



The Detroit Electric Scheme

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Will Anderson is a drunk, heartbroken over the breakup with his fiancée, Elizabeth. He's barely kept his job at his father's company---Detroit Electric, 1910's leading electric automobile manufacturer. Late one night, Elizabeth's new fiancé and Will's one-time friend, John Cooper, asks Will to meet him at the car factory. He finds Cooper dead, crushed in a huge hydraulic roof press. Surprised by the police, Will panics and runs, leaving behind his cap and automobile, and buries his blood-spattered clothing in a garbage can.

What follows is a fast-paced, detail-filled ride through early-1900s Detroit, involving murder, blackmail, organized crime, the development of a wonderful friendship, and the inside story on early electric automobiles. Through it all, Will learns that clearing himself of the crime he was framed for is only the beginning. To survive, and for his loved ones to survive, he must also become a man.

The Detroit Electric Scheme is populated with fascinating characters, both real and fictional, from a then-flourishing Detroit: The Dodge brothers and Edsel Ford come to life, interacting with denizens of the sordid underbelly of the Motor City, such as Vito Adamo, Detroit's first Mob boss, and Big Boy, the bouncer at a saloon so notorious the newspapers called it "The Bucket of Blood." This expertly plotted debut delivers with great research, wonderfully flawed yet likable characters, and a shattering climax.

The Detroit Electric Scheme Details

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From Reader Review The Detroit Electric Scheme for online ebook

Nicole McBride says

This is another author that is going to be speaking at a writer's workshop I was thinking about going to this summer and he is an author from Michigan. I am always looking for authors to read from my home state and was naturally intrigued.

From the very beginning of the book I was hooked. I thought initially that I was not going to like the main character Will Anderson, but he grew on me as I progressed through the pages. DE Johnson definitely did an amazing job with character development as well as very diverse. It isn't easy to get a reader to connect with or even like a drunk, bitter main character accused of murder, but Johnson does it.

The historical aspect of the book was almost a character on its own. It was like I was back in the early 1900's Detroit on the verge of the electric automobile? explosion. Sadly, I have never quite taken to Detroit and do not go there unless I have to, but this book made me see it in a different light. It would have been fascinating to see this town in its heyday and not the broken down city it is turning into. The description of the horse drawn carriages, night clubs, and train stations were spot on and I am going to look for further books by this author in the hopes to experience this unique view.

There is a little bit of romance in this book, but it is shrouded in darkness which I am okay with. I have never been one to enjoy a sweet romantic entanglement within the confines of a dark murder mystery and one of those would have been very out of place in this book. I think that Johnson's handling of this helped not only the story but helped with the main character as well. It humanized in a way that made him likeable where without it, Will probably would not have been.

Overall, I thought that this was a dark, wonderfully written historical fiction on the Detroit automobile race. If everything afore mentioned is intriguing to you, then you will definitely find this book entertaining and will probably want to read more from this author. If you are someone who does not like historical fiction or a rather dark piece, then you might want to skip this, but it would be a shame because of how great a story this is.

Rating: 4.5 out of 5

I borrowed this book from my local library and was not asked to write a review of this book.

Ubiquitousbastard says

I went into this not knowing at all what to expect. Honestly, I sort of thought there might be a bit of

steampunk to it, something about the name sort of gave me that impression. It wasn't, however, just historical crime fiction.

Surprisingly, I really liked this book. The time period was interesting, as was the bits about early cars (especially the electrics), and it was all a bit noir which I've always been fond of. The romance caused me a little anxiety at first, until that got settled later on. I think one reason that I was surprised by liking this was because I'm a huge opponent of the falsely-accused trope, and it usually irritates me to a point where I can't read anymore. So, there was some of that, but there was no (view spoiler) awfulness that is the worst part of those kind of books. The ending might have been a bit too predictable since I was already starting to think that (view spoiler) but maybe that's because of the number of crime books I've read and nothing can be new to me anymore.

Debbi says

What I liked - Detroit in 1910 and all the local history. A decent plot and interesting characters.

