

INTERVIEW

“The reader knows who the perpetrator is virtually from the beginning”

Sins of the Fathers

by Les Cowan

Author Les Cowan told Philippa Gerrard about his interest in the psychology of crime, and how it led him to put pen to paper to create a different sort of thriller

Les Cowan has never been one to shy away from adventure.

After a varied career that involved everything from social work to teaching, he took a leap into the unknown by starting his own IT business just before the turn of the millennium.

It was a runaway success, but, in Les's own words, very full-on.

A decade later, Les was ready for his next adventure. A year living on the other side of the world in New Zealand satisfied him for a while, but before long he was back in Scotland with itchy feet once again.

A Spanish language course inspired he and his wife's next foray into the unknown, as the pair moved to Madrid and fell in love with the Spanish people and their way of life.

Having been used to life in Orkney, they missed the seaside and decided to move north to Galicia where they stayed for a further five years.

It was during this time that inspiration struck, and Les's next adventure was lived out on the page.

With two crime thriller novels now under his belt, *Sins of the Fathers* is Les's third offering in the David Hidalgo series.

He told Philippa Gerrard more about what readers can expect from this dark detective novel.

● Who is David Hidalgo?

He's the protagonist. David is Anglo-Spanish - his mum was a GP from Edinburgh and his dad a Spanish investigative journalist. David himself spends his time as a pastor mostly working with young people. He's not a professional detective by any means, though is a professional in morals. He often notices rights and wrongs in society which no one seems to action. There is no



Les Cowan is now bringing out his third thriller featuring his character David Hidalgo

manila envelope landing on his desk with details of the next big “case” to solve. In fact, David would be very happy living a quiet life looking after his congregation, but somehow life just doesn't seem to let him.

● Can you tell me a bit more about the novel's plot?

David runs a Spanish chat group on Saturday mornings in Edinburgh - as I used to do in Spain when I lived there. One morning, David is dishing out a series of Spanish newspapers to read when one story catches his eye. There have been four unusual murders in Seville; the police are stumped and appealing for help. At the class, a young Spanish girl called Andrea takes one look at the paper and says: “I think I know what the connection is.” We find out she's talking about a disgraced priest called Ramon who has been released from prison and is killing anyone who wronged him. The story becomes a battle of cat and mouse to catch Ramon and protect Andrea.

● Where did you get the idea for the book?

It features quite a current sort of topic really and one which is very divisive. Instead of feeling guilt and remorse after coming out of prison, Ramon is now bent on revenge

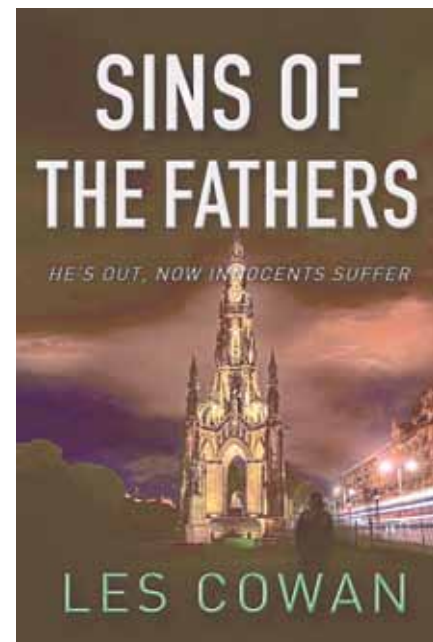
against those who testified against his shocking exploitation of children. It's an unusual crime story in that the reader knows who the perpetrator is virtually from the beginning. I am very interested in the psychology of crime and murder, rather than the “whodunit”.

● The plot is set across Edinburgh and Spain. Did you use real places throughout?

Yes, absolutely. Research for the book wasn't research as such, it was just living in these places and getting to know them as a local would. I don't like writing “they went for a coffee in a coffee shop”. I like to use real places and names. Ramon was in a real prison for example. I did research on the prison itself, all about its location and the initiatives they run for prisoners. As he is travelling through the country he stops in real villages and parishes and visits real bars. It gives the story legitimacy I think. Though I must say Google Street View is a fabulous aid.

● Do you have plans for any more books in the series?

There are now three published and three more written, waiting to go. I'm about to start work on a seventh. I write quite



organically I think. The ideas and characters are all in my mind but sometimes I'm in the creative zone and things happen on the page that I didn't expect. It's like they're living their own lives.

● Who do you think the books appeal to?

I think they have a very broad appeal. They sit on the crime shelves in bookshops but are particularly appreciated by people who want a bit more than a detective solving something in a quirky way. Particularly people who are interested in the deeper value of life, like yes there are bad guys, but why are they bad? What went wrong? Life throws all sorts of curve balls and people can go through some really awful circumstances and come out intact. I wanted to write about the more serious side of crime but also about the resilience of humans when we face things which are not in the script.

Sins of the Fathers by Les Cowan is available now from all good bookshops. Pick up a copy of next week's *your life* for the first in a series of extracts from the novel.

Superb sounds and all that jazz

Aberdeen proudly boasts a great wealth of talented musicians. And our city warmly welcomes sounds from all corners of the globe, with this month bringing a particularly international flavour.

Tonight, the Lemon Tree hosts Deutsche legend Wolfgang Flür who will grace us with his presence for an electronic odyssey. The former Kraftwerk member will demonstrate his acclaimed creative skills at this exclusive show. Recognised as one of THE most pioneering figures in dance music, travel this Autobahn of audio amazement.

For hip cats who dig sounds that swing, Aberdeen Jazz Festival kicked off this

week with more than 50 performances taking place city-wide.

This promises to be an extraordinary event for all who enjoy this genre. Orion All Stars, from Glasgow, will be spanning traditional jazz roots with modern-day covers. A new-age nod to Dixie's lively origins this evening at The Blue Lamp.

Later in the month at the same venue, raise your hands as African Groove Machine will be dropping crossover afro-beats with uplifting dance on March 21.

Personally, my favourite event of this phenomenal festival is always Jazz On The Green, which takes place on March 15. This fusion street party welcomes all. Cut loose in Aberdeen's historic hip neighbourhood which hosts a variety of music events from an array of exciting musicians. Nice!

From jazz to Jah, as dub king Lee “Scratch” Perry will be hitting the Lemon Tree on March 28. This octogenarian's

influence is ubiquitous among the reggae scene, and the Jamaican producer's alchemy brings wonderment with every show and collaboration. Globally recognised over decades for unique-sounding techniques fused with his distinctive vocal style.

From Caribbean cool to calming classical as Concordia String Orchestra are bringing a spring rendition to Midsocket Parish Church on March 28.

If jump jiving is more your bag then the wild side of rock ‘n’ roll will be unleashed at the Noose & Monkey on March 27 as Memphis Routes play Rosemount's coolest corner. An energetic night featuring the music of Chuck Berry, Jerry Lee Lewis and Elvis, bringing 1950s American style to your Friday night.

To echo the sentiments of Eddie Cochran...C'mon Everybody!

● Marie.q.music@gmail.com

MARCH HAPPENINGS

14th: Jazz Fusion Collective Hamlet; The Blue Lamp



Lee 'Scratch' Perry is at the Lemon Tree

14th: All Night Passion; Tunnels

14th: Paddy's Day Weekend, Illicit Still

24th: The Ninth Wave; Tunnels

28th: March of the Mods (Teenage Cancer Trust); Carmelite Hotel

Don't miss next week's *your life* for columnist Dougie Burns' take on the north music scene.

