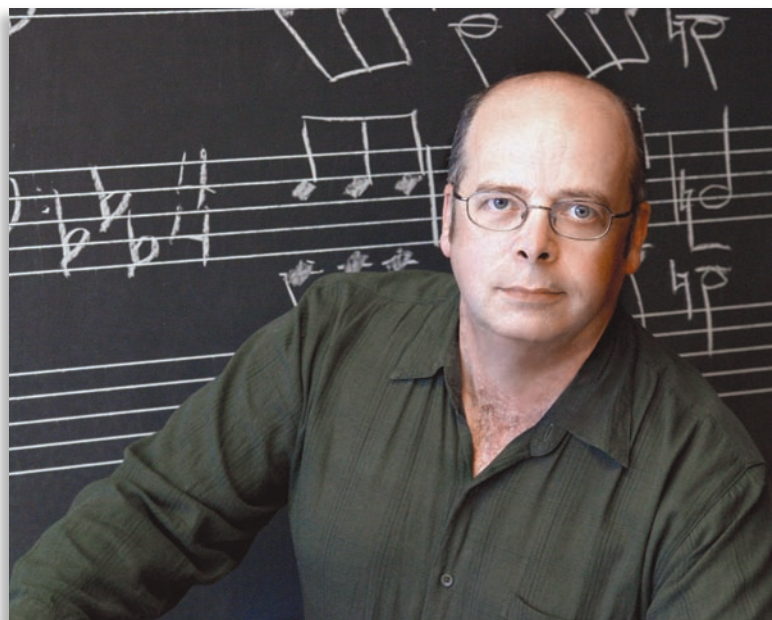


“Blechta has produced a hugely entertaining book. It’s packed with great characters, lots of action, a believable romance and great musical lore drawn from his own vast experience. If this is the future of crime writing in Canada, it’s a bright one indeed.”

— *Calgary Herald*



## RICK BLECHTA

The fact that Rick Blechta has been a musician all his life is clearly evident in his writing. He brings his musician’s viewpoint to crime writing in much the same way Dick Francis used his experiences in the horse racing world. All five Blechta novels published so far, *Knock on Wood* (1992), *The Lark Ascending* (1993), *Shooting Straight in the Dark* (2002), *Cemetery of the Nameless* (2005), and *When Hell Freezes Over* (2006) have been critically praised for the insider’s knowledge of the music world which he injects into his plots. Equally praised by the critics have been his engaging and memorable characters. *Cemetery of the Nameless* was a finalist in the Best Novel category of the Arthur Ellis Awards in 2006.

Rick began his professional music career at the tender age of fourteen and had eclectic tastes right from the start. He’s accomplished on several instruments, has been a “Rock Star”, conducted orchestras and even composed a well-received musical. His passion for music led him to emigrate to Canada from the U.S. in 1971 to complete a Bachelor of Music at McGill University. Immediately after graduation, Blechta formed one

of Canada’s finest progressive rock bands, Devotion, which went on to achieve legendary status across the country.

A growing family and disillusionment with the music business led him to the education field in 1977 for a one-year stint. *Twenty-three years later* he escaped, having taught instrumental music in Toronto schools and at the Royal Conservatory of Music.

For the past fifteen years Rick has been very active in Crime Writers of Canada and recently stepped down after two terms as its president. In 2000, the CWC presented him with the Derrick Murdoch Award in recognition of his contributions to the organization.

Recently, Rick’s begun performing again, playing trumpet in a big band and putting together a solo CD. He is married to prominent flutist and teacher, Vicki Blechta, and they have two sons, neither of whom are musicians or writers.

RendezVous Crime will be releasing Rick’s sixth crime novel, *A Case of You* in March 2008.

