



Calibre

Ken Bruen

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Somewhere in the teeming heart of London is a man on a lethal mission. His cause: a long-overdue lesson on the importance of manners. When a man gives a public tongue-lashing to a misbehaving child, or a parking lot attendant is rude to a series of customers, the "Manners Killer" makes sure that the next thing either sees is the beginning of his own grisly end.

When he starts mailing letters to the Southeast London police squad, he'll soon find out just how bad a man's manners can get. The Southeast is dominated by the perpetual sneer of one Inspector Brant, and while he might or might not agree with the killer's cause and can even forgive his tactics to some degree, Brant is just ornery enough to employ his trademark brand of amoral, borderline-criminal policing to the hunt for the Manners Killer. For if there's one thing that drives the incomparable inspector, it's the unshakeable conviction that if anyone is going to be getting away with murder on his patch, it'll be Brant himself, thank you very much.

Ken Bruen's *Calibre* is original and astonishing hard-boiled noir.

Calibre Details

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Author : Ken Bruen

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From Reader Review Calibre for online ebook

Kathy says

Most of the characters are unappealing, even the supposed 'good people'. The ending was mostly satisfying, but I don't think I will read more of this series.

Ladiibbug says

#6 Inspector Brant - Crime Series

Set in London's SE Precinct

Read this series in order due to unfolding events ...

The "Manners Killer" is on a lethal mission in London. His cause? A long overdue lesson on the importance of manners. For those who are rude, scold a child too strongly in public, or otherwise show a lack of regard for others, the Manners Killer will see that the offender pays the ultimate price.

Inspector Brant of London's rough SE Precinct is very close to the criminal edge himself. The other police officers, including the brass, know better than to mess with Brant and his Machiavellian (sp?) ways.

The Manners Killer begins sending letters to the precinct, taunting the cops. As usual, there's drama and more illegality inside the police station than on the streets.

Amazing, as usual with Bruen. Hard boiled, over the top, gritty crime writing. Just be very glad in real life the very worst of police officers don't come close to Inspector Brant, who doles out justice as he sees fit.

WortGestalt says

Die Truppe um Chief Inspector Roberts und Sergeant Brant von der Londoner Metropolitan Police wieder in Bestform. Schnell, dreckig und direkt.

William M. says

4 AND 1/2 STARS

For me, author Ken Bruen, along with Tom Piccirilli, is one of the best crime noir / thriller writers working today. Calibre is chock full of outrageously interesting characters, crisp dialogue, and unpredictable situations. While the central premise involves a killer taking out people in London who publically express

bad manners, multiple other storylines involving shady police and their personal lives create a stylized and interwoven, almost Robert Altman-like technique.

While Bruen's fast pace and short scenes keep the reader blazing through the narrative, some of the English terms threw me off here and there. No doubt I would appreciate it more if I lived in England. Fans of crime noir and thrillers not aware of Bruen, should seek him out as soon as possible. I'll be picking up more for sure.

A. Lieberson says

Once again Ken Bruen puts together great characters and a great plot.

Dan says

Only Ken Bruen is Ken Bruen.
He is the master.

Kathy Davie says

Sixth in the Inspector Brant crime-suspense series based in a London police precinct and revolving around its policemen and women, Inspector Brant in particular.

Award: Shamus

My Take

I gotta confess, I am beginning to wonder about Falls...I've been crossing my fingers for her from the start, but in this story... I'm glad she's not falling back on the booze or the coke, but to actually consider going out for a beer with McDonald??? Has she no standards? Then she turns around and redeems it with that knuckleduster...oh, yeah!

I can't figure out why Brant tricks Porter into checking on Trevor unless he was actually looking out for Porter? Or did he just want in on this gig?

Bruen really does give it to us real. His characters do tend to veer more to the excess, but that does make the action more exacting. They're real people with realistic issues reacting to extremes.

Yah just know that Brant is gonna get away with this new writing gig. He bashes and fucks his way through everything else...how could he possibly lose on this one.

The Story

Brant is back from a stint in Australia and he's more of a jerk than ever. After some missteps in *Vixen*, Falls and McDonald are one step from being kicked off the force---there's even a lottery going as to who cracks

first.

It's McDonald who gets the two of them off the school shift.

Porter gets assigned the serial case for this installment: Mr. Manners is hoping that offing the rudesbys will tidy things up a bit. Brant soon gets in on it and he recruits Falls to be bait. To be as rude as possible and entice him to attack. Then Falls gets paired up with Lane. Well, at least she isn't on her way out.

