

# Unsung Heroes

## *The boys (and girls) in blue*

---

### *Suspended Sentences*

---

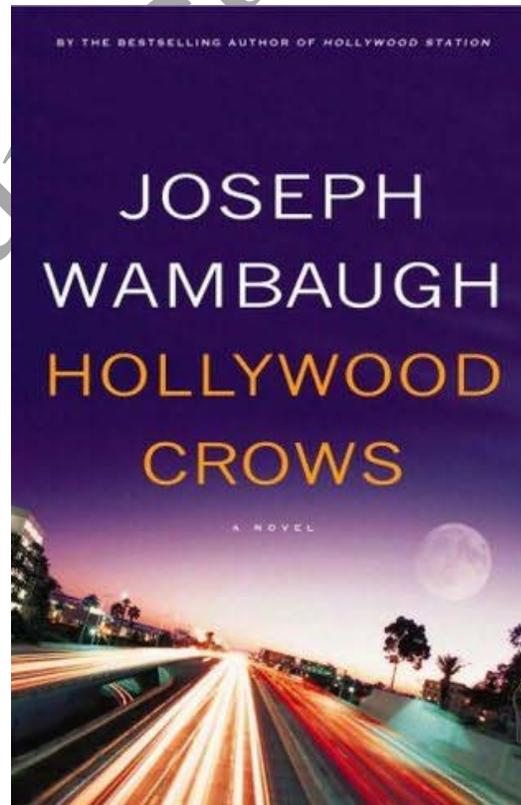
by Jim Napier

**T**hey are on the front lines: the uniformed police officers who are among the First Responders when our lives are at risk. And daily they risk their own lives to help others.

I admit to some bias on the subject. My youngest daughter is a state trooper based in New England. In the course of her duties she has run into burning houses before the firefighters have arrived, to rescue young children home alone; she has arrested – sometimes singlehandedly when backup hasn't yet appeared – drug dealers and interstate car thieves; and she has jumped into a lake in winter to prevent a mentally disturbed man from drowning. Together with her K-9 partner she has tracked and recovered a young woman lost in the woods in the depths of night; and she has taken countless numbers of drunk drivers off the roads before they can bring tragedy to someone's life. As almost always the first on a crime scene, uniformed cops are responsible for securing the scene and identifying possible witnesses, and preserving vital evidence for other members of the investigating team.

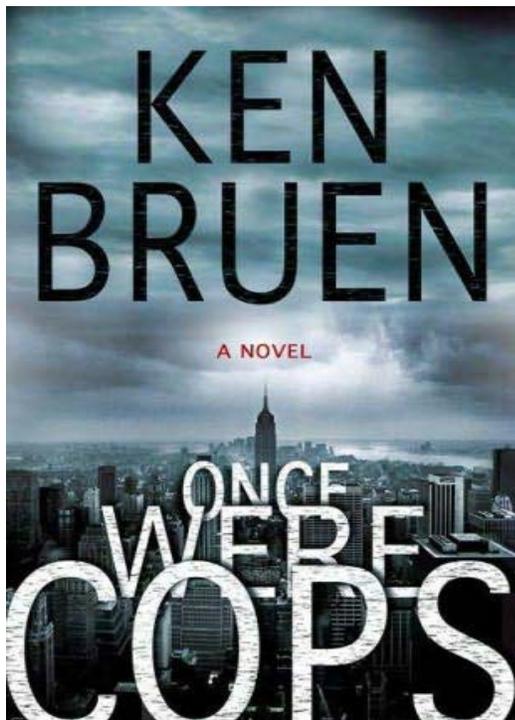
Of course, the police are not always seen in such a benevolent light. These are, after all, the same people who cause us a moment of apprehension, or even irritation, when they pull us over for a minor traffic infraction, or ticket our questionably-parked car. At such times

we would be more than human if we paused to acknowledge their contribution to our lives. So spare a moment for the men and women in blue: this week's column is devoted to just that, a half-dozen tales that are about crime, but also about the uniformed officers whose own lives are inextricably drawn into the cases they work.



