



Vanilla Ride

Joe R. Lansdale

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"There's no bullshit in a Joe Lansdale book. There's everything a good story needs, and nothing it doesn't. Joe pulls up the truck, says, 'Get in the back, we're going for a ride.' You know it might get a little scary and it might get a little crazy, but you get in, because you know in the end, it's going to be a fun ride." --Christopher Moore, *New York Times* Bestselling Author of *A Dirty Job* and *Fool*

In this Texas-sized thriller, Hap Collins and Leonard Pine—best friends, freelance troublemakers, and tough guys with good intentions—find themselves in the crosshairs of the Dixie Mafia.

Hap is an East Texas smart mouth with a weakness for southern women. Leonard is a gay, black veteran pining for a lost love. They're not the makings of your typical dynamic duo, but never underestimate the power of a shared affinity for stirring up trouble and causing mayhem. When an old friend asks Leonard to rescue his daughter from an abusive, no-good drug dealer, he gladly agrees and, of course, invites Hap along for the fun. Even though the dealer may be lowly, he *is* on the bottom rung of the Dixie Mafia, and when Hap and Leonard come calling, the Mafia feels a little payback is in order. Cars crash, shotguns blast, and people die, but Hap and Leonard come out on top. Unfortunately for them, now they're facing not only jail time but also the legendary—and lethal—Vanilla Ride, who is still out to claim the price on their heads. Full of twists and turns, gunfire and gaffes, this hilarious, rip-roaring novel will have readers turning the pages faster than a Texas tornado.

Vanilla Ride Details

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From Reader Review Vanilla Ride for online ebook

Kemper says

Hap and Leonard are back! As usual, no good deed goes unpunished when the guys try to help an old friend by getting his granddaughter loose from her drug dealing boyfriend.

This one starts with the best fight scene in a trailer since Uma Thurman and Daryl Hannah went at it in *Kill Bill 2*. After that Hap and Leonard find themselves in yet another bad situation where they'll now have to deal with the Dixie Mafia, the FBI, and a huge thug nicknamed the Big Guy. Oh, then there's the professional killer called Vanilla Ride that's more dangerous than all the rest put together.

It seemed like Lansdale had left Hap and Leonard behind with the depressing *Captain's Outrageous*, and then his movement towards books like *The Bottoms* and *A Fine Dark Line*, which were great but didn't have the same style I love in the H&L series. But the break seems to have inspired new highs in redneck obscenity, horrific violence and completely inappropriate humor. And I couldn't be happier about it. I'm hoping we don't have to wait another 8 or 9 years for the next one.

Tony says

22. VANILLA RIDE (A Hap and Leonard Novel). (2009). Joe R. Lansdale. ***1/2.

This was Lansdale's novel before "Devil Red," that I somehow missed. I missed the one before this, too, but that will soon be corrected. Hap (the white mensch with a conscience) and Leonard (the gay black with a heart of gold) are on the road again, this time doing a favor for their friend Marvin. The favor started out as a simple request: get his granddaughter back from the sadistic drug runner that she was living with. The problem was that the granddaughter, Gadget, didn't want to come back. She was convinced, however, when our heroes went out to the ramshackle trailer her boyfriend was living in – along with several of his buddies – and whipped them all into submission. In the process, Hap decided to dump all of the drugs he found in the trailer down the toilet. This was a mistake. The key members of the gang supplying the drugs to this dealer took notice and wanted their drugs (or the equivalent in money) back, and started sending goons around to mess with our deadly duo. Messing seemed to get turned around always, with our good guys coming out on top. What this led to was an escalation in the talent sent to kill Hap and Leonard, until finally they met up with Vanilla Ride. She (yes, she) was the primo assassin in the area, and managed to kill off most of Hap and Leonard's associates, and nearly take them out, too. It was a strange meeting, and one which played a big part in the "Devil Red" novel. This was another page-turner, full of wise cracks, humor, and non-stop violence. Recommended.

Craig Pittman says

What a weirdly enjoyable yet strangely plotted book this was. I've heard for years about Joe R. Lansdale's writing prowess and his comical series about Hap and Leonard, two East Texas roughnecks who are constantly getting into trouble, but this was the first of the books I've actually read. I was intrigued by the cover, too, which depicts a woman in bra and panties pointing a gun. I hasten to tell you that there is no such

scene or character in the book. It's strictly a come-on for suckers.

I read this book quickly, finishing it in only a couple of days, because most of it consists of dialogue and action scenes with just a dab of description here and there to set the mood. The ending left me wondering what had just happened, and how I'd gotten there. I'll probably read some more of the books, in part just to find out if this was an aberration.

