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Once upon a time, a fellow named Richard Bachman wrote *Blaze* on an Olivetti typewriter, then turned the machine over to Stephen King, who used it to write *Carrie*. Bachman died in 1985 ("cancer of the pseudonym"), but this last gripping Bachman novel resurfaced after being hidden away for decades an unforgettable crime story tinged with sadness and suspense. Clayton Blaisdell, Jr., was always a small-time delinquent. None too bright either, thanks to the beatings he got as a kid. Then Blaze met George Rackley, a seasoned pro with a hundred cons and one big idea. The kidnapping should go off without a hitch, with George as the brains behind their dangerous scheme. But there's only one problem: by the time the deal goes down, Blaze's partner in crime is dead. Or is he?Includes a previously uncollected story, "Memory" the riveting opening to Stephen King's new Scribner hardcover novel, *Duma Key*.

Blaze Details

Date : Published June 12th 2007 by Scribner

ISBN : 9781416554844

Author : Richard Bachman (Pseudonym) , Stephen King

Format : Hardcover 285 pages

Genre : Horror, Fiction, Thriller

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From Reader Review Blaze for online ebook

Jason says

The novel was so-so.

Honestly, the best part was the short story included at the end, Memory. It was the genesis for Duma Key, which I'm now really looking forward to reading. Otherwise, the novel itself only gets about 2 stars.

Horace Derwent says

this book brought me tears and laughter with moving pathos and humor

sk had the wonder of using different approaches to achieve equally satisfactory results like Of Mice and Men

if i were a director directing an sk's novel, this book would be my first choice!

Gregory Del Duca says

Look...

First and foremost, I am a self-described and unembarrassed "King Head." I have devoured Stephen King's words since reading "Thinner" as a fairly young boy with a slightly twisted mind that loved to be challenged, expanded, and scared.

I am also a person who has read loads of classic and contemporary fiction, non-fiction, science fiction, scientific journals, periodicals, etc. My point? I don't simply spend my time reading one author or genre, and I am a fairly discriminating reader.

I feel that Stephen King has become one of the masters of (a) story-telling, and (b) character development. I believe his characters, care about them, and, even through the unbelievable worlds and situations through which these palpable characters inhabit and experience, believe them.

In "Blaze," which was originally written at a very young age, sat on the back burner for 25+ years, and fortunately revisited the author after his "retirement," King is - in my opinion - at his best creating a situational plot line that follows two amazing characters blurring the lines of ethical/unethical, right/wrong, and nature/nature.

I recommend this relatively short book to anyone interested in a good story and a great character.

David says

This was a bit of a return to the old classic King, *sans* monsters and gore. It's a novel King wrote 30-odd years ago, then rediscovered and polished up and released as the last of his Bachman books. Ironically, I found it to be one of the better stories of his I've read recently, but I always have had a bit of a preference for his older stories - his newer stuff often just doesn't quite strike the right chord with me.

King has always been good with stories that pull up the carpets on small town America and look at what's crawling around between the planks of the floorboards. *Blaze* is about a huge galoot of a man, Clayton Blaisdell, Jr., who's as slow-witted as he is strong-bodied. Basically a genial soul who doesn't want to hurt anyone and whose only sin was being born into a crapsack world where he never got a break, the book alternates between Blaze's childhood, growing up in an (of course) abusive orphanage and his adulthood, where he has become the sort of small-time criminal everyone predicted he'd become. His partner of many years, George, who was the brains of their two-man outfit, has died, leaving Blaze to fend for himself. Blaze is trying to pull off George's last scheme, a kidnapping and ransom plot. Unfortunately, without George's brains to think through the plotting, Blaze's plan can't possibly end well.

The climax is fairly predictable - we know from the beginning that this poor sap never had a chance, so there isn't much suspense about how it's all going to turn out. But King, in his marvelous way when he's focusing on characterization and writing relatively economically, sketches out the life and personality of Clayton Blaisdell, Jr. for us, until we see him as a human being, a good guy in a bad place who made bad choices through little fault of his own, but mostly was just kicked around by a harsh, unfeeling world. And then we see the things he does, things which would make any reasonable person looking at his history but without the reader's knowledge of everything that happened alongside it, the context that framed the events and his actions, believe that he is just a two-bit thug and little more than a monster. To the rest of the world, that's all he is, but by the end you, the reader, just want to give this guy a hug.

Stephen King can be very sentimental when he wants to be, though he never goes for schmaltz. *Blaze* is about as close to a tearjerker as I've ever read from him. It's not all sparkling prose and the plot is perhaps a bit too predictable - even after King's very belated editing, this is obviously an earlier work. But it demonstrates that King has always been able to write fine suspense novels and fine human dramas, and his writing deserves to be taken seriously.