*“A Case of You is a bit of a departure for me. The two private detectives share an equal portion of the story with the musicians. And while music is an essential part of the narrative, it’s what happens off the bandstand and away from the instruments that’s most important. Oddly, too, the most important character hardly makes an appearance until the end, yet everyone who has read the book so far identifies with her most strongly.”*

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see side 2 for interview

# Rick Blechta interviewed about his sixth novel, *A Case of You*.

*Q: So you're delving into the jazz world in this novel. You're playing in jazz band at this point. Is there any connection?*

**A:** I've been planning this novel for some time. I suppose I could have made the main characters any sort of musician, though. Since I hadn't done anything yet with jazz, I figured it was time. This kind of music fits the story line, though, quite well. Jazz musicians tend to be rather intellectual, I find, or maybe thoughtful is a better word. My main character, Andy Curran, certainly reflects this trait.

*Q: (grins) So, like jazz, can we expect a lot of music and long-winded expositions?*

**A:** Not at all! In many ways this book does not have a heck of a lot of music in it. There's not a lot of musical things to explain, either, so my story line can really zip along. All of my novels tend to be more character-driven than anything else, anyway. *A Case of You* just takes that aspect further. Readers so far have found one character exceptionally interesting, and since she's the one I spent the greatest amount of time polishing, that's very gratifying indeed. Everyone who's read the manuscript has responded really strongly to what I've written. It goes beyond, "Gee, this is really good." They have a gut reaction to it beyond anything I've written so far.

*Q: Even though all your books are centred in the music world which give them all a similar feel, surely readers must be bugging you to create a series character.*

**A:** You can't imagine! It's not just readers; publishers are naturally very interested in their authors creating a viable series. For me, I don't think that would work. Musicians don't tend to get involved in murder and mayhem every day. I can go to the well once or twice with a character, but past that it strains credulity. However, I have come up with an interesting saw-off in this regard: why not move characters from one book to another, mix them up and see what happens? So *A Case* has one character from my third novel and another from my most recent, plus brand new ones. It made for a most interesting mix since two characters were already fully-formed and two had to be worked out along the way.

*Q: Your books always have something surprising in them. What is it this time out?*

**A:** The character most central to the plot hardly appears in the book! We meet her only via flashback until the last third of the story. One of my favourite movies is *The Third Man*. The central character in that, Harry Lime, doesn't appear until the movie is at least half over. You only hear about him

from others. I tried to do the same thing here, building up the mystique of the person until she walks on, and hopefully, totally blows you away as you find out more about her. She is *definitely* not what readers will expect her to be!

*Q: A Case of You is a very evocative title. Where does it come from and what does it mean in relation to the story?*

**A:** I had a tough time with this one. Usually I use titles of real songs or pieces and I originally wanted to call it *Someone to Watch Over Me*. Unfortunately, there was another book, a mystery no less, with the same title. Hmm... I kicked around a few other ideas, but could never settle on anything. Then someone played Joni Mitchell's "A Case of You", a song I was already very familiar with. It was one of those "duh" moments. Of course! The poetry of the lyrics is poignant and the melody absolutely gorgeous and it just fit what I was creating so well. In doing a little more research I found that Joni had rerecorded it 2000 with strings in a slowed-down, smoky and very wistful rendition that is really quite wonderful. For the rest of my writing of the book, I had that recording on in the background constantly. To my mind she is the best songwriter Canada has produced.

*Q: How much does your musical background help when you write your novels?*

**A:** Quite a lot, but not in the ways you might imagine. Sure, setting my novels with a musical background is a easier for me than to write about a hospital situation, for instance. I would have to research myself into the ground to do that! With music, if I don't already know it, I know someone who does.

But being a musician I'm used to looking at the underlying emotions behind things. Good musical performances should affect listeners on an emotional level. I have no time for intellectual music. It really doesn't say anything to me and I tend to lose interest quickly. A friend said recently that I must like opera because I write stories with music in them, and that's exactly right, but I love opera for the emotional content. For the same reason I like Otis Redding. Music or writing, it's all about emotion for me.

It's also telling that readers always want to talk to me about my characters. "Are you going to bring so-and-so back for another book?" That's very gratifying because I genuinely *like* my characters. They're the type of people I'd enjoy having over to dinner and getting to know. By the time I'm finished with a book, I'm generally quite sad because I won't get to hang around with these neat people anymore.

**Please visit [www.rickblechta.com](http://www.rickblechta.com) for more information and background on the author.**