



An American Outlaw

John Stonehouse

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TOP 100 Kindle Crime

The scion of one of the West's great outlaws comes home from the war in Iraq—Gilman James, the last of three childhood friends to return.

His brothers-in-arms are mere shadows of their former selves—Gil, unmarked—determines to take care of them. But how far should a man go for the people he loves?

Stepping across the line between right and wrong, Gil finds himself stranded in the Texan desert—as a bank heist he's planned goes horribly wrong. Pursued into the badlands by US Marshal John Whicher, Gil crosses paths with Tennille Labrea; an outlander, with her own demons to fight. Shielding a secret too precious to share with anyone, she's ready to cross her own line in the sand.

What makes an outlaw? Marshal John Whicher, veteran of the First Gulf War thinks he knows. But can natural justice ever outrank the law? For three very different people a moment of reckoning is set in train: violent, defining; inescapable.

An American Outlaw Details

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Author : John Stonehouse

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From Reader Review An American Outlaw for online ebook

David says

What a great book! In some ways similar to a book by Cormac McCarthy - sparse prose, well-developed characters, a blurry line between good and bad, a compelling atmosphere, and a story that will stay with me.

Tom Dooley says

This is one heck of a page turner. It deals with a subject all of us have at least heard about and that is PTSD. I have to say the way he gets the characters working together is amazing. The first 200 pages follow a certain pattern then after that you better hold on!!

Randy says

Gilman James, a distant relative of the famous outlaw, gets involved in a bank robbery gone bad (one dead, one wounded), a young kid jumping the gun, and is pursued by a U.S. Marshal. He'd simply wanted to help some old friends, and their family, who'd been left wounded by the war in the Middle East.

A young Mexican woman with her own problems, an ex-husband who wants their child and her (he doesn't believe in the ex-part) becomes part of the group as they try to escape.

Author John Stonehouse has produced a gripping tale of revenge as a man seeks to right the wrongs done to his friends.

Will Decker says

Noir style?, first person, present tense, nonstop action, it takes a lot to pull all these elements together, but Author Stonehouse did it in magnificent fashion! Had the editing been a little more polished I would have given it a 5 star rating. I loved the story. The soft spoken main character that isn't only dangerous, but always thinking, with all his flaws. The hot Latino that grows on him and him on her, yet they never get sexual because the story is so much more than that. A gripping, emotional tale with a great ending! Stonehouse is an author worth following!

Andrew Smith says

Ex-marines, scarred by combat. Now a new mission to complete. Robbery. Money to be made, the purpose oblique. East Texas. Dusty trails. A seasoned lawman on the chase.

Short sentences. Staccato. Conversations are cursory. Facts are hard to glean, dripped out slowly. Physical characteristics skimmed over. Players not fully drawn.

Need to adapt to the rhythm. Read it quickly. That's better, getting into the flow...

It's a case of less would have been more. Chase too protracted. Facts too slow to materialise.

Did I care enough to plough on. Just about.

It's different. Atmospheric. Not everyone's cup of tea. Not mine really.

Paul Nelson says

'You took up a gun, your world could turn upside down in a heartbeat. A bank. A gas station. A patrol, the other side of the world. Or a robbery, the fields of Texas. You stepped off, the fall could be an inch, a mile—unending. Nobody to save you, nobody there.'

An American Outlaw is a stunningly stylish dose of southern American crime fiction and you know when you enjoy reading something so much you're practically buzzing when you sit down to write a review. Well that's how I'm feeling and all from looking at James Lee Burke on Amazon and clicking through customers also bought section. Certainly glad I took a punt on this.

What captured the atmosphere, the characters and a chase laden plot perfectly was John Stonehouse's style of writing and all this in a debut novel that's left me eagerly waiting for his next offering. You know I like my quotes so there's a couple scattered through the review.

The style of writing is reminiscent of Cormac McCarthy's No Country for Old Men, it's short, sharp, sparse and not a wasted word in site. There's no beating around the bush and it takes a little while getting used to, it's not for everyone but you can say that for every book ever written. I'll give you an example of a direct prose that borders on cutting but at the same time a mite refreshing.

'I faced a lot of things. But I couldn't look her in the eye, the girl I met in second grade. Freckles and the chestnut hair. If every bone in her body had gone, she couldn't have looked more broken. Crushed. She told me she could sit on that porch, not a soul could see her—not a soul could hear her ask the world why it took everything. The boy she loved from eight years old.'

