



Drum

Kyle Onstott

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The world of DRUM is a world of brutality, lust and miscegenation... where chained Negroes are sold like cattle... where prize specimens, male and female are chosen to work in exotic bordellos, and on slave-breeding plantations... where masters, drunk with the power of life and death, force their slaves to entertain them with unspeakable acts.

Drum Details

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From Reader Review Drum for online ebook

Karla says

A wise person once said on the internets:

Admittedly, I am a fan of this type of garbage. Some might think - you're a Black woman, why would you read books like this? Well, I adore horror novels too, but I don't condone the slaughter of teenagers with chainsaws...

Because of the sticky issue of race and a generation of the PC Thought Police, there's a little voice in the back of my mind that wants to have a valid and "socially-approved" reason for loving this genre so much. There's no straw to grasp on the grounds of literary merit because there isn't a scrap of merit in it. It's trash, pure trash of the solidest gold. Stereotypes of blacks and whites alike abound, every plot twist and turn is motivated by either sex or violence, and the prose is either subpar or hangs slightly above average for the wink of an eye. But I eat this garbage up with a spoon.

So thank you, anonymous person on the internets, for saying it straight out and making me wave that Falconhurst banner with a lighter heart. Does it mean that I long for the days of the Old South and slavery? Oh please. What's wrong with loving literary trash? Nothing.

And this book is pure trash, although it takes a while to get to the gloriously skeevey stuff that was first glimpsed (and then only done half-baked) in Mandingo. It's divided into 3 parts, each one about a tumultuous time span in the lives of 3 male slaves, all related by blood.

Book 1: Tamboura

Tamboura's the brother of a tribal chief, but due to some jealous conniving, he finds himself aboard a slaver ship bound for Cuba. Once there, he gets involved with his master's white mistress, and things don't end well.

Book 2: Drum

Drum, son of Tamboura and the white woman, lives in his mother's whorehouse but thinks he's the son of her maid. An argument with a client's coachman proves that Drum's an able fighter and he becomes a main attraction at the brothel: bare-knuckle brawling with any slave put up against him, and putting on public displays of his prowess with the quadroon whores for the amusement of the white dudes who come to drink, leer, and drool. But these salad days don't last forever.

Book 3: Drumson

The imaginatively named son of Drum is purchased by Hammond Maxwell (here's where the Mandingo connection comes in) and he becomes a valued slave in the Maxwell household. However, Maxwell's horny daughter Sophie causes no end of trouble for any man within groping range. Maxwell's own vendetta against two other slaves (a grudge carried over from the last book) helps ignite a slave rebellion that has a bunch of carcasses littered among the burnt-out ruins at Falconhurst.

So, nothing redeeming in it whatsoever, but so hugely entertaining and absurdly addictive that the slow parts didn't seem that slow and when the action ramped up, the pages flew by. The first 80 pages were very similar to what Alex Haley did in Roots 14 years later, with depictions of village life and Tamboura's capture and journey on the Middle Passage. If anything could be called "serious" and "well-done," it is that first section.

Then the horny white woman shows up and we're off!

Sex! Violence! Death! Violence! More sex! Lots more sex! Lots and lots of casual homoerotica! More violence! Decapitations and handjob and bears, oh my!

To this day I still don't know why I liked *Mandingo* so much. Compared to this book, it's deathly dull with its repetitious dialogue and non-existent plot. Maybe if I tried to read it again, I wouldn't get through it. Thanks to a 1975 article I found in *The Washington Post*, I feel pretty confident in asserting that Lance Horner is probably the one to credit for giving the Falconhurst books some focus and pizzazz. That elderly gay Bostonian eccentric (who allegedly mailed gay porno postcards to misogynist bachelor Kyle Onstott) took the reins of long-distance "collaboration" (they never met) and set the *Mandingo* saga on the trashy rails where it belongs. I salute you, sir!

