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The Lady In The Lake: Library Edition



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Book Information

Audio CD

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0792781090

ISBN-13: 978-0792781097

Product Dimensions: 1.5 x 7.5 x 6.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 228 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #10,310,358 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #35 inÃ Â Books > Books on CD > Authors, A-Z > (C) > Chandler, Raymond #16396 inÃ Â Books > Books on CD > Mystery & Thrillers #23795 inÃ Â Books > Mystery, Thriller & Suspense > Mystery > Hard-Boiled

Customer Reviews

Chandler is not only the best writer of hardboiled PI stories, he’s one of the 20th century’s top scribes, period. His full canon of novels and short stories is reprinted in trade paper featuring uniform covers in Black Lizard’s signature style. A handsome set for a reasonable price. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Raymond Chandler is a master." --The New York TimesÃ¢â ¬Å“[Chandler] wrote as if pain hurt

and life mattered.Ã¢â ¬Â• --The New YorkerÃ¢â ¬Å“Chandler seems to have created the culminating American hero: wised up, hopeful, thoughtful, adventurous, sentimental, cynical and rebellious.Ã¢â ¬Â• --Robert B. Parker, The New York Times Book ReviewÃ¢â ¬Å“Philip Marlowe remains the quintessential urban private eye.Ã¢â ¬Â• --Los Angeles TimesÃ¢â ¬Å“Nobody can write like Chandler on his home turf, not even Faulkner. . . . An original. . . . A great artist.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •The Boston Book ReviewÃ¢â ¬Å“Raymond Chandler was one of the finest prose writers of the twentieth century. . . . Age does not wither ChandlerÃ¢â ¬â„¢s prose. . . . He wrote like an angel.Ã¢â ¬Â• --Literary ReviewÃ¢â ¬Å“[T]he prose rises to heights of unselfconscious eloquence, and we realize with a jolt of excitement that we are in the presence of not a mere action tale teller, but a stylist, a writer with a vision.Ã¢â ¬Â• --Joyce Carol Oates, The New York Review of BooksÃ¢â ¬Å“Chandler wrote like a slumming angel and invested the sun-blinded streets of Los Angeles with a romantic presence.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Ross MacdonaldÃ¢â ¬Å“Raymond Chandler is a star of the first magnitude.Ã¢â ¬Â• --Erle Stanley GardnerÃ¢â ¬Å“Raymond Chandler invented a new way of talking about America, and America has never looked the same to us since.Ã¢â ¬Â• --Paul Auster Ã¢â ¬Å“[Chandler]Ã¢â ¬â„¢s the perfect novelist for our times. He takes us into a different world, a world thatÃ¢â ¬â„¢s like ours, but isnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t. Ã¢â ¬Â• --Carolyn See --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Published in 1943, this was Chandler’s fourth novel featuring private detective Philip Marlowe. America was at war, but there are few references to it in this story. WWI was Chandler’s war and if Marlowe has plans to join the army he never mentions them. War or peace, there will always be domestic turmoil and missing wives to look for.In this case, there are two missing wives. Both are small, pretty blonds, but one is independently wealthy and married to a hot-shot executive and the others’ husband is a disabled maintenance man. Nobody ever said life was fair. Both were last heard from on Friday, June 12 at a small group of cabins on a private lake. It’s called Little Fawn Lake and one of the missing wives has been at the bottom of it for a month.Critics don’t consider this one of Chandler’s best, but it’s my favorite. For one thing, Marlowe leaves the city streets and heads up into the San Bernadino Mountians where L.A. inhabitants go when they’re tired of the ocean and the palm trees. And since there’s a dead body involved, Marlowe soon makes the acquaintance of Deputy Sheriff/Constable Jim Patton.Patton is large, slow-moving, and almost bovine, but in the grand tradition of country cops he’s smarter and tougher than he looks. "Keep Jim Patton Constable. He’s too old to go to work." As Marlowe quickly realizes, Patton’s folksy re-election slogan is a front for a shrewd, very effective lawman.I also love the contrast between the

