



The Ghosts of Altona

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Jan Fabel is a changed man.

Head of the Polizei Hamburg's Murder Commission, Fabel has dealt with the dead for nearly two decades, but when a routine enquiry becomes a life-threatening - and life-altering - experience, he finds himself on much closer terms with death than ever before.

Fabel's first case at the Murder Commission comes back to haunt him: Monika Krone's body is found at last, fifteen years after she went missing. Monika - ethereally beautiful, intelligent, cruel - was the centre of a group of students obsessed with the gothic. Fabel re-opens the case. What happened that night, when Monika left a party and disappeared into thin air? Meanwhile, Hamburg's most dangerous serial rapist has escaped from high-security prison. Fabel is convinced he had outside help, but from whom? His suspicions that the escape is connected to the discovery of Monika's body seem to lead to nothing when there are no sightings of the fugitive, but little can he imagine the real purpose for which this monster has been unleashed.

When men involved with Monika start turning up dead, the crime scenes full of gothic symbolism, Fabel realizes he is looking for a killer with both a hunger for vengeance and a terrifying taste for the macabre.

A true gothic demon is stalking the streets of Hamburg...

The Ghosts of Altona Details

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Author : Craig Russell

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From Reader Review The Ghosts of Altona for online ebook

Andrew Hamilton says

this was the first book I have read by this author and I thoroughly enjoyed every minute. Craig Russell has a great way of writing to keep the reader thrilled and intrigued and wanting more. a fantastic novel with great characters twists and plot and I very much look forward to continuing with more from the Jan fabel series. a truly fantastic talent.

Gram says

It's been a few years since the last of Craig Russell's books about the head of Hamburg's Murder Commission, Jan Fabel and finding a new story was a joy. This time round, the story of Jan and his team of detectives - which includes the wonderfully feisty Anna Wolff - opens with Fabel being shot by a child murderer, and the detective undergoing a near death experience. We move on two years to the discovery of the body of a strikingly beautiful young woman - head of a youthful Gothic cult - which had lain underneath a supermarket car park for 15 years. The discovery of the body sparks a murder spree, resulting in the deaths of several men who were friends and lovers of the dead woman. Another of her friends, called "Zombie" because he suffers from Cotard delusion (also known as "walking corpse syndrome") - a rare mental illness in which an afflicted person holds the delusion that they are dead. Zombie helps a vicious rapist - a giant of a man named "Frankenstein" - to escape a maximum security prison, adding the threat of extreme violence from this "monster" to muddy the waters of the Murder Commission's existing investigation. Throughout the book, there are all manner of misdirections and various suspects enter the frame only to be discarded until a nerve shredding twist at the end, which reveals the secrets of the Gothic cult and its enigmatic leader, known as the "Silent Goddess". I think this book - the 7th in the Jan Fabel series - is the best yet.

Philip says

No bad, not bad at all.

Not everyone's cup of tea though. It's set in Germany with rather - deliberately I suspect - stiff characters that at times seem almost the German stereotype.

That said, Fabel, the main protagonist is likeable, though lacking a sense of humour. His sidekicks' like Anna, for example, get the best lines. Fabel is fairly typical of the detective breed in novels of this type, a goody-goody smart-arse with seemingly few skeletons in the closet. Yes, the guy was shot and had a near-death but the preoccupation with this just gets tediously repetitive.

Good story/plotline, although I guessed the ending with a few chapters to go. Readable enough in isolation but seems rather tame up against MacBrides' gritty novels.

Kerrie says

The announcement on Crime Watch that this novel is the winner of the Scottish Crime Novel of the Year 2015 reminded me that Craig Russell is an author that I was taken with nearly a decade ago, but I have read only the first two in the Jan Fabel series, and none since I began this blog. I know I have some hard back copies of at least one or two novels on my shelves somewhere.

So this seemed an opportune moment to do some catching up with Jan Fabel.

What **THE GHOSTS OF ALTONA** did is convince me that I must read some of the novels I have missed in the intervening years. Jan Fabel has come a long way since the novel I read nearly ten years ago. Two years ago (in "novel time") he nearly died, and his near death experience (NDE) changed his whole approach to life. Not only is he now a member of the Club of the Living Dead, people who have experienced similar NDEs, he is participating in group research into what actually happens as people experience death.

There is a remarkable depth to this novel, a feeling of good research, as the reader meets others who have also had NDEs and reacted quite differently to Fabel. There is also an exploration of Fabel's leadership style, the way he feels as if he is a fatherly figure for his hand-picked colleagues in Hamburg's Murder Commission.