Gone are the pages upon pages of musings about rheumatiz and hot toddies and the ins and outs of slave breeding saying the same damn thing over and over, and instead are vivid descriptions of a New Orleans bawdyhouse's "attractions," a yellow fever epidemic, handjobbing mulattos, horny masters and mistresses and slaves, and brawling fights where nuts get grabbed and ears get chewed and wrists nearly get snapped off. There's enough there that is pure *Mandingo* Onstott, but the zip and zing in this one can only be due to Horner and his rather quirky grasp of Southern gothic horror porno exploito-trash. There's far more sex in this than in *Mandingo*, which was so fade-to-black that I never knew if anything was happening. Here there's no doubt, though still phrased coyly with terms like "warmth" and "raging need" and "orgiastic ecstasy." But there's never any doubt what's going on and it happens often. In fact, sex is a motivator for nearly every character at one time or another to do really really stupid things. It's often thrown in simply for prurient reasons. And I wouldn't have it any other way in lit-ra-cha like this.

And the gay element really stands tall and proud in this one. (Thank you, Lance. And this book was a featured selection in the "Reading Club For Men" in 1962. Wonder what some readers thought when they kept coming across those parts in between all the het stuff? Especially Drumson's "Damn, it's a guy with a hand on my dick! But I'm excited!" Hee!)

Duh, these books aren't for everyone. And I don't recommend them unless you know exactly what you're getting and are a-OK with just about any kind of WTFery that can get thrown at you. But for lovers of pulpy trash, they're a must-read.

Oh, and I should add that if you've seen the movie (as I have done oh so gleefully), the screenplay is a total mashup of the three stories. There are elements from each one that got smushed so the script would have one main protagonist.

Which is better: book or movie? Ehh, I would say 6 of one, half dozen of the other. They're both cheesy and campy trash, although the movie **does** have the benefit of John Colicos (you Trek fans know who he is) playing a campy evil gay Creole **and** the awesome Warren Oates chewing up the scenery as a very crude Hammond Maxwell. Oh, and Pam Grier talking about her missus's titties. The lead, Ken Norton, has barely more thespian skill than a rock. How can you go wrong, I ask you. It's cinematic gold for schlock film fans.

Read the book, then watch the movie. Or do the reverse. They're both gloriously bad in the best possible

way.

Faith Lowery says

I don't have the exact read start and finish dates on many books I have read this year. The dates are approximated, as I have been in & out of the hospital, and on bed rest, and read 2-5 books a day depending on the book & length and my ability to focus. All dates are approximated, by month.

Laurie says

Loved this book. Could not put it down. Read it on vacation with my sister. Mom read it years ago and still talks about it being a cant put down book. Took long time to find 2 hard copies a few years back but did it. Won't ever get rid of it, it has a permanent home on my bookshelf. :-)

Joan Noble says

Read it years ago and it is a great book.

Freelance says

First time reading this book, it was for a friend who wanted help writing her book report for her class. She told me that everytime she would read it, she would get so infuriated that she would throw the book on the floor and stomp it repeatedly. This was in 1964. In my opinion, it gave a very different aspect of the south, slavery, and the unique relationship that exists between the African-American's even of today. By the time "Root" was made into a movie, it was so similar to Onstotts novel but it left out much of the historical background that was significant in "Drum". Within Onstott's novel there are many mixtures and variations of African-Americans from the age of slavery, fro Quadroons, mulattoes. It was the unique physical beauty that was known only to the breed called, Mandingoes that Onstott mentions mostly.

His novel is a very raw, uninhibited version that in many cases probably rang true of the untold story of the south and early American slave breeding. Onstott paints an explicitly literal portrait of a nation trapped by its own lust, desire, and depravity that would lead it with no other choice but to abolish slavery. Many African-Americans of today have slave owner ancestry, there are scant few who do not.

Slave Traders of the Middle East were harsh, usually they made eunuchs of the African male children and given honorable positions either as guard of the royal the Harems or as man-servant to the Sheiks or Sultans only.