LeAnne says

Am I the only person on the map to not know Stephen King's early pseudonym was Richard Bauchman? Huh.

This was the last book written under that pen name, and it is not of the horror genre but a bit like *Of Mice and Men* with a crime story thrown in. A kind but slow fellow named Blaisedell is befriended by a small time con called George who uses him in his cons, but genuinely cares for the big lug. Blaze continuously talks with George throughout the snatching of a six month old baby, but the twist you learn early on is that George is actually dead and only speaking to him in his head.

Oooo, human psychology..

I was only drawn to the story because of a group reading challenge which asked that we each do a book that surrounded a kidnapping. Having already finished several great reads touching on the topic, I fluttered about and found this.

Not great, not bad. If you are a big fan of Stephen King's, you might want to add this to your repertoire. Otherwise, don't pay the ransom.

Effie says

Μετ? το σκ?λωμα που ?φαγα με τη Μ?ζερι, ?θελα οπωσδ?ποτε να διαβ?σω κ?τι παρ? ?μοιο. Να μπω 100% στην ψυχολογ?α του χαρακτ?ρα και να νι?σω την αγων?α του. Και το Μπλ?ιζ ?ταν ακριβ?ς αυτ? που ?θελα!

Ε?ναι απ? τα βιβλ?α που διαβ?ζονται με την αν?σα κρατημ?νη και σε βομβαρδ?ζουν με τα πιο ?ντονα συναισθ?ματα. Θεωρ? αδ?νατο να μη συμπαθ?σει κ?ποιος τον Μπλ?ιζ, παρ? τις πρ?ξεις του. Το τ?λος με στενοχ?ρησε π?ρα πολ?.

Mindi says

Considering that this is one of King's earliest works, (even under the Bachman Pseudonym), I think it's rather good. It's certainly not in the same league with his best fiction, but I was drawn in from the very beginning, and the story continued at a good pace up until the tense, nerve-wracking ending.

I like the way King introduced his main character in the beginning with a sparse amount of information, and then interchanged chapters the character's past with the present. We know that Blaze has done some bad things throughout his life, and that he's about to do something even worse, but King makes him a sympathetic character from the very start, and then increases the reader's sympathy with each subsequent flashback chapter. In the end you want Blaze to come to justice, but it's painful, because his entire life has led him to a harsh sentence that he ultimately doesn't really deserve.

I also liked that King published this novel and then donated all of the royalties to The Haven Foundation. King wrote Blaze when he was just starting out, and it never would have been published if he hadn't continued to revisit it and decide to share it with his Constant Readers. He has a tremendous amount of clout now, but King knows what it's like to be a struggling writer.

Essi | morrisongrl says

This was one of the few King books that I hadn't read yet. A new,unread King book is always a treat! And this one didn't disappoint. Goodreads puts this in the horror category,which it isn't. It's more of a crime/mystery type of story.

It took me some time to really get into it, and at times it felt a bit slow. That took away that one star. But other than that, I really enjoyed this. The character of Blaze was so well written, I really started to care for him. The story tells his life story as well as follows him in present time. I didn't expect this to be as emotional as it was, although King does say in the beginning that there might be tears. It was sad! I felt so bad for Blaze. I love characters like that, kind of contradictory ones. You care for them, feel for them, but they do bad things, things that are wrong. Makes the reader really think, whose side are you on. Are bad things, like maybe killing someone for example, sometimes justified? Or, if not justified, at least understandable. Blaze is now one of my favourite King characters. Poor Blaze.

Wayne Barrett says

After reading this I am a little surprised that it doesn't have a higher rating. I thought it was pretty damn good.

Written around the same time he wrote Carrie, King listed this one under his pseudonym, Richard Bachman. maybe that's fitting because one thing that stands out to me in this novel is that there is a complete absence of the supernatural...nada...zip...zilch!

Blaze, the nickname given to our main character here, is a hardcore crime novel. This is one of those stories that is told in such a way that you know the guy is a criminal, a killer, but knowing his past in detail, you can't help but feel sorry for the big lug.

There is another short story, 'Memory', attached at the end from which we get the novel 'Duma Key'. This story was interesting as well. I think Stephen is giving us a glimpse of the hell he suffered when he was run down by a vehicle. I'm looking forward to that novel now.

