



## Bad Boy Boogie

*Thomas Pluck*

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When Jay Desmarteaux steps out of from prison after serving twenty-five years for murdering a vicious school bully, he tries to follow his convict mentor's advice: *the best revenge is living well.*

But questions gnaw at his gut: Where have his folks disappeared to? Why do old friends want him gone? And who wants him dead?

Teaming with his high school sweetheart turned legal Valkyrie, a hulking body shop bodybuilder, and a razor-wielding gentleman's club house mother, Jay will unravel a tangle of deception all the way back to the bayous where he was born. With an iron-fisted police chief on his tail and a ruthless mob captain at his throat, he'll need his wits, his fists, and his father's trusty Vietnam war hatchet to hack his way through a toxic jungle of New Jersey corruption that makes the gator-filled swamps of home feel like the shallow end of the kiddie pool.

## Bad Boy Boogie Details

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Author : Thomas Pluck

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## From Reader Review Bad Boy Boogie for online ebook

### Rory Costello says

Thomas Pluck's harrowing tale has at its core how the abused become abusers. The hero of the story, Jay Desmariaux, is able to cast off that yoke -- but his psyche is damaged not only by his childhood suffering but also false imprisonment. There's a "Count of Monte Cristo"-type revenge story going on as well...but it's set in New Jersey! Pluck takes enjoyment in providing all manner of little authentic Garden State details. As seen in his other work, he's also adept at presenting two-fisted action.

I was more impressed with a previous Pluck novel, "Blade of Dishonor" -- but I was glad I read this, even though it ratchets up the discomfort level quite high at times. Puck's credo is "unflinching fiction with heart," and he continues to live up to it. Also recommended are his "Denny the Dent" stories; in fact, Denny makes a cameo appearance in "Bad Boy Boogie".

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### Holly West says

When Jay Desmariaux exits prison after serving twenty-five years for killing a vicious school bully, he steps into a world that has, in many ways, left him behind. His parents have disappeared, his friends are reluctant to engage with him, and the local bigwigs want him out of town. A Louisiana native, Jay's got no love for his adopted New Jersey home town (unless you count his childhood sweetheart, Ramona) but he's got debts to settle before he'll head south. What follows is a complex story that's heartbreakingly violent, subtly funny, and above all, well-told.

In Desmariaux, Pluck has succeeded in creating a nuanced character that is both naive and yet incredibly street smart. While Desmariaux has experienced some of the worst life has to offer and done things that are morally hard to reconcile, the twenty-five years he's spent in prison makes him a bit wide-eyed and innocent as he re-discovers life on the outside. This contrast is key to getting the reader to take his side. Like his protagonist, Pluck doesn't pull punches--there is nothing watered down here. And speaking as a writer, I admire and applaud Pluck for, as they say, going there. **BAD BOY BOOGIE** showcases in wonderful detail Thomas Pluck's talent for observing life and distilling it into a terrific story with a cast of memorable characters.

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### Kim says

This may not be everyone's cup of tea but it was right up my alley. Pluck writes with an endearing passion that makes the story a total pleasure to read. Gritty and raw, I couldn't put this one down.

Having grown up in the mid-atlantic myself, a lot of the fluff in this book was relatable for me. There's a scene where two characters are sharing cold rich frosted chocolate Entenmann's donuts and remarking about the "snap" of the chocolate shell. That chocolate shell snapping is absolutely one of my favorite food sensations. Having grown up fighting my father for the last donut in the box, I still enjoy a box of these sugar bombs once in awhile. It was nice to read that someone else has had the same blissful experience. Had to stop reading myself and read that passage out loud to my husband who thought I had written it myself :)

I sincerely hope Pluck decides to make this one a series. Would love to read about Jay's next adventures.

Perfect choice for fans of Joe Lansdale.

My copy was provided by NetGalley but my opinions are my own.

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## David Nemeth says

Everyone has an opinion about New Jersey, even if all you know is Springsteen, *The Sopranos*, or *Jersey Shore*. As someone that has lived in all of Jersey's border states and even lived in the Pine Barrens for a year, Jersey is far more complicated than the Turnpike rest stop you are probably thinking of. Forget everything you know about Jersey and let Thomas Pluck give you a tour of his slice of the Garden State.

Pluck's *Bad Boy Boogie* (Down & Out Books) is a character-driven novel about Jay Desmardeaux, but it is also a novel pushed on by the town and people of Nutley, New Jersey. Pluck skillfully tells the story of Jay, a con recently released from prison for killing the rapist-bully son of the Nutley's Mr. Potter. By my count, there are four timelines woven throughout *Bad Boy Boogie*: the five-year-old Jay, the teenager Jay, the prison Jay, and the ex-con Jay. To say that Pluck handles popping in and out of the timelines well would be an understatement. What makes *Bad Boy Boogie* work is Pluck's ability to give each story its own vibe without being obtrusive.

