

The Crime Cafe with Adam Maxwell

Presented By:



Debbi: Hi everyone. This is the Crime Cafe. Your podcasting source of great crime, suspense and thriller writing. I'm your host, Debbi Mack. Before we get started and I introduce my guest, let me remind you that the *Crime Cafe Nine Book Set* and *Crime Cafe Short Story Anthology* are on sale at my website, and all major retailers; Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Kobo, you name it, they're there. Just go to debbimack.com and click on "Crime Cafe" to find the buy links. You can also subscribe to the podcast there. Plus, I'm going to be making a big announcement. It's coming up soon, so stay tuned for the big announcement about the show. I guess what I've done is just made a big announcement about the big announcement! So, if that's not from a Monty Python skit, I don't know what is! And on that note, I'd like to introduce my guest, the very funny crime author, Adam Maxwell. It's so great to have you here, Adam. Thanks for coming on.

Adam: Well, thank you for having me. It's a pleasure.

Debbi: Awesome! So, your books seem to run the gamut from children's to adult mystery and caper. How would you describe yourself as an author in one sentence?

Adam: Eclectic!

Debbi: Eclectic...fair description.

Adam: Constructed perhaps [laughs].

Debbi: [laughs]

Adam: I think there's definitely two sides. The main two sides would be the crime writing, which it goes from crime to detective and a lot of little bits and bobs. Writing for kids was kind of an accident because I have a daughter and when she was maybe about 5 years old, I wasn't entirely satisfied with the sort of books that were available and thought, well I can do better than that. And I've ended up writing five kids novels. Four have been published and one, *Pirates vs. Ninjas*, which is going to come out early next year. But, that's kind of ... it's a destruction almost. It's fabulous. It's wonderful to do, but it's not really where my heart is. It was rather where my heart for my daughter is and being terribly vain I obviously published them as well [laughs]. But, yeah the majority of the work I'm doing, at the moment I've got sort of the next two or three books in the series, the crime series I'm working on at the moment. That's everything. I'm not sure. My daughter is getting to be kind of big, where she's starting to read the *Percy Jackson's* and *The Hunger Games* and I'm not sure...I'm not interested in writing that sort of thing so I think that's probably it for the kids books for me. It will just be crime from now on, which I'm sure anybody who's watching will be glad to hear [laughs].

Debbi: [laughs] It sounds like your writing career sort of started with your daughter.

Adam: Yeah, I mean certainly I was doing a lot of stuff before then that was much, much shorter but the crossover between the crime and the longer works started to come with the kids' books and then sort of now everything's too long, so everything is novel length. You can't have short ideas anymore because that's when they turn into these enormously long plot ideas that you have.

Debbi: Well, I think you could probably write short stories and novellas?

Adam: Well, the next one that I've got coming out, it did turn into a novella, but it almost ended up as a novel. I think writing sort of heist-caper style plots; the level of complexity in there, it lends itself really well to having much longer, convoluted, to-and-fro sort of plots. Yeah, that's how my brain works I suppose, so [laughs].

Debbi: [laughs] Well, I like it. I'm reading *Cat Chaser* and it makes me laugh out loud at points. The way your protagonist just stops when he falls asleep. I'm like, oh my god. What inspired you to write a mystery about a detective with narcolepsy?

Adam: [laughs] Well I think...that was one that I had for a long time. Now I am 41 years old and when I came up with that idea I was probably 21 years old and at the time I think you find different things funny then you do when you get older. When I first started to think about it, I was like, there's nothing funnier than people who have this thing where they fall asleep. It's actually the more research you do, the more you realize what a debilitating and tragic condition it is for the people. Like these people can't hold down jobs, and so it became this like...if we're going to be allowed to laugh, how can we make it a character who it's OK to laugh at and that was by always making him the cleverest person in the room. He never accidentally comes upon the solution to things. He is the person who has the idea, who makes the connection. So, he's always better than everybody else, and he does that in spite of his condition. And, so then I think you can get away with the humor a lot better. But, I think *The Defective Detective* is much more slap stick. The caper books, I think, are a bit more Coen brothers; sort of a bit darker.

Debbi: I like that. Which of your books are the caper books?

Adam: At the moment there's only one because *The Dali Deception* is the first one.