What I didn't like - I personally dislike the 'protagonist falsely accused and has to prove their innocence'. It's been done too often. Thank goodness I didn't have to read through a court case - I hate those the most! Anderson got beat up way too much for my taste and just too abused by the police. And Wes, almost dies and is up and about in no time - not believable.

I haven't decided if I'll read any more of these - 1910 Detroit might draw me back!

Debbie says

THE DETROIT ELECTRIC SCHEME by D.E. Johnson (Mystery Fiction, Historical, 1910s Detroit, Amateur Sleuth) 3.5 star rating

I began more impressed with this first in the series featuring Will Anderson, scion of one of Detroit's leading electric car manufacturers, circa 1910, who by necessity turns detective.

The beginning of the book laid out lots of information about early electric cars and painted a vivid picture of the auto industry of the day.

But once the "mystery" was set up, I was disappointed at every turn. The solution seemed obvious to me and the author's "sleight-of-hand" seemed heavy-handed. Other readers have raved about this series, though, so maybe I just made a lucky guess and the plot isn't as transparent as I thought.

Read this if: you're interested in today's electric cars and would like some information on their evolution; or you're looking for a new mystery series and the setting appeals to you. 3½ stars

Gary Swartz says

The Detroit Electric Scheme was very well written. There was a lot of character development. The main character, Will (William Anderson), changed his outlook on the murder of John Anthony Cooper throughout

the book and that made it very believable. Also, Will's lawyer, Mr. Sutton, has great character development. When Will is first charged with Cooper's murder, Mr. Sutton tries to get him out of it; "Mr. Sutton paced around the interrogation room like a tornado-in front of me, behind me, in front of me behind me. 'Christ, Will, we'd better start working on an insanity plea.'" Nearing the end of the book though, Mr. Sutton begins to lose hope in Will.

Also, there is a lot of good details. When describing the music being played in The Bucket, a fearsome saloon in town, the author by saying, "Wild music echoed through the saloon... The music soared and swooped, similar to ragtime, but untamed, improvisational." Another example of this is on page 145, "The office was small and cramped, lit by a pair of gas lamps mounted on either side of the room." It is describing an office that the Italian man and Will meet in to talk about finding Elizabeth Humes. This level of detail throughout the book makes it a very interesting read.

This book is very suspenseful, which is why I like it so much. There is a very big plot twist at the end that I really liked. Just when you think you know exactly who murdered John, a new piece of evidence is introduced and your entire argument falls completely.

This is a very good book to read. I would suggest it to many people who liked mysteries and people older than the ages of about 13 because there is a bit of swearing and it's kind of gory.

BTW- This is Gary's daughter, Jane, who is 11.

Audra (Unabridged Chick) says

Detroit's been floating around the back of mind recently thanks to the rather fabulous Chrysler ads that feature the gorgeous, gritty architecture and landscape of the city once called the Paris of the Midwest. When a tour opened for a mystery novel set in 1911 in the Motor City (this book's sequel), I couldn't resist, and being a stickler about reading things in order, I grabbed this book first so I could be good and immersed.

Set November of 1910, the novel opens with a grisly murder. Told by Will Anderson, son of a successful electric automobile manufacturer who has some demons and a drinking problem, we quickly learn the victim was John Cooper, a friend Will's from college who was engaged to the woman who, until recently, was engaged to Will. Understandably, everyone assumes the worst, and we follow Will as he tries to keep out of jail and solve the crime without more people losing their lives.

This book caused much contention in my house, as my wife and I both read it and had very different opinions upon finishing. (She disliked, I enjoyed.) I loved the setting and the ambiance of the story and Johnson throws in fabulous historical details that made the nerd in me die of glee. The mystery was straightforward but engrossing, and I liked all the characters. My only complaint really is that I wish the book were longer: at times, the story felt rushed or the characters kind of thin. With a few more pages, things might have been fleshed out more satisfyingly.

A solid start to a great historical crime series that is perfect for those who like seasons to match their reading. The grim winter in this novel felt pretty real with the miserable rain we've had in Boston recently!

