



Star Witness

D.W. Buffa

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The Edgar-nominated author of *The Legacy*, *The Judgment*, and *The Prosecution* is back. So is attorney Joseph Antonelli in this novel of greed, glamour, murder, and a Hollywood trial that explodes with secrets and lies.

Star Witness Details

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William Maya says

This is a difficult book to review due to the author's use of two dramatically different writing styles. The basic premises of the book is the overwhelming dominance Hollywood has over southern California. The plot revolves around Stanley Roth, a brilliant film director, whose movie star wife is brutally murdered at their estate shortly before her latest movie, produced and directed by her husband, has finished filming. Roth, due to his hectic schedule on the film, slept in a separate bedroom and left very early to work on the film. The body was found by the maid. Although the cause of the crime is based entirely on circumstantial evidence, Roth is quickly arrested and is as quickly condemned by society and the media. Joseph Antonelli, a successful criminal attorney is hired by Roth for his defense.

The narrative is presented entirely from Antoenlli's prospective. This is where the conflicting writing styles come into focus. One story is of Antonelli working with his client to understand the background of Roth, his deceased wife, his movie studio, and Hollywood itself. The other story is of the trial and is brilliantly portrayed. This is a trial that takes months to be presented, but the author skillfully limits the drama to the opening and closing arguments and the testimony of the most important witnesses. The dull parts are ignored. As a result, this part of the book is absolutely captivating. If the rest of the book was written in the same manner I would highly recommend it. The rest of the book, which occurs outside of the courtroom, is much slower and more philosophical. Atonelli spends much of his time dissecting his thoughts and the conversations, actions, motives, and involvement of the rest of the characters in the crime. As a result, it feels as if the plot is gently drifting down a slow-moving stream on a lazy summer day.

While all of the novel is vital to the reader's understanding, it was very difficult for me to read it to the end. This may well be a limitation on my part and if others enjoy this style of writing I heartily recommend it.

Ret Yeager says

On the surface this story appears to be about another Hollywood murder. The plot twists in the end, the story within in a story leaves the reader wondering after all: who done it? Probably should have given 5 stars but most of the story didn't deserve more than 4 in my humble opinion.

Maddy says

RATING: 3.75

This fifth book in the series finds Joseph Antonelli defending Stanley Roth, one of the most powerful men in Hollywood, who has been accused of murdering his movie star wife, Mary Margaret Flanders (nee Marian Walsh). There were only 3 people at their home when Mary Margaret was killed: Mary Margaret, Stanley and a maid. The security system had not been breached. When the police find Mary Margaret's blood on some clothing in Stanley's laundry hamper, he is charged with murder.

Antonelli has a reputation for being a lawyer who rarely loses. Roth calls upon him immediately; but

strangely, he seems rather disinterested in his own defense. Instead, he is consumed by the details of a movie called *Blue Zephyr* (which is also the name of his studio) that he has written and is planning to film. The movie is really 2 things: an homage to Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* as well as a fictionalized account of Stanley and Mary Margaret's life together, including an accounting of who killed her. If the movie makes Stanley look bad, so be it—the making of a great movie means more to him than the unraveling of his entire life.

Stanley's situation is threatening the future of the studio, and the partner who is the main financial backer is ready to pull out. There is a scene where Stanley almost kills him with a wine bottle. Although not a violent man, Stanley has lost control of his temper before, most noticeably when he hit his wife and gave her a black eye after she had an abortion. Antonelli uses all of these events in a very unique way in his defense of Stanley, and the trial is wonderfully portrayed in these pages. It's not the usual defense to bring up Roth's lack of concern about his wife's affairs, the fact that he hit her, the fact that he attacked his partner. It appears that this risky strategy just may backfire.

Buffa has done an exceptional job in creating the character of Stanley Roth. He is a very unique individual, and it is fascinating to see how he turns everything that happens into a movie-related event. The man is a sheer genius with incredible talent. He steals the book from Antonelli. The conversations between the two men are intriguing. In an interesting twist, *Blue Zephyr* is eventually filmed, and Antonelli is portrayed by an actor who was part of the trial.

Buffa has a unique writing style. As he is presenting the narrative, he also threads in some thought-provoking questions about the nature of fame and desire and obsession that apply to Antonelli just as much as they apply to Roth.

Based on the strength of STAR WITNESS, I plan to seek out the other books in this series.

Carol says

Criminal defense attorney Joseph Antonelli is brought in to defend a famous movie producer who is accused of murdering his movie star wife. In the process he is caught up in the true business of Hollywood and the sensationalism of this type of trial. There is also a story within the story of a screenplay that the accused has been working on for years that will bring to light all the secrets of the case.

The courtroom scenes are more in line of what is depicted on TV or movie courtrooms but that made for a more entertaining read. I enjoyed the attorney's speculations on how trials and juries work. There are plenty of twists to keep the story moving and the ending is strong as the screenplay is finally made into the movie.

Christie Ellis says

This author is not as well known as Grisham, but he writes just as well. Great courtroom drama

Larren says

Was bored at first with the philosophical dialogue but ended up liking the book.

Pat says

I love this series, and I love the protagonist, Joseph Antonelli. This was was about Hollywood, probably not my favorite, but he is just a great storyteller.

Carrie says

Not as good as some of the other by this author... so far my least favorite.

Peter says

Didn't use the audio version, but read the book. Buffa is the most under appreciated modern legal suspense thriller author.

Jenna Walker says

Usually books I read about Hollywood are only ok. This books was great. I loved the courtroom scenes. When I first picked it up I didnt expect much from it. But when i started reading it I loved it. I liked the characters and the dialogue. I definitely recommend this book especially if you like courtroom books.

Kitty says

Keeps you guessing even after you finish reading it. Good beach read.

Trish says

I very much enjoyed this mystery within a mystery.