Thomas Strömquist says

I thought this "Mice and men"-inspired little trifle was a more enjoyable read than I was afraid of, but it surely did not feel like an important one. What really made it was the flashbacks showing what shaped the brain injured baby-napper to what he is. The story itself unfolds and ends following the only logical pattern (except for the very ending which is probably not too realistic, but still very predictable).

I'm not sure why King felt compelled to publish this after so many years and certainly not why he contributed it to Bachman - a pseudonym that wasn't even born when the original draft was written (at least I think, please correct me if I'm wrong). Re-written and heavily expanded by King now but still a Bachman? Also - wasn't one purpose of the pseudonym to find out if the writer's success could be accounted for by any other means than his making himself a name?, i.e. would he still sell books under another name? Serving up this re-luke-warmed up lesser tale seems like the absolute opposite - using both famous names to sell something that maybe should have been left in that cardboard box...

Jennifer Wardrip says

Stephen King may be the "master of horror," but with BLAZE he proves that he's also just a plain ole good writer. This story is a mixture of a thriller, a mystery, a police procedural, and a personal struggle to figure out who you are.

Blaze, aka Clayton Blaisdell, Jr., is a dummy, and he knows it. Ever since his father threw him down a flight of stairs (and then hauled him back up and did it a couple of more times), Blaze hasn't had the brains for learning. The dent in his forehead might make him look scary, but we soon learn that Blaze isn't much of a threat -- except when he's really angry. He might look like a giant at 6'7" and nearly 300 pounds, but this

man's heart is as soft as his mind.

Blaze has pretty much drifted through life by skirting the law and mostly (with exceptions) avoiding trouble. When he meets George Rackley, Blaze learns the art of the con. The two of them (or, rather, George) have been planning one big job for awhile now. That big job would be kidnapping the baby of a rich couple, collecting the ransom, and living the high-life somewhere with white sandy beaches and lots of sun.

But we soon learn that things aren't going quite the way either man had expected. For one, George is dead, even though he's still helping with the kidnapping plot. For another, Blaze, as we've already learned, isn't the smartest guy around.

What follows is a mixture of present day mystery/thriller as Blaze carries out the kidnapping of little Joey, mixed with the flashbacks of his life that show how Blaze ends up where he's at.

King (aka Bachman..does it really matter the name?) shows great control in the pacing of **BLAZE**, and expertly weaves the present with the past. You'll also be surprised (and entertained) by the joy that is Blaze, who is a wonderful, fully-developed character.

Doreen Petersen says

An earlier work by Stephen King but I thoroughly enjoyed it. The ending sucked me in and I just couldn't stop reading it until I finished. A sure sign of outstanding writing. I would recommend this one.

Medhat The Book Fanatic says

DNFed on page 76

I hated this book from the very first page. I didn't like the atmosphere of it. I didn't like the writing, which, to me at least, felt very dry. And I didn't like the two main characters; not even Blaze, who is soft in the head (I am sorry if that sounds inhuman to say, but it is how I felt), and I thought that he isn't an interesting character, as far as I've read.

I just didn't care about anyone and anything.

Also, I need to say that I was very excited to read **Blaze**, especially since I was buddy-reading it with Mrs. Janie, from Bookworms Buddy, who is a fantastic Booktuber . . . But the book didn't work out to me.

Of course, I wouldn't say DON'T READ THIS BOOK, because I haven't read the whole thing (Because I was impatient), and I can't judge it as a whole (because it might indeed turn out to be worth the read, but like I said 'I was impatient'), only from what I so far read . . .

I hope this review does not irritate you from reading this book, but every one of us is entitled to our opinions, and this is mine. Anyway, I need to say that this is my first Stephen King book that I am not putting hold for a future reading (just because I couldn't get into it at this reading) . . . The first Stephen King book that I DNF and won't get back to AT ALL (And I am really hurt to say it, honestly).

Carol says

OMG.....I cannot believe how good this book is.....well, there were a couple things that bothered me in the narration sequence, particularly the final flash from the past, but I'm still surprised at the overall low ratings.

This is not your typical Stephen King (*Richard Bachman*) read, as a matter of fact, King did not originally think it worthy of being published, but be prepared, there are scary times, a kind of horror of a different sort you might say, that caused me multiple **OH NO!** and **OMG!** moments.

It's not easy to entice a reader to like a character that kidnaps a baby (*no spoiler here*) but Mr. King accomplished just that for me with **BLAZE**.....his GREAT BIG 6' 7" doofus of a man who begins his early life with a busted head and slow brain through no fault of his own, and takes the reader on an intense, worrisome and exasperating adventure that results in a non-stop action filled conclusion.

