



Hardboiled: An Anthology of American Crime Stories

Bill Pronzini (Editor) , Jack Adrian (Editor) , Dashiell Hammett , Raymond Chandler , Chester Himes , Norbert Davis , John D. MacDonald , Benjamin Appel , more... Elmore Leonard , Jonathan Craig , David Goodis , Ross Macdonald , W.R. Burnett , Mickey Spillane , Gil Brewer , Leigh Brackett , Helen Nielsen , Evan Hunter , Jim Thompson , H.A. DeRosso , Michael Kerr , James Reasoner , Margaret Maron , Raoul Whitfield , Robert Sampson , Andrew Vachss , James Hannah , Faye Kellerman , James Ellroy , Lawrence Block , Ed Gorman , Frederick Nebel , Paul Cain , Daniel Mainwaring , James M. Cain , Brett Halliday , William Coe , David Alexander ...less

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Compellingly and compulsively readable, "Hard-boiled: An Anthology of American Crime Stories" is a page-turner no mystery lover will want to be without. Included are thirty-six superbly suspenseful stories that chronicle the evolution of this quintessentially American art form, from its earliest beginnings during the Golden Age of the legendary pulp magazine "Black Mask" in the 1930s, to the arrival of the tough digest "Manhunt" in the 1950s, and finally leading up to present-day hard-boiled stories by such writers as James Ellroy. Here are eight decades worth of the best writing about betrayal, murder, and mayhem: from Hammett's 1925 tour de force "The Scorched Face" to Ed Gorman's 1992 "The Long Silence After." Other contributors include Evan Hunter (better known as Ed McBain), Raymond Chandler, Norbert Davis, Jim Thompson, Helen Nielsen, Margaret Maron, Andrew Vachss, Faye Kellerman, and Lawrence Block.

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From Reader Review Hardboiled: An Anthology of American Crime Stories for online ebook

Patrick Baird says

I would recommend this book for the introduction alone; it's a great history of hard-boiled fiction. But it's also a great collection of tough as nails stories from a variety of genres. My favorites are the hard to categorize, just nasty slice-of-life tales.

Heath Lowrance says

There's no shortage of great crime fiction anthologies, no matter what your tastes may be. But HARD-BOILED, edited by Bill Pronzini and Jack Adrian, is still my all-time favorite. I will admit some bias here, because there are many stories from the '50's in this collection, and I find that the best writers of the genre tend to come from that decade.

Anthologies are by their very nature a mixed bag. Usually, for every one great story you'll have to slog through two or more that leave you cold. Not so with this one. HARD-BOILED comes very close to being the perfect anthology. The editors have terrific taste, and they've chosen an amazing selection of hardboiled and noir stories, chronological from the '20's up to the early '90's (when this book was published). The majority of the stories are from the '30's and the '50's, since (as the editors point out) those were the twin Golden Eras of this particular genre.

Honestly, just about every story in this one is at least very good, and more than a handful are down-right brilliant. Here are some highlights:

1929. "Round Trip" by W.R. Burnett, in which a Chicago gangster gets a less-than-friendly reception when he takes a sabbatical to Toledo. Hardboiled, and quietly funny.

1931. "Mistral", by Raoul Whitfield—a private detective is ordered by his agency to find an American gangster in Genoa, but suffers a crisis of conscience when he realizes the agency's clients want to murder the man. Fast and tough, and still humane.

1934. "Trouble-Chaser", by Paul Cain, is the story of a 'problem solver' on the fringes of the law who tries to sort things out for a friend accused of murder—by stacking all the cards against the real culprit. Cain was about as hardboiled a writer as you can find.

1953. "Black Pudding", David Goodis—pursued by gangsters, Ken finds himself aided by a scarred, opium-addicted girl every bit as victimized as himself, and sets out to turn the tables on his enemies. Beautifully tense noir.

1955. "Mama's Boy", David Alexander—one of the more disturbing stories, a brutal body-builder who makes his cash by using older women decides he wants to take it one step further and beat his next victim to death. But his anger proves to be his undoing.

1956. "Home", by Gil Brewer, is the story of a young black man, home from college, and the awful moment

in which he forgets where he is and is victimized by the hateful residents of the city. Stark and chilling.

