

Buzz Bin

This is a good season for debut novels. One of the new authors landing on the desks here in the Crimespree offices is Carol McCleary with her first book *THE ALCHEMY OF MURDER* (Forge). Set in Paris during the world's fair of 1889 it's the perfect place and setting for a killer to get lost in crowds. Reporter Nellie Bly thinks the killings are tied into an epidemic that is killing thousands of people. This is an entertaining book and McCleary does a great job of dropping the reader right into the Paris of the late 1800's. Adding real life authors like Oscar Wilde and Jules Verne into the mix is just the icing on an incredible cake. We loved this book from cover to cover.

Laurell K. Hamilton has been writing vampires novels almost longer than anyone else doing it today. Her character Anita Blake has crossed into comics and will soon be on TV on IFC. The latest novel, *BULLET* (Brekley) is another nonstop action ride with Anita. An ancient and powerful vampire wants to use Anita as a stepping stone to take over the country. Thought to be dead her return has prompted people who know Anita well enough to know she can take care of herself to warn her off "Run if you can..." Make a pot of coffee, you won't want to stop reading till you're done.

Brian Wiprud has been a Crimespree favorite for years, hell even before Crimespree we loved his books. His latest, *BUY BACK* from Minotaur is his best yet. Insurance investigator Tommy Davin is good at his job recovering stolen art, but his skills are tested when he hatches a scheme to help his girl friend get out of debt. With his world imploding Davin is going to have to do some fast dancing to come out in one piece. Wiprud has a reputation for humor, and while this book does have some smirk causing moments, its real strength is the characters. These are people who you actually run across in real life, flawed and all too real. This is our **MUST READ** summer pick.

Edgar winner Stephanie Pintoff's second book *A CURTIAN FALLS* (Minotaur) brings the return of Detective Simon Ziele set in the early 1900's New York. Zeile is called back to New York by his former partner to help on a case that looks to be the work of a serial killer who is targeting chorus girls. Pintoff nails the period and weaves an intricate plot as a playground for her characters and it's a pure joy to read. A superb sophomore book.

Meredith Cole's first book was a great read, but her second is really something. *DEAD IN THE WATER* (Minotaur) brings back Lydia McKenzie, photographer and administrative assistant at a detective agency, in a book that will inhabit your head long after the reading is over. A photo job taking shots of hookers brings Lydia in touch with a murder case. Warned off by everyone she knows, she still can't help herself and gets involved when a simple unrelated assignment brings her to the murder site. Cole's ability to write realistic characters and a wonderfully intricate plot make this book a winner.

EYE OF THE RED TSAR (Bantam) by Sam Eastland is a complicated blend of real historic events and fiction set during the late 1920's in Russia. Pekkala is a detective working for Tsar Nicholas when the Bolsheviks take over which leaves him in a unfavorable position to say the least. Sent to the edges of Siberia he resigns himself to being an outcast and forgotten. He is brought back into the fold to solve a mystery too great for anyone else to unravel. Pekkala is to find the killers behind the execution of the Romanovs, at any cost. Knowing he can't trust anyone makes his every move a perilous decision. Loving Russian detective stories got us to open the book, loving this book will get us to read everything else Eastland writes.

In February of 2003 the largest ever diamond heist ever pulled was a headline around the world when a Belgium diamond exchange was robbed. *FLAWLESS* (Union Square) is a true crime book that looks at the heist and the planning of this robbery which was done without hurting anyone. An in depth look at how the Italian thieves did the job after two years of planning, this book was well researched in is incredibly interesting. It is by Scott Andrew Selby and Greg Campbell.

FLORIDA GOTHIC STORIES (Kitsune Books) is a collection of awesome short story goodness from the always amazing Vicki Hendricks. 11 stories with an afterward from Michael Connelly and an introduction by Megan Abbott, this should be on every crime fiction lover's book shelf.

Mary Logue does small town mystery better than almost anyone else. Her 8th book in the Claire Watkins series, *FROZEN STIFF* (Tyros) is possibly her best work yet. Local Daniel Walker is a rich man who doesn't mind ignoring morals to make a buck. When he is found frozen in the snow naked it's not hard to believe someone had killed him, the trouble is more who didn't want to kill him? Wonderful pacing and characters that you can't help but be invested in make *FROZEN STIFF* another jewel in the crown of Logue's writing career.

Barry Eisler is known for his fast paced thrillers and while *INSIDE OUT* (Ballantine) is that, it is also a non- apologetic look at policies of our government and agencies working for it. Black Ops soldier Ben Treven needs to perform a mission to keep out of some serious trouble. The job he has is to recover some tapes which will cause trouble for people up to the highest levels of Government and he is obviously not the only one looking for them. Edge of the seat suspense and a plot that feels like it's walking a tightrope *INSIDE OUT* will entertain you and make you think. A great combination.

LETHAL RAGE. What a great title for a book. It screams "pick me up!". And picking it up was a good move. *LETHAL RAGE* (ECW) by Brent Pilkey is a real ass kicking hardboiled police procedural. Set in Toronto, but not in the friendly parts we see on TV, *LETHAL RAGE*'s protagonist Jack Warren is taken out of the nice part of the city and transferred to 51 division. Along with his boos, Jack is in the middle of a drug war with a man who really doesn't care about anything but making his money. Before long the case becomes personal for Jack and all bets are off. This is not the happy drug war Reagan started back in the 80's, this is trench warfare and people are going to get messy before it's all done. A one sitting intense read that won't let you put it down.

Joanna Campbell Slan's third book in her Kiki Lowenstein series is out in May and it's a damn good read. PHOTO SNAP SHOT (Midnight Ink) has Kiki's daughter caught up in a murder at her private school as she may have seen the killer do the deed. Kiki steps in to help protect her daughter and discovers the secrets that abound in private schools (part of what makes them a perfect place for a mystery!). Slan writes with a wonderful knack for characters and the plot is laid out in a great classic style. If you haven't read her before treat yourself to a wonderful traditional feeling mystery with characters you will love.

RANDOM VIOLENCE (Soho Crime) is crime fiction tale set in South Africa. Jassy Mackenzie isn't writing the whimsical world that Alexander McCall Smith writes about, but instead deals with a more reality based country still coping with prejudice and inequality. A car jacking that goes to the next level to include murder has the police worried and the detective in charge look for help from the daughter of a former colleague. Jade de Jong had left South Africa after her Father's murder but is now back working as a PI. More than just a who-dunit this book is insightful without being preachy.

Julie Kramer's third book, SILENCING SAM (Atria) once again has us along for the ride as Riley Spartz reporter for the local news in Minneapolis tries to do her job, get to the truth and stay out of trouble, three things which seem to usually conflict with each other. Riley is facing murder charges when a gossip happy reporter is found dead, and she's also hoping to keep her job when a new hot shot comes into the picture gunning for the top spot. Julie Kramer combines real life experience with just the right amount of humor layered on a great plot to deliver a book that is a grade A steak in a world that loves to give us cheap burger.

James Patrick Hunt is back with his third book featuring St. Louis cop George Hastings. In THE SILENT PLACES (Minotaur) Hastings and the guys on his team have been given a detail as punishment for pissing off a few big shots on the force. Asked to keep watch on an up and coming Senator with bigger plans they discover a plot to kill him. However the killer is more than just a whack job as the Senator would like them to believe. A adrenalin filled thriller set in a great city.

Chris Collett has a terrific series featuring DI Tom Mariner and the 5th, STALKED BY SHADOWS (Piatkus), might be the most nerve wracking of them to date. Mariner has his hands full working two cases. The first; a woman is being stalked by a mad man who is just getting started. The second; a murder case involving a policeman's widow. Is this a revenge killing against aimed at the dead officer. Fast, like a punch to the gut, this is a book that will keep you guessing.

Debut author Ellen Horan has really jumped in with a big splash. 31 BOND STREET(Harper) is a wonderful thriller set in the 1850's. The murder of Dr. Harvey Burdell has police baffled. With no clues or witnesses, a suspect is scooped up and the powers that be want a swift trial to make them look good. Defense attorney Abraham Oakey Hall is the only chance Emma Cunningham has of ever seeing daylight again. Atmospheric and wonderfully moody this is an example of what historical novels are when they are done right. Perfect for fans of early Caleb Carr.

Barbara Fister is back with her second book, THROUGH THE CRACKS (Minotaur) featuring PI Anni Koskinen. Set in Chicago, it is full of police corruption, dirty prosecutors and secrets a plenty. A rape case proves to be a much more complicated undertaking than originally thought and Anni could be setting herself up for a big fall if she doesn't watch her every step. A fab thriller.

Deborah Coonts brings all the fun of Vegas to her latest mystery, WANNA GET LUCKY? (Forge). Lucky O'Toole is in charge of customer relations at a hot new hotel, but she can't help but get involved when what looks like a suicide from a helicopter is a bit hinky. An adult film industry event should be enough to keep her busy but she can't resist this case. Funny and fast paced this is a hoot of a mystery.

Last year Alan Bradley's book SWEETNESS AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PIE was a huge hit and his follow up is generating a lot of buzz. With good reason. THE WEED THAT STRINGS THE HANGMAN'S BAG (Orion) is a charming historical, traditional and gothic feeling mystery with broad appeal. 11 year old Flavia de Luce is once again solving a crime. A murder that happens during a puppet show has obvious ties to a murder from years earlier and Flavia will need every bit of her older than her years imply skills to get to the bottom of what is happening.

