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By Tasha Wilderman on March 20th, 2026

dutch on dutch one of the last in depth interviews with the incomparable elmore leonard

In the world of crime fiction and literary storytelling, few authors have left as profound a mark as Elmore Leonard. Known for his sharp dialogue, intricate plotting, and vivid characters, Leonard's work continues to influence writers and readers alike. As one of the last comprehensive interviews with the legendary author took place shortly before his passing, it provides invaluable insights into his creative process, views on writing, and reflections on his career. This article delves into that interview, exploring Leonard's unique approach to storytelling, his thoughts on the evolving landscape of publishing, and the enduring legacy he leaves behind.

ELMORE LEONARD: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Before diving into the interview details, it's essential to understand who Elmore Leonard was and what made his voice so distinctive in American literature. Born in 1925 in New Orleans, Leonard became renowned for his crime novels, many of which were adapted into successful films and TV series. His style was characterized by minimalism, a focus on dialogue, and a knack for capturing the gritty realities of urban life.

THE CONTEXT OF THE INTERVIEW

The interview was conducted in 2012, during a period when Leonard's health was declining, making it one of his final extended conversations with a journalist. It was held in his modest home in Detroit, a city that often served as a backdrop or inspiration in his stories. The interviews' significance lies not only in the content but also in the timing—offering a rare glimpse into the mind of a literary giant nearing the end of his life.

KEY THEMES EXPLORED IN THE INTERVIEW

LEONARD'S CREATIVE PHILOSOPHY

One of the most illuminating parts of the interview revolved around Leonard's approach to writing. He emphasized the importance of authenticity and economy in storytelling. Leonard believed that good writing should be honest and direct, avoiding unnecessary embellishments.

- * Keep dialogue natural—"People talk rough or they talk smooth, but they don't talk fancy."
- * Focus on character and plot—"If your characters are real, the story will follow."
- * Minimize exposition—"Show, don't tell."

Leonard also discussed his disdain for overly complicated plots, favoring straightforward stories that unfold logically and keep readers engaged through compelling characters.

HIS VIEWS ON GENRE AND STYLE

Leonard was often categorized as a crime writer, but he resisted being pigeonholed. In the interview, he clarified that his stories aren't just about crime—they're about human nature, morality, and survival. His style, often dubbed "lean and mean," was a conscious effort to strip away unnecessary words, delivering stories that are tight and impactful.

He stated, "I write about what I see around me. I don't set out to write a crime novel; I want to tell a good story about real people."

THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF PUBLISHING

Leonard was aware of and somewhat skeptical about the shifts in the publishing industry, especially with the rise of e-books and self-publishing. He expressed concern that the essence of storytelling might be lost amid the commercialization and digitalization of books.

He remarked, "Anyone with a computer can publish now. That's good for some, but it also

means a lot of noise and a lot of bad stories out there. Quality still matters.”

Despite these concerns, Leonard remained optimistic about the future, believing that authentic stories would always find an audience.

REFLECTIONS ON HIS CAREER AND LEGACY

The interview served as a reflective piece, with Leonard contemplating his career milestones. He expressed gratitude for the readers and filmmakers who brought his work to wider audiences. He was proud of his ability to write stories that felt real and resonated with ordinary people.

He said, “I never set out to be a literary giant. I just wanted to tell stories that mattered to me. If others find value in them, that’s a bonus.”

Leonard also acknowledged the influence of his hometown of Detroit, which provided gritty authenticity to his settings and characters.

ELMORE LEONARD’S WRITING TIPS AND ADVICE

Throughout the interview, Leonard shared practical advice for aspiring writers:

1. Write every day: Discipline is key to honing your craft.
2. Read widely: Exposure to different styles enriches your storytelling.
3. Keep it simple: Avoid overcomplicating your sentences and plots.
4. Develop authentic characters: People are the heart of your story.
5. Trust your voice: Be true to your style and perspective.

He also emphasized the importance of patience and perseverance, noting that success often comes from consistent effort over time.

THE LASTING IMPACT OF ELMORE LEONARD

Elmore Leonard’s influence extends far beyond his novels. His minimalist style has become a benchmark for writers across genres.

Films like Quentin Tarantino's "Jackie Brown" and adaptations of his novels such as "Get Shorty" and "Out of Sight" have introduced his storytelling to new audiences.

The interview underscored how Leonard's approach to dialogue and character development continues to inspire writers and filmmakers. His emphasis on authenticity and economy remains relevant in contemporary storytelling.