gritty, but sophisticated city that spawned the two women and the developing, but still primitive mountain community where they disappeared. Derace Kingsley is a GQ dream, complete with impressive office and elegant private secretary. Constable Patton works out of a wooden-floor shack where the most up-to-date equipment is the out-sized cuspidor. City slicker or country bumpkin, crime touches us all.As with all Chandler's books, it's a look at Southern California in a simpler, more innocent time. Only half a century has passed and yet Marlowe's world would be unrecognizable to a modern Californian. No cell phones, no computers, and the houses are as small as the small pretty blondes who go missing. Chris Lavery is a successful gigolo, but the bachelor pad where he seduces wealthy women is a tiny one-bedroom clinging to the hillside above the ocean. Derace Kingsley is a successful executive who can afford to buy land in the mountains and build a cabin for the impressive sum of $8,000. It's two-bedrooms, one-bath, and the alcove off the kitchen holds "an expensive plastic breakfast set." Plastic is modern and enviable, not yet a commodity to be looked down on.The plot is as convoluted as all of Chandler's books. Both husbands are suspects. Who could have a better reason for killing a woman than her husband? There's a Dr. Feelgood-type whose wife committed suicide and who seems very nervous about it. And there are dirty, brutal cops in Bay City. If you're a Chandler fanatic, you know all about Bay City. If you're not a Chandler fanatic, please go away.When I started buying e-books several years ago, Chandler's books were priced at over $10 and I decided to stick with my trusty old paperbacks. Now some lower-priced editions are appearing. I was almost afraid to buy one selling for $1.49, figuring it might be an inferior, poorly-edited copy. I was wrong. I don't care much for the cover art, but this is a good, clean edition of a great Chandler classic for under $2. Thank you, Lord.

The Lady in the Lake may not be one of Chandler's better efforts but it is a good snapshot of written noir, the 1940s and the "who done it". Occasionally, I go back and read the classics to see where PD lit started and there's no better combo than Chandler and Philip Marlowe. Given the author's descriptive prose and attention to body language, the storyline always comes in second. The plot is standard faire with Marlowe being hired to find a spouse who has been missing and the tale ascends with the discovery of a blonde in the water of a lake. Other characters include the portly local Sheriff, a playboy type and a big city Deputy who just oozes culpability.The Lady in the Lake is an easy read story without a hero. Marlowe is the prime character but Chandler doesn't elevate him above his cast with all their foibles open to the reader. If you're interested in PD lit of the noir variety and the forerunners to Mike Hammer, Travis McGee or Spenser, try The Lady in the Lakeby the preeminent Raymond Chandler.

I’ve read this book now three times in as many months. The first time I read it, years ago, I was nineteen. Much older now, I had to come back with a different perspective and try to see what Raymond Chandler was really up to. Entertaining the reader wasn’t the point. Sending Marlowe into another violent beat down, like some of the other books, wasn’t the point. Chasing down the mystery man, or woman, wasn’t the point either.I can say this. Raymond Chandler, for those paying attention, penned a social portrait of the relationship that the public had with the police department at the time. This is a Dickensian social commentary on the the differences of two small town (at the time) police Departments. Santa Monica PD and Lake Arrowhead Sheriff’s Deputies versus the public. What you get is two polar opposites.The book before this, my personal favourite, The High Window, also has an incredibly dark take of the Los Angeles Police Department during the late 30s early 40s. The Lady In The Lake though is to The High Window as what a film is to a snapshot. This being the film.Conan Doyle once stated as Holmes:"It is my belief, Watson, founded upon my experience, that the lowest and vilest alleys in London do not present a more dreadful record of sin than does the smiling and beautiful countryside." [The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes (1892) Sherlock Holmes in "The Copper Beeches" (Doubleday p. 323)]I would place a heavy wager that after The High Window came out, some of his critics were probably roasting him for his heavy-handed and dark portraits of the LAPD, which were likely too spot-on and were trying to deflect a bit for them and making the exact same point that Doyle made. I would imagine this novel is the response to that, and from that context, this book reads like a chess move. Knight to Kings’ 4. I would also imagine that he was probably hearing it getting louder throughout his career. If you’ve read the earlier books in the series, then you’ll know exactly what I’m speaking of here. And yes, Chandler was very much aware and concerned in regards to his critics.One of the more interesting aspects of this story, is that every single Police Officer or Law Enforcement official is an archetypal figure. A known stereotype lifted straight from the modern vernacular of that day. These days, Police procedural are no big whoop. But back then, you’d be hard pressed to find a plethora of them or any as scathing. With high-profile crimes like Black Dahlia and many others, as well as folks like Weegee (Arthur Fellig), Los Angeles really was a hot-bed for corruption and cops who would sap a man dead rather than fill out a tiresome form.(Sheriff) Patton up at Puma Lake & Little Fawn lake (Arrowhead & Big Bear Lake) is the indomitable, savvy veteran Sheriff who suffers no fools but wastes no energy being impolite. When you think you have him figured, you’d guess wrong.Degarmo is the text-book ne’er-do-well who roughs people up, frames poor saps who cross his path and busts people he doesn’t like for intoxication and saps them on the back of the skull.

