

IN A MELLOWTONE

No. 21 A John Harvey/Charlie Resnick Newsletter Spring 2005

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Ash & Bone, the second novel featuring Frank Elder, is published here in the UK by William Heinemann on April 7th. American publication is scheduled to follow in December, under Otto Penzler's impressive-looking new imprint at Harcourt.

In the novel, Elder is once again persuaded out of his self-imposed Cornish exile by circumstances beyond his control. Largely set in London, the story nonetheless allows some brief excursions to Nottingham, during the course of which Charlie Resnick makes more than one welcome appearance.

I shall be doing a launch reading for this at Waterstone's in Nottingham on Tuesday, April 12th. Details under *Events* further on.

The first Elder novel, *Flesh & Blood*, has been enjoying considerable success here as an Arrow paperback, sailing into the paperback charts at number twenty and bobbing about for some little time since, prey to the vicissitudes of the market place and the lure of books for young readers on World Book Day, when children rush to the counters of W. H. Smith and Waterstone's, Ottaker's and Borders - and, indeed, their local supermarkets - free £1.00 book tokens in their sticky little hands.

Seriously, this edition of *Flesh & Blood* has outsold anything of mine previously published, and the thanks for this are largely due to the efforts of everyone at Random House, the sales and marketing departments in particular. All I can do is provide the ammunition; they have to prime it, choose the right targets and follow through.

Buoyed up on all of this brouhaha, I've begun a third Elder adventure under the title, *Darkness & Light*, which, all going well, should see the, er, light, sometime in 2006.

Since moving back to Nottingham, it's not too surprising that Charlie Resnick should be on my mind, not to mention my computer.

A new short story, *The Sun, The Moon and the Stars*, is scheduled to appear in *Criminal Members*, a collection of stories written by members of The Detection Club

and edited by Simon Brett. This will be published by Orion in the autumn.

In this story, Charlie yet again crosses paths with the beautiful but troubled Eileen, whose gangster lover, Terry Cooke, blew his brains across the pillow they were sharing in the story, *Work*, and who made her last appearance in *Billie's Blues* - both those stories, of course, available in the now-no-longer quite Complete Resnick Short Stories, *Now's the Time*.

An even more recent Resnick story, *Home*, allows us a glimpse or two into the life Charlie is now sharing with Lynn Kellogg. A bleak little number, though not, happily, where Lynn's and Charlie's domestic life is concerned, this is due to see the light of day later this year in the pages of the *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine*.

There are also, in case you thought I sat on my hands all day, a couple of new non-Resnick stories to mention.

A Jack Kiley story, *Asylum*, is to be found in *Crime on the Move*, a collection of stories by members of Crime Writers' Association, edited by Martin Edwards, and published, with a spiffy-looking cover, by The Do-Not Press this Spring.

The Crime Writers' Association, incidentally, should not be confused with The Detection Club, although there are some of us - a select few - who have the not-inconsiderable honour of belonging to both.

The CWA, which is responsible for the annual Dagger awards for the best work in the crime field, is closer to a professional association, though japes and social shenanigans are not discouraged. The Detection Club, with a more limited membership, is primarily a dining club, and a sartorially proper one at that, the gentlemen, at least, never sitting down to dine without suit and tie - a restriction which would not suit everyone, some writers not being averse to throwing both caution and the occasional item of clothing to the winds when approaching the dining table or, more especially, the bar.

Well, it's a stressful life and we all have to relax somehow.

The other new story, *Snow, Snow, Snow*, has an entirely new cast of characters, the main protagonist being an assassin for hire. This was written for a new collection being compiled and edited by the indefatigable Robert J. Randisi under the title *Greatest Hits*, which will be published in the US by Carroll and Graf, sometime in 2006.

I'm delighted to say that in France the redoubtable folk at Rivages are publishing both *Flesh and Blood* and the short collection that I edited, *Men from Boys*, in September.

The city of Lyon, I'm told, has a reputation for fine French cuisine, so I'm more than happy to have been invited to take part in the first crime writing festival, *Noir Urbain*, this April. In the world of French academia, meanwhile, there's a three-day conference on Detective Fiction in Paris this May. On the first morning, Thursday, May 12th, Delphine Cingal will deliver a paper about my work under the title, "Bodies in John Harvey's Novels", and I am due to participate in a debate about crime fiction on the following day. More details below.