1957. "A Piece of Ground", Helen Neilson—all the Farmer wants is to save up enough cash so he can go home and purchase a farm with his wife and children. But then he gets involved with a seemingly kind-hearted whore and a hustler who says he can double the Farmer's money. The Farmer may 'buy the farm' a lot sooner than he thought.

1987 "To Florida", by Robert Sampson—Teller kills the landlord, takes his cash, and with his less-than-attractive girl in tow heads south. It doesn't take things long to fall apart, though, when the girlfriend starts to fear Teller's growing violence. A bleak, nihilistic little story.

1989. "Bonding", by Faye Kellerman. A bored teenage girl turns to prostitution just because she can, seduces her step-father, and manipulates him into murdering her mother. This is probably the boldest, most disturbing story in the book, and had me on the edge of my seat. Brilliant stuff.

Aside from these noted, there are of course many of the usual names—Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, Ross MacDonald, James M. Cain, John D. MacDonald, Jim Thompson, Lawrence Block, Elmore Leonard, James Ellroy... and the list goes on. It's a veritable who's who. But the real strength of this book is in the number of stories by writers you might not be familiar with. I guarantee, however, that you'll want to look up more of their work when you're done.

If you're relatively new to reading hard-boiled/noir crime fiction, or if you're an old hand looking for some sharp story-telling, this is one you don't want to pass up.

Laura says

I first read this anthology when I took a Crime Fiction class at Lancaster University in the UK. I was not crazy about all of the tales but there were a few good ones that stuck in my head.

Now that I teach my own Crime Fiction class at Cranbrook, I am also using this anthology since it provides a good selection of short stories from 20th century America in this genre. Although my students have favorites and ones that do not like at all, I think overall the anthology is nicely constructed and easy to use. I teach the following stories:

Hammett: "The Scorched Face"
Burnett: "Round Trip"
Cain: "Trouble-Chaser"
Cain: "Bush Fire"
Chandler: "I'll be Waiting"
MacDonald: "Nor Iron Bars"
Vachss: "It's a Hard World"

Ray Downton says

Excellent, varied compendium with informative bios covering 1920 till 2000. Also, an encouragement to read

further stuff by many of these writers

Hayley says

Nice history lesson of the hard-boiled genre.

RJ says

This is a terrific noir crime anthology with stories presented in chronological order of publication, beginning in the 1920s with Dashiell Hammett and ending in the 1990s (when this book was published) with Ed Gorman. Like most books of this type, you'll enjoy some stories more than others. With many great authors represented this is a great introduction to pulp-era noir; a survey of some of the genre's finest along with some hidden gems.

Stories include:

1920s

"The Scorched Face" by Dashiell Hammett (Continental Op story) - 3/5

"Round Trip" by W. R. Burnett - 4/5

1930s

"Mistral" by Raoul Whitfield - 4/5

"Backwash" by Frederick Nebel - 2/5

"Trouble-Chaser" by Paul Cain - 4/5

"Fruit Tramp" by Daniel Mainwaring - 4/5

"Brush Fire" by James M Cain - 4/5

"Human Interest Stuff" by Brett Halliday - 5/5

"Waiting for Rusty" by William Cole - 5/5

"I'll Be Waiting" by Raymond Chandler - 3/5

1940s

"Marijuana and a Pistol" by Chester Himes - 3/5

"Who Said I Was Dead?" by Norbert Davis - 2/5

"Nor Iron Bars" by John D MacDonald - 4/5

1950s

"Dock Walloper" by Benjamin Appel - 4/5

"Three-Ten to Yuma" by Elmore Leonard - 4/5

"The Bobby-Soxer" by Jonathan Craig - 4/5

"Black Pudding" by David Goodis - 4/5

"Guilt-Edged Blonde" by Ross MacDonald - 4/5

"Mama's Boy" by David Alexander - 4/5

"The Screen Test of Mike Hammer" by Mickey Spillane - 2/5

"Home" by Gil Brewer - 4/5

"So Pale, So Cold, So Fair" by Leigh Brackett - 4/5

"A Piece of Ground" by Helen Nielsen - 5/5

"The Merry, Merry Christmas" by Evan Hunter - 4/5

1960s

"Forever After" by Jim Thompson - 4/5

"The Old Pro" by H A DeRosso - 4/5
1970s
"The Saturday Night Deaths" by Michael Kerr - 4/5
"Graveyard Shift" by James M Reasoner - 4/5
"Deadhead Coming Down" by Margaret Maron - 4/5
1980s
"To Florida" by Robert Sampson - 3/5
"It's a Hard World" by Andrew Vachss - 4/5
"Junior Jackson's Parable" by James Hannah - 4/5
"Bonding" by Faye Kellerman - 5/5
1990s
"Gravy Train" by James Ellroy - 5/5
"Batman's Helpers" by Lawrence Block - 4/5
"The Long Silence After" by Ed Gorman - 4/5

Patrick says

12/14/10: "Gravy Train" (1994) by James Ellroy (first read around 1994)
12/16/10:
"The Old Pro" (1960) by H.A. DeRosso
"Forever After" (1960) by Jim Thompson
12/19/10: "The Scorched Face" (1925) by Dashiell Hammett (first read June, 2005)
12/22/10:
"Round Trip" (1929) by W.R. Burnett
"Mistral" (1931) by Raoul Whitfield
12/24/10: "Backwash" (1932) by Frederick Nebel
12/27/10: "Trouble Chaser" (1934) by Paul Cain
12/31/10: "Brush Fire" (1936) by James M. Cain
1/5/11: "Human Interest Stuff" (1938) by Brett Halliday
1/7/11: "Waiting for Rusty" (1939) by William Cole
1/10/11:
"I'll Be Waiting" (1939) by Raymond Chandler
"Marijuana and a Pistol" (1940) by Chester Himes
1/29/11:
"Who Said I Was Dead" (1942) by Norbert Davis
"Nor Iron Bars" (1947) by John D. MacDonald

Ian says

see book description

Stephen says

I had to get this anthology for a class and we read a good deal of the stories. Then I read most of the rest of them on my own. This is a great anthology showing the roots, origins, and progression of the genre with an eclectic blend of its authors.

Marc says

While perhaps not quite as intriguing on the whole as the James Ellroy / Otto Penzler-edited *Best American Noir of the Century* anthology that came out last year, this is definitely still a very good "noir" anthology (albeit it one that lumps "hard-boiled detective" and "noir / crime" fiction together, unlike the Ellroy/Penzler volume, which does not include any selections by Hammett or Chandler). Great pieces here by David Goodis, Chester Himes, Gil Brewer, Evan Hunter, and the other usual suspects (as well as good pieces by some not-so-usual suspects), and a very nice introduction by the editors. Recommended for fans of both the hard-boiled and noir genres and for those who want a good introduction to said genres.

Jazzy Lemon says

Several hard-boiled stories are presented in chronological order with a preface before each about the life and work of each author that was as charming, well-written and informative as the stories themselves.

Did you know that prior to becoming a hard-boiled writer that Dashiell Hammett worked for Pinkerton's and was investigating the case on silent film star Fatty Arbuckle where he was accused of the rape and murder of a young starlet? Although Arbuckle was later acquitted, his career was ruined - but Hammett's soared.

I also found it interesting that The 3:10 to Yuma started out as a short pulp story, which might leave you to wonder, How did they get a whole film out of THAT?

There are some brilliant stories with amazing twists, one especially left me stunned that I hadn't figured out the ending and having to flip backwards through the pages and re-read seeing where I was put off-track.

Even though there are stories that simply don't match up to the genius of the others, such as the first one, for example (which frankly really wasn't that good - so don't be put off by it!), I still felt it more than worthy of the 5-star rating considering the wealth of exceptional writing contained within the pages.

Rick Slane says

A good introduction to noir shows the underbelly of crime in the United States 1920-2000.

Ian Banks says

An excellent collection showing the development and range of the genre over the course of the last century. All the stories are fantastic and - apart from the swear words - could be interchangeable with one another, which says something about how the genre found its feet so fast. None of the stories feel formulaic and many are quite insightful, literary slices-of-life which belies the "intellectual junk food" stigma of this "sort" of story.

Julie says

awesome short stories - introduced me to a lot of new authors, some that i wouldn't think of as noir or detective-y.

Roz Milner says

Some good stories, a few clunkers- especially towards the end, with more contemporary authors- but overall good for hard boiled fans
