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James Benmore

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London, 1850s.

After five years in an Australian penal colony, the Artful Dodger returns to London in search of a hidden fortune. Unaware of the fate that befell Twist, Fagin and Sikes, Dodger revisits the criminal underworld of Dickensian London to seek out his old comrades, any of whom might possess the key to the treasure.

He finds the city a changed place from his youth: with law and order upheld by a new police force, Fagin gone to the gallows, his old gang scattered and danger around every corner.

Dodger Details

Date : Published April 11th 2013 by Quercus Publishing

ISBN : 9781780874654

Author : James Benmore

Format : Kindle Edition 416 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Mystery, Crime, Fiction, Victorian, European Literature, British Literature, Adult

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From Reader Review Dodger for online ebook

GBL says

I enjoyed this recreation of the Artful Dodger, as he returns from his enforced sojourn in Australia as a convicted thief. He is sent back to England under the watchful eye of his Aborigine companion with a task and the story develops as he revisits his old haunts and meets former friends in his search for a lost jewel. Dodger is developed from the character in Oliver Twist and for fans of Dickens the author succeeds in creating a believable character who is older and wiser than the original but still has the same dangerously attractive traits of the younger boy.

The ending is clever as Dodger succeeds in finding the treasure only to realise that he has been tricked into discovering a bigger prize for his evil employer.

Victoria says

I enjoyed this but I dunno it was good but not great. Enjoyable to meet the character of the Artful Dodger he was very interesting and so was the world we where introduced to. But there was something missing

Robin Carter says

Review

This is one of those books that should not need too much advertising or blurb, at least it should not for anyone who loves reading. We are after all talking about a sequel to one of the all time great stories “Oliver Twist”, a story from the great Charles Dickens.

A debut writer taking on something like this might be considered, arrogant, audacious, possibly even career suicide. But the fact that Heron are publishing it, means that there is something there.

So first impressions; The cover art, personally I think its fantastic, it's what drew me to the book immediately (well that and im a sucker for a debut novel) Then the concept, the return of the artful dodger, the return of a boy transported to the colonies (australia) for stealing. (maybe we need a new place to transport the thugs and thief's of today?), how has he returned? is he reformed?

The Dodger is back and he has an agenda. Given a pardon by a disreputable peer of the realm and a mission to fulfil with his ever-present watcher the aboriginal Warrigal. We get to find out the fate of many of the characters in Oliver twist and also meet up with the members of Fagin's gang who are still living the life of the thief, while our rascal The Dodger looks for the Jakkapoore Stone, a Jewel of value, and ominous history.

Like in life sometimes its best not to go back, not all reunions are sweet, and some are dangerous. Old friendships are reforged, some are forver consigned to history and in the case of Ruby some friendships turn to love for our young Dodger.

So can Benmore write? I'm happy to say yes he can, but if you are looking for the deep dark dank of

Victorian London then you wont find it here, because even though Benmore doesn't hide the filth and poverty of London, its seen through the eyes of the Artful Dodger, and ole artful loves his London, so even filth has a pink rosy tint to it.

After reading the book the first thought that struck me was that this would make an excellent saturday evening TV series. Something to replace a show like Merlin or Dr Who. A great fun wholesome family TV show. I'm not sure if that is the intent of the author, but hidden in amongst the tale of an almost irredeemable thief are morals, and friendships and honour. There is plenty of depth and emotion, something for everyone. I don't think there is even an age or gender group for this book, from Young Adult to grandparent, there is something in this story for all to love.

I really recommend this book to you all. and I look forward to what ever James Benmore writes next.

(Parm)

Alan Smith says

I've never been of the school that says an author can't use other writer's (out of copyright) characters. OK, so "Scarlett" was pretty awful, and the non-Douglas-Adams "Hitchhiker" book was dire. But Greg Mathews' "The Way West" (Using Twain's Huck Finn and Jim) and William Horwood's "Wind in the Willows" continuations were damn good. Some of the post-Fleming Bonds were entertainment personified, and then there's the doyen of all such books - "the "Flashman" series by George MacDonald Fraser.

So though I am no Dickens fan (for reasons elaborated on elsewhere in my reviews - see <http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/...> and <http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/...>) I thought I'd give this first novel by James Benmore a go. And I'm damn glad I did. Apparently the first five chapters of this work were knocked out as part of a creative writing course, and Benmore decided to keep going with it. A decision that paid great literary dividends.

