSPIRED YOU?

Raymond Chandler

Ros Macdonald

Ernest Hemingway

F. Scott Fitzgerald

Robert Crais

T. Jefferson Parker

Michael Connelly

Megan Abbott

WHAT IS THE WRITING PROCESS LIKE FOR YOU?

A messy affair. You'd think I'd be a little more ordered after five books, but I'm even more disorganized. However, I've learned to trust the creative process and be open to new ideas. Often, my subconscious will push a sentence onto the page that doesn't have a place in the story I'd planned to tell. I leave it there and allow myself time to digest it. Ninety percent of the time it steers me in the right direction, adds layers, and shows me the deeper meaning of the book. I call this process dropping anchors. It usually works. When it doesn't, I go back and pull up the anchor.

WHAT IS THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE ABOUT WRITING THAT YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED?

Keep your ass in the seat.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU? ANY NEW BOOKS IN THE PIPELINE?

The sixth Rick Cahill book. A mystery that has followed Rick around for five books will be solved, for better or worse.

ANY FINAL WORDS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY ABOUT YOURSELF, YOUR NOVEL, OR LIFE IN GENERAL?

Nothing truly great is every accomplished without effort and sacrifice. Keep your ass in the seat.