

SPECULATIVE FICTION REVIEW by Stephanie Young

TITLE *Black and Blue*
AUTHOR Ian Rankin
PUBLISHER St. Martin's
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PRINTING 1997

I see you now, scratching your head and saying 'I never heard of Ian Rankin' and scouring the library to see what speculative fiction he has written. Stop – you won't find any. Ian Rankin is a mystery/crime thriller writer and yes I am reviewing his book here.

So my secret is out – I read books other than sci-fi and fantasy. I endorse this vice in all of you as well. Do not get locked into just one genre. Reading classics and other fiction give you new perspective on the genre we love while also being very entertaining at times.

I knew nothing of Ian Rankin until I read an interview in one of my writer magazines, I believe it was *Writer's Digest* and I was fascinated by the way he described his protagonist DI John Rebus. Rebus is a veteran cop who has no life other than police work, drinks, smokes, and is divorced from his wife plus his daughter doesn't see him much. He is obsessive and that obsession is the main undercurrent of this book.

The novel starts with a grisly scene of torture and death that seems like just another murder until later in the book when it becomes clear everything is connected. Rebus is being hounded by a film crew that is putting a story together on a convicted murderer that recently committed suicide. Rebus is haunted by the fact that his old partner convinced him to go along with what appeared to be a setup. Now his ex-partner who was retired commits suicide and Rebus is left holding the bag.

Meanwhile he is obsessed with a serial killer named Johnny Bible who seems to be a copycat of a serial killer from over 20 years ago called Bible John. Along the way a few murders occur, Rebus becomes a suspect in one of them and the entire thing condenses into a frenzy at the end of the book. I found it impossible to put the book down for the last 100 pages and I don't often get that way about a story.

I really liked this book, it has terrific characters and the pace is wonderful. The other thing that was fun is the setting is Scotland and the slang is very interesting. I found myself hitting Google a lot to make sure I understood some of the unfamiliar terms. The only complaint I have is that I would like to have seen a better resolution to the one character. It's possible he comes up in a later book but I suspect not.

Yes I have picked up two more Rankin novels.

I give it 4.5 rings of Saturn.