And this is a novel where cold case meets the present day. The discovery of Monika Krone's skeleton under the asphalt of a car park, a murder unsolved for fifteen years, seems to trigger a number of deaths, seemingly unrelated.

Excellent story telling.

I was however struck by plot similarities with a novel I completed last week, **SILENT SCREAM** by Angela Marsons: where the discovery of a skeleton in wasteland next to an orphanage triggers murders. But in reality the two novels take entirely different paths. **THE GHOSTS OF ALTONA** features a seasoned investigator, while in **SILENT SCREAM** we see a career just beginning.

Martin says

I was torn between giving this a 3 or a 4 and still have mixed feelings. On the one hand, I love that the book didn't use the cliché at-the-last-minute or superhero-detective tropes to progress the investigation. On the other hand, there were things that happened in the story to force the narrative that just didn't make sense. Still, a very good story if you don't pass too critical an eye over it.

Sharon says

There are several interconnecting threads running through the storyline of *The Ghosts of Altona* and a plethora of characters. Following the discovery of a woman's remains Jan Fabel the central character reopens one of his first cases, an unsolved disappearance from 15 years ago. The discovery triggers a series of new murders. As the story unfolds we meet some odd seemingly unrelated individuals, including Zombie and Frankenstein, and we drop in on a group of people who regularly meet to talk about their near death

experiences (NDE).

Craig Russell's characters in *The Ghosts of Altona* are not stereotypical but complex individuals neither entirely good, or evil. They are flawed, depraved, sociopathic, psychopathic, innocent, naive, and charming. Traumatic experiences have shaped them into what they have become or maybe they're just unfortunate to have inherited some very bad genes.

Craig Russell writes intelligently and with sensitivity about a key characters mental illness, and of another's medical condition which has resulted in horrendous physical abnormalities. Incredibly powerful and thoughtful stuff! It was difficult to truly hate the 'the bad guys' even though I still wanted to see them get their just deserts.

Initially I thought the ending rather abrupt but after mulling it over actually appreciated the opportunity to draw my own conclusion as to what I wanted to happen between the characters. Maybe there's more to come in a follow up as an opening is certainly there.

The Ghosts of Altona is an absorbing above average crime thriller which weaves into the storyline the fascinating history of the Gothic origins and traditions.

The Ghosts of Altona is absolutely not one to miss.

I discovered Craig Russell writing as Christopher Galt last year with, in my opinion the totally underrated, Biblical. An intelligent, compulsive, sci-fi read and I really wanted to read more from him.

* Biblical is out now (April 2015) in paperback with a new title, *The Third Testament*.

Disclaimer: A complimentary digital copy of *The Ghosts of Altona* was provided by Quercus via NetGalley in exchange for an honest unbiased review.

Booklunatic says

4,5 Sterne

Das war der zweite Krimi von Craig Russell, den ich gelesen habe, außerdem habe ich auch bereits zwei Verfilmungen mit Peter Lohmeyer als Jan Fabel gesehen. Russells Krimis sind "irgendwie anders", aber im positiven Sinne. Die Besonderheit fängt schon damit an, dass ein Schotte Krimis schreibt, die in Hamburg spielen - und das auch noch authentisch. Auch die Plots sind interessant, originell und ebenso gut recherchiert wie durchdacht: Diesmal sind die zentralen Themen Nahtoderfahrungen und das Gothic-Milieu. Die zweite Hälfte der 700 Seiten-Schwarze habe ich quasi am Stück inhaliert, das spricht wohl für sich.

KruemelGizmo says

Jan Fabel, Chef der Mordkommission in Hamburg, hat sich verändert, seit dem ihm vor zwei Jahren ein Mann anschoss und er beinahe gestorben wäre. Er hatte eine Nahtod-Erfahrung, die ihn noch mehr zu einem intuitiv arbeitenden Polizisten werden lässt. Als bei Bauarbeiten eine Leiche gefunden wird, ahnt er sofort,

dass es sich um die sterblichen Überreste der vor 15 Jahren verschwundene Monika Krone handelt. Kurze Zeit später beginnt eine unheimliche Mordserie. Ein Maler, zu dessen frühen Motiven ein Bild von Monika gehört, wird tot aufgefunden, ein Autor, der sich auf moderne Edgar-Allan-Poe-Versionen verlegt hat, wird ermordet. Alle haben eine Verbindung zu Monika gehabt. Und dann taucht ein Mann aus Fabels Vergangenheit wieder auf – und er begreift, welche Dimension dieser Fall hat.