The earliest known records for intentional castration or force celibacy to produce eunuchs are from the Sumerian city of Lagash in the 21st century BC. Over the millennia, they performed a wide variety of functions in many different cultures as courtiers or the equivalent domestic slaves, treble singers, religious

specialists, government officials and guardians of women or harem servants. Scantily dressed eunuchs carrying a weapon as he keeps an eye on the Sultan's royal harem in Tunis, Tunisia was not uncommon. They were denied the ability to make a family to serve the royal family. America was not the first or the only ones to enslave Africans, slavery has existed for centuries before it was brought to the original Thirteen Colonys in the 15th and 16th Centurys

nicholas cifton says

I have not been able to read this book because I can not on the site

Jon says

Good Lord! Vivid, graphically told chronicle of three generations of slaves. The story begins in Africa (with elements that are quite similar to what later appeared in the minseries Roots) and follows a young man who is sold into slavery by his greedy family. This slave, Tamboura, becomes involved with a Cuban master and his beautiful mistress. The second phase concerns his son, Drum, and Drum's life with the mistress who is now a bordello madam in New Orleans. The final part is about Drum's son, Drumson and his life with an owner who was featured in the previous novel (and movie) Mandingo. The blunt language, visceral savagery and frank attitude will really pop some eyes open, especially in these PC times. There is also, however, a very detailed (and welcome) account of the times and places of these men. Compelling, if not always pleasant, reading with some unforgettable bits of storyline.

Jeannie says

I'm re-reading books I read while a pre-teen. Lord only knows this was not a proper book for me to be reading at that age but the thrill of knowing such is what made it all the more fun. Ha. For some reason I have an odd attraction to the books in this series. I'm enjoying them today as much as I did then and this one was no exception.

Rick Brindle says

I've cleared out my bookshelves many times, but this one always stays. I've read it several times too. It's an excellent, evocative story about slavery, taking the reader back in time, as though you were there. Very well written, with vivid characters, all believable, no cliched right and wrong characters, just a great story. Although the fate of the three principal characters leave the reader pondering the moral of our fate for tasting forbidden fruit.

Ij says

I read this book many years ago. I don't remember the whole story; however, I remember it is about slavery in the U.S. I think this is a historical fiction because the book actually reflexes many of the atrocities that actually occurred during slavery. The characters are not real; however, slave owners, overseers, and slaves are a historical fact. Slaves had to work as house and field slaves under owners and overseers who saw them as property rather than human beings. Slaves had to live in poor conditions, off what ever was provided them. Further, unwanted sex and violence were wrongs that slaves had to endure.

Life on the plantation was and great. The author capitalized on human nature by exploiting our fascination with sex and violence. One thing I do remember is that, I enjoyed the book and read the other books in the series.

Kenneth says

A brutal story of slavery in the Old South, where slaves are bred and sold like cattle and strange things go on nevertheless.

Charles says

I think a book called "Mandingo" basically started the "Plantation" fiction craze and this was a follow-up to that. I barely made it through it. Long and boring, I thought. I pretty much was just scanning toward the end.

John says

So wanted to give this one star because I really did not enjoy reading it but then it was not actually bad. When it was published in the 1960s, it was probably considered shocking. It bored me.

Bobby says

started out slow but still a good book

Steve says

Some five years passed between the publication of Kyle Onstott's anti-GONE WITH THE WIND slavery epic, MANDINGO, and during that time two significant things took place in the author's career:

1. Presumably following actually taking the time to read the sprawlingly over-long MANDINGO, someone

at Onstott's publisher had the infinite mercy to not inflict such a pointlessly dense doorstep of a book upon readers a second time, and consequently hired an editor who was not asleep at the wheel when the inevitable sequel was in the pipeline.

2. With the first of MANDINGO's sequels, 1962's DRUM, Onstott acknowledges the contributions of his "good friend and collaborator, Lance Horner, to whom I am profoundly obligated for the assistance he has given me and without whose insistence, aid, and persistent encouragement this book would never have been finished." There appears to be little information as to the full nature of the collaborative relationship between Onstott and Horner, but if you ask me, especially since I've read the majority of the subsequent books, Horner probably acted to trim the fat from Onstott's narrative, something MANDINGO certainly needed (it was re-issued several times after its original edition in "expurgated" versions that trimmed superfluous padding while retaining all of the sex and violence). From DRUM onward, Horner was present for what remained of Onstott's output and beyond, but I'll get to that in a bit.

