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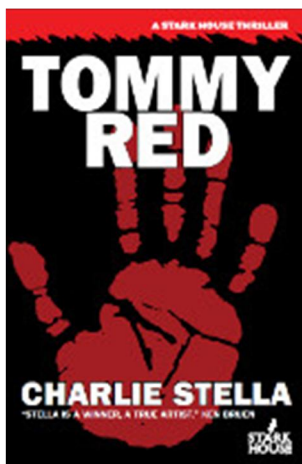
2016

April is Charlie Stella month, and the reviews are already starting to come in on *Tommy Red*, Stella's first new novel in four years. Don Kirkendall at the *Men Reading Books* blog, had this to say: "Holy crap. I've said it before and I'll say it again. Why the hell isn't Stella on every mystery lover's must-read list... This taut, tightly presented story of misplaced loyalties and retribution is nicely tied up in a fast-paced tale that, once you get used to the rhythm of the dialogue, just begs you to turn the next page."

These comments were mirrored by Bill Crider's review in *Pop Culture Magazine*: "If you miss Elmore Leonard, give Charlie Stella's *Tommy Red* a look. It has dumb bad guys, bad good guys, great dialogue, humor, and a plot that'll have you guessing about who's going to survive... Good stuff and highly recommended."

Tommy "Red" Dalton is a freelance Irish hit man. He takes on a job for the Mob, but unfortunately, the Mob boss orders a clean-up afterward that includes Tommy Red. The clean-up is botched, and now Tommy is out for revenge. It's to Stella's credit that he takes such an unlikely character and gets us to care about him.

For Stella, it's all about character and dialog. *Tommy Red* is another brilliant example of what Stella does best: create a plethora of carefully delineated characters, then bounce them off each other and watch the sparks fly. Because the Mob is only one of Tommy's problems. His ex-wife has got it in for him and tells their oldest daughter what dad does for a living. So Tommy's got it coming at him every which way, both professionally and personally.



Stark House is proud to present *Tommy Red* by Charlie Stella as our April book, and suggests you contact your local bookstore immediately to reserve your copy today.

Charlie Stella

Tommy Red

978-1-933586-96-0

\$15.95

April needs nothing more than *Tommy Red*, so let's talk about May, when we have two books to offer our Crime Club members. The main release for the month is *Scratch a Thief/House of Evil* by John Trinian, pen name for the author also known as Zekial Marko. Marko was the pulpster of the Beats, a friend of Jack Kerouac and Richard Brautigan, and a great tale spinner to any and all that he met.

Ki Longfellow knew him as Marko, and she provides a wildly impressionistic essay on their days together in the San Francisco area. In fact, she was the basis for the female protagonist in *House of Evil*, not the horror book it might appear by its title, but a send-up of the horror B-film, which Marko knew all too well. He'd been involved in a few local films himself.

Scratch a Thief was originally published by Ace Books in 1961. Director Ralph Nelson turned it into a film with Alain Delon and Ann-Margret and Marko wrote the screenplay. Some of the stories behind that filming are to be found in Longfellow's introduction. The book itself is a noir masterpiece of crime fiction, the story of a reformed thief who finds



himself caught between a revengeful cop and his criminal brother's gang, forced into one more job. The writing is as lean as its gets as the story takes us around the back alleys and warehouse districts of San Francisco. Whether you call him Marko or Trinian, this is definitely "John Trinian" at his best.

John Trinian
Scratch a Thief / House of Evil
978-1-933586-99-1
\$20.95

Paired with these 1960s treasures is the next mass market volume from Black Gat Books: the exquisite satire, *The Girl on the Best Seller List* by Vin Packer. As Trinian plays with the tropes of the B-film, so does Packer with salacious bestsellerdom. Just as Grace Metalious created her own small town scandal in *Peyton Place* by exposing the secrets of the people around her, so too does Gloria Whealdon reveal all the foibles of her friends and neighbors in her thinly-veiled tell-all called *Population 12,360*. Her friends are savaged. Even her own husband is lampooned.

But, of course, with Vin Packer, there is always a twist. Gloria's friends all had a reason to hate her—but only one had a reason to kill her. The secret at the heart of the novel is what makes Packer's book such a zinger.

Packer is, of course, Marijane Meaker, perhaps better known today as M. E. Kerr, author of many classic young adult novels such as *Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack* and the Fell Trilogy. *The Girl on the Best Seller List* is one of 19 “Vin Packer” novels she wrote between 1952 and 1969, primarily for Gold Medal Books, that offered wicked social satires in the same vein as Patricia Highsmith. Prologue Books made this novel available as part of their ebook program a few years ago, but Stark House is proud to finally bring this book back in paperback for the first time in 56 years.

It’s a welcome addition to our collectible Black Gat line—this is #7—that recreates the format of the 4.25” x 7” paperback of the past. It’s been fun putting this list together, and we look forward to #8 in August, when we re-introduce an early Orrie Hitt novel. More on that later.



Vin Packer

The Girl on the Best Seller List

978-1-933586-98-4

\$9.99

In the meantime, we are surprised that the current bestseller from Stark House Press is our new edition of *No Orchids for Miss Blandish/Twelve Chinamen and a Woman* by James Hadley Chase. Who knew that vintage gangster fiction would be in such demand? You should be happy to know that more Chase is on the way.

And if by now it seems we have jumped the gun, so to speak, in presenting both April and May titles together in one newsletter, well, so be it. April is late, and May is early. Honestly, we couldn’t wait to let you know what we have planned, and we hope you enjoy the continued variety we bring you, both new and old, as we continue to “Bring Back the Mystery.”

—Greg Shepard, publisher
Stark House Press

