



The Shark Net

Robert Drewe

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Author(s): Robert Drewe ISBN: 9780143002154 Binding: Paperback Published: 2003-06-01 Aged six, Robert Drewe moved with his family from Melbourne to Perth, the world's most isolated city - and proud of it. This sun-baked coast was innocently proud, too, of its tranquillity and friendliness. Then a man he knew murdered a boy he also knew. The murderer randomly killed eight strangers - variously shooting, strangling, stabbing, bludgeoning and hacking his victims and running them down with cars - an innocent Perth was changed forever. In the middle-class suburbs which were the killer's main stalking grounds, the mysterious murders created widespread anxiety and instant local myth. 'The murders and their aftermath have both intrigued me and weighed heavily on me for three decades. To try to make sense of this time and place, and of my own childhood and adolescence, I had, finally, to write about it.' The result is 'The Shark Net', a vibrant and haunting memoir that reaches beyond the dark recesses of murder and chaos to encompass their ordinary suburban backdrop.

The Shark Net Details

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From Reader Review The Shark Net for online ebook

Lucy says

Engagingly written and insightful snapshot of Perth in the 50's and 60's. Finally found a WA book actually about Perth and not set in the country somewhere!

Rahul Dickstein says

This bildungsroman eclipses Drewe's loss of innocence during his childhood in the world's most isolated city; Perth, full of tranquility and friendliness. The first few chapters are very sluggish and slow-moving however soon enough this vibrant and haunting memoir reaches beyond the dark recesses of murder and chaos and can easily spark interest and capture your attention. Juxtaposing to the ordinary suburban backdrop of an innocent Perth, Drewe contrasts the murder grounds of the killer, going on to depict 8 horrendous murders in great detail and his connections to each one at a very personal level. Each chapter focuses on specific influences in the author's life while several of them follow the murderer's point of view instead, positioning the reader to feel more connected to the murderer and have a greater understanding of the events which occur. All in all, not my type of book however many readers should find this book a unique and fresh read.

Nick says

Really good!

Sharon says

I've known of this books existence for many years, but had never got around to reading it until now.

A great book, based in my home town, it is interesting to read of events in the time that my mother would have been hearing of them and living them.

I love that the author knew people involved in the crimes, and the insight to the way people thought at the time (a child born out of wedlock, is more shocking than a couple committing adultery??) is fascinating.

Love the book, anyone from Perth West Australia should read this.

Chava says

Bla bla and more bla bla. Initially quite entertaining, but then just plain dull

Dillwynia Peter says

This is a witty, funny and traumatic memoir of Robert Drewe growing up in Perth in the 1950s & 60s. There are some incredibly funny bon mots and turns of phrase that had me cackling in my seat. It is evocative of an Australia that is not more (actually a world that is no more).

Until the iron ore mining boom, Perth was an isolated oversized town on the edge of the continent. Drewe writes: a city of branch managers for companies with head offices over east. And that would sum up the upper business echelon of Perth; so small fish in a smaller pond.

It is a city of conservative niceness: of worrying about your public face, especially with any scandal such as a police record for public drunkenness or teen pregnancy and marriage, mixed religious marriages and so on. In actuality, this would sum up Menzies' Australia and would equally be at home in any of the larger southern Australian cities. The difference is the open living - the huge time devoted to being at the beach - and to the fact that quickly everyone knows each other, especially if you are middle or wealthy class. Connections made at school will permeate into your adulthood.

And it does in Drewe's case. He knows a serial killer personally; the man used to work as a lower employee for his father: he has been to the house to deliver furniture for a company function. And he has grieved for one of the murdered victims - someone he knew at school and had met in the street a few days before the murder. In such a claustrophobic society as Perth, it is easy for many people to have a personal connection to the violent crimes committed. The killer is good at covering his tracks, and only due to a misunderstanding with his wife (she accepted his womanising & thought he was visiting mistresses) that he managed to escape capture for so long.

The writing is light as we follow the growing pains of Drewe & the transition to adulthood & the inevitable change in relationship with his parents. All is done with wry humour and good writing. My only complaint, and it is a minor one, is the jerky nature of his jumping around 6 months to a 12 year in cases. I listened to this & I suspect it is more jarring than when read.

Surprisingly, Perth still has retaining some aspects recorded by Drewe - in particular the obsession of living near the sea, the healthy sized sub group that stay behind & stay connected, so other peoples affairs are easily gossiped & spread, and their hatred for the eastern states.

Cyn says

Incredible read, amazingly written. Not what I was expecting at all, but really glad I picked it up. Highly recommended.

Nathaniel Maldonado says

sharks are scary

Ewa says

I read the first few chapters... then flung the book across the room. That's how good it was.

Lyn Elliott says

The Shark Net won three Australian prizes in the year after it was published and was praised highly in reviews by writers such as Joyce Carol Oates, Peter Carey and Jim Crace. A reviewer in The New York Times compared Drewe's Perth to Camus' North Africa - 'blinding in its brightness'.

Drewe conveys the essence of childhood and adolescence in this hot, isolated city, where most outdoor life is lived by the sea or the wide Swan River. He writes economically and creates vivid images of people and events. The story threads move in scenes; some alive with dialogue, some descriptive, some reflective. In most of them, Drewe and his immediate family and friends are in close focus, but in several chapters the murderer takes the stage.

Many of the events he writes about are highly emotional, both within his family and in his community as eight people are murdered by a serial killer. One childhood friend is a murder victim; two others die. But Drewe keeps the emotional tone of his writing subtle. 'Nuanced', Peter Carey calls it. 'Deft' and 'beautifully structured'. It's also a great read.

I've just picked up a copy of The Body Surfers by Drewe, ashamed that I haven't read him before.

Alexis Mantheakis says

A brilliant book about the journalist-writer's life in Perth when a friend of his is killed by a person he also knew. A wonderful dissection of the writer's adolescence in what prides itself on being the world's most isolated city. Written with brilliant observations, sharp humour, and great narrative. The book was given to me by a friend who lives in Perth when I visited him last November, my first time in Australia, and I have re-read the book three times already. A really gifted Australian writer...do read it.

Felicity says

I saw Robert Drewe speak at a literature conference of a number of authors back in school, and it spurred me on to read this book. Captivating and wonderful-should be considered an Aussie classic.

Nick says

I don't remember very much about this book. I purchased it in a bookstore in Rome, one of the very few books in english they had, and read it while riding trains up through italy, germany, switzerland, and holland. Outside a coffee shop in venice a young couple from australia saw me reading this and they knew the book. We drank some beers and had a laugh that night and i felt the world a bit smaller and a bit safer and a bit easier to abide.

That being said i remember nothing of the book itself.

John Clarke says

Don't be confused by the blurb. This book is not as interesting as it paints itself to be. Although the general writing in the book is quite good, Robert Drewes storytelling skills are not. Drewe would rather focus on his childhood in this memoir rather than the horrific murders Eric Cooke was committing at the time. His priorities when telling his own story are all out of wack. There are more pages talking about Dunlop shoes then they are about the far more interesting serial killer, Eric Cooke. Drewe's own recount of his childhood just simply isn't interesting enough to write a compelling story about, and because of that reason I have to give this book 2/5 stars.

Tony says

I read this book while living in Perth for just over a year. I loved how it captured the essence of the place, even though it was set many decades in the past. All of the place names were very familiar to me, and much of the story takes place right in the neighborhood that we lived in. Having said that, I do not think this book would have resonated as strongly with me had I not had this personal connection to the setting. The story itself held my interest well enough, but the narrative wasn't really gripping, and the prose was more like reporting.