Update: November 24, 2016 - Turkey Day

MEMORY is a short *bonus read* that follows **BLAZE** about two horrible accidents one of which is a lead-in to KING'S novel **DUMA KEY** that was published back in 2008. Sounds pretty darn good too!

Franco Santos says

Buen libro de King bajo su seudónimo de Richard Bachman. Es muy entretenido, ameno, fluido y rápido ; sin embargo, hay alguna que otra parte que se me hizo un poco pesada y quizás hasta monótona.

Es curioso que con el personaje principal de esta historia llegás a sentir una especie amor-odio.

Tiene un buen final; a muchos no les gustó, tal vez no fuese el mejor, pero es aceptable, y arriesgado. Me encanta que los autores se arriesguen con las conclusiones.

En fin, buena novela de King, para pasar un rato agradable.

Amar says

Zadnja Bachmanova knjiga napisana davne '73 godine, a manuskript prona?en na tavanu poslije 30 i kusur godina. Stvarno šteta što je Bachman preminuo... pisao je prokletio dobre knjige.

Iako ovdje nema prštenja ideja na sve strane i iako je pri?a poprili?no banalna, ima ono nešto, a to je karakterizacija. Blaze, iako negativac ove pri?e, je tako draga i fina osoba, a la John Coffey iz Zelene milje, da ti srce ugrije toplinom i dobrotom kojom lik zra?i, uprskos užasnim djetinjstvom koju je imao, i pomalo nepravednim zivotom kojeg je proživio.

Mom apsolutnom uživanju ove prije je malko zasmetao policajac Albert, koji je bio nekako... meh, previše crno-bijelo.

Sve u svemu, zaista poslastica za pitat.

4.5*

Dan Schwent says

Aided by the voice of his dead friend George in his head, a slow goliath named Blaze kidnaps an infant and holds him for ransom. Can Blaze hold things together long enough to collect the ransom?

Blaze is a straight up crime book from Stephen King, aside from the voice of George in Blaze's head, which might not even be supernatural in origin. I have to wonder why this wasn't the book Stephen King offered up to Hard Case instead of The Colorado Kid.

The story of Blaze unfolds in two parallel stories, one of the present day kidnapping and the other of Blaze's past, how a beating at the hands of his father rendered him a simpleton and landed him in the state home. I found Blaze's past way more interesting than his kidnapping scheme, which had some ludicrous moments due to Blaze not really knowing what he was doing. When the wheels predictably come off, things quickly go to hell in a handbasket.

For the most part, this book was just kind of there for me. Blaze was the only really memorable character for me. I thought that for a book that was less than 400 pages, there was a bit of the King bloat in effect. While I liked it, it almost fell back into the "it's okay" realm. Maybe it was a wrong book, wrong time scenario.

Apparently Stephen King wrote the original draft of Blaze around the same time he was writing Carrie. Carrie got picked up and Blaze fell by the wayside until King decided to revive it while on the Lisey's Story tour. Why he stuck the Bachman name on it, I don't know. It feels more King than Bachman to me.

Three out of five stars but it's a weak three.

Zoeytron says

Although there is nothing I like better than to pick up a 1000 page novel by this extraordinary storyteller, sometimes less is better. This is one of those times. A simple plot, great characters, and a perfect ending.

Blaze is a big hulking galoot who doesn't have much going on in the brains department, complements of his abusive father. Irretrievably damaged with a dent in the middle of his forehead, he is removed from the home and plopped into the uninviting lap of the state orphanage. After a particularly horrendous placing in a foster home, he is returned to the orphanage. Surprisingly, Blaze grows up to be a gentle giant, eager to please and thus, easy to manipulate, a veritable tool in the hands of a smalltime con-artist, George. A plan to kidnap a baby from a prodigiously wealthy family is hatched by George. Blaze's fate is sealed when he agrees to participate.

The author himself makes reference to this being a trunk novel. I disagree. It was far better than that.

Matthew says

Wow! This book was fantastic!

Why does King start the book with an apology/warning? This book is now definitely in my top 10 favorite King books (if not the top 5)

Seems like this one is even frequently skipped by King fans - please, stop skipping and read!

This book has a great story and great characters. It is quick and easy to read and kept me interested every page.

Blaze is a flawed but easy to sympathize tragic hero who doesn't really know what he is doing, but thinks he is doing it for the best. The course of his life is driven by unfortunate events and I am left wondering how much different it would have been if the cards hadn't been stacked against him.

This book has so much going for it - and I think almost anyone would enjoy it.

Alissa Patrick says

2- 2.5 Stars.

I just kept waiting for something to happen, but nothing really did. This felt like Stephen King-lite. Yawn. Not a fan of this story.