Debbi: [agrees]

Adam: That sort of sees the crew get together. You've got Violet who is the brilliance of the operation. She returns to her home city, which is a fictional...it's the same city that the Clinton in *Defective Detective* occupies, this fictional city of Kilchester which was supposed to be the north of England, but has enough crossover in most British cities that there's something there from each one where you kind of, you can spot that this part might be London and this part might be Manchester. So, there was a bit of that in there. But she returns home to this place having sort of exiled herself after her criminal boyfriend tried to kill her halfway through a job and so she comes back and is tempted back as criminals in this sort of thing tend to be by promise of big payday and pulls together the crew through that and I kind of...when I started to write it, I'd not been writing anything but *The Defective Detective* for a while and I sort of thought, is this it? Like, if it is, then I suppose that's fine. I like Clint as a character and had plenty of ideas, but I wanted something else that I could do. And so I deliberately tried to come up with a set of characters that I'd be able to use in a series going forward so that I did more than one thing and not just bore everybody to death with the same thing all of the time. And so I ended up with the five of them and three of them were women and two of them were men. And kind of the women were in control and they were the ones who made the decisions and the men kind of but not...I mean or the real experts

and they've failed as you would have imagined. But, at the end of it, there is very much the question of what do we do next. Like, where do we go from here? And I sort of like that you've got this kind of *Guardians of the Galaxy* dynamic of these people who don't really trust each other and kind of have to trust each other or want to trust each other but, some of them are scheming and some of them...and are they betraying each other as they go along? Will they stick together? And so you've got all of these sort of miniature things playing out at the same time that they try to steal a blank canvas signed by Salvador Dali and so because it seemed a ridiculous thing and Dali did in fact sign a lot of blank sheets of paper in order to make money. He would just sell these and there's a lot of discrepancy as to some of the works as to whether he did them or whether they're forgeries because they've got a real signature. And so these sorts of things all seem very interesting and then I thought I'll write something short that I could maybe get people into the series with this novella that I'm just putting the finishing touches to which is called *Kill It With Fire*. But while I was writing that, the next book came along as you know, you do the same thing and you end up in that sort of...well OK, let's do the next one and the following one starts to invade as you plot it. So, there's a lot of...these characters definitely are moving in different areas and different things are happening in their lives and they're getting involved in things they shouldn't. It's interesting to me and hopefully interesting to readers.

Debbi: Well, I find it interesting. And what sort of arc do you anticipate for these characters?

Adam: Well I think that series characters often have a degree of reset, so that you kind of...you move a little way up but you don't necessarily want to take them so far that it's...it's not *Harry Potter* series, where you've got a beginning, middle and end. It's more sort of Donald Westlake kind of scenes where there is some changes and some things happen, but the majority of things you've got to pick up one of the books and you'll probably still get as much out of it even if you hadn't read the rest of them. So, I do kind of see the next book being...the idea behind the next book is that they're going to inadvertently steal from an assassin. And so the assassin will then come after them and try to murder them all. So, it's not the traditional like, "let's knock off a casino" kind of book.

Debbi: [laughs]

Adam: But in forcing them together in this kind of situation, it will probably bring a lot more trust in one another out of it. But then you've got in *The Defective Detective* books that you've been looking at, the computer expert in that is sort of the white hat computer expert and is the sister of the black hat computer expert in the *Dali Deception*. So, the prospect of putting them two together in a room and how they make them do family things, at the same time that they're sort of trying to do...she's trying to stop her when she's trying to do the bad thing and those kind of dynamics interest me. I've always been a big fan of P.G. Wodehouse and those little awful, can you imagine what it would be like if they were to have Christmas dinner together somewhere and they were forced into an environment like that. It would be entertaining, but at the same time the crime aspects are always, oh how could she steal something? Oh, that would be good. Or you hear about a new technology and you think, yeah so I would probably use that once [laughs]. So, I'm not 100% sure where I'll take them, but I think for the next one I'll sort of bring this idea of them trusting each other a lot more. And then the follow up book, definitely need to break it after that. They need to stop trusting each other again after that [laughs].

Debbi: You've got to have that conflict in there somehow, yeah.