**Joseph Wambaugh**  
*Hollywood Crows*  
(Little, Brown & Co., 2008)

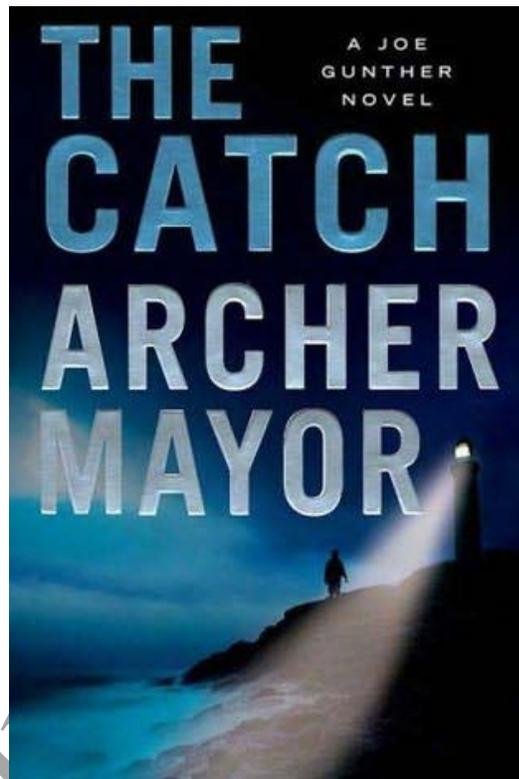
The author of more than a dozen police thrillers, Joseph Wambaugh has penned a saga of two LAPD officers caught up in the schemes of the wife of a strip-club owner, both of whom want to be rid of the other. Factor in a pair of suntanned surfer cops known as Flotsam and Jetsam, along with women officers in the squad, and you have a pot destined to boil over. Informed by his own experiences as an LA cop, Wambaugh's writing is assured, convincing, and always entertaining.



**Ken Bruen**  
*Once Were Cops*  
(St. Martin's Minotaur, 2008)

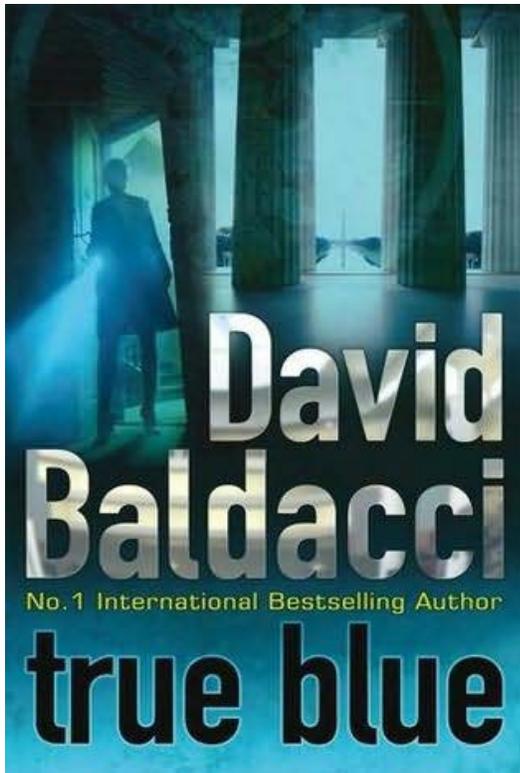
At the other end of the country, award-winning author Ken Bruen serves up a tale of Michael O'Shea, a member of the Garda, or Irish police, who journeys to New York City as part of an international police exchange program. For Michael it is a dream come true, but he finds himself paired with a borderline psycho who likes to bludgeon his opponents. When he learns his partner is

also in bed with the Mob, O'Shea's dream quickly becomes a nightmare. An edgy, hard-boiled saga for our times.



**Archer Mayor**  
*The Catch*  
(St. Martin's Minotaur, 2008)

Crime fiction comes close to home in the Vermont-based novels of Archer Mayor. An investigator for Vermont's Chief Medical Department and a Deputy Sheriff, Mayor has penned no fewer than nineteen novels featuring Vermont police officer Joe Gunther. In *The Catch* Gunther investigates the death of a fellow officer, and finds it has close ties to a major drug-running operation extending from New York State to the coast of Maine. An engrossing series by one of the best in the genre.



