

ENTERTAINMENT

Bestselling author David Baldacci talks '6:20 Man' series, Canton event and Netflix shows



Ed Balint

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Key Points

Bestselling author David Baldacci will be speaking on Nov. 18 at the Canton Palace Theatre as part of a Stark Library event.

The prolific author will be releasing a new book in "The 6:20 Man" series in November.

Baldacci's appearance at the Palace Theatre is already sold out.

Bestselling author David Baldacci once worried that a plot for one of his government thrillers might be too over the top.

"I thought I had just jumped the shark and I had gone too far," he said.

So he asked a friend who worked in the national security realm if he would read five pages, "and tell me if I've gone too far ... and whether I needed to pull it back or not."

The friend firmly refused to read the draft pages, Baldacci recalled. "He said, 'If you've imagined it, we've already done it.'"

"Now that was chilling," the author said with laughter. "So I've felt liberated since then. I could write about anything. And truth is always stranger than fiction

because fiction has to make sense. Truth by default doesn't have to make sense – it happens."

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Baldacci hasn't toned down his approach since he was given that advice, pushing the boundaries of his imagination in the new book, "To Die For," part of the "The 6:20 Man" series and scheduled for release on Nov. 12.

Baldacci will be promoting the novel when he speaks at 6:30 p.m. Nov. 18 at the Canton Palace Theatre as part of Stark Library's "Speaking of Books Author Series." Attending the event is free, but no more seats are available.

"To Die For" continues the story of Travis Devine, a former Army ranger who attempts to untangle a conspiracy involving government agencies and an orphaned 12-year-old girl and her uncle, who's accused of being a global criminal.

Baldacci said readers will be in for some surprises.

"At the end of the last '6:20' book, 'The Edge,' ... (Devine) had sort of an antagonist," he explained. "I called it the girl on the train, who tried to kill him in the beginning of 'The Edge,' and then at the end ... she rears her head again.

"So he heads out to the Pacific Northwest thinking he can probably lose her. That doesn't turn out to be the case, but the twist is you expect one thing to happen, and in this book, something totally different happens. And it's plausible, but you're not really going to expect to see it."

Baldacci has been a prolific author since publishing his first book in 1996, "Absolute Power," which was retold on the big screen in a movie starring Clint Eastwood. Scores of bestsellers have followed, with his books published in more than 80 countries.

During a recent phone interview, the Virginia native chatted about the new book, as well as the depth of research he does for each work, what books will be on TV or film, and another upcoming novel that he describes as a "bucket list" project.

Coming up with new book ideas

Asked if it gets easier or harder to come up with new ideas, Baldacci said "every book is a challenge."

There's no mold or formula. "Everything is a unique experience," he said.

Locations change with each story. "To Die For" is set in Seattle and parts of Washington state.

"I kind of like that, putting (the lead character) into more of an urban setting in Seattle, and then moving him into the rural areas out in Washington state," Baldacci said. "It really put him through his paces."

Loyal readers

Baldacci is a brand in the book world, selling 150 million copies and cultivating a passionate fan base.

Books have helped readers get through difficult times and deaths of a loved ones, he said.

"I had one writer of mine who's a really good friend," Baldacci said. "He emailed me and tells me that his dad was my biggest fan. He enjoyed my books more than his son's books. And he had passed away with my latest book on his nightstand, and the bookmark where he was like three-quarters of the way through."

Baldacci's research included parachute training

Baldacci's books often immerse readers into a shadowy world of national security risks and the inner-workings of federal government.

The level of detail and realism are a product of extensive research, including a trip to the former Fort Benning in Georgia for a past novel.

"I spent three days down there getting my butt kicked from one end of the base to the other," he said. "Trying to do everything that they do, so I could not just have book knowledge about it but functional knowledge about what it's like to fire weapons ... or do parachute jumping and all that."

He laughed at the memory.

"There were like 40 or 50 paratroopers there," he said. "And 49 bet against me jumping (from a practice tower), but I proved them wrong."

Baldacci's books coming to Netflix, Amazon Prime Video

Within the last 18 months, Baldacci has sold the rights to five book series to streaming platforms or networks.

Netflix has plans for the "6:20 Man" series. Amazon Prime Video is "very high" about the "Memory Man" series. Baldacci also expects "The Camel Club" series to be produced by NBCUniversal.

"They all have showrunners and writers attached to them," he said. "So there's a lot of stuff going on, and some of the stuff should be (on the) screen next year. It's pretty exciting. It was like a boom."

'Strangers in Time' is set in World War II

"Strangers in Time" is a new novel set for release in April.

The story takes place in London in 1944 in the throes of World War II.

The novel "is about three people from three very different walks of life who the war has impacted," he said. "They've also lost everything, and in order to survive the war, they have to come together and work together in order to get through this horrific experience."

Reach Ed at ebalint@gannett.com. On X (formerly Twitter) @ebalintREP and Instagram at [ed_balint](https://www.instagram.com/ed_balint).