Auferstehung von Craig Russell ist der 7. Teil der Jan-Fabel-Serie.

Jan Fabel ist ein außergewöhnlicher Mordermittler, seit seiner Nahtod-Erfahrung hat er sich sowohl persönlich als auch bei seiner Tätigkeit als Ermittler verändert. Als bei Bauarbeiten ein Skelett entdeckt wird, ist ihm schnell klar, dass es sich dabei nur um die verschwundene Monika Krone handeln kann, ein Fall den er nicht lösen konnte. Bald darauf sterben weitere Menschen und bei den Ermittlungen stoßen sie dabei immer wieder auf Monika Krone. Die Entdeckung der Überreste scheint etwas Tödliches ausgelöst zu haben und Fabel und sein Team stehen unter massiven Druck den Fall zu lösen.

Der 7. Teil der Jan-Fabel-Serie war mein erster Teil den ich gelesen habe. Aber auch ohne Vorkenntnisse der vorherigen Teile zu haben, konnte ich gut in die Geschichte eintauchen und verstand auch schnell die Dynamik innerhalb des Ermittlerteams. Jan Fabel der Protagonist dieses Thrillers hat mir gut gefallen, er war mir sympathisch und seine Herangehensweise an den Fall konnte ich jederzeit gut nachvollziehen.

Der Fall selbst ist ziemlich komplex aufgebaut und meine ersten Überlegungen, wer den der Täter ist, und wie alles zusammenhängt lösten sich bald in Wohlgefallen auf um immer wieder neuen Platz zu machen.

Die Nebenhandlung im Altenheim, ein weiterer Fall um den sich Fabel und sein Team kümmern muss, hat mir besonders gut gefallen, gerne hätte ich hier sogar noch mehr von lesen wollen, auch wenn es nicht zum eigentlichen Hauptfall dazugehörte.

Über große Teile empfand ich dieses Buch als beklemmend und auch düster in seiner Grundstimmung was mir sehr gut gefallen hat, auch wurde der Spannungsbogen gekonnt aufgebaut um dann in einem interessanten und spannenden Finale zu gipfeln. Allerdings werden bei dem Ende nicht alle Fragen beantwortet, was einen kleinen Wehrmutstropfen bei mir hinterlässt.

Auf jeden Fall wird das nicht mein letzter Jan Fabel gewesen sein, dieses Buch hat mich neugierig auf die Vorgänger werden lassen.

Mein Fazit:

Ein spannender und auch düsterer Thriller, den ich gerne weiterempfehle.

Emma Radford says

2.5 stars Lots of promise in places, but I got fed up of the almost constant repetition of how beautiful the victim was and how everybody seemed to have had a near death experience. It also seemed a little far fetched that each of the four friends had become so famous/ eminent in their fields. There were SO many loose ends too; I like the idea of the non-traditional ending but it was just too abrupt for me.

Jane Myers says

I've done it again....read it too quickly cos it was great and then wished I had savoured it more. Another great Jan Fabel book, long awaited and will not disappoint.

Liz Barnsley says

So this series has been running for a while it seems, me I'm late to the party but I really loved this one and am going to slowly work my way through the previous stories - for anyone who, like me, has stupidly let these pass them by, you can start here I had no problem at all reading this cold.

The thing that struck me about The Ghosts of Altona was the beauty of the storytelling, the sheer power of the characterisation and the thought provoking themes that Craig Russell weaves seamlessly into the plot - add to that a descriptive power to the use of language and you have a way above average crime thriller.

In this instalment, main protagonist Fabel is returning to work after a near miss and a life changing experience - the opening pages pack a real punch both emotionally and physically, after which the author allows a step back, a more thoughtful and intense way forward as things start to unfold. When a body is discovered that takes Fabel back to his first case, then more deaths follow, this is page turning stuff - a truly involving mystery with an eclectic and absolutely fascinating supporting cast, a really enthralling tale.

Some difficult subjects handled with sensitivity and obviously well researched, all mixed up in the unfolding murder case make for some great moments, Fabel himself is absolutely brilliant, I loved him - so well drawn and I am honestly looking forward to heading back to see who he was before...

For me the parts of the novel that dealt with gothic origin were superb, as were the threads looking at Near Death Experiences - There are many layers to be had here and Craig Russell brings them all together over time in indomitable fashion - clever construction and a real feel for character development means this comes highly recommended from me.

