



The Exploding Detective

John Swartzwelder

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One of a series of comedy science fiction novels featuring slow-witted detective Frank Burly. By John Swartzwelder, the author of "The Time Machine Did It", "Double Wonderful", "How I Conquered Your Planet", and 59 episodes of The Simpsons.

The Exploding Detective Details

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From Reader Review The Exploding Detective for online ebook

Erik Erickson says

Let me start with this: I finished this book in three days.

The fact that I even finished it at all means it must be interesting. Doing it in three days not only confirms that but means that it's exceptional.

This book is hilarious. I laughed out loud an average of 3 times per chapter. I didn't count but I did highlight the funniest passages. I think that happened about every other page or so.

Can't wait for the next one (adding to Amazon now...).

Andrea says

Hilarious! I don't give 5 stars... but I give this 5 stars. Plenty of "lol" moments and the tale this less than astute, but likable and ridiculous detective weaves will leave you laugh/crying and wondering how it suddenly ended up "here." It's also short. So do yourself a favor and pick something that makes you laugh.

Glenn Proven says

This is the 2nd time I read it. I'm a HUGE Simpson's fan but after my first read, I felt, this was too "Homer Simpson-ish". After this read (it's only 150 pages so it's not a major time investment), I found some added context and enjoyed it thoroughly. Not that I hated it the first time, just a bit too simple. Maybe I am too familiar with Mr. Swartzwelder's work.

One thick detective who finds time travel (and exploding) monotonous gives us jokes aplenty. There is minor sci-fi as Frank Burly, our hero, tries to use a pimped up jet pack in an effort to be the "Flying Detective" to drum up business, but is confused with a superhero ergo adopting a supervillain. But it is mostly a humorous story.

Swartzwelder's writing style is giving us the jokes through word play and a dense dick (using a little film noir vocabulary) who bucks trends.

This is one in a series of Frank Burly books, but you're not missing anything if you make this your first. Will never win the Pulitzer (unless someone holds a gun to Mr. Pulitzer's head), but a good fun trip if you want a humorous quick read as a diversion.

Carolina says

Frank Burly is but a dimwitted, loveable lucky bastard, and his adventure is worth checking out. A quick

read, though the first half I had to push through a bit but the second I could definitely see the Simpsonsque type of dialogue Swartzwelder was well-known for writing (I could envision Homer in and out of the story, which I thought was great). This is the first of his books I've read so I can't really compare it to the others but I mean it is worth a read. Is it one of my favorites? No. Would I probably want to read this again at some point in time. Yes. Definitely a unique story.

Brandon says

For whatever reason, I assumed this was the first book in the Frank Burly series and it's not. However, based on the way it's written, I doubt I really need to read any of these in order. There was exactly one reference in the entire book to something else that happened earlier in the series (to The Time Machine Did It, I guess), but it wasn't jarring and didn't take me out of this story. That's partly because the story is secondary to the non-sequiturs and humor since it's a spoof of detective novels. The absurdity and random nature of the story really works. More than anything, I'd like to read the other novels in the series because it's light easy reading.

Kevin says

There's a bit of sameness to these novels. Similar pace and patter and type of humor. But it's still damn funny.

Circa Girl says

Swartzwelder's idiotic detective does it again and actually manages to cause and outlive the end of the world. Not every moment in the first half was laugh out loud funny but the second half where Burly has to experience a future that is a blatant parody of 1984-esque cliches kept me chuckling in delight.

I loved that in each book in the series, at the end, Burly lazily shrugs off the chaos and societal degradation he has caused. Perhaps there is a formula to the stupidity of Burly and the shenanigans he continually finds himself in that throw the world into a tailspin, but it's a formula I absolutely love.

Pete says

from the writer that brought you over 59 episodes of the Simpsons. this is funny funny stuff.

Ak says

liked it better than time machine. he's starting to grow on me. reading these books feels more like staying in for a night with a hilarious friend than like a literary experience. some great quotables in this one. "Finally he began bouncing grimly toward the fortress on a pogo stick." As my friend James once noted about Dave

Barry, modifier specificity can make all the difference in humor. Grimly!

Daniel Pratt says

John Swartzwelder is not just a famously elusive writer responsible for writing 59 episodes of The Simpsons. He is also the galactic centre for a lot of the joke and character stylings that The Simpsons are most lauded for originating. So much so that even Simpsons (of all eras; Conan is a huge fan and massively influenced by him) writers will often proudly describe gags, scenarios, or a character's actions as Swartzweldian.

I don't want to spoil the journey that can be had looking into the history of why he is important, iconic, and notably and hilariously elusive so I'll leave that to those interested.

