



Crossing the Line exposes
the dark side of hockey

Description

David Sherman's new novel examines some hard truths beneath our national obsession

By Irwin Rapoport

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[IndyPress](#), a new independent publishing house, launched its inaugural release, ***Crossing the Line***, a new novel by veteran journalist, author, and playwright **David Sherman**, on October 29.

With hockey as a backdrop, the story examines some hard truths beneath one of Canada's main preoccupations and exposes the seamier side of our national obsession: a love story, a story of uneasy stardom, and tawdry truths beneath Canada's preoccupation with hockey. Click to read an [excerpt](#) from *Crossing the Line*.

"They could've added pain meds to the post-game table: grilled chicken, pizza, wings, pasta, Oxycodone, Empracet and Indocin. Who didn't hurt after a game?"

– From *Crossing the Line*

For the story's protagonist, dazzling up-and-comer Blake Fowler, hockey has been his life and his escape, scoring sublimely through the bruising and bone-breaking. Traded to his native Montreal, where the fans expect, even demand, he leads the team to the Stanley Cup, he confronts the ghosts of his childhood and the racism, sexism and inequities inherent in pro sports, as well as the balm of true love.



David Sherman

“The story running through *Crossing the Line* is an absorbing way to discuss the joys and struggles of real life,” says Sherman. “It reveals the obsession and dedication of pro sports as well as the physical and mental toll it takes on those who earn a king’s riches to play 15 to 25 minutes a few times a week, while society can’t cope with the unhoused and the hungry.”

David Sherman is a playwright, singer/songwriter, filmmaker, journalist and author. His novel about an aging, struggling singer and her daughter, ***Momma’s Got the Blues***, was released by Guernica Editions in May. His play, ***The Daily Miracle***, produced by Montreal’s **Infinithéâtre**, will be published this fall by **infiniPRESS**. *Crossing the Line* is his third novel. He also created and edited ***Fish Wrapped: True Confessions of Newsrooms Past*** (Guernica, 2020), a collection of essays from notable Canadian journalists in days gone by. David founded and contributes to an eclectic blog for several writers to explore the world and the written word, ***You’re Going to Die. Live with It.***

Here he speaks about *Crossing the Line* and his passion for the written word:

WM: *What was your impetus/inspiration for writing Crossing the Line?*

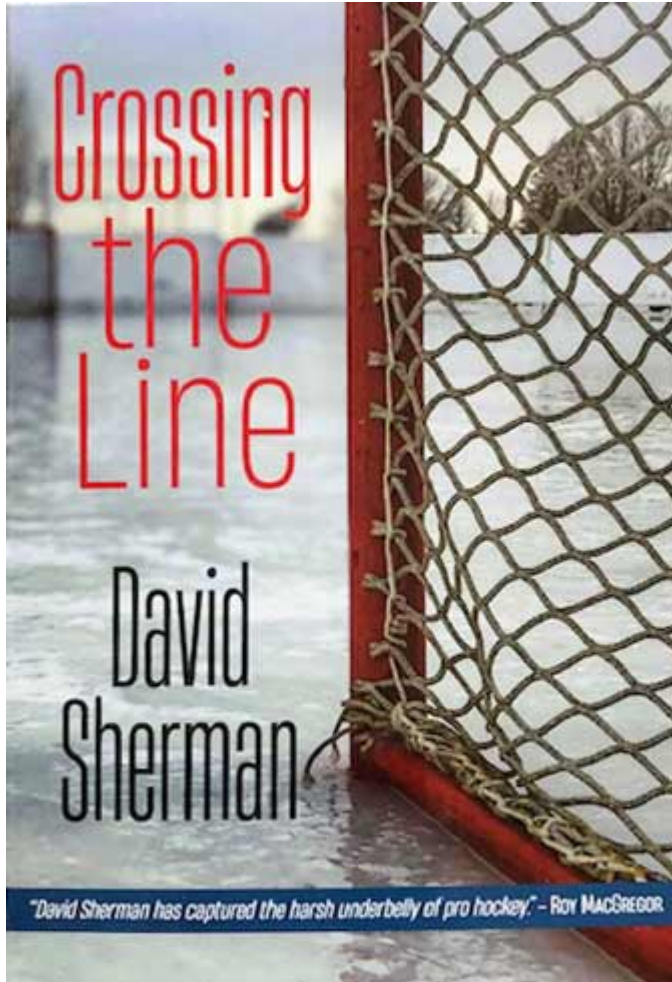
Sherman: Moving to the mountains where winters are longer and entertainment choices limited, hockey became a frigid evening’s ritual. After taking the game for granted most of my life, I slowly appreciated the superhuman efforts required to play at a professional level. Looked at with a microscope, professional hockey is the most difficult and



