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Big buzz for thriller

Publisher has high hopes for B.C. realtor's creepy debut

Article

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By **Vit Wagner**
Publishing Reporter

Few titles will arrive in bookstores this summer to greater fanfare than *Still Missing*, a debut thriller by Chevy Stevens, the pen-name for 37-year-old former Vancouver Island realtor Rene Unischewski.

Publisher St. Martin's Press has ordered up a North American print run of 150,000 hardcover copies of the book, which has already been sold to more than a dozen other countries.

The novel, which comes out next month, is a harrowing story of a real estate agent, Annie, who recounts to her psychiatrist a year-long abduction at the hands of a creepy misogynist. Stevens has already signed to write two follow-



Still Missing is a debut thriller by Chevy Stevens, the pen-name for 37-year-old former Vancouver Island realtor Rene Unischewski.

ups, both of which will feature the first novel's therapist as a continuing character.

We caught up with the author by phone from her home in Nanaimo.

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Q. You started working on this novel in 2005 and put your real estate career on hold for part of the time you were writing it. What possessed you?

A. I wasn't happy. I wanted to do something that I could be really passionate about. I liked real estate. It afforded me the opportunity to write my book. But it didn't fill my soul in any way. Writing the novel, I had to learn how to take the critiquing and learn how to keep going no matter what. Going through all that changed my life on a personal level.

Q. You must be impatient for it to finally be out there.

A. There are some moments when I want to move on to the next stage. And then there are other moments when I'm still enjoying the before stage. It's kind of exciting in the before stage. It's like perpetually waiting for your Christmas presents to be opened. Because it's a debut book and they wanted to go hardcover, they felt that it would have the most appeal and impact if they put it out in the summer. That's when people do the beach reads.

Q. There has been a lot of buzz around the book, including blurbs from the likes of Kathy Reichs. But the jury is still out as far as ordinary readers are concerned.

A. I'm aware that it's being touted as a success. But you don't know until you know. I accomplished what I wanted to accomplish. I wanted the book to be published. And that is happening. So in my mind, it's already a success.

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