DRUM tells the story of three generations of characters, unfolding its narrative over some five-hundred pages and managing to hold the reader's attention without ever lapsing into the lengthy and agonizing bits of useless business that went nowhere and occasionally brought its predecessor's 659 pages to a gear-grinding halt. One might think that an epic covering approximately forty-some-odd years and three protagonists would be ponderous going, but the narrative is wisely divided into three books, so the leaps from era to era happen with no wasted words and bring readers to exactly where they need to be in the showcased hero's development.

Book One opens in Africa sometime around or just before 1800 and introduces us to Tamboura, a member of Hausa royalty who eagerly awaits the culmination of his manhood trials and his subsequent right to get his hump on with the nubile girls of his village, a right guaranteed once he is ritually circumcised. Well, poor Tamboura is shit outta luck because some of his jealous family members plot against him in an effort to usurp his right of tribal leadership succession and successfully drug and kidnap him, selling him into slavery to an Arab flesh-trader (rather than kill him outright, which would have offended the spirits). With nothing to his name but a totemic necklace he believes affords him mystical protection, Tamboura endures the long journey from Africa to the slave markets of Cuba, where his fierce physical beauty catches the eye of an aging, monied plantation owner, don Cesar, who buys him with a mind to use Tamboura as a prime stud for breeding. The don is a man with vision enough to foresee the encroaching end of legally importing slaves from Africa and he intends to use his plantation as the first self-sufficient slave-generating compound in Cuba, a move that would earn him the wealth of a king. Tamboura, as is par for the course in this kind of novel, of course comes to virtually worship don Cesar and does everything in his power to please him. Then Tamboura meets the don's hot, blonde and French mistress, Alix (allegedly the Comtesse de Vaux, a title she embellished herself with upon fleeing the horrors of the French Revolution), and the two enter into a clandestine relationship of torrid, passionate sex, unhindered by any hint of actual communication or getting to know each other as human beings. In her earlier days, Alix had loved a devoted slave named Bonaventure, who gave his life during her aforementioned escape, so she developed a taste for strapping black men, an interest definitely not approved of by her slave and almost-constant companion, the haughty Rachel (who doesn't like men for some reason that no one can figure out...).

Tamboura and Alix's affair goes on rampantly and undiscovered, which practically drives Rachel insane with jealousy and frustration, causing her to resort to an escalating and utterly futile barrage of voodoo charms before coming up with one of the most brilliant relationship-destroying schemes I've ever read about (and I won't spoil it for you; sorry). Needless to say, the lovers are discovered en flagrante and Tamboura is put to hideous death by a reluctant don Cesar, who knows that Tamboura did not rape Alix (despite what she claims in order to save her own worthless ass) but must execute him to reinforce to the whole town the lesson of what happens when a black man gets it on with a white woman. Alix and Rachel are given twenty-four hours

to vacate the premises with nothing but the clothes on their backs (which in no way stops them from stealing anything of value that they can carry), their passage guaranteed on ships bound for Mexico or New Orleans. They set off for the latter, and a distraught Alix realizes that she had actually come to love Tamboura, retaining only his totem necklace to remember him by. That, and the unwanted son that she discovers she's knocked up with.

