

The Booklist Interview

Scott Brick

Actor, writer, and screenwriter Scott Brick has found fame as an accomplished reader of audiobooks. To date, the Audie Award-winning narrator has recorded more than 200 titles. In a relaxed conversational style, he spoke with *Booklist* from his home in California.

BKL: *How did you become a narrator, and what title put you on the map?*

BRICK: I graduated from UCLA with a theater degree, and I wanted to narrate audiobooks, but it's a very difficult business to get into. About four years ago, a friend of mine got me an audition at a company that is no longer in business. I read a couple of short stories, and it just took off from there. Nelson DeMille's *The Lion's Game* was my breakthrough book. It was the first time one of my titles hit the retail shelves, and people began paying attention.

BKL: *Do you read the book before you narrate it?*

BRICK: For the most part, yes. I think it's imperative that you know what's going on, particularly with a whodunit. I need to know "whodunit," and I have to be conscious that the listener doesn't. When there's a surprise ending, seeds have been dropped all the way through. When there is a line that's very ominous or portentous, you need to make sure you read it more as a throwaway because the audience shouldn't know "whodunit" yet. Sometimes I just can't read a book all the way through because there are not enough hours in the day. If it's nonfiction, sometimes I narrate it cold.



BKL: *I would imagine if you are familiar with a series, you have a little more leeway with your preparation time.*

BRICK: Yes, there are a number of shortcuts you can take, but sometimes it becomes problematic. I did a Tom Clancy novel a couple of years ago, and I was given it in parcels. There was a female character from Brazil, and I'm reading her in a Brazilian accent. Some 300 pages into it, I receive the last installment and find out she's a Brazilian who was raised in Britain. We wound up re-recording the book.

BKL: *Do you do your own research, or do the production companies do that for you?*

BRICK: It's very collaborative. We just did two lengthy biographies that had hundreds of real people mentioned in them. Somebody out there is going to know how to pronounce all the names. So the producers went above and beyond in researching the names. I've done three Dune novels, and in those instances, I get on the phone with the author's son, who spent hours giving me pronunciations for 600 to 700 words that don't exist—words his father made up.

BKL: *Do you listen to audiobooks?*

BRICK: I do listen to audiobooks, and I try to get as wide a variety as I can. I like to know what other narrators do because I want to expand my craft. When everyone was telling me that Jim Dale was the end-all and be-all, I wanted to hear what he does. I also listen to others, such as David Warner, a great British actor who is the first to tell you he doesn't "do" voices. He does what is called "coloring," where you make words like *bloody* and *vengeful* sound like more than they are.

BKL: *You have a gift for accents.*

BRICK: I appreciate you saying that. I find it very easy to do British or Hispanic accents, but some, like Russian, are more complex. German is also easy for me, but when doing it with a Russian accent, I can't go back to German. So I have to stop and consult my resource, a CD of Robert Blumenfeld speaking in 52 accents.

BKL: *You're probably asked this a lot, but do you have a favorite title that you've read?*

BRICK: I can narrow it down to three. In order of recording them, the first was *What Makes Sammy Run?* I got to read the entire novel in a character voice, which I had never done before. Then I would say *Mystic River*. As we were recording it, Clint Eastwood bought the movie rights, and I thought, "Wow, what a great movie that's going to be." Another one I have to rave about is *The Book of Joe* by Jonathan Tropper. It's poignant and lovely yet wildly funny. I don't think I've ever laughed harder recording a book.

—Interview conducted by Mary Frances Wilkens