WHEN DEATH INTERVENES (Five Star) by L.C. Hayden is the latest in her Harry Bronson series. Set in South Dakota the retired Dallas PD Detective is thrust into a situation that will test his limits in all areas. A woman is running from a killer. The killer is, beyond a doubt, dead. Here in lies the Mystery. Fast pacing and wonderful characterizations make this a perfect summer read. Hayden pulled out all the stops on this book.

Book Reviews:

61 HOURS
Lee Child
2010
Transworld Publishing

This year Jack Reacher will appear in two novels by the Englishman in New York – Lee Child, and judging by the standards of the first of these two tales, it is something we should celebrate. Written in terse short sentences, this tale set against a frigid winter in South Dakota, with Reacher involved in a coach / bus crash which leads him on a complex tale of Columbian Drug lords but again nothing is entirely what it seems. Peppering the narrative is a

peep into what makes Reacher tick, especially the seeds of his past. Also present is Lee Child's interest in the minutiae of life and death, though the real pleasure of this novel is how Child makes 'the cold' the real villain of the piece.

Following the crash, Reacher leads the way into the small town paranoia that circles the proceedings like vultures waiting for death. Throw in a prison that holds secrets, a biker gang who may or may not be involved in a drug racket, as well as characters as multi-faceted as the snowflakes that pound the South Dakota winter and you have yet another rip-roaring read that is basically an updated, reboot of the works of the golden age thriller writing of Child's precursors, such as Ian Fleming, Alistair MacClean and John Buchan.

Totally readable, the Jack Reacher novels have become my comfort reads of choice, and considering the current turmoil in the world, I'm rather glad I'll get two comfort reads this year. I've marked my calendar for Child's second book this Autumn [aka 'Fall']. Highly recommended, but I'd advise reading 61 HOURS with gloves on, not just because of the chilly tale that unfolds in your hands, but to prevent friction burns on turning the pages.

– Ali Karim

A JOURNEY TO DIE FOR

Radine Trees Nehring

May 2010

Wolfmont Press

In the "Something to Die For" Mystery series, heroine Carrie McCrite King and husband Henry take a nostalgic train ride from their home to historic Van Buren, Arkansas.

This newly-married couple, in their sixties, are like friends, and anyone would be happy to have them as neighbors. However, Carrie has a penchant for finding bodies, and this trip is no different. When they arrive, Carrie goes for a walk to see the wall mural that shows the history of the town. A slight deviation to the river--and there is the body.

The body is of a man she saw on the train--blonder hair and blue shirt. At the time, she thought something was fishy about him, as he was not the type to go on this kind of an excursion. When she gets back on the train, there is a man with the blonde hair and blue shirt sitting in his same seat. So she must have been mistaken.

The murder takes them to Kansas City where Henry had been on the police department. He has to confront the ghosts of the reason he took early retirement.

Antique buttons, stolen goods, a sunken warship, several lying or reticent witnesses, and more history are involved.

Nehring's stories always share a lot of local history and scenery of Arkansas, and she makes you want to visit her trails.

Gay Toltl Kinman

AREA 10

Christos Gage

2010

Vertigo Crime

The Vertigo Crime series has been a success with their crime stories, so one didn't know what to expect with the sci-fi twinge that came with AREA 10. What it brings is the most electrifying entry of the Vertigo Crime line so far.

In the comics world Christos N. Gage is a writer that has been doing phenomenal work for years but needs that one hit to make him a household name.

AREA 10 is that hit. He crafts an absolute thriller from beginning to end.

Detective Adam Kamen, while trying to find a decapitating serial killer named Henry the Eighth, happens across a therapist session gone very wrong.

For intervening he's rewarded with a screwdriver stabbed through to the middle of his brain. After recovery he heads right back to work only to discover the accident may have triggered something that causes him to get glimpse the future. But it's all tied to the Henry case. And it all comes back to a long-forgotten practice of finding the "third eye" called trepanation.

Gage is able to convince you know what is going to happen only to pull the rug out from under you at the last second. The book takes many twists and turns, especially when you think they've run out of them. Artist Chris Samnee's style works superbly with the noir feel complimenting the writing.

The romance angle in this book invites my only criticism. It felt a bit forced and came too quickly. Like a mandate as opposed to something that arose naturally in the story.

But overall the story is a real edge of your seat crime thriller. Don't discount this crime story as sci-fi because it works. And it works fantastically.

Joe Schmidt

THE ARK

Boyd Morrison

2010

Touchstone

This debut from new author Boyd Morrison is a worldwide adventure thriller that centers on, as the title implies, Noah's Ark. Dilara Kenner's father, who has been searching for the ark for years, went missing three years ago. While in LAX a dying man gives her a clue to finding her father. She is told to find a man named Tyler Locke.

She hooks up with Locke after a series of mysterious events and the two are off on a grand quest that is shrouded in ancient mysteries and secrets. She and Locke find themselves in a race against time as they search because the Ark may give up a secret that may wipe out mankind.

Fast paced adventure abounds in this novel that seems ready to go to screen. While it seems as though the book was inspired by books by Steve Berry and Dan Brown, Morrison has his own voice. He does a good job keeping the reader entranced. A great summer beach read.

Jon Jordan

AVENGING ANGELS

Mary Stanton

2010

Berkley Prime Crime

What a delightful Book! Paranormal / cozy, the third in the series of Beaufort & Company, set in Savannah in the present featuring Bree Winston-Beaufort an attorney, who inherited her great uncle's law office. Turns out he practiced law in the Celestial Courts. Now she's the attorney for souls who have lost their way and need an advocate. She is ably assisted by Ron and Petru, who are angels in the office. Bree's office is in a two hundred-year old building, set in the middle of an All-Murderers cemetery. Where else?

Stanton has created a complete world for this unique advocacy. The large cast of characters are listed in the front, which is very helpful. Russell O'Rourke is believed to have committed suicide because he lost his fortune. To complicate matters, his suicide was witnessed by his wife and accompanying friends.

Beazley and Caldecott are angel / attorneys for the Opposition, which means if they win the case, O'Rourke will permanently stay in Limbo where he has been assigned.

The story opens at the auction as most of O'Rourke's goods were put on sale as he was in bankruptcy. His widow tries to buy them back. His desk where he died, and where he now resides, until matters can be settled, intrigues Bree. He cries out to her to take him and the desk to her home.

Love It!

Gay Tottl Kinman

BLOOD HARVEST

S.J. Bolton

2010

Bantam Press UK

BLOOD HARVEST is the latest from S.J. Bolton, who happens to be one of my very favorite new authors. She has a wonderful way of telling a story that combines classic gothic feeling with the modern thriller.

Tom Fletcher is a ten-year-old boy who along with his family has just moved to the town of Heptonclough, a place out in the moors where you would be hard pressed to believe it's the computer age. It's an amazing house and the family is happy, at least to start with. When Tom starts to see a strange kid in one of the nearby churchyards a series of escalating pranks and incidents are begin to make it clear that perhaps this family isn't welcome.

Other odd things are happening as well. A local woman is convinced her daughter who died in a fire isn't dead, and the new vicar thinks that the warm reception he got may not be genuine. There are secrets in Heptonclough and it has something to do with the death of local children. When Tom's brother and sister go missing the Fletchers regret ever moving to this town and they will need to dig deep inside in order to survive.

Bolton writes with amazing depth and it's impossible not to get caught up in this fantastic tale. If words were notes of music this book would be a piece to rival all the classics. Engrossing to the end and utterly amazing.

The US version comes out in June from Minotaur.

Jon Jordan

BLOOD OATH

Christopher Farnsworth

May 2010

G. P. Putnam's Sons

It's probably not a good idea, if one is an ambitious White House staffer, to get caught boffing the President's daughter. Zach Barrows finds this out the hard way. Suddenly, he has a totally different job, a job he's not happy about: he's the new sidekick for Nathaniel Cade, the President's vampire.

It's a long story. Zach learns it in bits and pieces as he and Nathaniel fight an old enemy (at least for Nathaniel) again. Nathaniel isn't the only immortal on the planet; Dr. Frankenstein is still trying to perfect his monster. This time he's ostensibly working for the terrorists in the Middle East.

There are sub-plots involving other government agencies, other beings from Nathaniel's past, etc. BLOOD OATH is a more complicated book than this summary would indicate.

Barrows is, at first blush, a politico well on his way to sycophant-hood. By the end of BLOOD OATH, he's grown up some and realized that this is not a job he wants to walk away from, were that an option. Cade never pretends to be other than what he is, and he is clearly aware that his choices have been taken from him. He accepts his nature, all the while detesting it.

Farnsworth has taken some trends (vampires, terrorists) and wrapped them into a conspiracy novel. In the hands of a lesser writer, this could very easily seem like a blatant attempt to ride the wave of what is currently hot. Fortunately, Farnsworth is a good enough writer to make it all work. This is the first in a series. With any luck, it will become the political thriller version of Charlaine Harris's TRUE BLOOD series.

P.J. Coldren

THE BOOK OF SPIES

Gayle Lynds

2010

St. Martin's Press

As F. Scott Fitzgerald said, the rich are not like most of us. And in this fast-moving thriller, there are ten ultra-rich men who place themselves above all the rest of us, not only in accumulating wealth, but hoarding the world's treasures in the form of hundreds of gold- and precious gem-covered books in a secret location. Then one of the books, "The Book of Spies," is smuggled out and becomes the source for the location of the "book club."