The plot takes up the famous Artful Dodger's story some years after he is convicted and transported to Australia. Sent back to his native London, to perform a service for a crooked aristocrat, and accompanied by "Warrigal", the aristocrat's indigenous Australian hit-man, the Dodger gets into more scrapes, is reunited with Ruby, his old love, and encounters adult versions of many of Fagin's old "Kinchins".

As the plot unwinds, we learn more of what went on in Fagin's "thieves kitchen" than Dickens ever told us (and find ourselves liking Fagin a lot more than we did in "Oliver Twist"), the story behind Bill Sikes' murder of Nancy, and even discover what befell Twist after his rise to riches. And Mr Pickwick makes a cameo appearance.

With highly entertaining storytelling, great dialogue, and many nods to Dicken's original stories, this is one that even those who dislike the original may well develop a huge affection for. And the end of the tale gives us the provocative sign-off "End of book one." If there is truly more of this saga to come, count me in!

Karen Cole says

Dodger is one of those books I've been meaning for a while. When I still lived with my parents we had a Jack Russell called Dodger so it was almost fate! I have to admit however, I'm not generally a huge fan of Dickens' books but I do make an exception for Oliver Twist and when somebody strongly recommended me James Benmore's book I immediately added it to my to be read list.

From the first few pages I was hooked. As in Dickens' novel The Artful Dodger is arrested and transported to Australia, unaware of the fates of Fagin, Bill and Nancy. This part of his life is skipped over here and we meet Dodger again on his return to England five years later when he is accompanied by an Aboriginal man called Warrigal, ostensibly his servant, having apparently made his fortune exporting wool. It swiftly becomes clear however, that Jack Dawkins hasn't gone straight. He is actually in search of the Jakkapoore Stone, a valuable jewel with an dark history. What follows is a thrillingly exuberant adventure story, occasionally poignant and with clever twists and turns, featuring a cast of vibrant characters who would fit into any Dickens novel. We learn more about Dodger's childhood, with Fagin, here a more sympathetic character (drawn as he is from Dodger's memories), meet some of Fagin's other kinchins again, now grown up, and are even treated to a brief mention of Great Expectations' Abel Magwitch. Naturally though it's Dodger himself who is the star of proceedings and his character leaps off the page. He's an anti-hero really, unlike many of Dickens' characters who find retribution, Dodger feels no remorse for his crimes. Quite the opposite in fact, he's proud of his prowess as a pickpocket and as our narrator frequently boasts of his skills. Nevertheless we still cheer him on, willing him to succeed in his quest and to avoid a dreadful fate at the hands of the villain of the piece. He is open (except when it suits him) about who he is, an honest thief then who takes pride in his work but does so without malice. He steals because he wants something but he isn't bitter that the rich have more. The life that Oliver Twist eventually found would never suit The Artful Dodger.

It would be remiss of me to fail to mention here Dodger's beloved London, almost a character it's own right. This is Dickens' dirty and seedy London evocatively brought back to life. It's perhaps not as dark as Dickens' city because it's being described to us by Dodger, a man in love with his London who sees its flaws as part of its charm.

Dodger is one of those genuine couldn't put down books, the sort I walked around reading with the book in front of my face. It's actually been a few weeks since I read it but I've thought of it often. Luckily for me there is already a sequel, Dodger of the Dials and there is to be a third book, Dodger of the Revolution so I can look forward to more. If you are a fan of Charles Dickens read this book, if your main reference point for Dodger is Jack Wild singing Consider Yourself in Oliver! read this book, if you're not a fan of Dickens or musicals but enjoy well written and well plotted stories then read this book.

Catherine says

The Artful Dodger was always my favorite character in Oliver Twist throughout the many adaptations of the original material, and obviously the actual novel. I just loved his 'cheeky chappie' persona, which I suppose I can mostly attribute to Jack Wild, as the musical was my first exposure to the character. So when I found 'Dodger' by James Benmore whilst hunting around online for books set in Victorian or Edwardian London, I hit the 'buy now' button without much hesitation, and am very glad I did!

It's written in such a way that I think Dickens would be fairly happy with. Dodger seemed very in character and it was really interesting to read an imagining of what happened to him after his transportation. Also the mentions and actual appearances of some of the characters from the original novel were really nice,

especially Charley Bates.

I have the second book in the series ready to hand to start straight away and would recommend this series to anyone that has ever been curious to read more about one Mister Jack Dawkins.

