



The Hum Bug

Harold Schechter

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Premier mystery author Harold Schechter revisits the chilling world of NEVERMORE in this novel of historical suspense, the second in his critically acclaimed series starring Edgar Allen Poe. It's the spring of 1844, and Edgar Allan Poe and his young wife, Sissy, have moved to the publishing centre of America, New York City. When P.T. Barnum, the 'Prince of Humbugs', advertises a display of Davy Crockett's authentic belongings, Poe is determined to reveal the man as a fraud. He knows for a fact that he himself owns at least one of the items Barnum claims to possess. Poe and Barnum are drawn together over the controversy, and Barnum appreciates the publicity Poe's expose provides his show. But when his emporium is linked to a brutal murder that imitates a display in Barnum's hall of true crimes, Barnum enlists Poe's help in discovering the killer before the bad publicity ruins his business. Sissy believes it is the ghost of the original murderer who has returned to seek revenge, as he promised on the gallows. Poe thinks there's much more to the case, and he's determined to solve it.

The Hum Bug Details

Date : Published October 29th 2002 by Pocket Books (first published 2001)

ISBN : 9780671041168

Author : Harold Schechter

Format : Paperback 512 pages

Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Historical, Historical Fiction, Historical Mystery, Horror

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From Reader Review The Hum Bug for online ebook

Megan says

This probably doesn't deserve a full four stars. But it was just so much fun.

Lois says

It was better than ok, but I didn't love it. I like long books, but thought this one was about 100 pages too long. If it were tightened up a bit, and maybe didn't go into quite as much detail at every turn about PT Barnum's collection of oddities, etc., in his museum, it might have held my interest more. I am a longtime fan of Poe, but the references to his dear little "wifey" began to annoy me, especially once I was struggling to get to the end. If Barnum could have referred to Poe occasionally as something other than "Poe, m'boy", it might have helped, too.

I did like the wrap-up at the end, with some twists to it, but it just seemed a long time coming. At first I thought I might look into the author's other book with Poe ("Nevermore"), but I probably will let that pass.

Chazzi says

I took my time with this. Part to enjoy the atmosphere and era and part as at times the characters seem a bit verbose. I guess it is the Victorian style and this is set in the Victorian era...but...

This is the second book in a series involving Edgar Allan Poe in a detective role. Called to act in this part by P. T. Barnum, in an effort to solve the recent murder of young, single lady.

The murder is similar to one done earlier. Barnum's interest is due to the fact that he has set up an exhibit of wax figures depicting the murder scene in his American Museum. A local paper is claiming that the exhibit had influence on the murderer. Barnum wants to prove the paper is wrong.

Barnum feels Poe is the only one who can solve this grisly murder. Poe is well known for his eerie and strange tales, and has recently become notorious having solved the "Nevermore Murders.

Taking place in New York City, the investigation turns up some shadowy background on a number of involved people, and connections between these very unlikely folk. The victim lives quite well in a very expensively furnished apartment, has an expensive wardrobe, but there is no obvious means of income. Who is paying for it all? She comes from a poor background.

Another interesting character is Morris Vanderhorn. His physical appearance is on the bizarre side because his face appears to be split down the middle with one side disfigured and the other being perfectly normal. Aside from this, he has married well, made a great income and is active in the high social circles. A strange fact is that his business associates are from the lower levels of society. There also appears to be a connection

between the victim and Vanderhorn.

There are also the freaks that work and perform at Barnum's museum. Strange and bizarre looking but maybe a little more normal than some of Vanderhorn's cronies. Also Poe's wife, "Sissy" and her mother, Muddy, are in the story.

It isn't a short read, but it is a good read. I will now have to find the others in the series. Luckily it isn't a long series.

Jann Barber says

I will read Schechter's other Poe book "Nevermore" at a future date. I should have read it first, but didn't realize this was a second Poe mystery. Still, it stands alone quite well.

Edgar Allan Poe confronts PT Barnum over the David Crockett items on display in Barnum's American Museum. Barnum is impressed with Poe's skills in logical thinking, and comes to Poe for help when the victim of a murder is found in the same condition as one of the wax displays in Barnum's museum.