Meanwhile, a clandestine, super-secret CIA group discovers an alleged link between the library and a terrorist bank account, setting off a chase around the world. A former curator for the Getty Museum, Eva Blake, serving a sentence for the vehicular murder of her husband, is enlisted to assist in the effort. She's teamed with Judd Ryder, a troubled ex-military intelligence operative. Together, they chase leads from Paris to Rome, to Athens and Istanbul, seeking the secret location.

Ms. Lynds is the author of five suspense/espionage novels [all, up until now, standalones] and co-author [with Robert Ludlum] of three others.

Parenthetically, it should perhaps be noted that the author ran a contest in which entrants vied to have their names affixed to various characters. In the interest of full disclosure, Gloria Feit (wife of this reviewer, who also appears offstage - or, rather, off page - a few times as her fictional, as well as being her real-life, husband) appears in a minor but crucial role in the novel. As for the others, as Ms. Lynds writes, "I won't tell you which ones are theirs.

That's called suspense." And there is plenty of suspense in Spies to keep the reader on the edge of the chair with every page turned. And, since Spies is indicated as the first of a series, apparently there's a lot more to come. I will look forward to future entries.

Theodore Feit

CHRISTOPHER WALKEN; A TO Z

Robert Schnakenberg

2008

Quirk

Overly stimulated by the first ever C2-E2, I walked amongst piles of trades, current books, and acknowledged masterpieces of the comic genre. My eyes alit on this title with a soaring of the heart. Like many I am a huge and unapologetic fan of this actor. I may wonder what happened on that boat with him and the Wagners but I also wonder what made him take the role in THE STEPFORD WIVES sequel. Is he the cook I've heard? Where does the dancing come from? All is answered within the pages of this 2008 release from Quirk. I've read it all now; A to Z. A singular man with a common talent, or perhaps a singular talent coming from a common man, Christopher Walken fascinates me. This is a book for all of his fans. This book screams coffee table.

Ruth Jordan

DIE TWICE

Andrew Grant

2010

Minotaur

David Trevelyan is back in action in this follow up to last year's debut, *EVEN*. *DIE TWICE* picks up right where *EVEN* ends with Trevelyan a little too hot to keep in New York. Not sure if he should go back to England, he is sent to Chicago to take care of a "mess".

The mess is another agent who seems to have gone rouge and even took a shot at the local station chief. Trevelyan is used to operating undercover and knows that sometimes things get grey, but with shots fired and a dangerous gas missing there is no doubt that there is an agent who has gone over. The hope is that Trevelyan can track down the agent, get back the gas and be out of town pretty quick.

Well, the best laid plans and all that....

Grant writes thrillers like a man who has lived it; his knowledge of spy craft and the ins and outs of what is involved with an operation in this grey world of espionage strikes true. The action is believable and there are no over the top situations that would make you doubt the story for a minute.

One of my new favorites, Andrew Grant is an author on the rise and he and Trevelyan look to be ready for a long stay.

Jon Jordan

DRIVE TIME

Hank Phillippi Ryan

February 2010

MIRA Books

Charlotte McNally [dubbed "Charlie Mac" by her 9-year-old soon-to-be step-daughter], the protagonist in this engrossing series, is an investigative reporter at a local TV channel in Boston. She is engaged to Bexter Academy professor Josh Gelston. Splitting her time between her condo on Beacon Hill and Josh's Brookline residence, she finds her loyalties somewhat divided when Josh confides in her something which she feels can be the tip of an iceberg which would be a huge story. Things become even more complicated when she is offered a network job in NYC, and her personal and professional lives battle for supremacy.

A second, seemingly prescient plotline deals with serious and potentially lethal automobile defects involving recalls of autos never repaired, some still on the market either as car rentals or used cars; we all know the parallel real-life situation dating back only to November, 2009.

Penny, who Charlie thinks of as nine going on sixteen, and their calico cat, "Botox," fill in the background of Charlie's increasingly complicated home life, as her priorities shift back and forth between a huge professional move to the big-time and the man she dearly loves, as she finds herself pondering the question: "How many secrets can one person have?" The suspenseful tale escalates with threats and deaths among the Bexter 'family' and the 'who-is-behind-this' tension in both aspects of the plot. The fact that the author herself is an investigative TV journalist and multiple Emmy-Award winner lends an unmistakable authenticity to the novel.

Gloria Feit

END OF THE LINE

Mike Manno

June 2010

Five Star Publishing

When ex-banker R.J. Butler is found murdered on the back of a city transit bus, state police special investigator Detective Sergeant Jerome (Stan) Stankowski is assigned to the case. Unfortunately for Stan, Deputy Attorney General Parker Noble will assist.

Parker has a way of taking over the investigation, which leaves Stan feeling like a sidekick rather than the officer in charge. Parker's obsession with regular meals, his use of Stan as a taxi service, and his insistence on calling the officer "Stanley" make for one long case.

R.J. was fired from his bank job after \$80,000 disappeared, but des this have anything to do with his murder? Or is his ex-wife's desire to remarry in the Catholic Church the driving force behind his death? R.J. was fighting his ex-wife's annulment request because of the incorrect assumption that his son would be left illegitimate. The story is peppered with plenty of suspects with genuine motives to keep the reader guessing.

As usual, Stan's attraction to women brings him nothing but trouble. R.J.'s lovely former co-worker is a suspect, one gorgeous source lives with a protective uncle, and reporter Buffy Cole alternately helps and interferes while she tries to decide which is more important—Stan or a scoop.

Manno's clean writing style sets a fast pace. Dry details such as annulment procedures are spiced up in the delivery by interesting characters like Fr.

Thomas "Rock" Dodge, a former police officer. The ending brings a surprise, but the clues are all in the book if you're sharp enough to catch them.

Jacqueline M. Vick

EXPIRATION DATE

Duane Swierczynski

April, 2010

Minotaur

There's a hum in the room when you talk about this author. One of a handful of authors who put the black back into American Noir in the early part of the new millennium, his work has been exceptional and inspires a cult like following. I am waiting for that sound in the room to become a roar.

EXPERATION DATE is a book that is the exception to prove the rule, "there are only three mystery plots." Once again Swierczynski uses sparse prose and taut characters to create something entirely unique and utterly amazing.

Mickey Wade is a downsized journalist. As the book opens his life seems to have hit the pause button. Job gone and with little money Mickey is in no position to decline his Mother's offer of a rent-free apartment. His Grandfather's to be exact.

Who is the Philadelphia Slasher? Why was Mickey's Dad murdered by someone he'd never met? Why has Mickey's Grandfather lived in the apartment of a murdered scientist for the past eight years? Is it possible a bottle of out dated Tylenol is sending Mickey back in time or has he simply lost his mind? Swierczynski plays his plot like a post modern maestro. He breaks all the rules. Fast forwarding and rewinding the history of three generations. The only constant is a Philadelphia that could only be drawn by someone who loves and knows that city; all of it. Throwing in elements of every genre as well as something entirely unique, *EXPERATION DATE* is an indescribable book written by a scribe with no expiration date.

Ruth Jordan

THE EXECUTOR

Jon Evans

2010

Vertigo Crime

Jon Evans has written some excellent thrillers and has a knack for strong characters. News that he was doing one of the Vertigo Crime books made me happy, as I'm a fan. *THE EXECUTOR* was not what I was expecting. Once again I see a favorite author stretching their creative muscles and doing something unanticipated and wonderful. Andrea Mutti's art is so perfect for this book. His use of shadows and ability to really get the most out of the black and white is amazing.

Joe Ullen was raised in a small nowhere town called Elora in New York and when his hockey skills gave him a chance to get out he ran. His career

turned into his being a thug, eventually injured to the point of not playing anymore, leaving him running a business and really bored. He gets word that his old high school sweetheart has died and has named him executor of her will. Rather than just dealing with it over the phone he decides to go back to Elora. Miriam's death isn't as accidental as it looks, and when he starts looking into it a bit he discovers that the whole town is full of secrets. Some of the secrets are his. Not knowing who to trust he finds an uneasy ally in an unlikely place and is determined to get to the truth if he has to lay his own soul bare in the process.

Evans has some great characters that he weaves in and out of various threads of the plot. The culmination brings them all together seamlessly. A bit like the bastard son of Ross McDonald and William Kent Krueger, this book has an ending that is bittersweet yet perfect.

Evans has raised the bar for this group of books from Vertigo.