The five-year-old Jay lives in a world of monsters and things he cannot understand, somewhere between fairy tales and King-like shit:

Fingers with broken nails brushed back his bangs. Revealed the Witch's rotten smile. Just a kiss, just a kiss. The boy grabbed the doorknob and the Witch yanked him by the ankles. Dragged him along the moldy carpet toward a pair of oil-stained work boots.

The Gator man.

The terror does not disappear in Pluck's version of Jay's coming-of-age shit, after all, there's a teenage bully roaming free throughout Nutley doing horrible things to the younger kids of the town. Jay's time in prison is the most linear and matter-of-fact of Pluck's writing but it stands up well against the other stories. The present-day story that is filled with action of Jay's revenge and, as with the other story lines, there's some pretty dope lyrical prose as well. Here is Jay working as a bouncer at a strip club.

Jay stood in a corner of the club, reading the swarm of bodies like he was still in the prison yard. Fear in their body language, the macho posturing of men drunk on overpriced liquor and the power of a handful of dollars. The trapped eyes of dancers working the hustle.

As you read Pluck's *Bad Boy Boogie*, the novel gets better page by page and, even if you find it disturbing, you keep going on. If you don't think shit can happen, brace yourself because it's gonna happen. My reading of *Bad Boy Boogie* turned into a slow read as I wanted to enjoy all of Pluck's words as much as Jay enjoys the rippers at Rutt's Hut. With the roots of *Bad Boy Boogie* deep in Jersey, Pluck gives us a great crime thriller filled with energized action and harrowing deceit.

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## **John McKenna says**

### **Bad Boy Boogie**

#### **Mysterious Book Report No. 296**

**by John Dwaine McKenna**

For all of my adult life, New Jersey was a place I landed in and took off from at Newark International, rented a car and headed up the Garden State Parkway, bound for the family homestead in the Catskills. Jersey was a place overcrowded with traffic, bad roads and wretched, impatient, sue-happy drivers . . . somewhere I wanted to pass through as fast and expediently as possible. Then came The Sopranos on HBO, and years later, Boardwalk Empire, plus another network show about the Shore which showed the Garden State in a more entertaining fashion that softened my attitude and improved my feelings some. Now, comes a new novel that takes all that Jersey swagger and epic bad-assiveness to a whole new level . . . to the utter delight of every crime fiction lover who reads it.

Bad Boy Boogie, (Down and Out Books, PB, \$17.95, 334 pages, ISBN 978-1-943402-59-5) by Thomas Pluck, takes place in Nutley, just across the Hudson River from New York City, and begins when forty-something Jay Desmarteaux comes back to town after a twenty-five year jolt in the Jersey State Prison at Rahway for murdering a savage, psychopathic, vicious high school bully. Jay's come back to the scene of the crime to pick up the pieces of his life and extract a measure of revenge by living well, in the words of Okie, his mentor while in the penitentiary. Unfortunately for Jay however, the father of the boy he killed is now the Mayor, who burns with desire to extract a revenge . . . as does the Chief of Police and several of his officers. Now grown-up, they were the dead boys high school posse, and all of them want to inflict some pain on their old enemy, Jay Desmarteaux. Jay just wants to have a job, find his missing adoptive parents and tête-à-tête with his old girlfriend, but she's married the rich kid who testified against him at the murder trial. As if that's not enough to deal with, there's an organized crime captain, who wants Jay gone, or dead. Maybe both. All Jay has left to fight with are his wits, a tomahawk his father carried in the Viet Nam war and the friendship of Tony, a bullied follower back in high school, now a bulked up gym rat and owner of an auto repair business catering to high-end performance cars. The task is near-impossible, the odds of Jay coming out alive slim, and the corruption bottomless in this electrifying piece of stylish and tough as tough can be, cutting edge noir. Bad Boy Boogie lives up to every aspect of its name and carries that theme through to the end. It's one awesomely entertaining summer read and Thomas Pluck is a writer we'll be on the lookout for from now on because his tough guy writing is so good and his characters are so bad!

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## **Eric says**

If you want a decent crime thriller to read over a weekend, then Bad Boy Boogie is it.

The main character in the novel by Thomas Pluck is a violent, hot tempered convict just released from prison after twenty five years for a murder he committed when sixteen years of age.