Zara Mcaspurren says

Dodger by author James Benmore was a book that I had found entirely by chance. A friend and I were discussing what we term as 'published fan-fiction' and both the works of Dickens and Victor Hugo entered our discussions, prompting a search to see what we could find. Needless to say, I came across *Dodger*.

Before reading the novel, I decided to look into a little bit about the writing process and was pleased to see that Benmore had given himself the challenge of keeping the characters as in-line with their Dicken's given fates while creating a new chapter in the Artful Dodger's life. Something for which I thank him, as it is so easy for people to use other interpretations to allow for some sort of shock twist which usually ends up being not that shocking at all.

Dodger begins with the return of Jack Dawkins - the Artful Dodger himself - to England, after six years in Australia, working on the farms. In fact, through this farm work, Jack has become a respectable gentleman, and is merely traveling to London to take care of business affairs there. Along his travels he is joined by a Vicar and his family, and encounters the new Police Force for the very first time.

If, at this point, you have already guessed that we learn that Jack has not changed all that much, then well done to you. While he has an official pardon from the Governor of New South Wales, he is only allowed in England to do the business of someone else, and had only been chosen to do such business because of his youthful connections. Returning to London and discovering many of these connections dead or gone is a shock to Jack, but he is always able to adapt and continue on, determined to finish the task - it's his neck if he doesn't.

When I first went into this novel I had expected something that could be considered along the lines of a penny dreadful - a quick, cheap thrill using familiar characters to lure in the readers. Something that you would enjoy, but might not find yourself deeply engrossed with. Happily, my expectations were not to be true. Though *Dodger* is no where near the length of its Dickensian origins, Benmore manages to fill each page with exactly the right amount to keep you going. The characters we know have changed and are yet still familiar and characters new to us feel as though they could have found their own place among the original work.

The one downside - if it may be called that - is that you will see nothing of the grim that Dickens showed of London. It is not that it is no longer present, but simply that we are seeing London from the point of view of a person who was considered part of that grime, and counts it as the happiest times of his life. Jack Dawkins loved the underclass of London, and in *Dodger* we see it as he sees it - a life of surprising freedom, if you know what you're doing.

The next book is *Dodger of the Dials*. I look forward to reading it, and I hope that Benmore has managed to keep up the same feel of London and the same excellent writing which he has produced with this novel.

Five stars because it genuinely deserves more praise - and fans - than see available to it.

Liz Barnsley says

London, 1850s.

After five years in an Australian penal colony, the Artful Dodger returns to London in search of a hidden fortune. Unaware of the fate that befell Twist, Fagin and Sikes, Dodger revisits the criminal underworld of Dickensian London to seek out his old comrades, any of whom might possess the key to the treasure.

I had my eye on this one for a while before I actually read it – I’m not a huge Dickens fan (Oliver Twist and A Tale of Two Cities being the two I loved) but one of his characters I always adored was The Artful Dodger. So I wavered between not wanting that character spoiled for me but also extremely intrigued to see what a new writer could do.

Well I loved it. Pretty much perfectly done I would say. Still capturing the ambience and feel of the times, giving Dodger new heart and voice then sending us on a rollicking adventure all around the streets of London and beyond, this was the most fun I’d had with a novel in a long long time.

A “treasure hunt” of a tale, this expands beautifully on Mr Dickens original mythology, giving extra heart to Fagin’s kitchen, a well imagined expansion of some well loved characters and introduces us to some new ones all of whom are extremely well drawn. Oh I did love Warrigal, and there is also a most terrifically villainous villain to boot. It is addictive, humorous, fascinating and most of all, fun to read.

Not that I presume to speak for long gone authors, but I’m fairly convinced Mr Dickens would approve. As a reader I certainly approve – another adventure awaits in “Dodger of the Dials” coming later this year and I will be the very first in line. No doubt about it.

Highly Recommended.

Q & A with James Benmore can be found here:

<http://lizlovesbooks.com/lizlovesbook...>

Sue says

The Artful Dodger from Dickens' Oliver Twist is back in London from the Australian penal colony having gained a pardon from its Governor. He has been sent back by his master and immediately comes up against one of the new Peelers. Lots of references to previous book and use of some Dickensian names. Enjoyable with an excellent final 30 or so pages.

Sarah says

This book was well done in a similar style to oliver twist and fit well within the world that had already been created.