Jon Jordan

THE GIRL WHO KICKED THE HORNET'S NEST

Stieg Larsson

2010

Quercus Publishing

There really is no point reading the third and final book in Larsson's Millennium Trilogy unless you've read the first two – THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO and THE GIRL WHO PLAYED WITH FIRE. These novels have become the biggest selling books of fiction in the world. In fact when THE GIRL WHO KICKED THE HORNET'S NEST was released in paperback in the UK in April, the combined sales of the Larsson novels [in all their various editions] represented over 4% of total UK book sales that week. These three books have divided opinion, into those who love the tales of Lisbeth Salander and her male foil Mikael Blomkvist; and those who hate them. Reading this third volume without knowing the back-story contained in the two preceding books would be akin to trying to read this book in a Sanskrit edition, as much of the proceedings have their roots in the past. The other factor is that if you disliked the preceding books, then 'HORNET'S NEST' will just annoy you, however if you loved the first two, then this will give you closure. So what's the verdict on THE GIRL WHO KICKED THE HORNET'S NEST? It is far more complex than the first two in terms of narrative direction, even more characters, many who are hard to delineate; though it is a treat for those who want to see closure after the traumatic incidents in the preceding books. It opens minutes from the conclusion of 'Fire', with Salander seriously ill in hospital with gunshot wounds. Mikael Blomkvist tries to contact Salander despite a heavy police guard to try and unravel who she really is. Larsson uses the book to explore his two pet themes – violent misogyny against women, and the threat of the extreme right wing to the stability of Swedish Democracy. In so doing we will discover what in Salander's past resulted in her miss-fit persona, the seeds of which were sown in book two. Again the writing style is most peculiar but very hypnotic so the reader falls into a trance, engaged with the narrative, despite some convoluted along the path of conspiracy. When I closed the book, a sense of melancholy spread over me like a thick blanket. I felt sad, because there would be no more tales about the adventures of Lisabeth Salander, and sadness came from the emptiness of losing a friend, even if she never really existed, except in the dark crevices of my imagination.

Ali Karim

A GOD SOMEWHERE

John Arcudi

2010

Wildstorm

I've read an awful lot of graphic novels and you would think that with the sheer volume of them that it would take something special to "wow" me. That would be true. And A GOD SOMEWHERE did Wow me.

A trio of friends are going through their loves like most of us do, planning for things to do later, talking about what happened today, and just enjoying each other's company. A freak natural disaster brings out super powers in one of the trio and all of a sudden it's a completely different world. And not just for typical citizens, but for the three friends. Eric Foster suddenly has the ability to fly, he seems invulnerable, and is really strong. Obviously this affects him, but it also has a major impact on his best friend Sam and his brother Hugh. As Eric becomes more and more used to his power he starts to lose touch with his humanity. His family is worried and Sam doesn't know what to do. Hugh wants to just talk to his brother like things haven't changed, Sam starts to cash in on being "The best friend" and Eric starts to lose it.

At first I thought this was going to be another deconstruction of the superhero kind of a tale, but it is far from that. It is a look at society, the nature of family and the limits of friendship. Parts of it really made me look at some of the friendships I've had and how they changed. This is a great book and one people will be talking about for a long time.

Jon Jordan

GREEK STREET: BLOOD CALLS FOR BLOOD

Peter Milligan w/ Davide Gianfelice

2010

Vertigo

Peter Milligan (interviewed in Crimespree last issue) has a new series at Vertigo called Greek Street. The first collection is now out.

Milligan takes the cool parts of British modern crime stories and combines it with the tragedies of the ancient Greeks to deliver a story that is both fresh and familiar.

A crime family, common thread, is at war with other gangsters. A stripper who is much more than she seems, a crazy young woman who is seeing things and a young man trying to find his way in the world get wrapped up in something bigger than they can imagine. A strange series of murders all appear to intermingle in the beginning of what looks to be an epic tale. When a man's son is less important to him than his criminal empire things go wrong.

To prevent a war with another family he has to make a sacrifice. A young man named Eddie finds the mother who gave him up when he was a baby only to have the meeting end tragically. Local cops are looking for a killer who is destroying men who hurt women. Little by little the threads come together and by the end of this first volume you are firmly hooked. Greek Street looks poised to be the next big hit for Vertigo. I can't wait for more.

Jon Jordan

HALF-PRICE HOMICIDE

Elaine Viets

May 2010

Obsidian

Cozy. That much maligned and yet entirely embraced sub-genre. While many are successful and a precious few write well within these hallowed halls, no one today does "cozy" quite like Elaine Viets. The author of the "Dead-End Jobs" series saw a world that few of us were willing to admit was coming to pass. Intelligent, educated people working in a series of jobs that their background did not prepare them for.

Helen Hawthorne is your protagonist. Throughout this series she's worked a series of jobs that require more cunning and people skills than any education can provide. HALF-PRICE HOMICIDE finds her in a consignment shop trying to make ends meet. When a difficult customer turns up dead Helen finds she's not trying to solve the murder as much as trying to exonerate herself.

From here, Ms. Viets takes her reader on a "laugh out loud" journey into the hallowed past of traditional mysteries while setting a contemporary theme that others could do well to learn from. Far and away the best "cozy" series out there, Viets wit and knowledge of mystery always play to her writer's skills. She is a one off, with a character as enduring as Jane Marple and a story as multi-faceted as any Dorothy Sayers ever penned. She is deserving of every to be read pile in mysteryland.

Ruth Jordan.

I, SNIPER

Stephen Hunter

January 2010

Simon & Schuster

The reader of this novel, like the protagonist of the title, needs infinite patience to reach the end of this fairly lengthy tale. Bobby Lee Swagger was one of the top two or three snipers during the Vietnam War, retiring as a USMC gunnery sergeant. He's drawn in to what seems to be a cut-and-dried case when four well-known protesters, including a Jane Fonda look-alike, are shot at long range apparently by another Marine sniper named Carl Hitchcock who is later found, a suicide, in a motel room. All clues point to him as the shooter and the FBI is moving forward to close the case.

Swagger, who is in the tradition of larger-than-life heroes like Jack Reacher and others of that ilk, shows his ability to think clearly (as well as shoot straight) when he upsets the appercart by showing that it wasn't Hitchcock's rifle that fired the shots, upsetting the FBI's already-made decision as well as the Ted Turner-like ex-husband of the slain movie actress who keeps pressure on all levels to conclude the investigation.

So we follow the trials and tribulations of Bobby Lee as he acts the rogue, following his nose, while his FBI buddy is hung out to dry when he drags his feet delaying the closing of the case. Despite its length, the novel moves swiftly, except for all kinds of minutiae on the life of a sniper, guns, sights, ammunition and, of course, shooting, to a totally unanticipated denouement.

Theodore Feit

INNOCENT

Scott Turow

May 2010

Grand Central

Like many, I found Scott Turow after watching the movie, *Presumed Innocent*. The paperback copy of that book opened a whole new world for me. It was a world where genre met literature and literature could become a decent movie despite or because of a wooden star.

In the twenty plus intervening years Turow has written books that revisit the themes of marriage, murder, lust and greed. In many those themes are addressed with a cynical aplomb matched by no one. In all, the words are lyrical. The getting there is the reader's joy, the master's plan.

Upon hearing that Turow would revisit the world of Rusty & Barbara Savage, I reserved skepticism. I'm so glad I did.

Years later Rusty is still the self centered, prickish humanitarian he was in *Presumed*; fighting the good cause, while not necessarily good. In the opening pages of *INNOCENT*, Rusty finds wife Barbara dead. He sits vigil on the body for 23 hours before calling the family doctor; strange behavior for the next member of the State Supreme Court. Enter Tommy Molto. Tommy is happy for the first time in his life. With a young wife and a newborn child, Molto doesn't want to rock the boat. Still, Tommy believes Savage did murder Carolyn all those years ago and he knows something is wrong now.

Evidence of an adulterous affair spurs Molto on and soon we have a rematch of wits where the stakes are higher for both men. Rusty Savage is about to be tried for murder the second time. Can a man really be innocent twice? Is Savage capable of human emotion or just a parable of the Human Condition?

For many authors revisiting an earlier path is not a good idea. Turow is not many authors. His is a talent that while often deconstructed has never been definable, a man of his times who's allowed us to share through words so beautifully put to the page you often forget you're reading about the basest of motivations.

INNOCENT; a good idea with excellent execution.

Ruth Jordan

THE KILLER v.1

Matz / Luc Jacumen

Archaia Studios Press

After being a big hit in France, the good people at Archaia Studios Press thought it a good idea to translate *THE KILLER* thriller into English for America. And thank the comic gods they did. *THE KILLER* flies under the radar as a slow building epic that makes you want a lot more. And this is only the first volume.

Writer Matz masterfully takes us through the life of the unnamed assassin, Killer, through a series of flashbacks while the Killer waits patiently for his latest job to work out. Matz takes a premise used many times and is able to make a very fresh and exhilarating story from it. The aging Killer remembers how he got into the business. How this seemingly normal young man who lived for nothing but school and women would find himself becoming the unsuspecting enforcer and hired gun. What's amazing is how you can believe how real this story could be. You can see every choice that Killer makes as one that any one person could make. But it's his life. And everything leads to the moment of him waiting too long for his target to appear. A mistake takes him far away from where he was, trying to leave it all behind, but like any good story, he gets pulled back in. From there it only gets from bad to worse for the "protagonist."

There was initial concern about the art having flipped through preview pages. It had a more perfected style to the tune of Scott McDaniel. *THE KILLER*, however, is so much more perfected. The art is the perfect companion to the story. The lines, while sharp and sometimes jagged and clean and easy to read.

Reading *THE KILLER* is like reading multiple movies. There's so much too it, yet you know it's only the beginning. The book is thrilling and surprisingly brilliant. This is how you make an epic.