Finally, let me draw your attention to the BBC Radio 4 Classic Serial, *The Raj Quartet*, based on Paul Scott's four-novel sequence chronicling the last days of British rule in India.

The dramatisation, by Shelley Silas and myself, begins on the afternoon of Sunday, April 10th and continues for eight weeks, each episode being repeated on the following Saturday evening. Some of the performances are truly heart-rending, and if you're anywhere near a radio when it's on, I couldn't recommend it more strongly.

EVENTS

Tuesday, 12th April

Waterstone's Bookshop
Bridlesmith Gate, Nottingham
Reading and signing to launch
Ash & Bone
7.30pm Information : 0115 948 4499

Thursday, 14th - Sunday, 17th April

Noir Urbain Festival
Lyon, France
Information : ln.noirurbain@free.fr

Tuesday, 26th April

Jazz at Dexter's
The Five Ways, Arnold, Nottingham
Reading with Second Nature jazz group
8.00pm Information : 0115 959 8321

Friday, 13th, May

"The Detective Novel: themes and perspectives"
International Conference at the Institut
Catholique de Paris
5.00pm Room B18
Discussion about "Anglo-Saxon Detective
Fiction" with Jake Lamar, moderated by
Delphine Cingal
Information : dcingal@club-internet.fr

Thursday, 9th June

Nottingham Local Studies
Central Library, Angel Row, Nottingham
Talk with readings about being a writer
7.15pm Information : 0115 915 2828

Friday 1st - Sunday 3rd July

Crime Scene
National Film Theatre, London
Details to follow

19th - 28th August

Melbourne Writers' Festival
Information : www.mwf.com.au
Plus various additional events in Australia
& New Zealand, details to follow.

PLAYLIST, MARCH 2005

1 Cannonball Adderley Quintet

Them Dirty Blues
Capital Jazz 95447

According to Georgie Fame, this was one of the recordings that turned him onto jazz, when he was holed up in a friend's Soho flat after being sacked as Billy Fury's pianist. It's marvellous, straight-ahead stuff, very direct, very swinging.

2 Stan Tracey Trio

Seventy Something
Trio TR 563

Tracey was in Nottingham recently, playing solo and in duet with pianist Steve Melling. Still very inventive, even at seventy something, all those jabbing chords broken up by great flourishes down the keyboard with the right hand.

3 Pee Wee Russell Quartet

Ask Me Now!
Impulse A 96

I remember one particularly foggy night, driving back and forth through the Peak District in the 60s (on what is officially one of the most dangerous roads in Britain) to see Russell at the Manchester Sports Guild with the Alex Welsh Band. Here, less dangerously, he's in 'modern' mode, complete with Monk tunes and a valve trombonist.

5 The New Don Rendell Quintet

Roarin'
BGP CDBGPM 166

Not new at all, of course, though it was in 1961 when these hard bop tracks were recorded. Don Rendell, still a fine tenor player, is spurred on by Graham Bond, here on alto and later, more famously, organist with his R&B group, the Graham Bond Organisation, which often played all-nighters at The Flamingo opposite whom? Georgie Fame.

In the last issue of *In a Mellotone*, I drew attention to the CD *Till It Shines*, which features me reading with the jazz group, Second Nature. Most of the tracks were recorded some years ago, and were originally available on a limited edition audio cassette under the title, *Ghosts of a Chance*. Slowly keeping up with the technology, these tracks have now been remastered for this CD, together with four new unaccompanied readings from *Still Water* and *In a True Light*.

Many of the poems – which come from the collections *Ghosts of a Chance* and *Bluer Than This* – take jazz or jazz musicians as their subject – Chet Baker, Charlie Parker, David Murray, Thelonious Monk – and Monk features in one of the prose pieces, as does Milt Jackson.

Bop Noir, somebody christened this stuff, and as a label I think it works.

Anyone interested out there – poetry fans, Resnick fans – anyone who simply wants to pour themselves a glass of something, dim the lights, sit back and listen to my mellifluous tones, could do worse than order a copy of *Till It Shines* now!

To order, please fill in the form below and send it, with your cheque (no credit cards, sorry) to John Harvey, 41 South Road, Nottingham NG2 7AH, U.K.

Please send me copy/copies of TILL IT SHINES @ £10/\$16 each, post free.

I enclose a cheque for NAME

ADDRESS

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