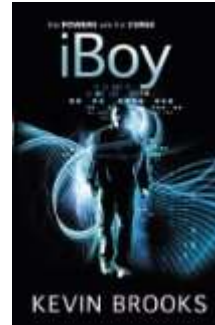


Kevin Brooks: Q and A on his new book *i-Boy*



What gave you the idea of embedding parts of an i-phone in Tom's head? Was that the first spark of the story or were you already thinking about a gang culture story?

I was talking to someone at a book fair in Athens about Greek Gods and Greek myths, and this led to a discussion about superheroes in general, and we realised that there haven't really been any contemporary British superheroes ... and after that I couldn't stop thinking about the idea of a young, contemporary, British superhero. And when I started imagining what kind of powers such a superhero might have, the iPhone idea just came to me in the proverbial flash. What could be more contemporary, more 21st century, than the powers of an iPhone?

How easy was it researching the neurological detail and then simplifying complex ideas for the novel? Where did you do the research?

Although I did a fair amount of research for the book (talking to neuroscientists, technology experts, and so on) I didn't let myself get too bogged down in the technological/neurological details, because iBoy is first and foremost a story, not an academic paper, and furthermore it's a superhero story ... so it's allowed to stretch the truth a little!

i-boy is about some of the worst aspects of our culture - did you speak to boys and girls in this culture and did you meet any girls who had undergone what Lucy went through?

No, I didn't speak to anyone directly – I think that would have been too intrusive – but I read lots of first hand accounts, reports, interviews, articles, etc.

I know people in LEAs in London who despair of the effect of unemployment and this gang culture on boys. It seems to me that as a society we ignore it as much as we can - what do you think we should all be doing to improve the situation?

One of the reasons I included a quote from a book called 'The Gang' by Frederic Thrasher was that its description of the gang culture of Chicago in 1927 could quite easily be a description of the gang culture of South London in 2010, showing that such a culture is nothing new. It's an age-old phenomenon, and to a certain extent it's simply part of human nature. In terms of solutions, or what we should all be doing to improve the situation ... ? Well, as Tom say in the book:

... there'll always be gangs of some kind or other – tribes, families, religions, nations, football supporters – because, quite simply, humans are social animals. We naturally form ourselves into groups. We seek protection and security in groups. We find safety and status and purpose

***in groups. And, in order to reinforce everything we get from our group, we fight and kill and rape individuals from other groups.
It's what humans do.
How could I possibly hope to change that?***

You say on your MySpace page that you like to write about the darker side of life. Why do you think this is? Do you write with any intention to educate or inform or do you see novels as being purely entertainment?

Yes, I think novels are primarily for entertainment, but entertainment doesn't have to be exclusively light-hearted. It can also be thought-provoking, serious, challenging, heart-breaking, distressing, real, frightening ... and while it can be educational and informative, I certainly don't write novels with any intention to inform or educate. I'm not a teacher or a preacher, I'm just a writer.

I also read a lot of crime fiction and thrillers and then wonder whether it gives me too depressing and distorted a view of human nature - do you think this might be a danger?

From a personal point of view – which is the only way I can answer this – I have a fairly dark view of human nature anyway, and, if anything, it's the reality of human life that I find depressing and distorted.

You also write on your page that you dislike God - is it the idea of a God that you dislike or God himself? (That's my son's question!)

Good question! I dislike both the idea of God and God himself. Not that he exists, but if he did, and if he really was how he's depicted in the Bible, I wouldn't like him one bit.

and finally - you also say you would like to meet yourself when you were 12...why and what would you say to him?

I'd say: "Don't worry, everything turns out all right in the end. Just keep dreaming."

Thank you!!!