Joe Schmidt

KILLER INSTINCT

Zoe Sharp

2010 (new edition)

Busted Flush Press

When I hear of certain things I get an immediate response, Ice cream: Black Cherry, Peanut Butter: Skippy, Football: Green Bay, favorite soda: Root Beer. Well when I hear Thriller Writers Zoe Sharp is always one of the first names I think of. Why? Because she nails it, action with constant forward movement in the plot and characters who you really believe can kick ass.

Zoe has had a number of books published here in the US, but her first books were not and now for the first time an American publisher with vision and great taste are releasing them here.

KILLER INSTINCT introduces Charlie (Charlotte) Fox. Charlie is a woman who thinks on her feet, is deadly with weapons and can really handle herself. Before Charlie evolved into the character she is today she was a woman making a living teaching self-defense and was not exactly happy about it. She

finds herself in the middle of a murder investigation because she is actually a logical suspect. It's her wits and skill that will keep her safe and out of jail. Sharp is part of a very small group of writers who actually talks the talk and walks the walk. She really knows this stuff and so when she writes it, it feels more real than most non-fiction books. Sharp deserves a genre all her own. This book, more than most being published deserves to be in print again and if you are just discovering Zoe Sharp than you are in for a real treat.

Jon Jordan

THE KILLING OF MINDI QUINTANA

Jefferey A Cohen

2010

Welcome Rain

Frederick Builder is a man with a gift for designing displays. It comes naturally and without effort. But he doesn't appreciate that gift; he wants to be a writer. Frederick doesn't possess the same talent for writing. While he's waiting for his writing career to take off, Frederick "Freddy" is working as the manager of the china department at Chanet Department Store. He's been regularly recognized as "Manager of the Month" and his greatest fear is that he will be named "Manager of the Year." The Manager of the Year becomes Philadelphia's great celebrity. His face is put on billboards and bus ads, on the company's bags, boxes and aftershave. It is meant to be the ultimate reward, but Freddy fears that fate more than anything. He's embarrassed by his position as a department store manager and eagerly awaits the day that he can call himself an author and walk out of this job he so despises.

Mindi Quintana works for a literary magazine and is the daughter of an ex-con. Her father did some "creative accounting" for the mob and ended up in jail. For a short time in college, Mindi dated Freddy then meets up with him again during a trip to Chanet to find a vase for her parents' anniversary. Mindi would like to be friends with Freddy and she tries to be nice to him, but Freddy wants more. Freddy shares his writing with Mindi in the hopes of finding someone to publish it, but Mindi is honest with Freddy and tells him his writing needs a lot of work.

When Freddy is named "Manager of the Year" at Chanet and Mindi rebuffs his advances, he cracks and kills Mindi. He becomes an overnight celebrity as the China Manager case.

THE KILLING OF MINDI QUINTANA is Jeffrey Cohen's debut novel. It looks satirically at society's obsession with celebrity and that obsession's impact on the legal system. It is also a look at how the legal system designed to protect the innocent often rapes the victims.

The novel moves on the slow side. The actual killing of Mindi Quintana doesn't occur until the middle of the book. The beginning of the book works to build up the reader's dislike for Freddy. I did find myself wondering why Mindi wouldn't just stop agreeing to do things with Freddy, but that's bringing my own personality into the mix. While I felt ultimately there were some contradictions in her character, humans can often be contradictory.

What I found most effective for me as the reader, though, was the reminder of how imperfect our legal system is. This causes conflict for me because I remind myself of the need to protect the innocent. But in some cases, the innocent aren't protected and the guilty are. Do we settle for imperfect and continue to justify it or do we need to be reminded that we should still be working to improve this imperfect system? Definitely makes you think.

Jen Forbus

MURDER ON THE CLIFFS

Joanna Challis

2009

Minotaur

What a fun book! After the end of the first World War, budding author Daphne du Maurier visits her mother's old nurse on the Cornwall coast--and finds a body--as well as a setting, and characters for her future books.

Beautiful Victoria Bastion, a servant in Padthaway, was engaged to Lord David Hartley. Suicide? Murder? If murder, how? who? The dead woman was found wearing only a nightgown and no slippers or shoes. The latter piques Daphne's curiosity.

Since Daphne is the daughter of the famous London stage figure, Sir Gerald du Maurier, she is welcomed into the castle in this small village.

Suspects are, of course, David, her fiancé; Lady Hartley, his mother, who opposed the marriage; and Soames, the man who hired Victoria, and with whom she may have had a past. David's sister may be a little unbalanced, as may be Victoria's brother, but would they kill her? Victoria had a secret life in London--something to do with her father--so is the murderer there?

Challis has a second Daphne du Maurier book in the works and I look forward to it. Cozy.

Gay Toltl Kinman

MOTHERHOOD IS MURDER

Diana Orgain

2010

Berkley Prime Crime

Although breast pumps are not funny, they are funny in this story. New mom (baby is 2 months old) is a wannabe P.I., and she's going to make it. But how do you do stakeouts, interview clients, follow people, when you have to nurse your baby every two hours? Fathers can only do so much.

Kate Connolly manages a lot. The story starts on the dinner cruise of Roo & You, aka Mommy and me, however this cruise has the fathers aboard instead of the infants. A person is killed, seemingly by falling down the stairs. It's not quite so cut and dried. Kate has met everyone and is hired by one of the participants to find out what happened. She picks up a lot of gossip--who was having an affair with whom--which gives her a lineup of suspects.

She starts asking questions and winds up in danger.

Gay Toltl Kinman

MURDER HAS NO CLASS

Rebecca Kent

2010

Berkley

Set in Edwardian England, Bellehaven House's Headmistress Meredith Llewellyn is at odds--her assistant is doing untoward things, the maids are about to riot, and the boys are leading the girls astray. What to do?

See a ghost.

Actually, Lord James Stalham lives--or rather he lived--in the house that is now the school. His father was murdered and James was hung for the dreadful deed. In James' appearance to her, he conveys to Meredith that he is innocent and wants her to find out who the killer is, so that he can finally rest in peace. With the help of two friends, she sets off to do so. She wants to visit the murdered man's wife, mother to the supposed murderer.

Lots of period history.

Gay Toltl Kinman

OLD DOGS

Donna Moore

2010
Busted Flush

The Lefty Award is given out at Left Coast Crime to humorous mysteries. Donna Moore has one. If you've been lucky enough to meet Donna at a convention you would remember as she glows with warmth and is just a joy to be around. She is also one of the funniest wittiest people I know. Donna is one of the lucky few that can take her sense of humor and put to paper and have it work. Like an expert chef she uses just enough of all the right ingredients with out over doing anything. OLD DOGS does not try to be funny, it just is. And what is OLD DOGS? Two elderly ladies are living a life that is fiction; one built to hide their past has hookers and con artists. They have one last big heist in mind that could let them live their days in luxury. Steal a Shi Zu statue from a Glasow museum, a statue covered in jewels. The only thing keeping them from pulling it off? A variety of people who want the dog, from young punks to a Tibetan national to an Australian hit man. Fast and furious with perfect timing and guaranteed to leave you smiling, OLD DOGS is one of my favorite books of 2010.
Jon Jordan

ONCE A SPY
Keith Thomson
March 2010
Doubleday

Drummond Clark is living a quiet life in retirement and has begun the slow deterioration of Alzheimer's Disease. He worked his whole life as an appliance salesman, or so his son Charles thought. Turns out Drummond has a secret and that secret could be putting him in grave danger. The only problem is, most of the time, Drummond doesn't remember the secret. Drummond's son Charles is a gambling addict in debt up to his eyeballs with a dirty loan shark. If he doesn't come up with a very large payment soon, he will be in grave danger. Normally, Charles hates to be bothered with his aging father, but when Drummond hints at the fact that he has millions of dollars stashed away, Charlie pays close attention. And before he knows what hits him, he's in the midst of a man hunt where he and Drummond are the prey. Traditionally I've been a cynic when it comes to spy thrillers. ONCE A SPY is so unique, though, I had to check it out. The element of ONCE A SPY that drew me in was the relationship between Drummond and Charlie. The dynamics of this relationship are so life-like; I don't think any reader would have a hard time relating this father and son pair to people in their own lives. They may not have shootouts and car chases and hidden passageways, but they have the emotional dilemmas and connections. In the typical spy thriller, all of the James Bond action and gadgets can come across as over the top and hard to believe. In ONCE A SPY, cynic Charlie helps to make those elements humorous and even a little more believable. And Drummond's Alzheimer's Disease enhances the humanness of his character. He isn't a larger than life, superman-type character; instead he's susceptible to pain and disease and heartache. This reality makes me, the reader, care what happens to him. I have to continue reading to see his fate, instead of focusing on the improbability of the action and gadgets. As a reader, I am a hard sell on the spy thriller, but Keith Thomson is a top-notch salesman and I walked away a happy customer.
Jen Forbus

OUR LADY OF IMMACULATE DECEPTION
Nancy Martin
2010
Minotaur

Roxy Abruzzo runs a salvage business in Pittsburg. She is a single mom, loyal to a fault. In this new series from author Nancy Martin I found myself stepping into a time warp, back to the early nineties when authors were allowed to show the quirks of their protagonists and, damned skippy, those quirks mattered. OUR LADY OF IMMACULATE DECEPTION is a very well done Murder on the "lite side". A powerful Pittsburg family loses its heir and fortune is up for grabs. Roxy is at turns an alibi, a motive, and thorn in the paw of the Hyde family. An engaging addition to the annals of femmes both femme and fatale, Roxy had me at the first pilfered statue...
Ruth Jordan.