He’s like the bad guy out of every detective novel with a badge. Sneer included. Toothpick and quick-draw intact. Every instance on the page of this character has the reader cringing from Degarmo’s behaviour, choice of words and inappropriate decisions.Webber, Chief over in Santa Monica - or Bay City as Chandler always referred to it, is the out of touch, administrative, trusting General who probably doesn’t know half the business his men are getting into and is usually late to the scene on every occasion. He becomes an interesting character, quickly, once he’s unearthed. It’s curious that Chandler writes so snidely though about Santa Monica Police of this era, but perhaps he knew something back then that we don’t, as readers, have a bead on anymore.Someone’s going to mince words with me about Bay City being Santa Monica and Pacific Palisades, but in this context, we know that Chandler was writing about Santa Monica, while some of the victims did reside in Pac Palisades. Hope that clarifies it.All the other detectives and beat patrolmen do nothing but ratchet up the tension with every appearance.So much ground is covered in this book, in such a detailed manner, that the reader never sees any of it coming and the idea of stays well camouflaged throughout most of the book. You think Chandler is trying to tell a complex story about a Doctor’s wife that he might’ve worked out backwards, first, in order to write it out artfully, but I think that would lead down the wrong mountain path.The plot becomes so convoluted in fact, that it takes almost four pages towards the end, without much dialogue or paragraph breaks to explain how it all ended up the way it did. When it does, you’re left not just scratching your head a bit, but a tad dazed. It’s a mouthful of explanation that reads more like Agatha Christie than it does Raymond Chandler.He was on top of his game during this period and I doubt that something so obvious, at least to me, wasn’t his main aim. Chandler was a master story teller and the Dickens’ of his age. Chandler was writing very detailed essays during this era about the very thing that I’ve highlighted in this review. Social commentary in fiction. He also wrote a lot about Charles Dickens and was a definite fan.I don’t think I’m the first person to state that the overall story is pretty ludicrous. By the time you get 170 pages in, if you’re not smelling the set up, then you probably just coast through books half asleep as it is. Reading like it’s some form of sedative while you’re curled up in bed after a long day. That’s not a crime, but it does set the reader up for only a quarter of the message of the book. Some people like it like that though...."Police business is a hell of a problem. It’s a good deal like politics. It asks for the highest type of men, and there’s nothing in it to attract the highest type of men. So we have to work with what we get." -- Webber to Marlowe...."I’m all done with hating you. It’s all washed out of me. I hate people hard, but I don’t hate them very long." -- Marlowe to Degarmo....

This book is very disappointing. It has a convoluted plot that is hard to follow. There is almost no foreshadowing. Philip Marlowe wraps up the whole story in the final few pages, leaving the reader thinking 'huh?' Chandler is great at descriptive narrative, often going into great detail on clothing and furnishings.

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