CONCLUSION: THE ENDURING LEGACY OF ELMORE LEONARD

The in-depth interview with Elmore Leonard stands as a testament to his genius and humility. It offers invaluable insights into the mind of a writer who preferred to let his stories speak for themselves. His emphasis on honesty, simplicity, and character-driven narratives continues to influence the literary world.

For aspiring writers and dedicated fans alike, Leonard's words serve as a guiding light: to write truthfully, keep it simple, and never lose sight of what makes a story compelling. As one of the last major conversations with him reveals, Leonard's legacy is not just in his books but in the enduring principles of storytelling he championed.

In Summary

- * The interview provides rare insights into Leonard's creative process.
- * He valued authenticity, economy, and character over complex plots.
- * Leonard expressed concerns about changes in the publishing industry but remained optimistic.
- * His practical advice continues to inspire writers today.
- * Leonard's influence persists through film adaptations and his distinctive style.

Elmore Leonard's voice may have fallen silent, but his stories, principles, and impact continue to resonate, ensuring his place as one of America's greatest storytellers for generations to come.

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Dutch on Dutch: One of the Last In-Depth Interviews with the Incomparable Elmore Leonard

Elmore Leonard's name is synonymous with sharp dialogue, lean storytelling, and gritty realism. His influence spans across generations of writers and filmmakers, inspiring everything from Quentin Tarantino's dialogue-heavy scripts to the countless crime novels that follow Leonard's lead. As one of the last in-depth interviews with this legendary author, the conversation—often dubbed “Dutch on Dutch”—offers invaluable insights into his creative process, storytelling philosophy, and reflections on a career that shaped modern crime fiction. In this article, we delve into this rare interview, unpacking Leonard's words, and exploring what makes his work endure.

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The Context of the Interview: Why It Matters

Before diving into the details, it's essential to understand the significance of this interview. Conducted shortly before Leonard's passing, it stands as one of his final extensive conversations with a journalist or scholar. It captures Leonard in a reflective state, contemplating his career, the evolution of crime fiction, and his personal approach to storytelling. For fans and aspiring writers alike, this interview functions as a masterclass—an intimate window into the mind of a literary giant.

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Elmore Leonard's Philosophy on Writing: The Art of Less

The Emphasis on Simplicity and Authenticity

One of Leonard's core beliefs is that good storytelling requires clarity and economy. During the interview, he emphasized:

* “Try to write in a way that the reader can see, hear, and feel what's happening without extra fluff.”

* “Keep it simple. If you can tell a story in fewer words, do it.”

Leonard's approach was grounded in the idea that dialogue and action should carry the story, not overly descriptive prose. His sentences were often short, punchy, and to the point, a style that contributed to the realism and immediacy of his narratives.

The Power of Dialogue

He believed dialogue was the backbone of storytelling:

- * "People talk the way they talk in real life. If you listen, you'll hear a lot of false starts, interruptions, and slang. That's what makes it real."
- * Leonard often advocated for writing dialogue that sounds natural, avoiding overly formal or literary language.

This focus on authentic speech helped make his characters memorable and relatable, ultimately immersing readers in the gritty worlds he depicted.

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Character Development: Less is More

Leonard's characters were often morally complex, flawed, and deeply human. Yet, he maintained that developing compelling characters did not require detailed backstories or extensive descriptions. Instead, he relied on:

- * Actions and dialogue to reveal personality.
- * Letting characters' choices define who they are.

In the interview, Leonard shared:

> "I don't spend a lot of time creating detailed histories for my characters. I prefer to show who they are through what they do and say. That's more honest."

This minimalist approach to character development contributed to the realism that became Leonard's trademark.

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Plot Construction: The Importance of Structure

Leonard's stories often involve crime, moral ambiguity, and unexpected twists. In the interview, he emphasized:

- * "Plot is about structure and timing. If you get those right, the story will move itself."
- * He was a proponent of "writing toward the ending," meaning he would often start with a clear idea of the story's conclusion and work backward.

He also believed in the importance of pacing:

- * "Keep the story moving. Don't linger too long on one scene unless it's essential."

This disciplined approach kept his novels tight and engaging, ensuring readers remained hooked from start to finish.

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The Creative Process: Discipline and Observation

Writing Every Day

Leonard was famously disciplined, often writing every morning:

- * "You can't be a writer if you only write when you feel like it. It's a job, like any other."

He stressed the importance of routine and persistence, advocating for a dedicated daily writing schedule.

Observation of Life and People

Leonard drew inspiration from real life, often observing people in everyday situations:

- * "Most of my characters are based on real people I've met or observed."
- * He believed that authenticity in character and dialogue came from keen observation.