PAGANINI'S GHOST
Paul Adam
2010
Minotaur Books

Music is the theme of this delightful novel, a sequel to the author's equally charming debut effort, THE RAINALDI QUARTET, which featured the luthier violin-repairer and -maker Giovanni Castiglione. This time, the mystery involves the violinist and composer Paganini, whose virtuosity and audacity provide Mr. Adams with a wealth of material to inform and entertain the reader. Paganini's violin, the famous "Cannon," is kept in Genoa where it is provided every two years to the winner of a competition to play at a concert. The winner of the current competition, a young Russian virtuoso dominated, of course, by his mother, detects a flaw in the instrument that is brought to Giovanni to inspect and hopefully to repair. This transaction gives Giovanni the opportunity not only to befriend the young artist, providing one theme in this mystery, but to become involved in a couple of murders, the outgrowth of events in Paganini's life. When a visitor from Paris is found dead in his hotel room with a torn fragment of a musical score, detective Antonio Guastafeste asks his friend Giovanni for help, and the two go on to investigate not one but three murders and the reasons behind them. Along the way we are treated to such detail about violin making, the life of a child prodigy, and the history of Paganini's career and life that we are almost overwhelmed (but joyfully entertained) in this fast-reading mystery.
Theodore Feit

PRETTY IN INK
Karen Olson
2010
Obsidian

Tattoo artist Brett Kavanaugh and team ink a group of drag queens, which is how they end up front and center for Britney Brassieres' stage show opening night. The real show turns out to be a champagne attack on Britney who is shot with the cork from the champagne bottle in the middle of her act. Britney survives the cork assault, but when she and another drag queen are dead days later and Brett's intern is on the run; Brett is following the only clue she has, a queen of hearts tattoo. PRETTY IN INK is the follow-up to Olson's THE MISSING INK, and Olson hasn't dropped a stroke with this series. The eclectic mix of characters on the case in Sin City makes for sharp humor and exciting action scenes. Olson adds substantially to her cast with the drag queens. Her knack for giving the

characters dimension seems especially acute with these men dressed as women. Olson crafts her characters in such a way that the reader can connect with them individually instead of seeing them as part of a stereotypical group.

They say you shouldn't judge a book by its cover, but the dashing cover reflects the brilliance of Vegas as well as the artistic angle of the characters: the custom tattoos, including Brett's reproduction of Monet's water lilies and Jeff's Day of the Dead, and the flamboyant make-up and clothing of the drag queens. Olson's writing style is one that paints broad strokes of life on her paper canvas.

The final element that should not go unnoticed is Olson's dialogue. The voice of each character takes on a life of its own, from the fearless Bitsy to the uber-macho Jeff to the arrogant detective, DeBurra. The dialogue flows naturally. I especially appreciate the way Brett's spunk and humor takes shape through her conversations.

The Tattoo Shop Mystery series is one I look forward to. PRETTY IN INK did not disappoint as Olson's sophomore addition to the series.
Jen Forbus

THE PROOF IS IN THE PUDDING

Melinda Wells

2010

Berkley Prime Crime

Della Carmichael has a successful TV cooking show in Southern California. At a cook-off, where she is a judge, death strikes. Della becomes a suspect. Even though many people wanted to kill the victim, her niece had a special reason. She's a suspect also.

Della has ties with LAPD, as her deceased husband was a police officer there, and they may be cutting her a little slack, but not much.

Set in North Hollywood and Santa Monica and environs in the present.

The third in this delicious series, with lots of food discussions. Recipes for the dishes she prepares, such as Carole's Quick and Easy Chocolate Nut Butter Fudge Pudding, are in the back.

Caveat: Gaining ten pounds just by reading this book is not the fault of the author!

Gay Toltl Kinman

RECKLESS

Andrew Gross

April 2010

William Morrow

Ty Hauck left his position with the police department to work for the Talon Group covering corporate data security and internal forensics. But when an old friend and her family are brutally murdered, Ty's investigative instincts won't let him leave this case to the authorities. Meanwhile, a "friend" of Talon's asks for assistance looking into the man she is dating. Ty's investigation collides head first into Treasury Agent, Naomi Blum's investigation of a possible terrorism issue. As Wall Street, and thus the world's economy, appears to be literally imploding, Ty and Naomi discover something "bigger than terrorism."

Andrew Gross is back with one killer thriller. Not only is this a fast-paced, action-packed plot, it's a complex look at the reality of our vulnerability. Gross illustrates how with the right pieces in place, the whole world's economy could be brought to its knees. This isn't an I-know-it-can't-happen-to-me plot. This is a plot that all-too-realistically could touch each and every reader that picks up the book. That's what keeps you glued to the pages.

Consistently throughout this Ty Hauck series, Gross has shown a natural aptitude for developing character relationships. This plot element is often overlooked in thrillers as the concentration centers more on the action of the plot. But Gross doesn't let his characters falter. Ty's daughter Jessie never appears (except for a phone call) in this novel, but the strength of their father-daughter bond is as evident as any of the books she features prominently in. A past friendship re-surfaces for Ty in RECKLESS that could have been a disastrous cliché. Instead Gross molds it into a connection so jarringly real, I had to remind myself I was reading fiction.

The final element of RECKLESS that must be noted by me as superb is Gross's female characters. They hold equal footing with his male characters, and he affords them a level of respect that isn't always present in this genre. Gross introduces Naomi Blum in RECKLESS; the Treasury agent working with Ty exemplifies this respect. I hope Gross intends on keeping Blum around, as I think she is quickly becoming one of my favorite females of crime fiction.

I couldn't put this one down, so don't be reckless and miss it.

Jen Forbus

ROLLING THUNDER

Chris Grabenstein

May 2010

Pegasus

Sea Haven has a new roller coaster on the boardwalk; John Ceepak and Danny Boyle are policing the grand opening event when Jackie O'Malley, wife of the roller coaster's owner, has a heart attack and dies while taking the very first ride. Everything points to natural causes until Gail Baker, a young local, is found dismembered. Ceepak's and Danny's investigation leads them into an ugly element of Sea Haven and circles back to Jackie O'Malley's death on the ROLLING THUNDER.

Ceepak and Boyle are back for their sixth outing in the seaside resort-themed series. Grabenstein is back with his signature wit, complex plots, and stellar characters. The masterful way he blends these elements of the novel makes for a captivating, entertaining reading experience. Grabenstein gives the reader everything: comedy, drama, action, and every once in awhile a dash of romance.

The theme of family is present again with the O'Malley's and the return of Ceepak's trouble-making father, Joe. And of course it wouldn't be a Ceepak novel without the compelling interaction between him and Danny. They both grow in their own ways; however, this time Danny experiences a bit of a growth spurt. The young officer is growing up.

To think that this was the Ceepak that almost wasn't still makes me shudder. The series continues to be fresh and distinctive. Grabenstein continues to work magic on the page. Long live Ceepak!

Jen Forbus

RUNNING DARK

Jamie Freveletti

June, 2010

William Morrow

Last year's debut novel by author Jamie Freveletti, RUNNING FROM THE DEVIL, was highly entertaining and full of good characters. With a fantastic plot, RUNNING was a thriller that thrilled and left you wanting more. This year Ms. Freveletti presents RUNNING DARK, a sophomore book without any sophomore blues.

Chemist Emma Caldrige has put the events of the Colombian Jungle behind her. She's competing in an Ultra Marathon when a bomb goes off right

next to her, on mile 35. As she's helped to her feet she sees an epi pen, feels a prick, and runs an astonishing time. Something isn't right and a few rudimentary tests later Emma knows she's been exposed to a new and potentially deadly drug.

Back in the States Edward Banner would like nothing more than to put the Columbian experiences of last year behind him. Unfortunately, both he and his company Darkview are under scrutiny. A Senate committee wants to know why the largest oil pipeline in South America was blown up.

Off the coast of Somalia, Special Agent Cameron Summers is laying low. Working on special assignment for Darkview, Summers is guarding a Cruise Ship from possible attack. Summers may be experienced but once the pirates arrive he knows that it's a matter of when, not if they board the vessel. Apparently there's something far more valuable than rich tourists on board.

As Emma makes her way to Somalia to assist Summers, Banner staves off a surly Senator and someone far more sinister. Aboard a ship in Somalia a group of courageous passengers tries to fight off pirates both better equipped and more experienced than themselves. Two of America's top politicians display erratic behavior and Banner is attacked. Darkview realizes that the answer to everything may be in the drug Emma was exposed to.

Seldom do new novelists have the ability to juggle multiple plot points, locations and characters and not drop at least one. RUNNING DARK is a welcome exception. Jamie Frevelleti is not only a great juggler; she's a magician as well. RUNNING DARK will leave you racing for the finish line. That's a promise.

Ruth Jordan

SAINTLY REMAINS

Tony Perona

2010

Five Star

New Midwest Chapter MWA President Tony Perona still finds time to write, and write well, as evidenced in his latest Nick Bertetto Mystery.

Nick is supposed to be on vacation at his in-laws in Jasper, Indiana, when he is pulled into a case with animal cruelty, a missing body from a high school shooting and possible Satanic rituals. Loosely based on the rumored story of teen Cassie from the Columbine High School massacre, who purportedly reaffirmed her belief in God before being murdered, this story delves into the case of what happens next to a town devastated by such an event.