To the story a group of ex-marines plan a robbery spree, on the day of the bank job Gilman Francis James, a descendant of the infamous Frank & Jesse James is left stranded as a power blow out robs him of petrol and the ability to phone his partners. Their plans plunge into catastrophe and pretty soon it's all down to improvisation and the unknown as they become wanted fugitives at large. Every man and his dog on their case.

On The hunt US deputy Marshal John Whicher, four main strategic points, four towns and 'thirty thousand square miles of desert and mountain and honest to god wilderness.'

And just what Gil didn't need when lying low, a hard headed young woman with plans of her own and a

shotgun. Tennille needs cash, needs an out for her daughter, escape from a partner and Gil drops into her lap like a tainted gift from God.

Right is forever broken, compromised, wrong takes over until finally the boundaries between good and immorality fade into obscurity as everyone's reasons come to the fore.

Atmospheric I guess would be the perfect word to describe this, bleak and harsh conditions, the mountains, the trails, the rain and the desert almost taking on the role of a vengeful character, providing help then wrenching it away in a storm of indifference.

'Dust is everywhere, he screws his eyes tight against it. He holds his jacket across his mouth in the choking haze, sand scattering, the ground shifting. Like smoke beneath his boots.'

Apologies for the long review but I did like this and I think it shows. A read with plenty of depth, an ending that just felt right, one the reader could appreciate and even applaud if you're of an excitable type. Three compelling characters that surprisingly you find, at some point you're actually rooting for all of them.

Recommended

Also posted at <http://paulnelson.booklikes.com/post/...>

Tom says

One of the best reads ever! Compelling, exciting, credible. Presented at times in a stacatto-like cadence that enhances the story-telling. This was a most enjoyable and entertaining book. I'm a bit stingy when it comes to ratings, so a solid 5 by me says a lot for this book.

Steph says

Very well written, cannot wait for his next book.

Vikki Beardsley-scuro says

Great book

"American Outlaw" was intriguing, though Gil was flawed he had a big heart making bad choices for good reason, likewise the U.S. Marshall, Wincher is a man of the law, sworn to protect, he makes choices from his heart and his head. Very well written John Stonehouse.

Raven says

Always keen to highlight debut authors, John Stonehouse has proved to be a real find with his first book, *An American Outlaw*. This is a blistering slice of modern Americana that is hugely reminiscent in the spare, sparse style of authors like Cormac McCarthy, Ace Atkins and Denis Johnson, and hooks the reader throughout with its depiction of a fast-moving and tension filled manhunt across Texas.

The action focuses on Gilman James (a distant relation of outlaw Jesse James) and his two cohorts, having successfully completed one heist, and on the verge of a second in the far southwest of Texas. However, due to an unfortunate power outage, and the gung-ho actions of the other members of his team, their second job leads to death and injury and sees Gil and his injured friend on the receiving end of a desperate manhunt in the company of Tennille Labrea, a woman harbouring a secret and with an agenda all of her own.

Stonehouse splits the action effectively between the trio's flight from justice, and the actions of those who pursue them, headed by John Whicher from the US Marshals Office- a dogged and uncompromising ex-soldier who always aims gets his man.

With the ex-military background of James, his cohorts, and the marvellous and dogged Whicher, Stonehouse plays heavily on the themes of friendship, loyalty and the bonds and experiences illicit by the involvement in military conflict, and this is a real strength of the book. There is an interesting play on the way that the moral duty afforded to those who serve their country can be quickly unravelled in their return to society, as evinced by James and his friends' actions. Stonehouse reveals a step at a time the connection between the main male characters through their military service across both Gulf Wars, highlighting key events across their tours of duty, and how these incidents have shaped and defined their connections to one another. The characters of Whicher and James, in particular, are incredibly well- defined, and lead to a shifting of loyalties in the reader's conscience along the way, as neither man is wholly good or bad, making them both vital to the central plot and the holding of the reader's interest. The pace is relentless and tense, and supported by this excellent characterisation, truly keeps those pages turning. Although I was initially less sure about the introduction of the female character, Tennille, a young Hispanic woman joining up with the fugitives, my fears were quickly assuaged, as her story was integrated well into the main plot, thus undoing my feeling of her being a token female character to make up the numbers.

The atmosphere and location of the action is brilliantly rendered, with clipped and precise descriptions of the dusty environs of the Texas landscape and its haunting but desolate beauty. You can almost hear the twanging strains of a lone guitar, as the fugitives track across this endless wasteland of run down gas stations, diners and the miles and miles of deserted and hostile Texan terrain. It is incredibly visual, and also ramps up the tension tenfold, as the fugitives' desperation increases in the sights of their dogged pursuer. Aided by the authentic and spare dialogue which captures the linguistic rhythms of Gilman's southern roots and the Texan drawl of others, and the superb characterisation of the central characters, I would thoroughly recommend this. A good read.

cisco pike says

A wild ride in the transpecos desert

This is a post Iraq Butch and Sundance throw down. Some west Texas action for Sul Ross University fans. meditations on war and love and life. Over too soon, can't wait to see the movie.