Liz Crowe says

I had the extreme pleasure of hearing Mr. Johnson read the first chapter of this book at the Ann Arbor Book Fest, right after I read a bit of one of my books. I am even more honored now to know that I was alongside such a masterful storyteller as this.

I'm a bit of a Detroit history junkie myself and was eager to dive into this novel, which is set at the turn of century against a background of the emergence of the auto industry, including electric cars, and the unions. Will Anderson is one of those characters who is not 100% sympathetic and I love that in a protagonist. And as the story progresses, he makes more and more seemingly bizarre choices in his effort to escape being thrown in jail for not one, but two murders. The side story of his relationship with the daughter of a prominent judge was deliciously mysterious, with a reveal towards the end that was not only in keeping with the mores of the time but with the personalities of the two characters concerned. I did not see the twist coming at the end and I tend to predict endings too much for my own good. Great job Mr. Johnson! And despite the fact that I need to be up early to work and pack up my house in readiness to move, I have just downloaded the next 2 books in ebook format because I can't wait to see what Will and Elizabeth get up to next.

If you love mystery/thrillers with a unique historical edge and a brisk, to the point writing style, go buy this first book in his series now. But be ready to quick-purchase the rest!

Jann Barber says

This book is the May selection for the library mystery book club. I like it so much that I've ordered a copy for my personal shelves, along with the next book in this series, *Motor City Shakedown*.

The author, D.E. Johnson, is speaking at one of the branches of our county library this Thursday as part of a program called Journeys. I hope to hear him speak.

According to his website, this is his first book. That is part of the reason for my 5 star rating. It kept my interest from the first page. The twists and turns blindsided me every time, and I like that!

I began to feel as achy as Will, because he is pummeled by police officers and villains at every turn. Johnson's descriptions are vivid, meaning I often felt as if I needed a long soak in the hot tub, a fresh change of clothing, and bandages. The threat of a life sentence in prison definitely motivates Will to keep searching for the truth.

As always, I refer you to the summary provided and will not add that to my review. I did often think of Sam Spade and Philip Marlowe, even though Will Anderson is not a detective. He's merely in the wrong place at the wrong time, trying to do the right (to him) thing.

I particularly like Will's neighbor, Wes. He is a talented, well-to-do young man, and is gay. In Detroit in the 1900s, this is problematic. Will ignores Wes until the problems in his life overwhelm him and then he finds

Wes to be a true friend who knows how to fight dirty.

Plus, I learned some things about the emerging Detroit automobile industry in the early 1900s. Edsel Ford appeared as a character, age 17 and trying not to be under the thumb of his father, Henry, as he helped Will try to figure out what was going on.

I am looking forward to reading the next book when it arrives!

Elizabeth says

An interesting mystery that takes place in Detroit in 1910. As the fledgling auto industry begins to grow by leaps and bounds, Will Anderson, 22-year-old son of an auto tycoon, discovers a body brutally murdered in his own department at Detroit Electric. Cornered by the police, Will panics and runs and spends the next several weeks trying to find the killer and keep himself out of prison, deep in the seedy underbelly of the Motor City. I didn't like Will at first--he's a drunk and a spoiled playboy--but gradually he realizes that in order to solve the murder he has to kick his drinking habit and become a man, and by the end of the book he's more likeable. What I loved most about this book is how beautifully it described Detroit, my adopted city, and how many of the places named were familiar to me. Real historical figures make appearances, too--Will is good friends with a teenaged Edsel Ford. VOYA featured this book in its annual column about adult mysteries with YA appeal, and I definitely see the appeal as Will is a VERY young 22 and Edsel Ford only 17 and still in high school. But, with a grisly description of a crime scene, another onstage and very brutal murder and a running thread of heroin abuse, this is for older teens only and even then on a case-by-case basis.

Lisa says

Having grown up near Detroit, I was drawn in by the title of this book, and when I found out it was set in 1910, I couldn't wait to read it. I loved the descriptions of early Detroit, its streets, buildings, and residents. There was also a lot about the early auto barons, which is fascinating stuff.

I thought the mystery itself was well done, but the protagonist made a ridiculous number of unwise decisions. When he first found the body (not a spoiler, as it's the first sentence of the novel), he should have told his father instead of going on to do things that constantly made him appear guilty. But if he had, I suppose there wouldn't have been a book.

