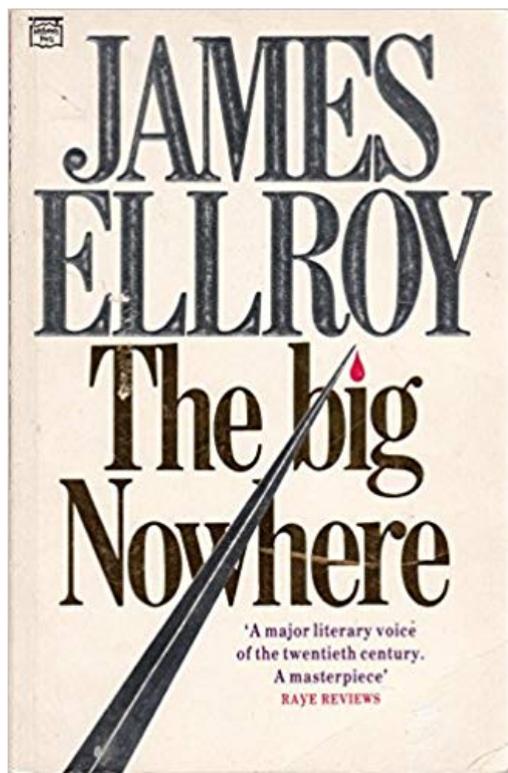


Big Nowhere *by* JAMES ELLROY



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Reviews of the *Big Nowhere* *by* JAMES ELLROY

Ucantia

This was the book that transformed James Ellroy an 'alright novelist' to an absolute must read again and again, in my eyes. Transformation is the name of the game with this book because all three of the characters starred are completely different from who they are, but the events still feel organic and natural. Ellroy's gift is in character, but he facilitates this through plot, which he treats like stocking stuffers on christmas, and packs it in so tight the novel is bursting at the seams. This novel is brutal, the kind of book that lingers. Game of thrones is famous for killing off characters prematurely, or just as the audience starts to like them, but james ellroy canonized it. This is some of the best Noir of the 80s.

Flocton

I read this years ago plus the others all out of order and saw the movie LA Confidential. Now that I am retired, it is a great time to add audio books to my morning walk at a local prep school field house. A disc a day makes walking more exciting and interesting. Certainly, this is a great second chapter in the series - I liked the development of the closeted gay character. All the actors in LA Confidential flashed through my mind while listening to these discs. Like that some are 75 minutes long and help me get to my 15K step daily goal. If you like gritty noir mysteries and walking, this series will keep you entertained for weeks.

Nalmezar

Sandwiched between "The Black Dahlia" and "L.A. Confidential," "The Big Nowhere" is James Ellroy's second book in his L.A. Quartet series (which concludes with "White Jazz"). For me, this book had a good enough beginning, but seemed to drag somewhat during the middle. But what it lacked in the middle rounds, "The Big Nowhere" had one of the most readable, exciting endings of any book I've read. The house could've burned down, but I wouldn't have left until I finished the book.

I think there are only two ways to look at James Ellroy: you either hate his twisted, over-the-top, graphic style, or you love his sharp and true dialogue, titillating decadence and his bent for blending in true characters with fictional ones in his patented quasi-historical way. Count me in the latter group.

Without going into spoiler overdrive or exhaustively rehashing the book and other reviews, I like the way Ellroy tied in police corruption from the mid-1940s through 1950, Mickey Cohen, and the Communist Scare in Hollywood with his own unique characters. Take one of his three main protagonists in this book -- "Buzz" Meeks, who was a minor character in "The Black Dahlia," a prominent character in "The Big Nowhere" and a relatively brief character in "L.A. Confidential." Meeks progressively grows as a character throughout the novel. Creating this change, which all of his protagonists go through, is a hallmark of a great writer.

Ellroy has also created a devilishly clever character in Dudley Smith, a detective on the rise, a human on a moral nosedive, and an increasingly poignant character in "The Big Nowhere" and "L.A. Confidential." Ditto with Deputy District Attorney Ellis Loew.

There is no low Ellroy doesn't explore: hypocrisy, incest, rape, sicko murders, graphic scenes, twisted sex (all in the City of Angels) -- but he does it in such a way as to make it all seem probable, all part of the plot in a tapestry of flesh-and-blood, imperfect characters. The "sickness" is somehow just part of the ride amid the turmoil of a Byzantine sea of deranged madness, as opposed to how it is portrayed seemingly for its own sake by a writer like Bret Easton Ellis.

The choice to either buy this book or avoid it is simple: If you are easily offended, don't buy it. If you are not and want a very readable book that can stand on its own legs, even though it's part of a quartet of books, definitely buy it. I'm very happy I did.

Kifer

If you like "film noir" you'll like this book. The corruption of the LAPD in the post- WWII era is incredible, and you see the roots of the Rodney King beatings and other racial incidents that followed decades later. Ellroy has the talent to make you like even seriously flawed characters like Buzz Meeks, because they still show a human side despite their despicable acts. The large cast of characters will at times make you feel a little lost early on, but you eventually figure it out. As a native So. Californian, who lived in the LA area at various times, it is fun to recognize venues and locales that you know. I know much of the slang and hateful racial epithets, but a younger reader may need a dictionary!

Carrot

Each book in the series has something that sets it apart from the others. Elroy switches to the third person so that he can get inside the heads of several different cops. This means we never really get to know any of the three as well as we knew Bucky from book one. But, on the other hand, the multiple viewpoints are very useful when trying to craft a mystery. In book one, I sometimes wanted to shake Bucky when he failed to follow through on obvious clues. Since the three heroes of this one each learn only part of the truth, you do not lose respect for them when they fail to solve it alone. This one has the best "good cop who is chewed up and spit out by the corrupt system" and it has the best "dirty cop who sees the error of his ways and redeems himself." As always, it is the characters that you remember after these books are over. You will remember Danny and Buzz forever. Oh, and we finally get a good bad guy, Dudley Smith.

Phalaken

I started reading Ellroy in the 90's, beginning with the Black Dahlia, which is only OK IMO. This book, and the followups, are where Ellroy came into his own. In my mind it's an LA Trilogy, not a Quartet, and this is where it starts. Hop on for a crazy ride. Rude, dark, and impossible to put down. You've been warned!

Dodo

Masterpiece of a novel crazy HBO hasn't bought the rights if you can't handle graphic details of murder and can't look past the "antiquated" vernacular and mindset of LA 1950 you will probably not be able to finish this novel yet it's a hardboiled masterpiece

Reading The Black Dahlia first is not necessary but reading LA Confidential before reading this may affect how much you get out of a single character arc

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