



Being Cool: The Work of Elmore Leonard

Charles J. Rzepka

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Widely known as the crime fiction writer whose work led to the movies *Get Shorty* and *Out of Sight*, Elmore Leonard had a special knack for creating "cool" characters. In *Being Cool*, Charles J. Rzepka looks at what makes the dope-dealers, bookies, grifters, financial advisors, talent agents, shady attorneys, hookers, models, and crooked cops of Leonard's world cool. They may be nefarious, but they are also confident, skilled, and composed and cope without effort or thought. And they are good at what they do. Taking being cool as the highway through Leonard's life and works, Rzepka finds plenty of byways to explore along the way.

Rzepka delineates the stages and patterns that characterize Leonard's creative evolution. Like jazz greats, he forged an individual writing style immediately recognizable for its voice and rhythm, including his characters' rat-a-tat recitations, curt backhands, and ragged trains of thought. Rzepka draws on more than twelve hours of personal interviews with Leonard and applies what he learned to his close analysis of the writer's long life and prodigious output: 45 published novels, 39 published and unpublished short stories, and numerous essays written over the course of six decades.

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