Jay Desmarteaux, a Cajun with mystery lineage, returns to the area of the murder to extract revenge, make things right and to find out why those he thought were his friends betrayed him.

The novel is like a pulpy, high octane, smack to the head-like stories found in old black and white movies.

The book is violent, but in a noirish way and which comes with the territory.

Highly recommended.

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### **J.J. Hensley says**

An absolutely fantastic read. Highly original.

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### **Ed says**

Explosive crime fiction about Jay Desmarteux's mission of vengeance on the people who railroaded him into a 25 year prison sentence for murdering a viscous bully. Hard hitting thriller you won't soon forget. Hopefully, this won't be the last we see of Jay Desmarteaux.

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### **Alex says**

Pluck has a great series on his hands and I'm curious to see where it goes. He manages to visit the "ex-con in the real world" sub-genre with aplomb, handling it deftly and also adding a few new wrinkles to the genre. Worth your time if you're a crime fiction fan.

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### **Dave says**

Bad Boy Boogie is a crime thriller on crazy steroids. It starts with a fairly classic situation of a con being released from prison and feeling his way out in the real world, bent for a bit of revenge on those who left him to rot in prison all these years. Of course, Jay can't stay out of trouble -not even for a second. He was taught a bully only gets to come at you once and he'll learn never to make that mistake again. Jay gives it back so hard no one can believe what this guy is capable of.

But, what makes this story such a standout is that it paints a picture of the outside world which is just as much a trip through hell as prison life was. Flashbacks take Jay back to young love with Ramona, who now lives in a mansion. Back to a nightmarish childhood in the bayou. Issues of trust, loyalty, courage, cowardice, and bullying all appear. In the real world, no one stands up to the bullies as long as it's someone else who is the wounded prey. And, it's not just his enemies who betrayed Jay, but nearly the whole damn town. It's a whole twisted past that is told in one gut-punch after another. Thomas Hobbes said that life outside society would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." But, boy, he ought to see what life inside society can be for some.

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### **Andrew D says**

BAD BOY BOOGIE delivers. The characters are so real you can almost smell them. The writing is crisp and clean, like an Angus Young solo, some great riffs, but never gets too full of itself. While all this sounds like your typical adrenaline fueled crime thriller there's a dark heart motoring underneath. Reading Jay Desmariaux's tale made me wonder can revenge fantasies erase the nightmares of the past? Pluck does an excellent job telling a kick ass crime story with a heart break tale of secrets, lies, and the meaning of family.

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### **Clea Simon says**

If you have any doubt that bloody violence and truly despicable human behavior (rape, child abuse, incest, etc.) can be written with grace and humor, "Bad Boy Boogie" will put your doubts to rest. Jay Desmariaux didn't begin his life as a killing machine. He has memories of being a loved child – and maintains a strong allegiance to those who did right by him, including his Papa Andre, his Mama Angeline and his high school sweetheart Ramona, but some other people "just need killing." Having done his time, Jay would like to return to simply living, ideally with some of the people he still trusts. Only his small New Jersey town won't let him forget – and turns out to be as much of a gator-infested swamp as anything he can remember from his tortured Louisiana childhood. Before long, Jay is at it again, wreaking furious vengeance on evil doers and those who support them, and learning that very little he believed in was true. Any book that gets me to read beyond a beheading with an ax gets extra points...

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### **Bracken says**

I got to read an ARC if this book and it is fantastic! Thomas Pluck's writing is high performance. He doesn't waste a sentence, a word, or an idea propelling his story forward in a way that drives like he's behind the wheel of a precision car built by Eddie Bunker and tricked out by Andrew Vachas. Pluck juxtaposes Jay Desmariaux's past and present in a way that gives this tough guy protagonist the kind of real flesh and bone—and most of all heart and intention—that other writers can only aspire to. I've been a fan of his writing for a long time, but BAD BOY BOOGIE is the kind of explosive book that makes life long fans. I guarantee I won't ever miss a thing Thomas Pluck puts out, and neither should you!

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### **Elaine Tomasso says**

I would like to thank Netgalley and Down And Out Books for an advance copy Bad Boy Boogie, an everyday tale of violent revenge in small town New Jersey.

Jay Desmariaux was jailed as a teenager for the brutal murder of local bully, Joey Bello. 25 years later, thanks to some changes in the law, he is out, free and clear. He is, however, holding a grudge against certain people who left him to carry the can alone all those years ago, so all the money, tickets to New Orleans and threats will not stop him.

