
Crime fiction

Posted by Lyra - 20-04-2008 20:17

I've not found a really good crime book in ages. So here's a new thread.

Yesterday I read Close Enough to Kill by Beverly Barton. It was OK in that I read it all, but it was a bit poor. I knew who the killer was the moment he was introduced. I think the genre can do better.

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Re:Crime fiction

Posted by JtS - 21-04-2008 09:39

Have you read any Pelecanos?

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Re:Crime fiction

Posted by Lyra - 21-04-2008 11:18

Yes, of course, he is very good.

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Re:Crime fiction

Posted by Mitch - 21-04-2008 12:05

The book review on Radio 4 did a roundup on the latest crime-fiction the other week, and the best was by C.J. Sansom.

Who I've never heard of before, but he's written this crime series about a hunchbacked detective lawyer in Tudor England. It's meant to be really good?

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Re:Crime fiction

Posted by Lyra - 21-04-2008 12:24

Yeah, the Matthew Shardlake series. They are good, yeah, very good. I find it odd though that they are so massively hyped and popular, because they're really not so much better as such than say Susanna Gregory's Matthew Bartholomew series, or Sylvian Hamilton (both of whom are great) or Edward Marston, or Candace Robb, etc.

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Re:Crime fiction

Posted by Felicity, I guess so - 21-04-2008 13:44

While I praised historically-based crime fiction on the old thread (Alan Furst, Robert Wilson, erm, forgotten others again) I can't take medieval crime fiction, or anything in tights etc seriously.

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Re:Crime fiction

Posted by JtS - 21-04-2008 15:06

Re-read all the Chandler books.

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Re:Crime fiction

Posted by Amor de Cosmos - 21-04-2008 15:49

Not an original choice but damn good nevertheless: Death Comes for the Fat Man is well up to Reginald Hill's usual standard, perhaps even a bit better than the last D & P.

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Re:Crime fiction

Posted by Lyra - 21-04-2008 15:52

Is that the one that was published here as The Death of Dalziel? It was good, yeah.

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Re:Crime fiction

Posted by Amor de Cosmos - 21-04-2008 16:09

Must be, it's the most recent I think.

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Re:Crime fiction

Posted by Mitch - 21-04-2008 16:10

I finally got around to reading The Maltese Falcon the other week, and it's so much better than I expected it to be. I don't know why, but I'd just assumed it was a poor imitation of Raymond Chandler.

But it's ace isn't it? And Sam Spade is one of the great bastards in literature.

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Re:Crime fiction

Posted by Lyra - 21-04-2008 16:34

AdC there's a new one out, A Cure for all Diseases..

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Re:Crime fiction

Posted by Amor de Cosmos - 21-04-2008 16:38

Ah. It'll probably be a year or so before it makes it over here, if it's in PB I'll try to pick it when I'm over next month. Perfect airplane reading.

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Re:Crime fiction

Posted by Lyra - 21-04-2008 16:55

It was new in HB in March, but maybe they've done one of those airport PBs...

I was reading the Amazon reviews. Seems a lot of people didn't like this one being as how it's one of his more experimental ones. I expect they're just eebing silly.

There's also going to be a new Joe Sixsmith in June, which is great news.

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Re:Crime fiction

Posted by Amor de Cosmos - 21-04-2008 19:37

Oh good. I thought he'd given those up.

Re:Crime fiction

Posted by Gyuri - 21-04-2008 20:30

I finally got around to reading The Maltese Falcon the other week, and it's so much better than I expected it to be. I don't know why, but I'd just assumed it was a poor imitation of Raymond Chandler. The Maltese Falcon is my probably my favorite crime novel, and one of the first that helped me realize that just because something is "genre fiction" doesn't mean it can't be good "literary fiction" as well. The story Spade tells Brigid O'Shaunessy about the guy named "Flitcraft" has always particularly stuck with me.

I also second the recs for Pelecanos and Furst, though I thought the latter's novels are more spy than crime stories.

Re:Crime fiction

Posted by Amor de Cosmos - 21-04-2008 21:19

For obvious reasons The Flitcraft Parable isn't in the movie, which in a way says a good deal for Huston's direction and the performances of Bogart and Mary Astor, as it provides a much of the rationale for Spade's actions.

Re:Crime fiction

Posted by JtS - 22-04-2008 10:52

I bought The Maltese Falcon the other day and will read it soon. I've never been that bothered about reading books of films I've seen.

Re:Crime fiction

Posted by Lyra - 07-05-2008 15:26

Did the book not come first?

