

It's the weekend at Nana Plaza, Bangkok's notorious flesh-pot, where girls can be picked up for the price of a bottle of Johnny Walker. In one go-go bar, a red eyed, middle-aged Englishman says, "Check that one out with the Pamela Anderson knockers."  
 "She's a katoey [ladyboy]," replies Christopher G. Moore, demurely taking another sip of his espresso.

The 49-year-old, Oxford-educated novelist soberly takes in the scene with the nonchalance of a silent voyeur as the goggle-eyed sex tourists leer at the

Dubbed "the Hemingway of the Far East" by Canada's national newspaper *The Globe and Mail*, Moore has also been lauded by Bernard Trink, who writes a weekly column about commercial sex and local entertainment in the *Bangkok Post*. "What is outstanding in the works of Christopher G. Moore is his in depth comprehension of what psychiatrist Carl Jung labeled the collective unconscious, as it applies to Thai motivation, thinking and action. Moore understands the Thais better than many understand themselves."

Germany, the North American publishing world continues to ignore him, despite the fact that literary icon Barney Rosset, who first published Henry Miller and William Burroughs in the US, tried to secure a deal for Moore in the States.

Undaunted, the author says, "By publishing my books in Bangkok, I can sell them directly through my website in collaboration with my publisher Heaven Lake Press, a local Thai publishing house." Moore adds that he can not only churn out a book a year, but increase sales and profits through online commerce at his site [www.cgmoore.com](http://www.cgmoore.com), which he calls his bookstore. "Before, New York and London had a lock on publishing. Outsiders had no way to communicate with people who actually make books, so web-publishing will continue to revolutionise book promotion, marketing and distribution."

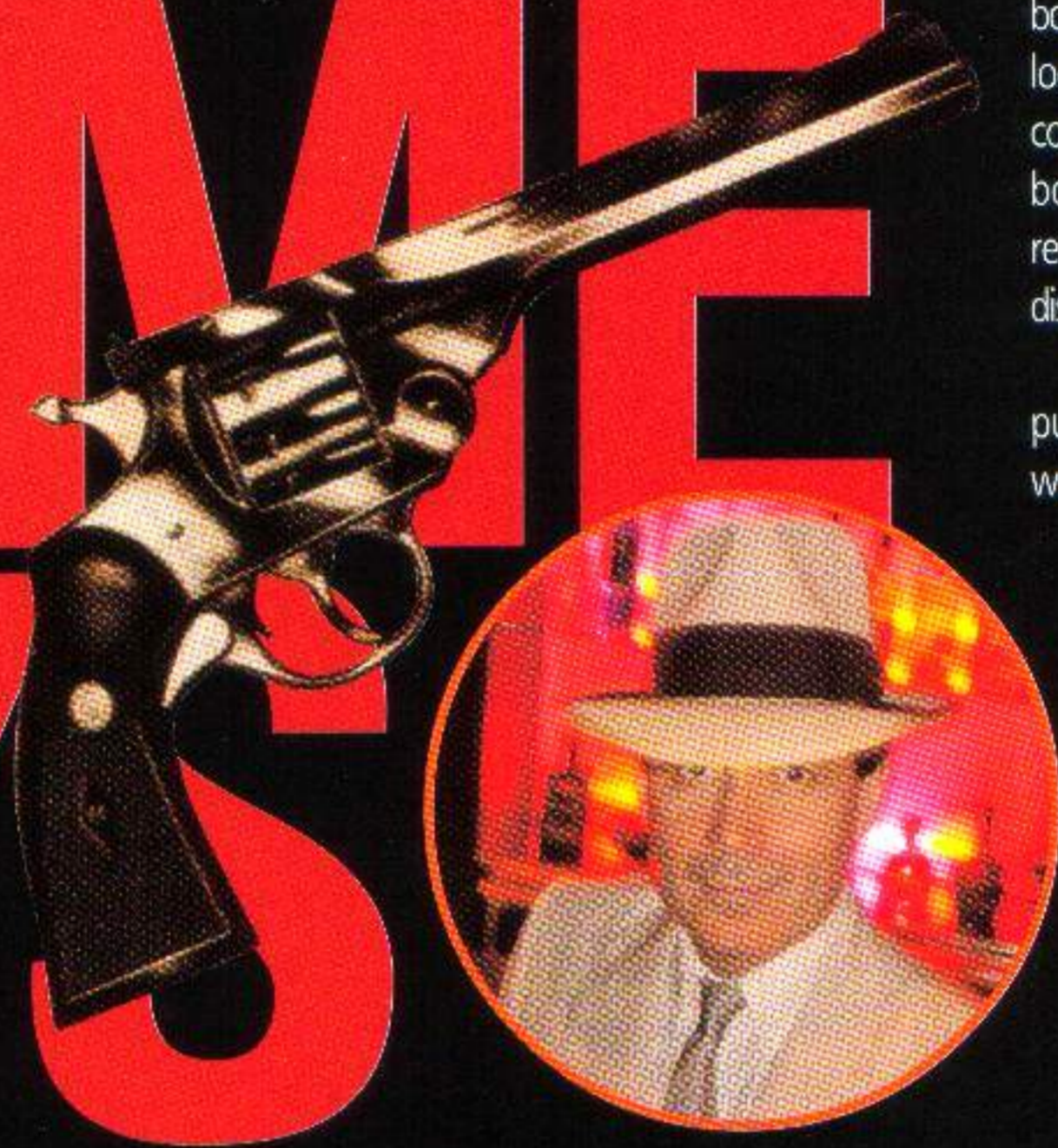
The trend for movies set in the Far East has put Moore in good standing. Another local writer, Jake Needham, an American novelist and screenwriter who wrote *The Big Mango*, has secured a deal with Creative License Productions in Los Angeles to put his book on the big screen. Moore says the Calvino series has been optioned for a TV series in Los Angeles, and plans are afoot to begin shooting in Thailand next year. One of his earlier novels, *God of Darkness*, has also been optioned for a film, and the script has already been written.