It's Brant's threats, though, that push things over the edge and at least England won't have to suffer Mr. Manners anymore.

The Characters

Sergeant Tom Brant rips off shopkeepers and criminals and everyone around him knows to be leery of him. Recently back from a two-week exchange in Australia, he's all-things Oz and bugging his fellow cops. He's looking to be the next McBain. **Chief Inspector Roberts** is about the closest cop Brant has to a friend. He's currently solving cases right and left...and getting a mite too cocky. **WPC Elizabeth Falls** is one step away from being thrown off the force. She's managing to stay off the sauce and the coke and working hard to claw her way back on to a more active beat. **Sergeant Porter Nash** is back at work---a stage 1 diabetic. And feeling his solitary state.

PC Alistair McDonald is on the bottom as well and it just gets worse when he runs out on a fellow cop. Figuring he's got nothin' to lose, he starts pulling Brants. **Superintendent Brown** is a major, bigoted jerk and it's more of a joke than a serious concern when he's "caught" passing funny money.

WPC Andrews is doing quite well even if she does have to run the usual gauntlet for new women cops.

Alcazar "Caz" is Brant's latest snitch. **Trevor Blake** is a bartender interested in a longterm relationship with Porter. **PC Lane** is mostly sidelined at the precinct due to an unfortunate photograph. **Linda Gillingham-Bowl** is the book agent interested in Nash/Brant's synopsis. **Don Keaton** is a stockbroker who rearends Falls and, man, does he fall.

Thomas Crew, a.k.a., "Ford" is living out his favorite crime authors and having a ball. **Mandy** is his hooker girlfriend. **Jamil** is a drug dealer caught in a domestic. **Fitz** is a BIG crook passing funny money. Never ignore advice about approaching this guy. **Graham Picking** is a pedophile about to meet his Maker.

The Cover

The cover is divided into three rows: the top is a very blurry black-green-and-white of two men in a hallway, the narrow middle has a gray ground with the author's name and the award noted in black, and the bottom is a black background with a colonial blue title.

The title refers to the book that Brant is "getting" Nash to write for him, *Calibre*. It's about the only contribution Brant has made to it so far.

Brendan says

Calibre rockets through the story of a group of cops (ala McBain's 83rd Precinct) in London and the criminals they encounter. Its characters are sharply drawn and distinct, and its dialog really pops. If Bruen's other books are half as enjoyable as this one, he's got a new fan.

* The killer and the main detective (a corrupt, charming, badass asshole named Brant) are both big murder mystery fans, with the former trying to become a character from a true crime novel, and the latter trying to become a novelist without actually doing any writing. Ed McBain and Jim Thompson serve as inspirations for the two characters.

* The use of the police squad storytelling style (ala McBain) works really well here, with the characters standing out vividly (even if they're a bit caricatured).

* The dark world of the police in Bruen's novels sure is gritty — the police are only just a bit better than the criminals, the more successful of the former being the ones more likely to trample all over the latter. But the detached violence and pragmatic reactions of all the characters paints a cynical, almost nihilistic world. When your main detective is as amoral as Brant seems to be, it's hard to imagine the cops as holding the moral high ground.

* The only thing I wasn't satisfied with was the ending. It's almost as if Bruen had a contract for 180 pages, and when he hit 175, he realized that he needed to wrap up some storylines, so he cranked out two or three pages to wrap up three storylines. Not kidding.

An excellent read. You should read it too.

Ed [Redacted] says

The sixth in Bruen's Inspector Brant series about a group of police officers in South London. For whatever reason I read this one first. I think my enjoyment suffered a little bit for not having read the previous volumes. Despite this, I found Calibre to be an excellent read. Not as deep and soul-searching as the The Guards, it was still a well written, nicely plotted and just really fun book. The book is mainly concerned with the attempt to locate a serial killer working in South London. This particular character kills people who he finds to be rude or ill mannered in public. (remind me never to go to South London). The characterization is done quite well and the interactions between the characters are complex and always interesting.

Clearly I should have started with the first in the series, A White Arrest. This book is just short of five stars for me.

John says

I love *reading* Ken Bruen's books: the pages turn in a flicker, so fast that the edges smolder; I laugh and I cry and all the things you're supposed to do. The trouble is that, a few hours later, I can remember very little of what I've read.