It was nice to read about the old characters I remember and love and I think James created a great story for the artful dodger and the gang.

Some parts dragged for me and I feel like there should of been more of oliver twist in the story somewhere..

Yorky Caz says

awesome. just awesome. Best book i have read this year. the writing style is perfect. clever and funny with old words thrown in for authenticity. Dodger is just as you would expect and its good to hear the old names thrown around. i love his code and absolute shame at having to pay money for something instead of stealing!! bring on book two!!!

David Stringer says

I purchased as a hardback a good few years ago, and have saved on my shelf as one I have really looked forward to reading in the future, time permitting. I remember as soon as I saw the front cover in the book shop, and read the blurb about it being a kind of sequel for the much loved 'Artful Dodger' that I had to read this book.

And so some years later, I treated myself to finally starting it. And I am sorry to say I'm left a little disappointed. It is written well, is good humoured with some little twists and turns along the way, but it never really ever gripped me. I found I lacked any interest in the jewel that all the characters are seeking and any care or concern about the majority of the characters introduced in the story along the way. So, not a terrible book, think I just expected or hoped for more. I think I built up the expectancy of this book too much in my own mind. So I've given it three stars, still a good book but just never 'stole' my heart.

Lucy Perry says

'Dodger' could be described as a sequel to 'Oliver Twist' by I prefer to think of it as more of a spin off as it focuses entirely on the trials and tribulations of jack Dawkins on his arrival back in London after being removed to the penal colony, Australia. The story is a wonderfully woven yarn that leaps about the back streets of old London in true Artful Dodger style, taking us from scrape to scrape and visiting some old friends along the way. It is delightfully evocative of the Victorian era, warts and all.

One thing that troubled me at the start was portrayal of the narrator and our 'hero' Jack Dawkins. I wasn't sure what to make of him: as a person he is so flawed but with such good intentions at times that I found it hard to decide whether to love or hate him. This predicament was settled when I simply accepted that Jack isn't just the central character of the tale but also the narrator – he isn't a character portrayed in a descriptive sense where you are prompted to decide one way or the other to root for him or not. As the narrator, Dodger

is telling us how it is straight from the horse's mouth – what we see is what we get to we aren't 'supposed' to love him or hate him, but take him as he is.

The characterisation of Fagin is also an interesting point for discussion and I imagine is often contested in the mind of the diehard Dickens' fans. As Dickens' portrays him as a despicable rogue who deservedly meets a sticky end, in Dodger we see him through the eyes of someone who truly loved and admired him, a mother and father figure, so the portrayal is something very different indeed.

I would wholeheartedly recommend this book to not only Dickens' fans, but anyone who loves Victorian era fiction or in fact any mystery/adventure novels. In some parts this exciting tale is almost Sherlock Holmes-esque with a delicious twist at the end. At times Benmore's use of Victorian-cockney expression will have you stitches.

The story tempts us perfectly with a mention of Oliver Twist, but we don't come to meet him, leaving us thirsty for Dodger's next adventure in the hope that he might reappear!

edifanob says

It is always a risk to use characters and/or settings from famous authors.

The Artful Dodger is a well known character who appeared in "Oliver Twist" by Charles Dickens.

What happened to him? There was no answer from Charles Dickens.

Fortunately there is "Dodger" by James Benmore.

After reading the book I'm more than happy that James Benmore took the risk to continue the story of the Artful Dodger after the events described in "Oliver Twist".

The result is an excellent book. I was a great pleasure to read "Dodger". The author hit the bull's eye. Extraordinary good description of Victorian London combined with emotional characters and a story with twist and turns.

I was not aware that there will be a second book starring the Artful Dodger.

Now I look forward to end of Mai 2014 when "Dodger of the Dials" will be released.

Simon says

James Benmore took a big risk. Knowing that his work would be weighed directly against Dickens what he has achieved is brilliant.

He's taken characters that are well known and loved and managed to make them his own.

London is still the same dark city portrayed by Dickens but James shows her through the eyes of a homesick local returning from hard labour in an Australian penal colony. This local is none other than Jack "The Artful

Dodger" Dawkins.

In exchange for his freedom Jack agreed to find a priceless jewel for an unscrupulous lord. Failure is not an option, if he does not fulfil his task in the allotted time he will be executed by his aboriginal companion Warrigal.

Set five years after Oliver Twist we get to see the immediate and subsequent reactions to Dickens original.

Look forward to book number two.