I've learned that Johnson has written three more books in this series. I'm looking forward to reading all of them, but one is set in Eloise, and I can't wait to read that!

Laura says

I found this book while casually browsing the shelves of my local library - something I don't normally do, because I usually place books on hold and simply dash in and dash back out. There is a lot to be said for taking some time, wandering the shelves, and letting a book catch your eye based on nothing but its title and cover.

Corrupt judges and cops, fedoras and wool suits, disfiguring scars, jail, heroin addiction, homophobia,

disturbing deaths, and a couple of very flawed main characters - all taking place in the Motor City at the beginning of the automotive revolution. It's noir historical fiction, and it's just so, so good. The pictures that D.E. Johnson paints of the city with its factories and seedy underbelly made me feel as if I was walking along the streets of 1910 Detroit alongside Will Anderson.

I now have three weeks to read the rest of the series, having run back to the library when I gleefully discovered that this book was 1 of 4 in a series. D.E. Johnson might have just catapulted to the top of my favorite authors' list.

Sarah Rigg says

The mystery is set in Detroit in 1910 and mixes real-life figures like Edsel Ford and the Dodge brothers with fictional ones. At the beginning, Will, the son of a well-to-do electric car manufacturer, has become an alcoholic after his fiancée dumps him and ends up with his former best friend. The friend who stole his girl ends up dead in the factory, framing Will, and Will must solve the mystery and man up in the process. It was a fun novel to start 2016, but didn't live up to my expectations. Worth a read, but only a 3-star book.

Kate says

This book feels way longer than its 300-odd pages. And not in a good way.

It's not particularly well-written; the author has a habit of summarizing and glossing over scenes he probably shouldn't, only to turn around and linger on a multi-page description of how attractive certain female characters are. Because that, of course, is relevant to the plot. I was *almost* willing to forgive that, just because I hadn't realized how much I wanted to read a novel set in 1910s Detroit until I picked this one up.

Except that the protagonist isn't just unlikable, he's frankly too stupid to live. Around the 250 page mark I found myself rooting for the police to arrest him and put him out of my misery. (view spoiler)

Oy vey. Never mind the protagonist, I think *everyone* in this book was too stupid to live. It was just making my head hurt by the end of it.

Oh, and a final insult to injury: (view spoiler)

In short, this is a wretched book, and how it's so highly rated on Goodreads is beyond me. I think I'm now dumber for having read it.

Grace Shryock says

D.E. Johnson's debut novel, *The Detroit Electric Scheme*, is an absolutely exhilarating ride through Detroit in the early 1900s. The main character, Will, gets caught up in quite a twisted situation. With the help of his good friends, he fights to find his way out of it. The way Johnson intertwines this fictional mystery into a

real historical setting is breathtaking. The play between the fictional and non-fictional characters is completely believable, and Johnson's descriptions of Detroit are so vivid you will see the beauty of what the city was 100 years ago.

This novel has something for everyone. From the very first line, I was hooked and couldn't put it down. The scintillating plot, the rich character development, the beautiful descriptions of Detroit in the early 1900s, and the rich history of the booming automobile business all come together to make a fantastic story. You will want to read more when you finish this book, I guarantee it!

Jack says

I ordered this book because it was supposed to be a good thriller/mystery taking place in 1910 Detroit.

Thriller? Mystery? Early Detroit? For me, these three things right away made The Detroit Electric Scheme a must read.

also included - electric cars - yes - there were electric cars in the early years of the 20th century. Unions. Gangsters. Drugs. Good cops and bad cops. A few murders.

The story itself is very good, very involved with some interesting twists and turns and the author D.E.Johnson has done his homework on the history part. Love his descriptions.

The one thing that I found unsettling - the protagonist. Will Anderson is not really a likable guy. He's ok - he's not a bad guy...but...

However, that could be the markings of a good writer; you don't make the main character so likable or so despised. You see the guy's flaws and blemishes.

Overall, a good read. Let's see what these second book is like.