Pat says

An American Outlaw is the brilliantly accomplished, adrenaline fuelled and emotionally charged debut thriller by author John Stonehouse.

Gil James is a Gulf war veteran. He returns home remarkably unscathed himself but for his childhood buddies Michael, Nate and Steven, Traumatic Brain Injury, a disastrous last mission and a return home to families suffering from lack of support and financial ruin have all taken their toll.

Hang on to your seat as this "Cat and Mouse" game plays out before you. A bank robbery goes wrong and a dramatic and exciting chase begins, across a wild, desolate Texas landscape with uninhabited tracks and few people to busy diners, a cattle auction and lots more.

Add a determined US marshal, John Whicher, a beautiful young Mexican woman, Tennille Labrea, a great mix of narrative and dialogue, plenty of action , a clever and unexpected ending and you have this highly recommended, 5 star action crime thriller .

A great novel and very much look forward to the next.

Happy reading everyone!!

Mary Mullane says

Wow... This action thriller is a bit "Thelma & Louise", "Dog Day Afternoon" and "Blackhawk Down". A page-turner with twists, never predictable. Definitely a good read!

Col says

Synopsis/blurb.....

The scion of one of the West's great outlaws comes home from the war in Iraq--Gilman James, the last of three childhood friends to return.

His brothers-in-arms are mere shadows of their former selves--Gil, unmarked--determines to take care of them. But how far should a man go for the people he loves?

Stepping across the line between right and wrong, Gil finds himself stranded in the Texan desert--as a bank heist he's planned goes horribly wrong. Pursued into the badlands by US Marshal John Whicher, Gil crosses paths with Tennille Labrea; an outlander, with her own demons to fight. Shielding a secret too precious to share with anyone, she's ready to cross her own line in the sand.

What makes an outlaw? Marshal John Whicher, veteran of the First Gulf War thinks he knows. But can natural justice ever outrank the law? For three very different people a moment of reckoning is set in train: violent, defining; inescapable.

My take.....

An American Outlaw is a debut novel from author John Stonehouse. We have a fast-paced tale of robbery and pursuit set in wildest Texas. Fairly straight-forward you would think, but there's a depth to the prose which extends far beyond that of some of the books I read.

We have a fantastic setting, vividly depicted, so much so I'm sure I coughed and spat desert dust as I turned the pages.

We have an interesting mix of characters, mainly focusing around a trio of strong, determined and likeable individuals; Gil – a disaffected veteran, loyal to friends and family but now willing to put himself on the wrong side of the law, like his famous ancestor; Tennille – a single Hispanic mother, getting by but unwilling to sacrifice her daughter to her abusive ex-husband and looking for an opportunity to forge a new life for them both away from his clutches; and Whicher, another veteran and now a Marshal. Whicher has a decency about him, as well as tenacity and acumen – a quality which serves him well in his pursuit of Gilman James after poor fortune and impetuosity from his partners in crime derail the meticulous planning laid in place.

Stonehouse weaves together our three main characters into a fast moving plot-line, producing a tale that ultimately resolves satisfactorily, leaving our characters' integrity intact. In doing so he touches on issues which effect a lot of people today on either side of the Atlantic economic downturn, banks, foreclosure, poor prospects, rejection and isolation, provoking feelings of powerlessness and disenfranchisement. Should we be surprised when people decide to fight back?

I'm looking forward to more from this powerful author in the years to come.

4 from 5 initially, on reflection re-scored to 5 from 5 - can't think of a valid reason why not!

John Stonehouse can be found on Facebook here - <https://www.facebook.com/pages/John-S...> and on Twitter here - <https://twitter.com/JohnStonehouse2>

He was kind enough to send me a copy of this bad boy in return for an honest review.

An American Outlaw has been read and enjoyed and reviewed by Raven from Raven Crime Reads here. (<http://ravencrimereads.wordpress.com/...>)

Steve says

I believe this could be a good story. However, the way it is written will prevent me from ever finding it out. It was like trying to read a book written as short choppy text messages. I'm not sure a lot of those are even complete thoughts. The cadence pounded my skull and made me want to break my kindle. I've never wanted an audio book of anything before, until now.