dangerous of sports — hard ice, walls, sharp blades, sticks, and pucks can all be deadly. The speed of the sport is mesmerizing, played by boys and young men, some of whom are treated like gods. The best stories are the ones that are right in your face, and hockey has been in my face all of my life.

WM: *What makes this novel different from other hockey-themed books on the market?*

Sherman: The background is hockey, but the book is not hockey-themed, and there is little hockey in the book. First, there is little adult fiction using hockey as a motif. *Crossing the Line* is a tale of struggling working people and a young star athlete traded to his hometown, Montreal. Here, his consciousness is raised by all the poverty he sees and a woman he meets. Life outside the palatial confines of the arena begins to interfere with his game. He battles with himself about making so much money to play when so many are fighting to survive, including his own extended family. Hooked on meds to play through chronic pain, stymied by convention that advises to “shut up and skate,” he . No longer a game, he unhappily realizes it’s all a business.



the dressing room, the airplanes, the therapists and trainers, and dreaming about spending much of their life on a sheet of ice.

WM: *Why were you drawn to the subject, and what is your*

personal connection to hockey?

Sherman: People of my generation grew up with two channels on the TV – Radio Canada and CBC – and both had



hockey on Saturday nights. Hockey is in our blood; you watch a game at night, go to the café the next morning and talk about it. Read about it. For millions, our harsh winters mean life revolves around the arena and games on the widescreen. As a boy, lying on the floor, I watched “The Flying Frenchmen” on Hockey Night in Canada with **Danny Gullivan** and **Dick Irvin**. It was our birthright and these were great memories. I did play organized hockey as a kid, but I really stunk and I stopped and switched to basketball.

WM: What research did you conduct to write your book?

Sherman: I’ve spoken to players and sports writers, read **Roy McGregor** and **Ken Dryden** and dug into the Internet. I quickly learned that to play at this level, you need to start as a child, and the skill set is so varied and difficult only the best of the best make it, and even they can go from heroes to goats in a flash.

WM: Why did you choose that title for the book?

Sherman: Pucks cross the goal line, a player is offside when he crosses the line ahead of the puck, and a person crosses the line when he does something unacceptable. Our protagonist’s efforts to help the less fortunate and his confession to the press that athletes make more money than they need crosses the line for many.

Crossing the Line is available direct from the [publisher](#) and on Amazon.

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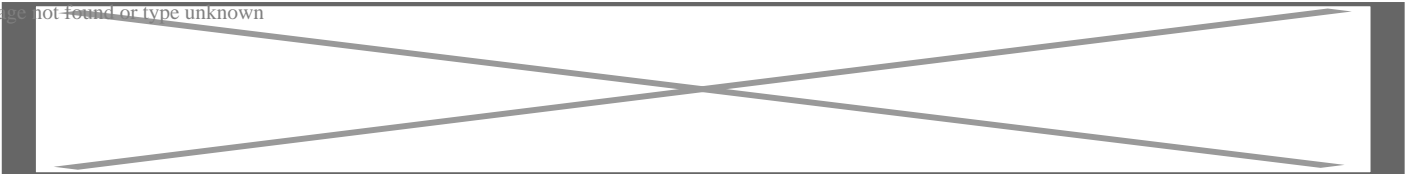


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Irwin Rapoport is a freelance journalist with Bachelor degrees in History and Political Science from Concordia University.

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