This is no damning criticism. I could say much the same about the *Midsomer Murders* TV movies, which I also rather like (although we're talkin' chalk an' cheese here). I read *Calibre* in a sort of race with time; as I came out the other end, puffing from the sprint, I asked myself how consequential was what I'd just read. The answer was: not very.

(As an aside, the book would have benefited from the attentions of a proofreader. Bruen's style violates orthodox grammatical rules, and I have no trouble with that. I do object to the spelling/punctuational errors, though.)

This is another tale of the South London division of the Met, and in particular of its most corrupt yet successful detective, Brant. This time out, the squad are up against a serial killer who's decided to off obnoxiously rude people. (If you think this echoes Brad Denton's satirical novel *Blackburn* [1993] you're right. Bruen thinks the same and actually mentions the book, but, because he believes the novel's called *Blackstone*, he can't identify the author's name.

Well:
fuckit, I:
can.)

There are various other subplots going on, of course, in a very *87th Precinct* style -- Bruen is far better at acknowledging his debts here. Some of those subplots come to a reasonable resolution; others don't; I'm not sure the main plot does, either.

Hm.

It has been, you see, several hours since I finished the book . . .

Gary says

Noir as a Blunt Instrument

It's impossible to categorize Ken Bruen. His jarring, disjointed chronicles of crime follow no convention, and while his respect for the masters of pulp fiction:

McBain
Chandler
Thompson

is faithfully imbedded in his prose, Bruen mimics none of them. His style and his formulae are all his own:

Fresh
Brutal
In your face
No apologies

"Calibre" is the latest Bruen masterpiece from Hell. A serial killer is on the loose, reaping vengeance on the rude, the inconsiderate, the boorish clods that spread their venom often and indiscriminately. The killer, "Ford", follows Jim Thompson's classic, "The Killer Inside Me", like it were the holy writ, a student of CSI dispatching his random and manner-less victims with vicious and intelligent efficiency. The perfect criminal - or so he thinks...

Back to crack the case is the incorrigible sergeant Brant of the Southeast London police, a character as

unconventional and unique as Bruen himself. Brant's disregard for authority is legendary, but Dirty Harry is perfectly prissy compared to Brant's disdain for rules and the law, which he routinely breaks with impunity. And while Brant's superiors would like to see him on the other side of the bars, he keeps his tracks covered while solving crime with methods guaranteed to keep the self-appointed watchdogs of politically correct police procedure in an uncomfortable state of apoplexy.

Take note: Ken Bruen and Sergeant Brant are not for all tastes. If you're looking for a clean police procedural with cool crime scene forensics, intricate plots, and a tidy conclusion, Bruen's rapid-fire dialog and sketchy story development may leave you wanting. Bruen, like his anti-hero Brant, are more suited to writing with a Molotov cocktail than a typewriter. But if you're looking for a new definition of noir, of grit and reality and black humor that is told without apology that could not care less who or what it offends, well, what are you waiting for?

Harry says

Unumstritten gehört der Ire Ken Bruen zu den bedeutendsten zeitgenössischen Noir-/ Hard-Boiled-Schriftstellern. Die Serie rund um den Ex-Cop Jack Taylor, aber auch Standalone-Titel wie London Boulevard oder die Kooperationen mit dem US-Autor Jason Starr bieten schlichtweg allerfeinste Unterhaltung.

Löblich, dass der Polar Verlag mit Kaliber nun auch die Serie um Detective Sergeant Tom Brant und Chief Inspector James Roberts erstmals in den deutschen Sprachraum bringt. Unverständlich allerdings, warum zunächst mit Band 6 der Reihe begonnen wird und im Frühjahr 2016 dann Band 5 folgen soll. Eine Veröffentlichungspolitik wie eine Ramschkiste. Schade. Mindestens ebenso wie die Tatsache, dass Kaliber einfach nicht wirklich zu gefallen weiß. Die Lobeshymnen diverser männlicher deutscher Kritiker bleiben für mich jedenfalls gänzlich unverständlich. Der Plot des Romans plätschert dahin, die Charaktere sind platt usw. usf. Hat man alles schon weit besser gelesen. Nicht nur bei Ken Bruen. Wüsste ich's nicht besser, könnte man fast annehmen, dass Kaliber der müde Versuch eines minderbegabten Schriftstellers ist, die feine Feder von Ken Bruen zu imitieren, was in einem ziemlich kläglichen Scheitern mündet.

Ammar says

3.5

Tim says

I'm not at all sure of the point of this story. It makes little sense to me. 2 of 10 stars

Doug says

4.5 stars