I'm just at the end of The Savage Altar by Åsa Larsson. It's pretty good, got a fantastically creepy setting in a weird speaking-in-tongues kind of church in northern Sweden, tons of snow and ice and pine trees and the Aurora shimmering away in the background. very decent mystery too, quite bloody, quite scary.

Re:Crime fiction

Posted by Nuno Gomes Loves Lyra - 26-06-2008 00:41

I'm rereading the oeuvre of Dennis Lehane. Partly because of the film of Gone, Baby, Gone, but partly because scenes/feelings from the books keep popping up in my dreams. Anyway, they're as good as they used to be. Thoroughly depressing, swoonsomely romantic.

Re:Crime fiction

Posted by The Purple Cow - 26-06-2008 08:54

I think Dash Hammett was a better writer than Chandler. People talk about how his dialogue has dated more than Chandler's but that's because it was more immediate and of it's time. It was the real street language of the day.

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If there is still anyone around who hasn't read the 'Berlin Noir' books by Phillip Kerr 'March Violets' - 'The Pale Criminal' and 'A German Requiem' they are great, great books.

Re:Crime fiction

Posted by Andy C - 26-06-2008 13:41

If you haven't already, I'd urge you to give Michael Dibdin's Aurelio Zen novels a go. As with the novels of Ian Rankin about Inspector Rebus, there's quite a bit of character development over the course of the series so it's best to read them in order: start with Ratking.

Re:Crime fiction

Posted by Mitch - 26-06-2008 15:21

People talk about how his dialogue has dated more than Chandler's but that's because it was more immediate and of it's time.

Neither author seems dated to me. It's only really minor details that make you think it isn't contemporary - mainly the fact that everyone's constantly smoking and drink-driving really!

All the rest of the descriptions of the LA high-life fit in perfectly with my mental image of the place. I suspect if you've actually ever been to California it's a different story though...

Re:Crime fiction

Posted by Broken Clock - 26-06-2008 19:28

Im halfway through "The Power Of The Dog" by Don Winnslow. Its a Mafia/DEA/CIA/FBI/ drug smuggling one set in Mexico, NYC, LA and San Diego (so far). great stuff, its gonne make one helluva film as well.

Re:Crime fiction

Posted by SamLKelly - 27-06-2008 00:27

As mentioned in the 'current reading' thread, Paul Auster's New York Trilogy is brilliant, although it won't half make you feel unintelligent.

Also, Poe. The Murders In The Rue Morgue and the others in the series. OK, so they're short stories, but even so. Do it.

Re:Crime fiction

Posted by the cantering captain - 03-07-2008 22:58

I'd like to second the nomination for Aurelio Zen, and I can also recommend Gianrico Carofiglio, just read 'The Past Is A Foreign Country', it was superb, going to get his others.

Henning Mankell is also really good, usually with an unfeasibly high body count.

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Re:Crime fiction

Posted by Purves Grundy - 11-07-2008 23:30

So far I'd totally endorse what TCC says about Carofiglio - I'm about two-thirds of the way through The Past Is A Foreign Country and it's far better than any book that looks like it looks ought to be.

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Re:Crime fiction

Posted by JtS - 02-09-2008 10:25

As mentioned on the Current Reading thread, I finished The Maltese Falcon and wasn't that impressed. It finished strongly but I found it very hard to follow the flow of the story for 2/3rds of it. There are quite a few dodgy bits of language in there too, felt a bit contrived to me.

This morning I finished my first Harlen Corben book, The Innocent. I really liked it, it moves along very nicely, has some good turns of pace. It was a shame that the absolute (and slightly unnecessary) ending was weak.

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Re:Crime fiction

Posted by Tiny Bulcher - 04-09-2008 15:40

Did you know Chandler went to the same school as P G Wodehouse? Scope for a mashup there, I feel. (I actually started writing one, but as usual didn't finish it).

Anyway, anybody that wants quality comedy crime fiction (a specialised market, I know) look no further than the Dortmund series by Donald E Westlake. From whence cometh my nym.

<http://www.donaldwestlake.com/home.html>

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Re:Crime fiction

Posted by Lyra - 04-09-2008 16:02

They were at the boys' school which is attached to my school. It was the only claim to fame we had.

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Re:Crime fiction

Posted by Tiny Bulcher - 04-09-2008 21:43

Lyra wrote:

They were at the boys' school which is attached to my school. It was the only claim to fame we had.

Dulwich College, I do believe.

My school can boast Paul Scholes, Steve Coogan, Clint Boon and Martin Alcock (who was in Fairport Convention). Not bad, actually. If a bit light on the academic side.

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