Bad Boy Boogie is a tightly written, cleverly plotted novel with flashbacks to Jay's life as a child in New Orleans, a teenager in New Jersey and as a prisoner to explain his character and motivations. Unfortunately it

did little for me as I felt no affinity to his character and struggled to understand his thought processes as he battles his opponents. I have no objection to fictional violence and this is an extremely violent novel but Jay is supposed to be smart and I feel he could have used his brain a bit more and his fists and anything else to hand a little less and it would have made for a better read. There isn't even any of the humour which leavens many novels in the same vein.

This is not a bad book and the characterisation is interesting. Jay Desmardeaux is undoubtedly a psychopath with his own moral compass but the other characters' self interest and self preservation, or cowardice as Jay sees it, make the novel more readable.

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## Col says

Synopsis/blurb.....

When Jay Desmardeaux steps out of from prison after serving twenty-five years for murdering a vicious school bully, he tries to follow his convict mentor's advice: the best revenge is living well.

But questions gnaw at his gut: Where have his folks disappeared to? Why do old friends want him gone? And who wants him dead?

Teaming with his high school sweetheart turned legal Valkyrie, a hulking body shop bodybuilder, and a razor-wielding gentleman's club house mother, Jay will unravel a tangle of deception all the way back to the bayous where he was born. With an iron-fisted police chief on his tail and a ruthless mob captain at his throat, he'll need his wits, his fists, and his father's trusty Vietnam war hatchet to hack his way through a toxic jungle of New Jersey corruption that makes the gator-filled swamps of home feel like the shallow end of the kiddie pool.

Praise for BAD BOY BOOGIE ...

“Thomas Pluck has launched himself into the rare category of...must read novels...must re-read...must tell all and sundry about. It is that fine, that compelling. Just tremendous.” —Ken Bruen, author of the Shamus and Macavity Award-winning Jack Taylor mysteries

“Thomas Pluck’s Bad Boy Boogie is a vivid dose of New Jersey noir with heart, soul and muscle.” —Wallace Stroby, author of the Crissa Stone series

“My first Thomas Pluck novel won’t be my last. Bad Boy Boogie is a superb, taut, little thriller that hits all the right notes and sustains its central conceits to the very last page.” —Adrian McKinty, author of the Sean Duffy trilogies

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My take.....

Not one for the faint-hearted here. Grim and gritty and violent throughout, populated by a cast of characters you probably wouldn't find sat next to you at Sunday service.

Our novel traverses 25 years and more, digging back into Jay Desmardeaux's rescue from a horrific and abusive parent in Louisiana. Mama Angeline and Papa Andre are his saviours. We enjoy some of his

friendships as a boy growing up in Nutley and the early stirrings of teenage love with Ramona. There's a tension and conflict present in this period as Jay and his friends clash frequently with a rival gang of bullies.

The storyline doesn't follow chronologically, we dip in and out of the past discovering a bit more about Jay and the events that have just seen him freed from Rayway prison after being sentenced as a teenager for the killing of Joey Bello. We suffer with him in prison - through conflicts with other inmates and the staff, as well as some moments of solace, with some solid bonds created. Twenty five years is a long time, but Bello's father, now the mayor and the rest of the community don't want Jay back in the vicinity.

Jay is fuelled by a sense of injustice. His victim was a bully and a rapist, but his friends remained silent at his trial, afraid and threatened, one of them complicit in the stitch-up. Jay lost his freedom and his family and he isn't about to let himself get bounced out of Nutley. If he leaves and heads back to Louisiana it's going to be on his terms.

Childhood abuse, growing up as a boy - far from carefree, prison life and freedom, a rekindled romance with Ramona - a woman with a few secrets and issues of her own, a renewed friendship with Tony – one of his childhood friends and now his employer, a lot of pressure from the cops, crossing swords with former friends and enemies, a kind-hearted cabbie, a reacquainting with some ex-Rayway inmates, nightclub shenanigans, a search for his missing Mama and Papa, conflict with a crime family, and a helluva a lot more to boot.

Pluck packs everything, bar the kitchen sink into this dirty tale of one man and his unwillingness to be further fucked with. Jay Desmariaux had my sympathy, but not always my admiration in this one.

Admirable qualities he may possess, but a period of incarceration, heaped on top of earlier horrific abuse has damaged him. He doesn't always make sensible or rational decisions but it's an interesting ride watching the path they take him.

4.5 from 5

Thomas Pluck has his website here.

<https://thomaspluck.com/>

Catch him on Facebook here (<https://www.facebook.com/thomaspluckw...>) and Twitter - @thomaspluck (<https://twitter.com/thomaspluck>)

I read a collection of his short stories – Get Plucked a month or so ago. Thoughts on them are here.  
<http://col2910.blogspot.co.uk/2017/03...>

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