I enjoyed the storyline, the descriptions, and the character development. For some reason, however, I found it bothersome that the author wrote as he believed Poe spoke. I don't know why this bothered me, since the story was told from Poe's point of view.

I would recommend this if you enjoy mysteries with some history sprinkled in. Poe as a detective is also an interesting premise.

Daniel says

I was in Hawaii when I picked up this book. I had finished my first one (Janice Dickinson) and needed another. When I first started reading the book I almost gave up. The story is about Edgar Allan Poe and PT Barnum. The writing is very old world, but once you get past that you feel as though you are back in New York at the turn of the century.

A murder takes place and Poe and Barnum team up to solve the murder along with many colorful characters from his American museum.

There are lots of twists and turns and just when you think you've solved the mystery you find out you were wrong. But do Poe and Barnum ever catch the killer? The fantastic ending will leave you at the edge of your seat.

Myersorchard says

this book just seemed to take forever to get thru. i was very disappointed and not sure i want to read anymore. the first book was very funny. this one had no humor.

Martin says

I like the time period and even the prose, however the author lost control of the plot around two thirds of the way through the book. I was difficult to finish because he seemed at a loss as to how to finish the book. In the end 250 pages would have sufficed and it would not been a tiring read. Great start, poor finish.

Tim Giron says

Just as good as the first book in the series. I have always found P. T. Barnum to be a fascinating historical figure and Schechter's portrayal of his mannerisms makes for a fun read.

Undine says

If a book with this many gruesome deaths can be called "charming," well, this book is. It's a nice blend of humor and murder mystery, and Schechter's depiction of Poe is a lot of fun to read. I hope the author continues this series.

Miriam says

Murders of young women as gruesome and Jack the Ripper's crimes, headless and hands-less, Eddy Poe and P. T. Barnum investigate. Poe solves the crimes and writes "The Raven."

Karyl says

Unfortunately, I didn't care for this novel as much as I did the first book in this series, *Nevermore*, even though the writing, as Edgar Allan Poe, was much less stilted than it had been in the first novel. This one read much more naturally. My issue is that it's too much like the first, with Poe and his verbosity balanced by a loud, flamboyant character. In *Nevermore*, it was Davy Crockett who was Poe's counterpoint; in this novel, we have P.T. Barnum. Had Schechter tried a new formula for this second book, I would have enjoyed it more.

I admit that I was surprised by the whodunit. It was rather clear to me that Barnum and Poe were chasing dead ends, but I couldn't figure out who was the actual killer. I suppose if I had been thinking about it more, it would have been obvious, but I was already tired of the book by the time I was a third of the way through it. The book could have been tightened up and shortened by quite a bit, and it would have benefited greatly by it.

Jennifer says

I'm so glad I read this. I read Nevermore first--Schechter's writing has really improved since the first book, where he seemed to be almost parodying both EA Poe and Davy Crockett. This book read much more naturally.

For a Poe geek, history nerd, and someone who has read hundreds of murder mysteries, this book that brings them all together is just about perfect.

Edward Cieslak says

Overall, this book was a good read. I never read the first edition in the series, but I was impressed with Schachter's sense of storytelling. Some details regarding Barnum's museum were a bit long-winded, but the book's climactic ending was worth the read. If you like historical fiction, you would enjoy this novel.

Vanessa says

Entertaining. I've read and enjoyed all the other books in the series. This one is fun since it primarily takes place in P.T. Barnum's museum and discusses many of the oddities found there.

Tony Entrekin says

Actually more of a 3 1/2. The novel delivers a convincing portrayal of Poe, PT Barnum, and Poe's marriage to Virginia Clemm. The historical detail and scene-setting are also well-drawn. The narrative suffers from a padded middle with long passages that contribute little, if any, to the story, and the inclusion of a fantastical element in Barnum's six-foot beetle mars the realism of the story. However, the murder, its investigation, and eventual solution are intriguing and gripping. Schechter's first Poe mystery, Nevermore, was a bit better than this present volume, but this is a good read, given a little effort.
