

Cobra Clutch (Hammerhead Jed Mystery) by A.J. Devlin

Date Read – 20190227

Rating –4 Stars

This is another nominee for the 2019 Arthur Ellis award for best first novel and I found it to be well worthy of that nomination as I think it is one of the best debut novels I have read this year. This book has everything you could ask for in a mystery novel involving a somewhat different and unique kidnapping, a collection of well developed characters with many of them being quite quirky and headed up by a great father and son team of Frank and Jed and more raucous humour than I've read in many novels that are billed as supposedly funny. There's lots of spectacular action highlighted by a very Spenser like plan which, for a change, even with a few bumps actually works and produces one of the most spectacular crash bang shoot-em-ups that I've read for quite some time all leading to a pretty solid ending and a bit of a twist that I didn't really see coming. Now I'm not a huge fan of Professional wrestling but that didn't interfere with my enjoyment of this story and as a quite young boy at a father and son banquet with my dad I did meet and get to shake hands with the legendary wrestler, "Whipper Billy Watson". I'm looking forward to the next wild and woolly adventure with "Hammerhead Jed"

Full Disclosure: A Novel by Beverley McLachlin

Date Read – 20180628

Rating 3 Stars

I'll write my full review after digesting this one a few days. OK I liked many things about this book but there are also quite a few flaws that make me wonder why it has received so many 5 star ratings. First some stuff I really liked. As one would expect, given the author, it is extremely well written with intelligent and literate prose and vocabulary while retaining an easy to read and smooth flowing style. I found it well proofread and I can't remember any of the great standout typos that are usually found in most ebooks. I liked that, being written by a Canadian author and set in Vancouver, it is written in Canadian English with Canadian

spellings and references to Canadian things like Timbits and Canadian sports teams and music and art etc. However, because of my preference for reading Canadian authors and especially stories set in Canada, I don't find that unique about this book. That said it really bugs me when a Canadian author with a Canadian setting slips to things like site where it should be sight and humor and center etc. which, thankfully, I didn't find here. I think the setting descriptions are fairly well drawn and acceptable and most of the characters are quite adequately developed and, especially with Jilly, one sees quite a bit of character growth as the story unfolds. As to be expected the courtroom drama is the best part of this novel. Now to some things that cause me to downrate this book somewhat and it is difficult here to avoid spoilers. I think the author has introduced too many subplots and tried to include every cliché and trope commonly found in mystery novels. I thought the whole premise was a bit farfetched and required a severe sense of disbelief. I thought Jilly's relationship with Damon was very unprofessional. I thought the motive for Vincent's severe reluctance to reveal the truth of his situation was pretty weak. I had pretty well identified the real murderer well before the final reveal and I'm not sure the not too surprising twist leading to that reveal was really necessary but was just included to introduce another cliché. Also there are some loose ends like the Cy and Lois story. However after all that this is a pretty decent debut novel and, as other reviewers have noted, it reads like the beginning of a series and I hope that's true and I'll definitely read at least a sequel. (less)

Why Was Rachel Murdered? by Bill Prentice

Date Read – 20190416

Rating 4 Stars

I bought and read this book because it is a nominee for the 2019 Arthur Ellis award for Best First novel and I'm glad I did 'cause I found it a very enjoyable read and well deserving of the entry for the award. This is a well written book with a very smooth an easy reading style with many well developed and strong characters both the likeable good guys, especially Neil Walker and Carole Lisgar, and the not so likeable but quite surprising bad guys and a very unique female hitman (hitwoman? hitperson? This PC stuff is atrocious!). Then Isobelle is a real enigma! The couple of twists after Neil and Carole's thorough investigations leading to the solid and satisfactory ending came as a real surprise to me but I should really have seen them coming. Once again, though, we have the bad guys meeting unfortunate ends before being brought into the

justice system and this is becoming a common writing device which I do not particularly like. Now one has to suspend quite a lot of disbelief to accept the quite farfetched and over the top plot line but it is very much based on current affairs, the Panama Papers and a lot of suspected political and corporate corruption and it sure made for a very enjoyable and entertaining read and the accompanying escapism for which we read these books. I think this book was very well edited and proofread with the following quote from chapter 58 being the only error that I can remember jumping out at me - " There will be come kind of vetting". Good read and I wouldn't mind more of Neil and Carole.

Find You In The Dark by Nathan Ripley

Date Read – 20190307

Rating –4 Stars

This is another entry in the 2019 Arthur Ellis awards for best first novel and I've rated it a 4 star read although I usually try not to do so for a debut novel as I like to leave room to see how the characters and the writing grow in subsequent books by the author but I had to as I enjoyed this read so much. I found it quite fascinating how Mr Ripley managed to build and sustain such a high level of suspense in a story where the bad guys are all known from the beginning and much of the story is told from their POV. However in some cases it is a bit difficult to determine if some of these characters are actually good guys or bad guys. I guess what I'm trying to say is that in some ways this is as much of a character study as it is a suspense story and it is very interesting to see the affect all the lies, secrets and misdirections have on the various characters and their lives. I'm trying not to get too specific and into some spoilers but I found Martin Reese to be an arrogant, egotistical and quite despicable kind of a person and definitely not too likeable but I also found myself pulling for him in the search but the twist at the big ending scene really showed his real character. I thought Ellen was a bit weak and should have walked out long ago. Kylie is definitely the most likeable character in that family and the rather vague ending concerning the affects of the ordeal on her tends to indicate a sequel in the works. As to the cops I thought Chris Gabriel to be a very good and effective detective while Sandra Whittal, while touted as the greatest detective in the unit, really jumped to a conclusion and with tunnel vision spent all her energy trying to find facts to support her theory and even if she may have actually been partially correct I couldn't rate her as the top detective. Anyway I thoroughly enjoyed this read and will definitely read another by Nathan Ripley.