The book is narrated by Hap, a white day-laborer who happens to be a crack shot. His best friend is Leonard, a black, gay military veteran with killer karate moves. They're both dedicated to protecting the innocent and knocking around the bad guys. Hap is also dedicated to his girlfriend Britt, an RN who is like the redneck version of the Manic Pixie Dream Girl -- she's got long red hair, short skirts, a penchant for violence and such a dirty mouth that at one point, as she's cussing out some bad guys while shooting at them with a shotgun, Hap admits, "even I was embarrassed."

The plot is set in motion by a friend, a retired cop named Marvin, who asks them to go beat up a drug dealer who's been beating up his granddaughter, and if possible liberate her from that scene. They do, in about the most violent way possible -- at one point a dog attacks Hap and he throws it out a window -- but that leads to complications because the drug dealer worked for the Dixie Mafia, which is now after the duo.

The primary pleasure of this book was the narration and dialogue. Hap and Leonard throw good-natured, X-rated insults at each other and at the bad guys, and Hap has a colorful way of explaining things. At one point he says Leonard hit a guy between the eyes "so hard I'm sure a distant relative in bad health in the old country crossed his eyes and died."

Before long Hap and Leonard are entangled not only with the Dixie Mafia but also the FBI and a local cop and a friendly but gigantic hit man named Tonto and a deadly old pal of theirs named Jim Bob. There's also a legendary assassin named "Vanilla Ride" that they have to watch out for, too.

Without giving too much away, let me say that their encounter with Vanilla Ride doesn't turn out the way any of them -- or this reader -- expected, which is both a good and a bad thing. Good in that I dislike predictable plots, bad in that it leaves a major loose end unresolved and that was dissatisfying. Honestly, after they bring Marvin's granddaughter back, NOTHING these guys do goes quite the way they plan, and in the end they walk away with their lives (and a little cash) but Hap is left wondering what became of his ideals and his innocence.

Finding the book doesn't end with a snappy insult, but rather with some melancholy self-examination, struck me as a highly original and risky choice. And that (well, plus the comedy) made me decide my next book will be the sequel. Then maybe I'll go back and start this series from the beginning.

Lexi Ander says

Don't let the cover of this book throw you. I did a search at my public library for "gay – fiction" and came across this title as an audio download. I have not heard of the author before and because the library had more than one book by him, I rented it, regardless of the picture on front (which I didn't get until the book was almost over).

For the first hour I laughed tears.

I did not know that this was the 7th in a series and I have already bought book one. BUT this can be read as a stand alone. You don't need the back history between Hap and Leonard to follow the story. I thought it was perfect.

Hap and Leonard are tough guys, “brothers”. Hap is a middle aged white hetero male who is living with the love of his life, Bret, in east Texas. Leonard is a gay black man who is on the outs with his lover, John. These two are definitely two peas in a pod. Ex-cop and friend, Martin, asks a favor of the two tough guys. Gadget, Martin's grand daughter is mixed up with a small time drug dealer who is using her for a punching bag. Would Hap and Leonard go get her and bring her home? It's a favor for a friend. It's simple enough, right?

Pissing off the Dixie Mafia, blackmailed by the FBI, hated by the Cops, car chases, gun fights, angry white woman with a shot gun, girl slap down, a dead alligator, an almost superman hit-man, and then there is the assassin, Vanilla Ride.

I loved this all the way through and look forward to start from the beginning.

Note: There is no sex or girly parts.

Kurt Reichenbaugh says

I haven't read a Hap and Leonard novel in a number of years, but have read all of the ones preceding Vanilla Ride, so I'm pretty familiar with the terrain these two characters roam. I'm a huge fan of Joe Lansdale's novels and stories and wouldn't hesitate to recommend any one of them to other readers. I would say with Vanilla Ride that newcomers to the series should start with the earlier novels before this one.

Hap and Leonard do a favor for a friend and wind up with the Dixie Mafia on their asses for their trouble. There are a number of shootouts with violent results, all of which our heroes manage to make it out alive from. A couple of times I was reminded of the scene in Pulp Fiction where Jules and Vincent survive a gunman bursting into that apartment shooting at them wildly and missing every time. But whatever, they're the heroes at this carnival so you know they're going to come out alive at the end.

Ultimately the Dixie Mafia is forced to send the legendary Vanilla Ride after them to finish the job none of their own gunsels could manage. It's something of a vengeance story, with some philosophical contemplation by Hap along the way.

I don't think it's the best one in the series, but that's purely a personal opinion. But that said, it's better than a lot of other adventure thrillers out there. It's nasty and impolite, and the banter between Hap and Leonard isn't suitable for polite company. But no one reads these books in Sunday School anyway.