While more research has been published debunking some of the Columbine rumors and situation, this fictional mystery still works as it explores religious idolatry and myth in a respectful, intelligent puzzle. Cruel and shocking details of a skinned pet at his in-laws followed by the grave robbing bring Nick calls from his reporter boss and further reason to get to the bottom of the interconnected series of events.

Perona does an excellent job of portraying family man Nick, who is pulled between work and family and then realistically has to bring his five year old with a typical short attention span on an interview with a Church leader. Too many mystery series with moms or dads have the kids conveniently out of sight at key moments. Interest deepens when the daughter here begins to have visions related to the crimes. The portrayal of teen Kevin, whose pet was also abused by the criminal and who also knows a lot of the high school victims and students, is excellent. Kevin is smart and daring in a respectful three-dimensional characterization which again brings this title above many others which follow teen stereotypes. Catholic history and lore, tie-in to shocking recent news subjects, interesting characters and surprising plot twists make this another strong addition to a good series from Perona.

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE Volume 8

Matt Wagner w/ various artists

2010

Vertigo Comics

Volume 8 of the pulp inspired SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE is one of the more interesting in the run. The first story features politics pre-WWII and United States involvement. Wesley Dodds (Sandman) is invited to join a group of other wealthy men who want to help fight against invading Nazis by donating money. A Polish aviator has come to appeal to them in hopes of saving his country.

Comics fans will recognize Janos Prohaska as Blackhawk, an aviator who made a big splash in WWII. Seen here he is a fancy flyer who has not yet really taken up the fight fully. Politics and larceny based greed stand to interfere with the good intentions of these men and Sandman steps in to stop the plot against Janos.

The second tale is a set against the backdrop of the rising popularity of pulps and comics. A small publishing house turns out to be a money laundering front for a local gangster. When he decides to clear out the competition things get messy. It's a great, if fractured tale of the beginnings of the comics industry.

This series of reprints is a real treasure. This is some of the best crime fiction done in comics at the time. Wagner lives and breathes this era and makes it feel like he was actually there. Books like this are why I love comics.

Jon Jordan

THE SERPENT POOL

Martin Edwards

2010

Poisoned Pen Press

This is the fourth novel in the series set in England's northwest Lake District, an area well-known not only for its landscape, but the home of Keats, Shelley, Tennyson, Carlyle, Beatrix Porter and Thomas De Quincey, this last perhaps best known for his "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater," but less famous for "On Murder Considered as one of the Fine Arts," a reference point in this plot. The series follows Oxford historian Daniel Kind and DCI Hannah Scarlett, now reassigned to the Cold Case Squad.

A baffling six-year-old case involving a young woman who drowned in six inches of water in the Serpent Pool, a fairly bleak spot in the area, has Hannah running in circles. Was it murder or suicide? Meanwhile, two new murders take place with intriguingly disparate MOs, but Hannah discerns some obscure similarities. Are all three cases related?

All this takes place while a De Quincey Festival is being put together and Daniel is writing a book about the author, who influenced such writers as Poe, Baudelaire, Gogol and Borges. This novel has all the elements of the mysteries of these stalwarts: suspense, sinister aspects, hidden secrets, a tight plot and interesting characters and good writing. (It should be noted that the book has also been issued in trade paperback.)

Theodore Feit

SILVER BORNE

Patricia Briggs

2010

Ace

I'm going to go ahead and talk about the elephant in the room. There are a lot, and I mean A LOT, of books coming out the last few years that fall into a category known as Urban Fantasy. You might recognize these books because they have vampires and werewolves and other creatures that go bump in the night, except they are told with modern sensibilities. It seems that the success of a few has really prompted the market to become flooded with this craze.

Ok, I'm glad I got that off my chest.

SILVER BORNE by Patricia Briggs does not fall into the group of books I just mentioned. Sure, it's urban Fantasy, but she's not jumping on the money train, she's one of the people that drive it. This is the 16th book Briggs has written, the 5th in this series featuring Mercy Thompson. Briggs doesn't follow trends, she sets them. Trust me, she'll be doing this and doing it well long after the Johnny-come-latelys jump at the next trend.

Mercy Thompson is a mechanic who has a knack for working on cars. She's also a shape shifter, trying to get by in a world not always ready to accept these Supernatural Americans. In this book Mercy has her grease covered hands full. Mercy had borrowed a book with secrets about a group of beings known as fae. The book is not something the fae want out and about as they are more than a little protective of their secrets. Unfortunately the bookstore is closed and the owner missing, and it doesn't look like a case of the economy shutting down another independent bookstore. Trying to stay ahead of the fae will be a full time job, so naturally something else goes wrong. Mercy's friend and fellow shape shifter is having problems controlling his wolf nature and this could lead to his being, well, eliminated. Mercy is going to really be on top of her game to make it through this.

Patricia Briggs is really something special and her story telling abilities are something to behold. She writes characters you care about or are afraid of or both, and her pacing is wonderful. Another truly great book in this series.

Jon Jordan

SLOW FIRE

Ken Mercer

2010

Minotaur

Quite a fantastic book. The writing advice of getting the protagonist up a tree and throwing rocks at him holds during the entire book, and none of it contrived.

Will Magowan didn't exactly make a big mistake, but working undercover for LAPD, he had to shoot up--as in drugs. He got hooked. So they let him go. His last chance at a real job is being Chief of Police in Haydenville, CA. with a force of--two.

No matter, here he is and he is trying his darndest to make good. He wants his wife back, and his life. But he's up that tree, and a lot of people are throwing rocks at him, particularly when he starts enforcing the law.

Tweakers have taken over the town, actually they are the town, and Will wants to shut down the source, which may be the town's most famous citizen. Even the librarian is on the citizen's side.

Nothing Will does works out. More rocks. Although he's not doing drugs, he is taking medication for the pain in his back. Is he addicted again? His estranged wife thinks so; therefore she's reluctant to get back with him.

Wonderful read.

Gay Toltl Kinman

SNOWBOUND

Blake Crouch

July, 2010

Miniature

Damn. Blake Crouch has never shied away from the macabre. He's also never made it so personal and so accessible to the reader.

SNOWBOUND is the story where the cross genesis of King (Stephen) and Hammett becomes the writer's own narrative.

SNOWBOUND. Will Innes has most certainly lost his wife to slave traders. He will lose his daughter to Cerebral Palsy. On the run, five years after his wife has disappeared, Will's life is about to change.

Rachael Innes is introduced into this narrative as not a great wife or a fabulous mother but as a victim. She's kidnapped by people who see the five hundred dollar a night possibilities and not the role of loving wife, mother and altruistic lawyer that composite her character. Rachael's disappearance sends shockwaves through the young couples' sub-division.

Husband Will and daughter Devlin escape into the transitory but they are discovered. Five years later the F.B.I. walks into their life and tells them the beloved wife and mother is alive... but life....

From here Crouch tells a simple but epic story. Three people will risk their future to find their past. Can love and cunning change the past? What awaits our players in the blizzard mansion? How can the things Crouch writes about really exist?

Within these pages a palpable challenge between life & death; love & loss exist. It is the simplest of stories that carries the day. Two parents who love their child and an F.B.I. who wants her sister back are about to tell the story of a three day journey that will capture readers everywhere.

Ruth Jordan

SO COLD THE RIVER

Michael Koryta

June, 2010

Little, Brown

"Every picture tells a story. Don't it?"

Eric Shaw is a young filmmaker who has already acquired a storied past when SO COLD THE RIVER opens. Kicked around and spat out by Hollywood, he's living in Chicago doing videos for high end funerals when this tale opens.

Watch out readers. The picture of an a-frame cottage is about to envelop you. Eric has a gift, a cognizance that is more than a director of photography's sixth sense.

Alyssa Bradford sees this and hires Eric. Her father-in-law is a rich man. No one knows his back story and she'd like for Eric to explore it with his camera before the old man dies. She has only one relic from his past. A bottle of the famous spring water from his home town is about to send Eric on a journey into the past and readers into a vividly candid look into the life of Koryta's characters, settings and sense of history.

Two magnificent hotels have been lovingly restored in French Lick, Indiana. Rundown salutations to the past have become must stay resorts of the present. They'll be the perfect setting for a video montage into Campbell Bradford's early life. The springs that allowed French Lick and Pluto Water a shining moment in the early part of the twentieth century are about to tell a timeless story... the story of how evil never dies.

Koryta's characters leap off the page. From the present and of the past, SO COLD THE RIVER is a tale of segregation, of moon shining, of contemporary racial harmony and marital woes. Complete the narrative with car chases, shoot them ups, hostage situations, Twisters, and a long ago decision for survival and you'll tap into this book. Read it and you'll get so much more.

No other writer could layer this lore with the brilliance of Koryta. He is in his element here, telling a story both timeless and elementary. It's a history he knows and a subject he loves. Already the winner of several genre awards, SO COLD THE RIVER is the novel that should catapult Koryta into the stratosphere of Best Seller.

Ruth Jordan

STILL MIDNIGHT

Denise Mina

2010
Little, Brown

Another tour de force from Denise Mina.

