



# Zero Hour in Phnom Pehn

*Christopher G. Moore*

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**Zero Hour in Phnom Pehn** Christopher G. Moore

2004 German Critics Award for Crime Fiction and Winner of 2007 Premier Special Director Book Award  
Semana Negra, Spain

In the early 1990s, at the end of the devastating civil war UN peacekeeping forces try to keep the lid on the violence. Gunfire can still be heard nightly in Phnom Penh, where Vietnamese prostitutes try to hook UN peacekeepers from the balcony of the Lido Bar.

Calvino traces leads on a missing farang from Bangkok to war-torn Cambodia, through the Russian market, hospitals, nightclubs, news briefings, and UNTAC Headquarters. Calvino's buddy, Colonel Pratt, knows something that Calvino does not: the missing man is connected with the jewels stolen from the Saudi royal family. Calvino quickly finds out that he is not the only one looking for the missing farang.

## Zero Hour in Phnom Pehn Details

Date : Published (first published 1994)

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Author : Christopher G. Moore

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# From Reader Review Zero Hour in Phnom Pehn for online ebook

## Andrew Tattersall says

Thriller set in Cambodia in the early 90's so a lot that's written about is really different from things nearly a quarter of a century later. Some things similar though many of the places obviously no longer exist. Enjoyable but not great.

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## Karen says

Set mostly in Phnom Penh, ZERO HOUR IN PHNOM PENH is based in the early 1990's, at the end of the civil war that tore Cambodia apart, in the wake of the appalling Khmer Rouge regime. UN peacekeeping forces are on the streets, gunfire is regularly heard, and PI Vincent Calvino is looking for an American man - a farang - who has friends in Thailand keen to get in touch with him.

With a distinctly noir sensibility, ZERO HOUR takes Calvino from where he is based in Thailand into the dangerous, unpredictable, unstable and decidedly seedy world of underground Phnom Penh. It's a risky business as it is obvious from the people this man is involved with, that there has to be something very dodgy going on. Even Calvino's friend Thai policeman Colonel Pratt seems to know a lot more about the missing man's involvements than he is letting on.

For a book with such a noir sensibility, there are some unexpected elements, not least of all a lot of descriptive and discursive story-lines that do mean it seems to take an age for any actual action to take place. Which isn't a bad thing at all if you're looking for noir with more of a cultural immersion effect. I will confess that it took me quite a while to get into the tone of the book - initially I found the wandering down various cul-de-sacs somewhat disconcerting, mostly because I struggled to see where everything could possibly be heading. That wasn't helped by some of the little offerings of sheer brilliance - the death of one particularly colourful character on the concrete steps in the stand at the racetrack was described with such skill that you could see him, his chocolate brownie, and the milling crowd with absolutely no effort whatsoever. I wanted more of that - more of the story moving forward. And once that started to happen, it has to be said a fair way into the book, I was completely and absolutely hooked.

It is a very dark story, and Calvino is a classic lone-wolf, cynical, side of the mouth talking, slightly Energiser Bunny sort of survivor that comes to that stereotype in a place, and an environment that's absolutely fascinating. There's no holds barred in the way that Phnom Penh is described, the way that the lawless society operates and the stark and very in-your-face descriptions of the differences between the UN peacekeepers and locals. There are a lot of people in this place living life on the edge, sometimes taking advantage, mostly being taken advantage of. It's not a pretty place, but whilst there are some glimpses of people trying to move forward, there are also some telling and very pointed examples of a collective ignoring, or lack of awareness of the reality of the present - and the immediate past. I was particularly struck by the references to an incident with a missing Australian traveller - a real-life incident I remember very well.

ZERO HOUR is not all noir, not all description, not all dire and not all dark though. There are glimpses of kindness, of care and of generosity. There's touches of humour, there's character development and there's a central lone-wolf character who might not exactly wisecrack his way through the grime, but he certainly is a

dab hand at a bit of observational wryness. Despite the slow start to ZERO HOUR IN PHNOM PENH I found this book increasingly compelling as I went through. Definitely a series that I need to catch up with.

<http://www.austcrimefiction.org/revie...>

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## **Jack Laschenski says**

The Dark Side of Asia.

Vincent Calvino is an American expatriate private detective living in Bangkok. He is hired to find another expat in Cambodia.

Time is late 1980s. UN (no US) troops are still in Cambodia. Incompetent as usual.

Murder, betrayal, and the horror of a society totally destroyed by its own leaders.

A great novel. A study in human evil.

One of 16 Vincent Calvino novels by Moore.

This one is not available in the US - I got it directly from Thailand.

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