In the '80s, the author honed his skills by working as a playwright for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, penning two well-known radio plays: *Sticks and Pucks* (1980) and *The View from Cambie Bridge*, which deals with Japanese-Canadians relocated to camps in the province of Alberta during World War II.

And Moore's attention to detail and 3-D characterizations make his latest book, *Minor Wife*, much more than just another crime novel about murder, betrayal, and a bawdy romp through the city's "comfort zones".

"When a private detective based in Bangkok sent me an e-mail," says the author, who meditates each morning before he begins writing, "telling me that after reading 'Minor Wife' he felt that he'd learned a few new tricks from Calvino the old hand, now that's the ultimate compliment."

# CRIME PAYS



Words by **Thomas Brezelica** Photo by **David Jacobson**

scantly clad women gyrating around chrome poles on a stage surrounded by mirrors. This is the same turf inhabited by the writer's fictional detective Vincent Calvino, who is the protagonist of seven of his novels. The latest one is *Minor Wife*: Heaven Lake Press; 2002. (For an excerpt from the novel see the opposite page.)

The private dick is a half-Jewish, half-Italian whisky drinker from the Big Apple. He untangles hard-boiled cases in the tradition of Raymond Chandler's Phillip Marlowe, an influence Moore happily cops to. "I'm trying to do something similar with the Vincent Calvino books." The writer's speech patterns are precise and there's a distinctly upper-class clip at the end of each sentence, an irony since many of his books focus on the subterranean world of foreign expatriates whoring it up in Southeast Asia.

But at times it seems the author is more concerned with exposing the moral vacuum of Bangkok, than Calvino is in solving cases for a financial pittance. Rather than providing many deep revelations about the world inhabited by normal Thais, Moore largely focuses on the microcosm of the red-light realm.

In the mid-80's, Moore left a tenured life as a law professor at the University of British Columbia and moved to Bangkok. To date, the author has sold some 100,000 copies of his 15 novels in three languages, many of them through his website, and the Chinese-language versions of *Spirit House* and *Cold Hit* will be published this August.

Although these foreign translations have sold some 30,000 copies in Japan, and another 15,000 in

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