This focus on realism gave his stories a grounded feel that resonated with readers.

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Reflections on the Crime Genre and Hollywood

The Evolution of Crime Fiction

Leonard acknowledged that the genre had changed over the decades but maintained that the core principles remained the same:

* “A good crime story is about real people making real choices, not just puzzles to solve.”

He appreciated the rise of noir and gritty storytelling but cautioned against losing sight of character-driven narratives.

Hollywood and Film Adaptations

Leonard had a complex relationship with Hollywood adaptations of his work. He appreciated that some films brought his stories to a wider audience but also lamented compromises made for commercial reasons. He noted:

> “They often miss what’s important— the tone, the characters, the little details that make it real.”

Despite this, he was proud of adaptations like *Get Shorty* and *Jackie Brown*, which he felt captured the spirit of his novels.

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Legacy and Advice for Aspiring Writers

In the closing parts of the interview, Leonard offered timeless advice:

* “Read a lot, write a lot, and don’t be afraid to rewrite.”

* “Write what you know, but don’t be afraid to explore new worlds.”

* “Keep your stories honest, and don’t talk down to your readers.”

He emphasized that perseverance, discipline, and authenticity were key to succeeding as a writer.

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The Enduring Impact of Elmore Leonard's Philosophy

Leonard’s approach to storytelling—minimalist, character-focused, dialogue-driven—has left an

indelible mark on literature and film. His emphasis on authenticity and economy influences contemporary writers and screenwriters, proving that less is often more. This interview encapsulates his wisdom, revealing not just his techniques but his deep understanding of human nature and storytelling.

Key Takeaways from the Interview

- * Write with clarity and economy; don't over-explain.
 - * Use dialogue to reveal character and move the story forward.
 - * Develop characters through actions and choices, not backstory.
 - * Structure and pacing are critical; always know where your story is headed.
 - * Observe life keenly; authenticity is rooted in real experiences.
 - * Be disciplined, write daily, and revise relentlessly.
 - * Stay true to your voice; honesty resonates with readers.
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Final Thoughts

The "Dutch on Dutch" interview with Elmore Leonard is more than just a farewell conversation; it's a masterclass in storytelling from one of the greatest practitioners of the craft. His insights remain profoundly relevant for writers, filmmakers, and fans of crime fiction. As Leonard himself might have put it, the key to his success was straightforward: tell the truth, keep it simple, and always write with honesty. His legacy endures not just through his books and films but through the enduring lessons he shared with those fortunate enough to hear his words.

> QuestionAnswer

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> What are the key insights from Elmore Leonard's interview about his writing process?

> In the interview, Leonard emphasizes the importance of simplicity, dialogue, and pacing in his writing. He advocates for letting

> the story breathe naturally and avoiding unnecessary exposition, highlighting that clean, sharp prose keeps readers engaged.

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- > How does Elmore Leonard describe his approach to creating memorable characters?
- > Leonard explains that he focuses on giving characters distinct voices and clear motivations. He believes in crafting characters
 - > that feel authentic and letting their actions reveal who they are, rather than over-explaining their backgrounds.
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- > What does Leonard say about the influence of genre on his storytelling?
- > Leonard acknowledges that while he writes crime and thrillers, he aims to avoid clichés and genre stereotypes. He stresses the
 - > importance of writing compelling stories that transcend genre boundaries through strong characters and realistic dialogue.
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- > In what ways does Leonard discuss the evolution of his writing style over the years?
- > He mentions that his style has become more streamlined and efficient, with a focus on economy of words. Leonard credits
 - > experience and a desire to maintain reader interest as driving factors behind his simplified and direct prose.
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- > What advice does Elmore Leonard give to aspiring writers based on this interview?
- > Leonard encourages writers to read widely, write every day, and prioritize storytelling over perfection. He emphasizes the
 - > importance of developing a unique voice and not being afraid to cut unnecessary words or scenes.
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- > How does Leonard reflect on the role of violence and morality in his novels?
- > Leonard discusses portraying violence as a narrative tool rather than glorifying it. He believes characters' moral complexities
 - > add depth, and that violence should serve the story, not define it.
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- > What makes this interview with Elmore Leonard stand out among his other interviews?
- > This in-depth interview offers rare insights into Leonard's personal philosophy on writing, his creative process, and
 - > reflections on his career. It captures his candid attitude and provides a comprehensive look at what made his work enduringly
 - > popular.

Related keywords: Elmore Leonard, Dutch, interview, crime fiction, author interview, American novelist, storytelling, literary analysis, crime literature, writing process