**David Baldacci**

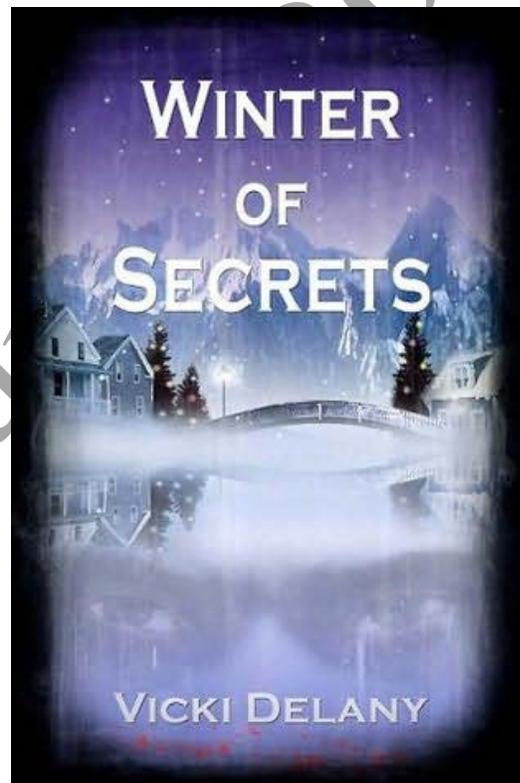
*True Blue*

(Grand Central Publishing, 2009)

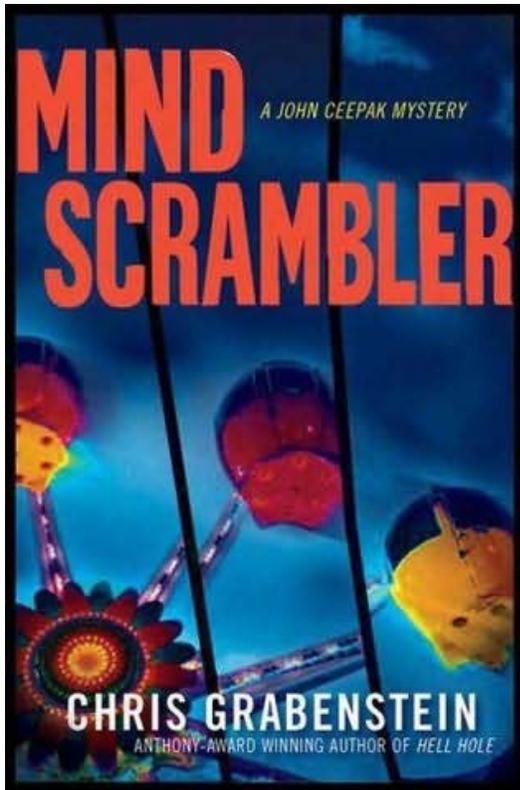
David Baldacci is a New-York-Times bestselling author of eighteen political and police thrillers. In *True Blue* he combines both elements in the tale of “Mace” Perry, a hot-shot cop on the D.C. police force who was framed for a crime and spent two years in prison. Now back on the street, she’s trying to rebuild her life. Just when Mace thinks things are falling into place, a lawyer friend discovers the body of a partner in his firm. Mace gets caught up in what seems to be a simple case of homicide; but nothing in Washington is simple, and before it’s over the investigation will pry the lid off of both public and private lives in the nation’s capital. Baldacci can always be counted on for a well-crafted, topical tale.

**Vicki Delany**  
*Winter of Secrets*  
(Poisoned Pen Press, 2009)

Readers with prodigious memories might recall that I reviewed Vicki Delany’s debut novel featuring Constable Molly Brown, *In the Shadow of the Glacier*, just last year. Set in the scenic mountains of British Columbia near the Alberta border, Molly struggles to gain respect in the small town where she grew up. In this, the third novel in the series, she finds herself investigating



what seems to be a tragic accident: a car carrying two young people has careened off the road and plunged through the ice, and its occupants are dead. But the autopsy reveals it was no accident, and as Molly digs into the fast-paced lives of the victims, she also has to contend with a stalker who has been released from jail and is looking to get even. An engaging protagonist in a unique setting.



**Chris Grabenstein**

***Mind Scrambler***

**(Minotaur Books, 2009)**

The latest installment of the award-winning series starring odd-couple police officers John Ceepak (a by-the-book former Marine) and his laid-back partner, Danny Boyle. When the pair travel to Atlantic City to take a routine deposition from a former con, it seems like a walk in the park; but all is not as it seems. John Ceepak is being yanked around by his father, who is in prison and seeking parole, and Ceepak is doing his best to keep him there. Then Danny discovers that a former girlfriend, Katie Landry, is working for a casino magician named Richard Rock. When Katie is found strangled some six hours later, the apparent victim of some kinky sexual foreplay, Danny doesn't buy it, and he vows to turn over some rocks of his own to get to the bottom of things. Humor-

ous and fast-paced, with an entertaining and original pair of crime-fighters.

Jim Napier can be reached at  
[jim.napier52@gmail.com](mailto:jim.napier52@gmail.com)

© Jim Napier 2009