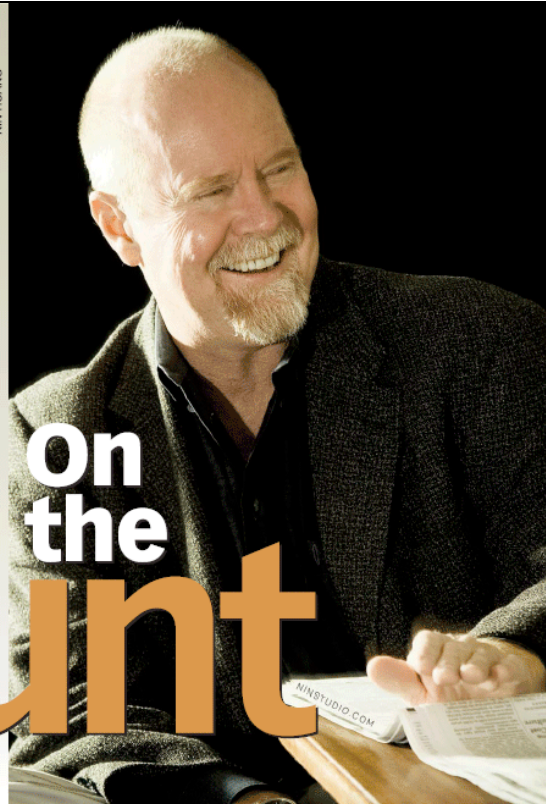


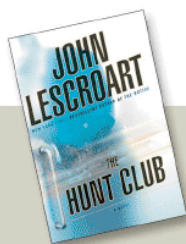
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On the hunt

Lescroart mingles old, new in a thriller

By Diana Jordan



The Best of John Lescroart

Author John Lescroart has had 17 novels published. His bestselling titles include:

- *Hard Evidence* (1993)
- *The 13th Juror* (1994)
- *A Certain Justice* (1995)
- *Guilt* (1997)
- *The Mercy Rule* (1998)

“ONE OF THE COOL THINGS about this book is that it’s got this warm heart.” That’s how John Lescroart sees his latest thriller, *The Hunt Club*.

Despite this warm heart pulsing throughout, the San Francisco-based story plunges into the dark side—opening with the brutal double murder of an esteemed federal judge and a beautiful young woman, complicated by the chilling disappearance of one suspect, a local TV star.

The novel features Wyatt Hunt, a 30-something investigator who was a bit player in Lescroart’s previous bestseller, *The Motive*, whose main characters are Dismas Hardy and Abe Glitsky. And, with a karmic wink, Lescroart turns his well-known characters Hardy, a divorced ex-marine and ex-cop who ends up starting his own law firm, and Glitsky, a black Jewish cop who becomes deputy chief of the Investigations Bureau, into bit players in *The Hunt Club*.

Lescroart tells *The Connection*, “When *The Motive* ended, I had to leave Hardy and Glitsky because, while my courtroom scenes were exciting, I just wanted there to be some action.”

The Hunt Club is a younger, fresher book with a sense of karma running through it. Wyatt Hunt was a foster child who grew up to join Child Protective Services, fighting evil. Angered by a stagnant bureaucracy, he quits and becomes an empathetic private investigator, recruiting some of the kids he rescued for the Hunt Club, a band of friends and colleagues who bend the rules.

“One of the things that got the book going for me was the epigram ‘You think you know yourself until things start happening, until you lose the insulation of normality,’” says Lescroart. The haunting quote by Robert Wilson in *A Small Death in Lisbon* sets the pace for Hunt, who taps into the “bubbling stuff” of his life once he joins the Criminal Investigation Division, saving kids.

“I always found that a challenging and wonder-

John Lescroart introduces a new character in *The Hunt Club*.

ful thing to write about: When you’re in bureaucracy, where do you draw the line between mercy and justice?” the author explains.

Lescroart shrugs aside any commonalities with Hunt, although, yes, he is a father, has been a camp counselor and has five younger siblings. The character Hunt is too new; they’re just getting acquainted. And they’ll get the chance to deepen their relationship—Wyatt Hunt is already in Lescroart’s next book. The author loves the fact that he now has another major player, along with Hardy and Glitsky, one who is younger and can work outside the system.

Lescroart owes his prolific career to “sticking to it.” Not very romantic, he allows, but he still has gorgeous moments of inspiration that see him crying or laughing out loud, or squirming in his chair as he writes. But, he says, by diligently “working out the problems on the page ... it’s turned into quite a wonderful romantic and inspiration-filled life, because the inspiration comes as you’re in the scenes, and you go, Oh, this is cool.”

When he hadn’t made it as a musician by his 30th birthday, he retired from music and at age 32 became a starving author. He worked at a variety of day jobs, not knowing that a regular guy from the suburbs could grow up to be a *New York Times* best-selling author. He made it by age 45, the trajectory no doubt harmed by his name. “I’m not whining,” he says, “my life is great ... but the name is still an issue.” It’s pronounced leh-SKWAH, and the author tells an illustrative anecdote.

Just a few months ago, Lescroart gave one of the best speeches of his life at the San Mateo Writers Conference; the vibe was right, he felt magical. Once off the stage, he overheard two guys talking about how great the speech was. One said he was going to buy all the author’s books. The other said, “What was his name again?” “John le Carré!” Lescroart says. “This name seems to be the *Shawshank Redemption* of names for thriller writers.”

Obviously, he can’t change his name, not 17 books into a career. And he downplays his music career—although he’s a singer/songwriter with three CDs to his credit.

Lescroart’s guiding light appears to be a conglomerate character who dwells in his mind, who “wants to do what’s right in the world.” That’s what he seeks in his life: “justice tempered with mercy.” And maybe a bit of karmic justice—that the world remembers his name. [E]

Diana Jordan (www.dianajordan.net) has interviewed hundreds of authors for the Associated Press Radio Network. Jordan reviews books and interviews authors for TV, the Web, radio and print.

The Costco Connection

The Hunt Club will be available in most warehouses on January 24. *The Motive* will be available in paperback in most warehouses in early January.

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