STILL MIDNIGHT introduces Americans to their third Mina protagonist. Alex Morrow is on the scene when a Glasgow storekeeper is taken for ransom. A no nonsense police, she hasn't the patience to play politics. Alex also has a past that may not do her any favors if it's discovered by her superiors. To be self indulgent and merely introduce a new protagonist isn't Mina's style. STILL MIDNIGHT is the story of an immigrant family and the men who kidnap their patriarch. Racial and sexual tensions run high in MIDNIGHT. When Aamir is ripped from his family home, nothing seems to fit. Who is the Bob the kidnapppers were seeking? How did Aamir's second son come to see the kidnap vehicle? Why is the case being taken from Morrow, who's next on the docket?

All will be revealed gentle reader and no one will be spared. Mina possesses a singular talent. Once again this dynamo interviews the lives of victims, perpetrators and police to tell a story politically personal. This crime of commerce seems clear cut early on. Mina takes this story on from all angles, sparing no group. The police have an unwritten bureaucracy. The thieves have a misguided and simplistic goal. Our family, Aamir's family has a desire to acknowledge their cultural heritage and past while working towards a future that will please both father and sons. Can all this be done in one book? Of course it can..... look to the top of the review, STILL MIDNIGHT by DENISE MINA.

SUPREME JUSTICE

Philip Margolin

June, 2010

Harper

I'm prefacing my review of SUPREME JUSTICE because Crimespree allows me to do so. I adore Philip Margolin and I've always enjoyed his writing. If you can stand the google search for the first 20 pages you'll find glowing reviews, in my maiden name, for his first two books. GONE, BUT NOT FORGOTTEN was his third and the novel that sent this novelist into the ranks of salability.

As a reader, I've changed. As a writer Margolin has changed. I clipped through SUPREME JUSTICE at an astronomical pace (translation, this book is highly readable). I found myself entirely satisfied at the end (a rarity in thrillers). Two days later I realized I live in a post X-Files world.

SUPREME JUSTICE is the sequel to EXECUTIVE PRIVILEGE. In that book a lawyer and a tabloid reporter exposed the President of the United States. I'm not going to tell you the how or why <<spoiler>>.

SUPREME JUSTICE starts with a DEA heist and ends up maligning our high court. Are the tangos in Washington as intricate as this novel would suggest? Can a tabloid reporter and a justice clerk make the difference between a wrong and a right?

Margolin throws in everything, from the death penalty to Supreme Court Nomination hearings, all very well done. Very readable. Still, I'd like to think that his writing and my reaction to it is allowed by the indulgent world of conspiracy theories and not anything that could ever actually happen in the real world.

Unlike his predecessors in the American Thriller, Margolin looks at a TMZ world, where reality and the truth never have anything to do with one another. But after reading I find myself wondering, which truth is THE truth and could or will something like this happen? It's a Fox Mulder world...

Ruth Jordan

THEY'RE WATCHING

Gregg Hurwitz

July 2010

St. Martin's Press

I have read everything Gregg Hurwitz has written. I can neither try nor will I try to be unbiased in the following review. For that, I suggest you go to Library Journal or PW or.... Oh wait, they're all starred reviews? So, personal prejudices aside I hope that everyone will see the truth in the following review and support a great writer who's found the voice to tell an encompassing mystery with a commercial plot. Buy this book.

Patrick Davis thought he wanted to make movies for a living. Patrick Davis thought his marriage would stand the test of time. Now he's sitting outside his home watching his wife cry. He's about to go to his job as an associate professor at a hobunk community college. Patrick Davis is about to watch a DVD that will change his life.

THEY'RE WATCHING is the story of a young couple having trouble in their marriage. They are being stalked in a manner no one but the most paranoid could have envisioned a decade ago; cameras in their home, e-mails intercepted, reality changed by technology. And then comes death.

Hurwitz writes of a paparazzi gone mad, of times where personal liberty belongs in the past. At its heart , THEY'RE WATCHING is first and foremost a love story. One couple must find their way back to trust to prove innocence but someone wants Patrick Davis behind bars. If and how Arianna and Patrick can find the truth behind their recent lack of privacy is the only thing that could save him. It may not be enough but it's all they can hold onto....

Suspense has never been quite like this. THEY'RE WATCHING should have everyone reading.

Ruth Jordan

THE UNNAMED

Joshua Ferris

January 2010

Reagan Arthur Books/Little, Brown

Tim Farnsworth is apparently the victim of a strange malady, part narcolepsy, part something else entirely, something which seems to be unknown in the annals of medicine to date: an inexplicable and completely irresistible, uncontrollable compulsion to walk. When an "attack" begins, it can last for days, or months, for miles and miles, even from one State to another, until his legs can no longer move. Then and only then can he stop moving, usually to fall where he stands into an exhausted sleep, only to start walking endlessly again upon waking. If in mid-winter, he may be dressed only in jacket and slacks, although he is sometimes moved to discard even these, proceeding barefoot and clad only in his boxer shorts, and continue on as far and as long as his legs just keep carrying him forward. A strange affliction, to be sure. And an unusual book.

Tim, a handsome man and successful partner in a prestigious midtown Manhattan law firm, has in the past had a routine of calling his wife, Jane, telling her where he was, and waiting patiently for her to arrive and bring him home. Together they have explored a diagnosis and treatment, from Mayo Institute in the US to clinics in Europe, to no avail. As the book opens, the second recurrence has just started, even as he is in the midst of preparing to defend a Very Important Client against a murder charge.

Tim and Jane have in addition had to deal with their daughter Becka's teenage angst. She was nine when her father symptoms first appeared. Now seventeen, she wears her hair in dreadlocks, is grossly overweight, and plays the guitar to the exclusion of almost all else, but as the book progresses must take her turn overseeing her father and rescuing him when necessary. A grueling business for all concerned. As to the marriage, the author says about Jane: "She couldn't know about walking. They were like two inviolable spheres touching at a fine point in their curves, touching but failing to penetrate, failing to breathe the other's air. She chose to believe him when he told her that his condition was not a disorder of the mind but a malfunction of the body." On its face a medical mystery, this is also a compelling and powerful tale dealing with some of the most basic and human of emotions, of commitment to one's loved ones, of hope and despair, at once disturbing and surprising.

Gloria Feit

WHEN DEATH INTERVENES

L. C. Hayden

May 2010

Five Star

Poor Harry Bronson--a bad, bad guy is playing a game with him. Every time Bronson loses, another person is killed. The problem is he doesn't know what the game or the rules are, so it's easy to lose.

Bronson and wife, Carol, are camping in their motor home in Wyoming. The woman in the campsite next to them, Linda Randiz, hires him when she learns he was a Dallas P.D. detective. She's at her wit's end, as someone has threatened her family if she goes to the police. She doesn't know what the killer wants or why he is doing this--but the killer is whittling down her family. The unknown killer has done in her parents and her husband, which leaves her son and his family--and herself--in jeopardy.

Cherchez le money, which is what Bronson does, leading him to her husband's partner. They created a valuable medical formula. Someone wants it--but whom? And, where is the formula?

Bronson gets into more tight, aka death-defying, situations than any retired, or even active, cop should be in.

A cozy in the fact that there is no blood and gore--but the promise of such keeps the suspense quotient high.

Gay Toltl Kinman

THE WINTER THIEF

Jenny White

2010

Norton

A very unusual story. The author is a professor of anthropology at Boston University specializing in Turkey, so she knows what she's writing about.

Set in December 1888 in Istanbul, the story is about the dream that Gabriel Arti has of setting up a commune between Russia and the Ottoman Empire in a lush valley now filled with snow. But why does he need a shipload of guns? Someone in the commune has tipped off the Sultan, who rules the area. Next, Gabriel steals the gold from a bank. That could have been done quietly since only keys were involved, however someone sets off an explosion--and that is what sets off the story.

Enter Kamil Pasha, the Sultan's special prosecutor. Super villain Vahid wants the commune wiped out and persuades the Sultan that the group, mostly Armenians, is going to try to assassinate him. Of course, Vahid can arrange this subterfuge and other nefarious deeds, such as framing Kamil to stop his investigation. Did Vahid also frame Gabriel by planting the guns?

Vera, wife of Gabriel; Elif, lover of Kamil; Feride, sister of Kamil and wife of Huseyin, who is the injured bank manager, all have stories to tell. The short chapters alternate among several POVs. Lots of action.

Gay Toltl Kinman

YOU CAN'T STOP ME

Max Allan Collins and Matthew Clemens

2010

Pinnacle

YOU CAN'T STOP ME is not only the title of this book but also a mantra I said to myself whenever something threatened to interrupt my reading, and I'm talking the need to eat, wanting more coffee, or even smoking. I did not move from my chair till I was done.

YOU CAN'T STOP ME opens with a bang. JC Harrow is a small town cop just doing his job, but doing it in spectacular fashion as he saves the President during a visit to the state fair in his county. Arriving home that night his world is turned upside down when he discovers his family murdered.

We jump ahead in time and see Harrow working on a reality show that hunts criminals. A case in Florida catches his attention and it appears to be the same killer who took his family away from him. The killer very quickly makes it known that he wants to be in the spotlight, and Harrow just wants him stopped.

History has shown that Collins can write unforgettable stories and he is a great writer. This book proves he is also a master of lightening fast books that make most thrillers seem pedestrian by comparison. And even though I finished reading, it clung to my brain like glue and it was while before I could start another book. I look forward to more stories with JC Harrow.

Jon Jordan