



**Gillespie Field Groove** by Corey Lynn Fayman

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### **1. Gillespie Field Groove is your fifth Rolly Waters mystery. How does this book continue the traditions established by other novels in the series?**

There are three thematic elements I like to keep going in the series. One is what you might call the 'family values' element. As previous readers know, Rolly lives in Hillcrest next door to his mother, who rents her "granny flat" to him at a substantial discount. That's still the case in *GFG* but there's some changes afoot that suggest their relationship may be in flux. Secondly, there's a musical element in each book. In *GFG* Rolly's client hires him to find a missing Jimi Hendrix Stratocaster guitar her deceased father bequeathed to her. Rolly's investigation gets into some of the details of collectible guitar valuation, as well as uncovering some of the predatory aspects of the music business. The third thematic element in each book is a backstory that comes to light as Rolly works on his present-day investigation. His cases always uncover some sins from the past and show how they've affected people's relationships in the present, which also gives Rolly some perspective on his own complicated history.

### **2. Why did you make music such an integral part of the Rolly Waters stories?**

I was a musician for many years, playing clubs, bars and social events, so it was kind of natural choice. I didn't see many similar books out there. As a musician, you cross paths with a wide variety of people during your career, from street addicts to high society matrons. You learn how to interact with all sorts of folks. I thought those kinds of skills would be great for a private eye.

Working as a musician all those years, I collected a lot of good stories and dealt with a lot of eccentric characters. The business has its own unique rhythms and idiosyncrasies and there's at least one person or incident in every book that's based on a real situation I encountered. Many of the characters are based on people I met in the business. My band's drummer did get mugged after a gig. I found out after writing the first book that one of my musician friends had a similar living arrangement to the one Rolly has with his mother, in almost the same location. That was great validation for the character!

### **3. Tell us more about how you came up with the Rolly Waters character**

I'm not sure why I chose to make Rolly a guitar player, except that guitar players are often the most visible performers in blues and rock'n'roll bands, the stars. They are intrinsically more dramatic, I think, than most keyboard players. I got to observe a lot of guitar players over the years, so I probably also wanted some sort of symbolic revenge against those damn show-offs. When I started the first book, I knew I wanted to avoid private eye clichés. Making my detective a guitar player seemed like a good place to start.

Also, in order to avoid some of those private eye clichés, I decided that Rolly wouldn't carry a gun. He's not physically intimidating. He lives next door to his mother. The characters he encounters tend to underestimate him because he's so cool and self-effacing. His ability to interact with almost anyone in a non-threatening way is his superpower. And the tenacity he needed to master his instrument is the same quality that makes him such a dedicated and resilient investigator.

#### **4. You highlight different parts of San Diego County in each book. How did you select the location for Gillespie Field Groove? What kind of research did you do?**

Choosing San Diego as the location for the books was a decision I made early on, and I've really enjoyed making my hometown the secondary star of the series. The first four books went from one end of the county to another, with La Jolla and North County in *Black's Beach Shuffle*, south county in *Border Field Blues*, the eastern mountains and beyond in *Desert City Diva* and then west to San Diego Bay and the Coronado Islands in *Ballast Point Breakdown*. For *Gillespie Field Groove*, I wanted to locate it someplace more central and a bit less exotic than I'd used in the previous books. Gillespie Airfield in El Cajon intrigued me, so I did some reconnaissance, driving around the area. It's a small municipal airport and has a café that sits right at the edge of the airfield, with a gate that allows access to and from the parked planes. It's also surrounded by industrial parks and warehouses, which seemed ripe for some illicit business as part of the plot. Taylor Guitars is nearby, as is a well-known recording studio. Things started to fall into place after that.

#### **5. Was there any specific inspiration for Gillespie Field Groove?**

I got my original idea from listening to "Hendrix in the West" a live album by Jimi Hendrix which includes several recordings made at the San Diego Sports Arena in 1969. The rock critic Robert Christgau called the version of *Red House* recorded there "definitive". There was also a riot outside the concert that night involving the police and a group of kids that were trying to get in. That intrigued me. I started imagining some of people who might have been there and how they might have interacted over the years. A "lost" Hendrix guitar seemed like a good hook to hang the whole story on. The concert plays a smaller part in the book than I'd originally imagined but it's still key to the story. I posted something about the concert on Facebook recently and was surprised by the response. There's quite a few San Diegans still around who attended, and remembered, that concert.

#### **6. Will there be another Rolly Waters mystery? What else are you working on?**

I'm putting Rolly on hold for a bit, though I do have an idea that involves Wild Man Fischer, who made one album, produced by Frank Zappa, in the late 1960s. He lived in a flophouse in downtown San Diego later in life, near some clubs where I used to play. I've also done some

outlining on a potential prequel for Rolly, before he was a private investigator and before he was sober. It's based on a classical music festival I worked for many years ago that was a bit of a catastrophe.

I will have another novel out soon, the first one that's not part of the Rolly series. It's a historical mystery set in La Jolla, California in the 1950s, about a young cop and his family. It's built around the now defunct Del Charro Hotel, a luxury resort in La Jolla which was a getaway for the rich and powerful in the 1950s and 60s. Raymond Chandler, J. Edgar Hoover and Zsa Zsa Gabor play key roles in the novel and it includes a lot of local history as well. Chandler moved to La Jolla in the late 1940s and died there in 1959. I had a lot of fun writing Chandler's character and imagining his relationship to this young cop.

I've also completed a 19th century historical mystery, which I'm shopping to agents. It's written from the point of view of a Chinese-Scottish orphan growing up in San Diego in 1891. The action takes place during the week of the first presidential visit to San Diego and includes many authentic historical figures, including Wyatt Earp and Clara Foltz, the first woman to practice law in California.

## **7. What or who inspired you to become an author?**

From the time I was a little kid I've always been a big reader. I was always writing things—stories, poetry, lyrics. Then I got serious and finished my B.A. in Creative Writing/Poetry from UCLA. But I also had a strong interest in music, so I spent my first fifteen years after college playing and performing music, as well as writing songs and working as a theatrical sound designer. It was after I stopped performing and began working for a music-related internet company called MP3.com that I first started thinking about writing a novel. The idea of a guitar-playing detective popped into my head. I started spending my lunch hours jotting down notes about the character and what might happen to him. It was a great stress reliever for a very stressful job, and I ended up with a lot of good notes! After I left the company, I made time to work more seriously on my writing and finished the first Rolly Waters novel, *Black's Beach Shuffle*. I reclaimed my creative side and I've never looked back.

## **8. What's your favorite thing about writing?**

One thing I've discovered is that creative work is essential to my own sense of self. It's energizing and important to me as a daily practice. After quitting the music business, I needed something to fill the void and it turned out to be writing. Any day I put together a few good pages is a great day. Even on the days I only manage to write a couple of lousy pages it makes me feel pretty good. I don't want to get too mystical about it, but when creativity takes over, it feels like you're tapping into something bigger than yourself. It's a problem-solving process, too. You're fixing problems every day (well most days) and that gives me a sense of satisfaction. The world might be blowing up all around you, but at least you managed to get that little bit of a story down on the page.