Cerisaye says

Why did I race through all seven Fabel novels in quick succession?! Because they're so good I simply couldn't help myself even though I knew the moment would come when I turned the final page of #7 and there wasn't a new one to move onto. Well, here I am and it's worse than I thought because the ending is so...abrupt... frustrating...bloody genius! I'm convinced Craig Russell devised it so readers feeling bereft at the prospect of Jan Fabel's absence from their lives would have to move on to his Lennox series for their fix of Russell's brilliant storytelling. Certainly that's what I intend.

Another thing, I'm convinced of is that Russell has some kind of conduit into my head because his books cover ALL my favourite things: history, serial killers, gothic literature, pre-Raphaelite redheads, fairytales, Norse mythology, architecture, German Expressionism, bookshops. Not to mention twisty, complicated plots that use crime solving as a way to explore complex issues about who we are and how the modern world is

shaped by all that has gone before. What makes this all the more interesting to me is Russell uses a German policeman to develop his themes, tapping into his country's dark history and rich cultural traditions.

Okay, I guessed the Big Twist early on but that might be to do with having read the novels so close together it was difficult to fool me. However, the opening section got me good! It is stunning and sets up the rest of the book very effectively.

I love Jan Fabel and hope to goodness Craig Russell plans more books in this series...he HAS to, right? I need to know Susanne's answer to that question. Amongst other things.

Billyf27 says

This novel had a great story with realistic broken characters. The ending left you eager for more from Craig Russell. I haven't read the other books in the series and that was no trouble at all. I can't wait to read the next one and will order it as soon as I can.

Paromjit says

This is a brilliant, intelligent, mesmerising and atmospheric Euro-thriller written by a master storyteller. The location is the Hanseatic Hamburg by the River Elbe. The tale is infused with ghosts and the Gothic, plentiful corpses, revenge and the dead. Near Death Experiences(NDE) are explored in depth both with Jan and Zombie who have different experiences of it.

Jan Fabel, Head of the Murder Commission is a gifted detective. His style of investigation is of a trained historian who created possibilities of what has happened from the evidence that emerges from murders. He is shot and has a NDE which instigates changes in his personality for the better. He is also a member of the Living Dead Club! He identifies a body as that of Monika Krone, who disappeared 15 years ago and was one of his first cases.

The discovery of the body triggers dramatically staged murders in the present and the prison breakout of the dangerous Jochen Hubner otherwise known as Frankenstein. There are other Gothic characters like the cadaverous Zombie. Monika is revealed to be a dangerous, cruel and cold personality obsessed with the Gothic. A charismatic and clever woman, she drew men to her effortlessly and manipulated them leaving them spellbound years after her disappearance.

In a story littered with unpredictable twists, Craig Russell excels in intricate, detailed and clever plotting. He is skilful in pacing the story to ensure maximum suspense. At the end of the book Russell admits to not reading crime fiction lest it should taint his writing. This clearly works for him although I cannot help feeling that he is missing out on a lot of great reading! Anyway, looking forward to his next book, I just hope I do not have to wait long!

Geoff says

Obviously, I was in the mood for a good crime novel because I loved this one.

Before I really threw myself into sci-fi and fantasy a few years ago, I read The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo and found myself reading a lot of 'Scandinavian' crime fiction. They tend to be darker or more dreary in nature. A literary type would say that is a reflection of the weather commonly found in the countries they are set. I've read crime stories from many different countries such as Sweden, Iceland, Scotland and Norway.

This is the 7th book by Craig Russell (series), following detective Jan Fabel, set in Hamburg, Germany. I've enjoyed, to a varying degree, all the books of his that I've read. They tend to involve a serial killer that has some sort of connection to history or literature (one previous book had a lot of references to the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm, aptly titled, Brother Grimm). This one was focused on gothic literature, with a lot of references to Edgar Allan Poe or Mary Shelley. And it definitely fit with the murder case in this book.

I felt the tension of the novel increased at a very satisfying rate. There was just enough hints and foreshadowing throughout the novel so that I was always anticipating what came next while not being too overbearing. And I appreciated that the detectives in this book proved to be competent throughout the case. I've read crime books where it seemed the main thrust of the novel was waiting to see how the detective would screw up next. That's not a satisfying mystery for me.

If there's an issue with the novel, its that the ending (the last 10 or so pages) was a little too ambiguous. I honestly don't know how the case resolved. Who did it? Why? Was there an unseen alliance the whole way through? Who's plan was it? Another 10 pages to wrap that up would have been fine. Maybe it insults some readers to have everything spelled out for them at the end, but I would've been alright with that this time.

Hopefully, its not another 4 years for the next Jan Fabel mystery.
