

ACCENT



Ian Rankin at Murder on the Beach Bookstore in Delray Beach. [ADRIANA DELGADO/PALMBEACHPOST.COM]

A mystery master

Novelist Ian Rankin recalls his start in literature: drawing comic books as a kid

By Adriana Delgado
The Palm Beach Post

For thriller writer Ian Rankin, his native Scotland is not only a prominent character in all of his novels, but also a main source of inspiration.

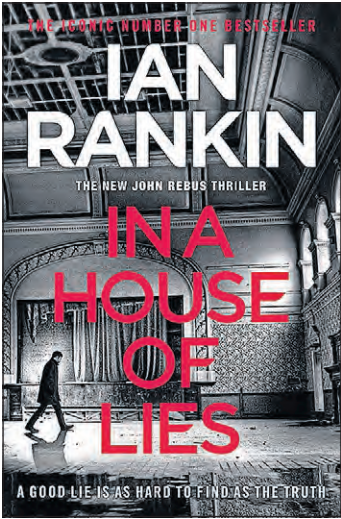
Rankin was recently at Murder on the Beach Bookstore in Delray Beach to hold a talk and book signing for his new novel, "In A House Of Lies."

The book stars his often disgraced protagonist John Rebus, a

nose-to-the-ground now retired detective, who seems more keen on breaking the rules rather than reinforcing them. But Rebus does get the bad guys, even if he sometimes has to rely on some of Rankin's shadiest characters for assistance, like gangster and villain Morris Gerald Cafferty.

Rankin explains that this double-sided persona, that of the hero and anti-hero in the same body is fascinating to him.

"Rebus is the last of his kind, who could get away with bending the rules," Rankin said. "He was doing police work before CCTV and cell phones, which makes



Rankin's latest Rebus thriller.

Rankin also adds that Scotland's atmosphere

is perfect for a dark detective thriller.

"Scotland is a pretty atmospheric place, and a city like Edinburgh has plenty of atmospheric locations in them," Rankin said. "It's influenced perhaps by the Scottish Gothic novel, which is quite dark and has elements of the supernatural to it. That allows for terrible things to be happening in very beautiful places." But even though he's considered one of the most prominent Scottish crime writers, Rankin began writing detective thrillers entirely by accident.

"I'm the only mystery writer that I know of who wasn't a fan of the genre

before starting to write it," Rankin confesses. "I was studying at Edinburgh University and doing a doctoral thesis on the Scottish novel, specifically on the works of Muriel Spark, who wrote one of the most famous Edinburgh novels, 'The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie.' But it was set in the 1930s and published in the '60s and I thought that no one seemed to be writing about contemporary Edinburgh."

In Spark's novel, Brodie tells us that she is the descendant of a real-life Scottish man, William Brody, who was described

See RANKIN, D3



Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher and Harrison Ford in the original “Star Wars” movie, screening March 1 in Boca Raton. [FILE PHOTO]

Feel – and hear – the Force

Boca Raton festival to host 'Star Wars' screening with live orchestra

By Lulu Ramadan
The Palm Beach Post

In a city not far away, Festival of the Arts BOCA will screen the first film in the popular "Star Wars" series while a live orchestra performs the award-winning score.

The second day of the ten-day festival, March 1, is reserved for a screening of the 1977 movie "Star Wars IV: A New Hope" at Mizner Park Amphitheater in downtown Boca Raton.

While cultural icons Luke Skywalker, Han Solo and Princess Leia light the screen at the outdoor amphitheater, The Symphonia, a Boca Raton-based full chamber orchestra, will perform the film's space-opera score.

If you go

‘Star Wars’

March 1, 7:30 p.m.
Festival of the Arts BOCA,
Mizner Park, Boca Raton
Information, tickets: festival-
boca.org

The soundtrack, written by John Williams, was

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FREE

Chalk-lined streets of Lake Worth

Add a bit of color to your weekend and get ready to “talk the chalk,” because this weekend, the 25th annual Street Painting Festival returns to Downtown Lake Worth. This festival has long been a staple for art-lovers and it's hard not to see why it gets more and more visitors every year. This year, Lake and Lucerne Avenues will be decorated by more

than 600 local and visiting chalk artists, in addition to performances on the music mainstage, shops, restaurants, a food court and more. This is an incredible opportunity to explore the best of the best of Palm Beach County's cultural events—for free, of course!

Street Painting Festival: February 23 and 24. Starts at 10 a.m. on both days. Lake and Lucerne Avenues, Lake Worth. Info: www.street-paintingfestivalinc.org.



The 25th Annual Street Painting Festival will occur this weekend in Downtown Lake Worth. [CONTRIBUTED]

DEAL



Mounts Botanical Garden invites you to explore the relationship between art and nature during “Cutting Corners: A Stickwork Exhibit,” created by artist Patrick Dougherty. [CONTRIBUTED BY JACEK PHOTO]

Giant natural sculptures at Mounts

There's a natural symbiosis between the art of sculpture and the craft of carpentry. If that doesn't ring true to you, make way to Mounts Botanical Garden where you can experience “Cutting Corners,” a project by North Carolina-based artist Patrick Dougherty, famous for his massive environmental Stickwork

projects. The exhibition celebrates new works created for Mounts, where guests can wander and appreciate art and nature as they effortlessly intertwine.