Book Two shifts the timeline forward by about eighteen years, by which time Alix has once more reinvented herself, this time as the madame at New Orleans' most high-end whorehouse, the de Vaux Academie de Musique. Having found herself pregnant with the unexpected and unwanted fruit of her time with Tamboura, Alix passes off her black son, Drum, as Rachel's baby and promptly distances herself from her child. Between the time of Drum's birth (sometime in the early 1800's) and his eighteenth birthday, Alix has become quite rich thanks to her bordello attracting wealthy and powerful regulars, and once he's of age, Drum is sent off to apprentice as a blacksmith. Unlike many of the slaves in books of this genre, Drum is more educated than most and comes off as rather sophisticated when compared to his fellow human chattel, an aspect of his demeanor that, along with his oft-mentioned overwhelming physical beauty, makes him ideal as a bartender and live sex show performer in the "melees" Alix stages for her jaded clientele. Growing up unaware that Rachel is not his real mother, Drum hates Alix as a foul epitome of all that he perceives as wrong and unattractive about white women, but he enjoys his status as a featured fixture at her establishment and eventually receives training as a fighter after kicking the living shit out of another slave who did not show him proper deference. Once trained, Drum goes on to win match after match, a towering nude black Hercules who can mete out and take extreme punishment, but as his winning streak breeds jealousy and frustration among some of the owners of slaves he defeats, so an escalating slate of horrifying and vicious opponents takes up much of his time. Much Of Book Two is taken up with Drum's pugilistic efforts, but there is also a fair amount of time spent on his "pleasuring" with an assortment of all-too-willing female slaves and, in one memorably tasteless sequence, a spoiled-rotten, uber-rich, homicidal bi-sexual French duelist (he does not rebuff the guy because the man bought him a prize wench and resisting him would mean financial suicide for Alix's whorehouse). A plague of yellow fever — colloquially referred to as "Bronze John" — hits New Orleans and kills people by the thousands, eventually claiming Rachel, who, with her dying breath, informs Drum that Alix is his real mother. Alix briefly steps out of her role as stern whorehouse manager and relates the details of his origin to her son, giving him the Number One position of power among the house's slaves if he never reveals that Alix gave birth to a black man's bastard. From there the story deals with what an entitled asshole Drum becomes, treating the other slaves like shit and emotionally torturing his main woman, Calinda, by withholding sex — a tactic she tried initially, but it backfired when he adopted it — and lording it over Blaise, a younger, even more strapping buck who harbors feelings for Drum's woman. One night while Drum is out servicing two "fancy" girls at some rich lady's house, Drum's woman takes Blaise to her bed and is inevitably caught by Drum. Overcome with rage, Drum attacks Blaise with the intent to kill him in cold blood. Their fight spills out into the whorehouse's courtyard and Blaise (who does not want to fight his best friend) defends himself with a carpenter's saw, embedding the blade in Drum's jugular. As Drum bleeds out on the cobblestones, Alix forces Blaise and Calinda, under penalty of severe punishment, to tell anyone who asks that Drum was killed in a street fight. Alix keeps the necklace that Drum inherited from Tamboura and holds it to give to her as yet unborn grandson, who is gestating within Calinda.

Book Three opens sometime in the 1840's and introduces us to Drumson (it's all in the name, folks), who is raised at Alix's brothel and serves as a house slave. Stunningly handsome and possessed of his father's physique, Drumson is also trained to fight by his Uncle Blaise. Alix keeps the boy on a short leash, never letting him know that she's his grandmother (all the secrets of Alix's jungle fever died with Drum) and as a result Drumson doesn't much care for her. Things get interesting and finally turn the novel into a proper sequel to MANDINGO when Hammond Maxwell, the conflicted slave-breeding/black chick-lovin'/white-chick-despising star of that book, shows up at Alix's establishment with an unusual offer. Following the

events so scorchingly chronicled in *MANDINGO*, Hammond has returned from "the Texies" and assumed control of Falconhurst plantation when his father finally has the decency to croak, seeing its cash crop of prime slaves raise his wealth to that of an antebellum Rockefeller. Now all he needs to have all his ducks in a row is to get a woman to run Falconhurst's main house, but he no longer wants a wife, thanks to what his first spouse, the infamous drunken interracial sex-offender adulteress Blanche, got up to with his most prized slave, the famed full-blooded Mandingo, Mede. Alix provides him with Augusta, a hairdresser to the local whores who has a mildly checkered past but is a very proper "lady" in every way nonetheless, and so the pair set off to Falconhurst with Drumson taken on as Hammond's personal body slave (a high position), and Regine, Hammond's new and ultra-hot bed wench (much to Augusta's annoyance). During their initial time together, a falling-down-drunk Hammond confuses Drumson with Mede and the readers are treated to Hammond baring his soul to what he believes is the ghost of the slave he so sadistically punished (read "murdered by pitchforking him and boiling his body for three days in a gigantic kettle until he was soup"), and in doing so Hammond reveals his crushing guilt over his foul deeds, finally making peace with that foul event. Upon arriving at Falconhurst, we meet Sophie, the spoiled-brat twelve-year-old daughter Hammond believes is his via Blanche (she's actually the child of Blanche's brother, Charles, and bears his crossed eyes as a marker of her true parentage) and Sophie is soon revealed to be a budding and dangerous nymphomaniac with a heavy duty interest in the slave boys, people over whom she wields the power of life and death, and woe to any who might cross her...

