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TBR

Inside the List

By DWIGHT GARNER

BURSTING ON THE SCENE: The Virginia-based thriller writer David Baldacci's new novel, "Stone Cold," appears at No. 1 on the [hardcover fiction list](#) this week. The book is about a secretive and feared Washington group called the Camel Club — feared in part, surely, because its fictional leader is named Oliver Stone. Baldacci's books have a real audience inside the Beltway. (Bill Clinton was spotted buying Baldacci's "Simple Truth" at a bookstore in 1999.) And like a politician, he is often asked to speak in public. Baldacci's [Web site](#), helpfully, provides an "introduction text" for him — that is, suggested words for presenting him to a crowd. The first sentence of this text probably startles the librarians who must sometimes need to recite it, with its code-red level of thriller-world bombast: "Internationally acclaimed best-selling author David Baldacci shocked the publishing world when he burst on the literary scene with his incredible first novel, 'Absolute Power.'" The suggested text ends more demurely: "Please help me welcome David Baldacci."

NOTES: Tom Brokaw's new book, "[Boom! Voices of the Sixties: Personal Reflections on the '60s and Today](#)," enters the [nonfiction list](#) this week, but it's unable to displace Stephen Colbert at No. 1. ... Jeremy Scahill's "Blackwater," an exposé of the security company, had a four-week run on the nonfiction list back in April and May. Blackwater is in the news, and Scahill's book is back, at No. 16. ... On the fiction list, Donald McCaig's "[Rhett Butler's People](#)" is new at No. 5. It's the second official sequel to "Gone With the Wind," after Alexandra Ripley's "Scarlett" in 1991. McCaig told Time magazine he fought with Margaret Mitchell's estate only over his historically accurate use of the N-word in the novel's period dialogue. "They had reservations about that to the end, but they didn't kill the book because of it. They didn't want to be embarrassed with the racist brush, you know?" McCaig, in his novel, makes Butler more racially enlightened. About Mitchell he said: "She was a Southern writer of her time, and I'm a Southern writer of mine."

BUK'S TYPICAL DAY: In this issue, Jim Harrison [reviews](#) a collection of Charles Bukowski's poems. Bukowski's work is sought after by collectors like that of almost no other 20th-century poet. On [abebooks.com](#), rare editions of his books sell for as much as \$14,000. The Bukowski rarity I covet — the one that gives the best sense of man — is a limited-edition volume called "Dear Mr. Bukowski." It's his response to a fan letter from a woman who asks him to have dinner with her and her 4-year-old daughter. The letter also asks what his typical day is like. Bukowski's response reads, in part: "I vomit, first thing, early. Then I read all the poems I wrote when I was drunk the night before and then I vomit again. ... Then I go back to bed and sleep two more hours. Then, strangely, I find myself at the racetrack again, losing with my new system. I go home and drink 18 bottles of beer. ... Then I go over to my girlfriend's place. I call her

a whore. We fight. ... I don't know when I write the poems." All this can be yours for only \$5,000.

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