



Southern Cross (Andy Brazil)

By Patricia Cornwell

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Patricia Cornwell has a sixth sense about the men and women in blue. In *Hornet's Nest*, her page-turning novel about crime and police in Charlotte, North Carolina, Cornwell moved behind the badges of these real-life heroes to uncover flesh-and-blood characters who strode through her pages to reveal vulnerable, passionate, brave, sometimes doubting, always fascinating figures.

In *Southern Cross*, Cornwell takes us even closer to the personal and professional lives of big-city police, in a story of corruption, scandal, and robberies that escalate to murder. This time, her setting is Richmond, Virginia, where Charlotte Police Chief Judy Hammer has been brought by an NIJ grant to clean up the police force. Reeling from the recent death of her husband, and resented by the police force, city manager, and mayor of Richmond, Hammer is joined by her deputy chief Virginia West and rookie Andy Brazil on the most difficult assignment of her career. In the face of overwhelming public scrutiny, the trio must bring truth, order, and sanity to a city in trouble.

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Southern Cross (Andy Brazil) By Patricia Cornwell Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #255753 in Books
- Brand: Berkley
- Published on: 1999-12-01
- Released on: 1999-12-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.50" h x .88" w x 4.19" l, .42 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 432 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

In their first appearance (*Hornet's Nest*, 1997), Chief Judy Hammer, Deputy Virginia West, and reporter-turned-rookie-cop Andy Brazil battled a serial killer in Charlotte, North Carolina. Now, in Patricia Cornwell's *Southern Cross*, the trio are dispatched to Richmond, Virginia--via an NIJ (National Institute of Justice) grant--to quell the growing gang problem and modernize the beleaguered Richmond PD. They bring with them a sophisticated computer program for tracking criminal activity and a tried-and-true methodology for reforming Richmond's men and women in blue. Unfortunately, Hammer, Brazil, and West could not have been prepared for the resentment they would confront... or the bizarre cast of characters they would find upon their arrival: Lelia Ehrhart--wealthy (and nosey) chair of the Blue Ribbon Crime Commission--whose heavy European accent renders her English dangerously hilarious; Butner "Bubba" Flunk IV--tobacco industry worker, gun collector, and UFO aficionado; Smoke--the sociopathic leader of the Pikes gang; and Weed Gardener--14-year-old painter turned master graffiti artist.

Unlike Cornwell's usual fare, *Southern Cross* is driven almost exclusively by an interest in these strange personalities and their surreal hometown, rather than in fast-paced thrills. The novel becomes a satire on city politics, Southern culture, the ever-tense relationship between the police and the public, and the struggles of the average man and woman with computer technology. Cornwell does fall down in a few places. First, her description of the computer virus that somehow infects police department Web sites from Richmond to New York seems a bit far-fetched. Also, her narrative, divided among three major characters, loses its focus and sags at several points. In the end, though, *Southern Cross* is redeemed by Cornwell's inimitable renderings of police work and the quotidian life of Richmond's many odd denizens. --Patrick O'Kelley

From Publishers Weekly

It's fortunate that Cornwell has a new Kay Scarpetta thriller (*Black Notice*) coming out in July, because this second novel featuring southern police chief Judy Hammer is as disappointing as last year's *Hornet's Nest*. The problem is elementary. Cornwell, who writes the Scarpetta novels in a first-person voice that blazes with passion and authenticity, lacks control over the third-person narration here. The tone is all over the place, veering from faux-Wambaugh low-jinks to hard-edged suspense, and the plotting is, too. Hammer and her team of deputy chief Virginia West and greenhorn cop Andy Brazil have moved via a federal grant to Richmond, Va., in order to set straight that city's policing. If only they could bring order to the narrative, which twists into an unwieldy welter of subplots. Early on, for instance, Hammer and West misconstrue as malevolent an overheard phone conversation between a local redneck, Butner (Bubba) Flunk IV, and a coon-hunting pal. From there Cornwell spins seriocomic descriptions of Bubba at work, Bubba on a hunting trip, Bubba arguing with a black cop. Among these events and those of other subplots (stymied love between West and Brazil; sabotage of the cops' Web site; the jailing of a police dispatcher; etc.) runs a more dominant plotline?the only one in the novel that exerts dramatic force?about a talented boy artist strong-armed into a gang by a sociopathic teen. There's a lot of broad, often slapstick, social commentary (mostly about class warfare) larded into all the goings-on. If Cornwell's intention is to reproduce with a snicker the chaos of a big southern city, she has succeeded all too well. 1 million first printing; Literary Guild, Mystery Guild and Doubleday Book Club main selections; foreign rights sold in France, Germany, the U.K., Italy and Norway. (Jan. 11). FYI: In May, Putnam will publish Cornwell's first children's book, *Life's Little Fable*. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Review

"Cornwell peels off every layer of this taut society in a careering crime drama that is full of suspense and

excitement and has a shaft of humanity beneath the tough talk and the wisecracks." --*Good Housekeeping*

"Fast moving, gripping and hugely entertaining." --*Sunday Telegraph* (London)

"Patricia Cornwell has switched to Hiaasen's world of black humor and nearly conquers it." --*San Francisco Examiner*, praise for the author

Users Review

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Roderick Donnell:

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