Spencer says

Gonna say it's my second favorite of the Hap/Leonard adventures that I've read thus far, behind Rumble Tumble (although in after thought, I did rather enjoy the conclusion to Captains Outrageous, just felt the crude humor was a little more forced than usual in that one). Here, however, the opening tiffle between Hap

and Leonard and Tanedrue, a low-level drug dealer and his pals is one of the best choreographed fight sequences I've ever read. The additional shoot-outs that dot the book later on aren't too shabby, either. Mean, lean, and rapidly paced, it's a nice solid slab of red-necked pulp fiction.

zackxdig says

They get mixed up with the Dixie Mafia to rescue a friend's daughter. Only to wind up in the ruthless path of hit men and Vanilla Ride who takes out one of the scariest of them all.

Luca Masera says

Mhhh... a mio avviso la storia più sottotono di Hap e Leonard: sgangherato e rocambolesco come tutti gli altri romanzi dedicati a questa strana coppia di detective, ma tutt'altro che indimenticabile.

Dan Schwent says

It's been close to a decade since Joe Lansdale gave us another Hap and Leonard tale. Was it worth the wait? HELL YES! I gave it five stars, didn't I?

Hap and Leonard get talked into doing a favor for their friend Marvin. Marvin's granddaughter has been hanging with drug dealers and Hap and Leonard go to bring her back. Things go south for Hap and Leonard, as they always do, and soon the drug dealers are looking for payback. One shootout later and our boys are in the clink. The FBI offers them freedom in exchange for finding the son of a member of the Dixie Maffia and the three hundred thousand dollars he stole. That's when things really get bad...

Mrs. Lansdale's little boy hasn't lost a step. Hap and Leonard's banter is as fresh and dark as ever. The violence is stark and comes in heaping handfuls. While most of the antagonists seem to be there to take bullet holes, Vanilla Ride, the hitwoman the book is named after, is quite a character, a killer with a moral code. I wouldn't be surprised if Old Joe writes a solo adventure for her in the future. The crooked cops from No Enterprise should top anyone's scumbag list. Leonard Pine once again proves what a bad mother he is.

To sum up, if you're a fan of Hap and Leonard, snap this one up. It's the best one since the third or fourth book.

Lynn says

Definitely my favorite Hap and Leonard book so far. OK, sadly there was no rabid squirrel in this one.....but the shooting, fighting and one-liners were nonstop. Excellent!

Mike says

"Vanilla Ride" by Joe Lansdale is the seventh in the "Hap and Leonard" series of books. If you're a fan of this series of books or the TV show it has inspired (the two are not usually that similar), you will be pretty familiar with the goings-on here.

By the seventh book, Lansdale has settled into a comfortable pattern. The pattern is as follows: a small problem, which Hap and Leonard solve in their East Texas "boots to asses" kind of way, becomes a much larger problem because of unforeseen...well, unforeseen by them...complications. People start dying, if they haven't already. The womenfolk either strap on guns or leave town. Reinforcements from the supporting cast may be called in. Manly banter is sprinkled throughout, touching upon both Leonard's confident homosexuality and Hap's "good ol' boy with a dash of liberal hippie" mentality. A change of scenery is often called for. Sometimes Hap and Leonard are the hunters, but mostly they are the hunted--much to the regret of those hunting. There is almost always a very large henchman who proves difficult to kill. There are multiple large, nasty fist/gun fights with a significant body count. And it all ends with our heroes being banged-up, shot-up, (occasionally blown-up) and going home to their tumbledown lives a little wiser and a lot sadder. Then they're off to lick their wounds before the plot of the next book--yet another bloody carnival ride--rolls into town.

Reading most of this series as I have, back-to-back, over the last few weeks has given me the above insights. I will say the books are trending towards getting better. Since "Savage Season," (the first book in the series) which was lousy, none of the Hap and Leonard books have been outright "bad." That being said, some books in the Hap and Leonard series are (way) better than others.

I feel "Vanilla Ride" is one of the good ones. What starts out as a back-asswards, butt-kicking errand of mercy for their "spent years in a coma" former police detective friend becomes a full-blown confrontation with the Dixie Mafia...whom, it seems, don't like to be called the Dixie Mafia. Who knew? Along the way, there are idiot drug dealers, crooked cops, abusive FBI agents, shady informants, that massive henchman (straight out of WWE central casting), and so on. The "Vanilla Ride" of the title is a sexy blonde mid-20s female hit-person/ninja that the Dixie Mafia uses as a nuclear option. Despite her name (or nom du crime) being the title of the book, she's not in most of it.

There's a lot of distinction-making between "bad guys" and "worse guys" here. The Dixie Mafia are the "worse" guys. Which they usually are.