The rest of the story relates Drumson's day-to-day interactions with the Falconhurst slaves, his devoted friendship with Miss Augusta (who turns out to be one of the most genuine and sweet white folks in the entire series), and the growing resentment of Drumson by slaves Clees and Clytie. Also figuring into this are Alph and Meg, twin former slaves of Hammond's who he sold a decade earlier, only to discover later that they had blackmailed his dead wife into allowing them to fuck her whenever they demanded it, lest they tell massa about her dalliances with Mede. Ever since becoming aware of their crime, Hammond had searched for them in vain, but when he finds them again he buys them from their current owner and brings them home with him, intending to imprison them away from the other slave sto heighten the suspense of what is sure to be some inevitable payback punishment, a reprisal that turns out to be imminent castration for both. The news of that development and the impending sale of the "uppity" Clees spurs an ultra-violent slave revolt that results in many gory deaths, including that of Drumson, who sacrifices himself to save Hammond's life, only to end up fatally shot and beheaded with a scythe. When the revolt is quelled, a heartbroken Augusta makes sure that Drumson's courage and more-than-slavelike humanity are never forgotten, affording him the rare honor of being buried among Falconhurst's honored white dead. But before Drumson's body is committed to the earth, Augusta retrieves Tamboura's legacy totem necklace and keeps it safe, eventually to be passed on to the first of the inevitable sons Drumson sired.

DRUM is a brisk and very entertaining read and an improvement upon *MANDINGO* in several respects. It is never boring, the characters are much more fleshed-out than before, and the three protagonists are each interesting in completely differing ways. Tamboura personifies the untamed beauty and majesty of Africa itself, an aspect noted by all who encounter him once he's transported into slavery, even inspiring an aging slave dealer to paint his portrait in tribute. Drum is an egocentric prick who's so full of himself that rather unlikable, quite happy in his role as what is essentially a human fighting cock (pun intended), with little concern or respect for his own value as a human being and not a commodity. Drumson is by far the most relatable of the three, displaying great intelligence and self-awareness despite being in a situation that seeks to quash such traits. His relationship with Augusta is both surprising and touching, illustrating one of the most interesting symbiotic relationships in all of the slave literature genre. Only three things unite these very different men: shared genetics, names that all sort of relate to a percussion instrument, and a disturbingly worshipful attitude toward white women. Before ending up as Alix's boy-toy, Tamboura, who bitterly despises whites, encounters a statue of the Blessed Virgin during his indoctrination into Western religion and

from then on he is mesmerized by the sacred beauty of female whiteness. Drum lusts after white women (an attitude he very wisely keeps to himself), but never gets with one, settling instead for the light-skinned beauties in his mother's employ. Drumson also reveres white women and would be curious to try one out, but he knows that is just not in the cards and is fatal to any black man who achieves that goal (the fate of Mede is constantly brought up, so he's got constant reminders to keep it in his pants). Instead, Drumson transfers his worship of the white female to Miss Augusta, and that reverence is rewarded with a mutually beneficial friendship that unexpectedly extends to all the plantation's slaves.

Well worth reading, even if you have not read its ponderous predecessor, DRUM is definitely recommended to the interested. The 1976 film version seriously fucks with the book's content and ends up being rather a mess, but it's one hell of an unintentionally hilarious disaster that features the great Warren Oates (as Hammond) , Pam Grier, Isela Vega (shockingly miscast as Alix), Paula Kelly, John Colicos (as an over-the-top interpretation of the bi-sexual duelist who must be seen to be believed) and Yaphet Kotto, all of whom chew the scenery like their lives depended on it. Definitely recommended for camp film enthusiasts and nowhere near as offensive as the movie of MANDINGO, but if you choose experience the book or film of DRUM, make the smart choice and stick with the novel. Followed two years later by MASTER OF FALCONHURST.
