



The Best American Noir of the Century

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“Well worth its impressive weight in gold, it would be a crime not to have this seminal masterpiece in your collection.”—*New York Journal of Books*

In his introduction to *The Best American Noir of the Century*, James Ellroy writes, “Noir is the most scrutinized offshoot of the hard-boiled school of fiction. It’s the long drop off the short pier and the wrong man and the wrong woman in perfect misalliance. It’s the nightmare of flawed souls with big dreams and the precise how and why of the all-time sure thing that goes bad.” Offering the best examples of literary sure things gone bad, this collection ensures that nowhere else can readers find a darker, more thorough distillation of American noir fiction.

James Ellroy and Otto Penzler mined writings of the past century to find this treasure trove of thirty-nine stories. From noir’s twenties-era infancy come gems like James M. Cain’s “Pastorale,” and its postwar heyday boasts giants like Mickey Spillane and Evan Hunter. Packing an undeniable punch, diverse contemporary incarnations include Elmore Leonard, Patricia Highsmith, Joyce Carol Oates, Dennis Lehane, and William Gay, with many page-turners appearing from the past decade.

“Delightfully devilish . . . A strange trek through the years that includes stories from household names in the hard-boiled genre to lesser-known authors who nonetheless can hold their own with the legends.”—Associated Press

James Ellroy is the author of the Underworld U.S.A. trilogy—*American Tabloid*, *The Cold Six Thousand*, and *Blood's a Rover*—and the L.A. Quartet novels, *The Black Dahlia*, *The Big Nowhere*, *L.A. Confidential*, and *White Jazz*. He is also the author of *The Hillicker Curse*, a memoir.

Otto Penzler is the founder of the Mysterious Bookshop and Mysterious Press, has won two Edgar Allan Poe Awards, and is series editor of *The Best American Mystery Stories*.

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The Best American Noir of the Century From Mariner Books Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

“Surprisingly, 20 of the 39 well-chosen stories published between 1923 and 2007 in this impressive crime anthology date to the last two decades, which may sound counterintuitive to casual readers who associate noir with the 1940s and 1950s. All the contributors excel at showing the omnipresence of the dark side of humanity in many different times and locales. In addition to names synonymous with noir such as Cornell Woolrich and Jim Thompson, Ellroy (Blood’s a Rover) and Penzler (The Best American Mystery Stories) offer depressing fare from writers better known for other work, like David Morrell, whose first published story, “The Dripping,” about the disappearance of a man’s wife and daughter, is one of the book’s best. Lesser-known authors also distinguish themselves, like Christopher Coake, whose reverse chronology in ‘All Through the House’ serves to heighten the suspense rather than dissipate it. (Oct.)”

---*Publishers Weekly*, STARRED

“This generous, flavorful collection of noir-tinged tales comes cherry-picked by Ellroy and Penzler, who exclude Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler as authors of “private detective stories.” Most of the 39 tales here appeared originally in magazines, not only in pulps like *Manhunt* and *Black Mask* but also in the more literary *American Mercury*, *Southern Review*, and *Omni*. Each story is introduced with a brief author biography. These pay respect to the careers of these professional scribblers, who managed (with the aid of multiple pseudonyms) to keep body and soul together writing and writing still more. The collection opens with Tod Robbins’s “Spurs” (1923), a beauty-and-the-beast tale that questions which is which; it was the basis for Tod Browning’s chilling movie *Freaks*. The collection closes with Lorenzo Carcaterra’s “Missing the Morning Bus” (2007), in which, amid half-emptied bowls of peanuts and salsa, Death takes a seat at a weekly card game. In between come memorable but lesser-known tales by, among others, Dorothy B. Hughes, Jim Thompson, Cornell Woolrich, Patricia Highsmith, and Bradford Morrow. Verdict Rooting around in the rich soil amassed by almost a century of noir, Ellroy and Penzler unearth dark, pungent, and flavorful truffles that will satisfy fans and may well whet the appetites of new readers.” —*Library Journal*

From the Back Cover

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About the Author

James Ellroy was born in Los Angeles in 1948. His L.A. Quartet novels—*The Black Dahlia*, *The Big Nowhere*, *L.A. Confidential*, and *White Jazz*—were international bestsellers.

OTTO PENZLER is a renowned mystery editor, publisher, columnist, and owner of New York's The Mysterious Bookshop, the oldest and largest bookstore solely dedicated to mystery fiction. He has edited more than fifty crime-fiction anthologies.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Zenaida Jackson:

This The Best American Noir of the Century book is absolutely not ordinary book, you have it then the world is in your hands. The benefit you receive by reading this book is information inside this book incredible fresh, you will get facts which is getting deeper an individual read a lot of information you will get. This The Best American Noir of the Century without we understand teach the one who studying it become critical in thinking and analyzing. Don't end up being worry The Best American Noir of the Century can bring any time you are and not make your handbag space or bookshelves' turn into full because you can have it in the lovely laptop even phone. This The Best American Noir of the Century having great arrangement in word and also layout, so you will not experience uninterested in reading.

Anthony Jarrard:

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Geraldine Louis:

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Kelly Brooks:

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