“Cutting Corners: A Stickwork Exhibit”: Now through June 2019. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$5 for children ages 5 to 12. Mounts Botanical Garden, 531 N. Military Trail, West Palm Beach. Info: 561-233-1757 or www.mounts.org.

SPLURGE

‘The Spitfire Grill’

No matter what kind of week you've had, a musical — especially when produced by Palm Beach Dramaworks — is sure to brighten your mood. Now through March 3, the company is presenting “The Spitfire Grill,” a heartfelt musical that tells the tale of

a young parolee starting over at Hannah's Spitfire Grill in rural Wisconsin. Tickets are selling out quickly, so be sure to get them soon!

“The Spitfire Grill”: Runs through March 3. Tickets are \$75. Palm Beach Dramaworks, 201 Clematis St., West Palm Beach. Info: 561-514-4042 or www.palmbeachdramaworks.org.



(From left) Elizabeth Dimon, Ashley Rose, Blake Price and Amy Miller Brennan star in Palm Beach Dramaworks' production of “The Spitfire Grill” now through March 3. [CONTRIBUTED BY ALICIA DONELAN]

RANKIN

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as being “a gentleman by day and thief by night.”

“I thought of modern day Edinburgh as being a sort of Jekyll and Hyde, civilized and cultured on the surface, but quite dark and dangerous underneath,” Rankin said. “So I wanted to write about that, and thought that a cop is a character that can explore both sides of the city, the good and the bad, the haves and the have nots. Rebus for example, can be interviewing a CEO or a politician one minute and the dispossessed and disenfranchised the next.”

Rebus also faces a new challenge in Rankin's new novel: old age and retirement. This doesn't sit well with a man who wants to be as close to the action as possible.

But as Rankin explains, he made Rebus too old for the start and there came a point where he would have to go on mandatory retirement.

“My wife said to me that he (Rebus) had been very lucky with his health considering his lifestyle,” Rankin said. “But I've been writing this guy for over thirty years, and what keeps it fresh is that he keeps changing. Everything's moved on, technology, his relationships. The challenge now was how do you get a retired guy involved in a police investigation?” It's not easy, to be sure.

What makes “In A House of Lies” particularly engrossing is that the plot is similar to a true cold case, in which a private detective is found dead in a parking garage years after he disappeared. Rankin says that the story came together fairly organically, and that it gave him the idea of including



Ian Rankin signs books for readers at Murder on the Beach Bookstore. [ADRIANA DELGADO/PALMBEACHPOST.COM]

the topic of mishandling of the case by police.

“I started to think that perhaps there were cops back then who were involved in the investigation who had gotten lazy, who had broken the rules, perhaps colluding,” Rankin said. “That allowed me to look at the present and the past, showing how society has changed, how the police have changed. And you get two mysteries for the price of one.”

Rankin says that he was more influenced by American crime writers than British. Authors like Lawrence Sanders and James Ellroy would inspire Rankin to write his own rogue detective, who isn't good at following the rules or working with a team. “When I read Ellroy, I discovered that many of the characters were real people and real crimes. So I wrote a book called “Black and Blue,” where I

took a real unsolved Scottish crime about a serial killer, and that was very influenced by Ellroy's style of writing.”

Something that some of his fans may not know is that Rankin started his literary career by writing comics when he was around eight years old.

“I was reading comic books like Batman, Superman and Spider-Man. I would get pieces of paper and fold them in little four page booklets where I would draw stick people and have several adventures of superheroes,” Rankin remembers. “Soccer players and space men running across the pages. But I wasn't good at drawing.

“Later, I got interested in pop music, but I had no musical ability so I created a pop group in my head and on paper, called The Amoebas and the lead singer was Ian Kaput, which was me.”

When iconic comic book writer and creator Stan Lee

died, HBO's “Real Time” host Bill Maher commented on a blog post that comic books weren't really literature or entertainment intended for adults.

“I still read comics, and I've also written a few, a John Constantine and Hellblazer standalone graphic novels,” Rankin said. “I think comics, like mystery novels, take on big themes and moral questions like good and evil. They ask us as human beings how we feel about the world and, if we could, would we change it?”

Regarding his future projects, he has plenty lined up, including a stage play starring Rebus and his former partner Siobhan Clarke. “I've also been offered some comic book and graphic novel stuff,” Rankin said. “But at the end of the day, I'm a novelist, because it's really all I know how to do.”

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FORCE

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originally recorded by the London Symphony Orchestra and won several awards, including an Academy Award, Golden Globe, Grammy and BAFTA.

“A New Hope,” written and directed by George Lucas, was the first in the ongoing franchise of “Star Wars” films that continues this year with the December release of “Star Wars: Episode IX,” the ninth installment.

Festival of the Arts, in its 12th year, often screens a classic film with live orchestra. In the past, Mizner Park Amphitheater has been home to showings of “Casablanca,” “West Side Story,” “Raiders of the Lost Ark” and “The Wizard of Oz.”

The festival calls it a nod to the history of film, when silent movies were accompanied by pianists' melodies.

A film screening with live orchestra is a tough task, the Festival of the Arts writes on its website. It requires “exquisite timing” to coincide the action in the movie with the symphony within a quarter-of-a-second, “or it becomes noticeable,” the website reads.

In addition to the film screening, the Festival of the Arts' ten-day lineup includes other musical performances, a ballet and a speaker series.

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