Adam: [laughs]

Debbi: I love the way your mind works [laughs]. You mentioned a couple of authors that inspired you. Are there any others that have been an inspiration for you?

Adam: Oh, certainly! I mean Elmore Leonard, he is just the master and not just the dialogue, I mean everybody says Elmore Leonard's dialogue, but when you're reading things like *Rum Punch*, the plotting, the characterization is just something to aspire to. It really, really is. Donald Westlake is definitely, the Dortmund novels brilliantly funny, you know *Hot Rock*. And closer to home, I grew up reading Douglas Adams, *The Dirk Gently*...

Debbi: I was just going to say...

Adam: [laughs] I mean the new series that's on BBC America at the moment is so well written.

Debbi: I think it's the best thing on TV now. It's the most imaginative thing on TV right now.

Adam: Yes and every single character again has their own...something's happening in their own world and I think this idea as a writer, everybody in the story is the protagonist of their own story and you as the author choosing the perspective that you're going to tell it through. The guy, I think it was the *Austin Powers* thing wasn't it where the henchmen—you suddenly cut away to the henchmen's family, because every single person has that something fading in and *The Dirk Gently* I think has definitely got that when you find yourself just watching the whole thing from the beginning again just to spot all of the bits that went on. And I think if you can do, especially in something like a caper, a detective novel. If you can do those things, it's...that's an enormous talent and so hard.

Debbi: Yes, oh my god.

Adam: Douglas Adams was definitely...he was a big influence on the style of my writing.

Debbi: It would be great write like him. Oh, my god. I mean, I'll never forget the first time I saw the BBC series of *Hitchhiker's Guide*

Adam: Yes!

Debbi: I was like, oh my god! It just blew me away. And then when I found out...I read all the books and then I found out about *Dirk Gently* and I was like, I've got to read this. And then when I read that I was like, oh my god! But then when I heard they made it into a series on BBC America, I was just like, I'm there, dude, I'm there!

Adam: We've watched most of the season two, and we haven't watched the finale that was on last night, so we're going to catch up with that after we finish here. That's what we're going to be watching.

Debbi: Well enjoy! That's all I can say. That show is just amazing and seriously one of the most, if not the most imaginative TV show on right now.

Adam: Definitely!

Debbi: I was blown away by it. And I celebrate Towel Day every year. 42, that's all I can say. Don't panic! [laughs]. And just for the record, are you a Doctor Who fan?

Adam: Of course, yes!

Debbi: Of course, of course! How silly of me to ask.

Adam: There was a Comic-Con near where we live and my daughter went as Matt Smith, with the bow tie and the braces, and she forced me to go as Tennant so that was [laughs] and the last Comic-Con I went as Arthur Dent, which was just essentially me in my dressing gown.

Debbi: [laughs]

Adam: Virtually every single person that came up to me said, "Oh, you came in your pajamas". Like, no, no, I didn't whatsoever. My daughter's Kiki from *Kiki's Delivery Service*, and this one woman said, "Oh, you look so good. We watched this obscure Japanese film. Who are you in your dressing gown"? No, we're not doing all that.

Debbi: Should have brought a towel with your dressing gown.

Adam: Yes, I even had the satchel. I know that's Ford Prefect, technically. I had to carry my purchases somewhere.

Debbi: Indeed! Well, is there anything else you'd like to say before we wrap up?

Adam: I'm not sure. You've put me on the spot. We are in a competition for the books at the moment on your clock, so if anybody wants to pop an e-mail to adam@adammaxwell.com, I'll even do the prize draw. There's three physical copies on offer and I'll post them anywhere in the world whoever wins those and I'll send you copies of the *Defective Detective* just free so you can get an idea and see what you think and maybe you'll like them.

Debbi: Well, I can't think of a more awesome offer than that. That is so cool! So cool of you, Adam, and thank you so much for being on.

Adam: My pleasure! Thank you for having me again!

Debbi: I'm sorry.

Adam: Thank you for having me again.

Debbi: You're very welcome! I just want to finish up by saying to remind you that you can find links for the Crime Cafe publications on my website debbimack.com and to enter the giveaway for Adam's books because they're great. And with that I will simply say thank you for listening or watching (as the case may be) and I'll see you in two weeks.