Bottom line, if you like the Hap and Leonard series, this is a good entry in that series. I'm not sure it's the best place to jump in if you're new to the series or haven't seen the TV show. Lansdale makes new readers comfortable (and veteran readers want to skim some sections) by re-hashing a lot of greatest hits and personal motivations for the characters. If "more of the same" is what you want, "Vanilla Ride" is a good read.

Ubik 2.0 says

Rimpatriata.

Così anche la serie Hap&Leo sembra avere esaurito la sua parabola creativa, sebbene Lansdale abbia deciso di tirarla fuori dalla naftalina in questo settimo episodio, dopo otto anni di interruzione dal precedente: ma non c'è nessun particolare rilevante, nessuna scena, nessun personaggio di spicco che distingua la storia di "Sotto un cielo cremisi" dalle altre e giustifichi la riesumazione della celebre e simpatica coppia.

Ce ne faremo una ragione: lo stesso autore, tanto per non smentire la sua prolificità, si è già indirizzato verso molteplici direzioni narrative diverse, anche se non disdegna di tanto in tanto di tornare a fare un salto dagli amici per una doverosa rimpatriata come questa.

Steve Vernon says

I envy my wife. She has the ability to taste a meal and tell you what ingredients went into it. I mean her tongue wears a Sherlock Holmes deerstalker hat and most likely smokes a meerschaum pipe.

(where is my spellcheck when I really need it the most?)

Which brings me to this book.

I had to stop for a minute before deciding which Goodreads "shelf" I was going to file this book under.

The book's flavor was a little hard to place.

Lansdale's books are usually like that.

Completely unclassifiable.

Which is a good thing.

The book wasn't a mystery. It wasn't quite an adventure, although that is where I end up filing it. Perhaps, in hindsight, I should have filed it under "fun".

Vanilla Ride is a fun fast gallop through backwoods bare knuckle and bullet territory. Lansdale's dialogue, as usual, is spot on. His sense of storytelling is unmatched. If you are a Hap and Leonard fan you definitely will not be disappointed.

I felt the ending seemed a little tacked-on for my liking. In fact, the whole "Vanilla Ride" character seemed a little tacked-on and "after-thoughtish". I didn't get any kind of a sense of her as a character. I kind of wish he had stuck with the whole Dixie Mafia scenario and kept his battle centred around them. Vanilla Ride, as a character and a piece in this story, felt more like she was nothing but a come-on for another book.

Still, that is a damn small quibble. I don't regret picking up this book. I don't want my money back. I enjoyed the ride - the ending seemed just a little vanilla to me.

Maybe next time throw in a little paprika?

I have now officially come to the end of my metaphor, left it beaten to death in a roadside ditch, somewhat mangled and moaning for it's momma.

yours in storytelling

Paul Pessolano says

This is the first novel I have read by Joe R. Lansdale and after reading all the awards he has won I wonder why it has taken me so long. He has received the British Fantasy Award, the American Mystery Award, the Edgar Award, the Grinzane Cavour Prize for Literature, and seven Bram Stoker Awards.

"Vanill Ride" is the seventh book in the Hap and Leonard series. If you familiar with the novels of Tim Dorsey, you will find that Hap and Leonard are a lot like Serge A. Storm and Coleman.

Hap and Leonard are best friends, and seem to invite trouble wherever they go. Unlike Serge and Coleman, they are street fighters and are not strangers to killing. They, however, perform their deeds with good intentions.

Hap and Leonard are asked by a friend to rescue his granddaughter from a drug dealer and find themselves in a fierce fight for their lives. When the young lady is rescued they find that they are facing serious charges and possible jail time. However, they are asked by the FBI to help out on a case that involves the "Dixie Mafia".

A Mafia leader has agreed to give the FBI much needed information if they can find his son who has run away with his girlfriend and \$300,000 dollars of the Mafia's money. Hap and Leonard agree to find them and the money if the charges are dropped against them.

The search is on and Hap and Leonard receive help from "Tonto" and "Bob", who add to the fun and excitement of the book. They also find themselves being pursued by the "Dixie Mafia", but also by "Vanilla Ride" who might be the most formidable foe they have ever faced.

This is really a fun and enjoyable read that never ceases to entertain the reader. In all the murder and mayhem in the book, there are also some great give and takes provided by both Hap and Leonard that gives the book its humor. A note of caution in that the book can be irreverent at times, and does contain some strong language.

Brian says

Love detective noir particularly from Deep South. Joe Lonsdale is a master at moving a story at pace, at the same time sucking you right into that beckoning vortex. Dialogue is so good at times that you just stop, reread and wonder. Humour is amazing.

Would award 4.5 stars if I could. Leonard & Hap are back!