This is my first time finishing one of his books but it seems to be the same across the board, that they are as good as getting 3-4 episodes worth of (golden-era, if that's how you want to think of it) Simpsons writing about characters and places nothing to do with the Simpsonverse.

The books have more adult humour in them, in so far as language, references, and pretty much having the gore of Itchy and Scratch or a Treehouse of Horror episode but for reals. However, taking The Simpsons as a whole, by comparison it's not by much. If your interests stretch as far and you can imagine a cross between Swartzwelder-style Simpsons and Futurama with a focus on things like detectives, time travel, and main characters who are incredibly cleverly written idiots, you've got it.

They're a joy to read; the joke rate is dense enough to be an exhausting thrill and the writing style is such that you will likely enjoy this 140-page book read at a much slower rate than you'd expect, taking it in like savoured poetry or Shakespearean dialogue rather than a speed-read thriller.

If you get a hold of one of the books and want more, John Swartzwelder often sells signed copies of newly released books on eBay for not much more than if you bought it unsigned elsewhere which I think is a worthwhile piece of TV / ridiculous writing history.

Oh, and the stories are ridiculous and the characters are quite insane.

Downward says

like swartzwelder's other books, the narrative is just an engine for jokes. in this one detective frank burly buys an old nazi jetpack and uses it to become the flying detective, a gimmick he uses to bring in more business. except he pretty much always crashes so he ends up being the exploding detective. swartzwelder is a pallet cleanser for me; it's nonemotional quick witted, low brow, high functioning, juvenile humor. every line is a joke and every joke is an absurdity. it's a brother to jack handy and the Simpsons (for which swartzwelder was a very prolific writer).

Jaime Vanhoose Steele says

At first I was confused at what was going on, but once you get the groove of the book you will be laughing

out loud!

Daniel says

John Swartzwelder, notoriously reclusive Simpsons scribe, is known for penning some of that show's funniest and most culturally pointed episodes. He is capable of being absurd without succumbing to plot-driven idiocy and able to nestle high-brow-rising humor next to the goofiest of puns without skipping a beat. Few of the show's current writers can boast his kind of output, whether you're measuring it by episode or by how many gags he can fit into any given minute.

His books (four so far) don't try to follow coherency as much as his work on The Simpsons. Instead, he uses the medium as a forum for his stream-of-consciousness wise-cracking. Mass by volume, these slim tomes have the same silly density as his episodes, even if they sprawl ten times as much. For the most part, Swartzwelder sticks to the same basic formula that made his shows a success: a fat and idiotic central character gets into all manner of monkey-shines and comes out mostly unchanged. Instead of Homer, though, our main man is called Frank Burly.

THE TIME MACHINE DID IT

Frank Burly introduces us to his unlikely career as a private eye. Although his primary talents are screwing things up and getting beaten on a regular basis, he ends up with a fairly important case. A bum claims that he used to be a millionaire, but criminals with a time machine retroactively stole his wealth. Burly's in over his head (heck, this guy gets in over his head just trying to tie his shoes), but that doesn't stop him from barreling headfirst into the mystery and subsequently making it messier and harder to solve. Quickly written, hastily plotted, and genuinely funny, this is one of the few books I've ever read that's gotten me to laugh out-loud, and on a regular basis. 5 Stars. FAVORITE LINE: Frank Burly, on his imprisonment and torture by the criminals -- "I held up under all this pretty well. I was sleeping like a baby -- waking up every three hours screaming and crapping my pants."

DOUBLE WONDERFUL

Swartzwelder makes a mistake. Instead of one central character with the brains of a dusty cactus, he creates an entire town of them. The citizens of the Wild West town of Slackjaw are having economic troubles. Part of their problem is that the "wild" in their western town is missing; it's a pretty boring place, plus it exists in the shadows of the world-renowned Double Wonderful ranch, run by a wealthy couple who are so perfect, God owes them favors. They try desperately to bring fame and/or notoriety to their little corner of the world, but most of their ideas are pretty lame (encourage bandits to rob them, hang the mayor, etc.). They eventually get their wish, and it's mildly amusing, but the scattered scope of the story's lunacy and its slapdash conclusion are pretty harried. You won't laugh as much as you'll roll your eyes. Not bad; not great. Notable mainly because the story's central theme (the horrifying price of fame) gives you some real clues as to why Mr. Swartzwelder himself so adamantly chooses to stay out of the spotlight. 3 Stars. MOST SELF-REFERENTIAL LINE: "...Buntline said that short books were the best selling kind ... That's what the reading public wanted in a book these days, he said. They wanted to get as close as possible to not reading at all."

HOW I CONQUERED YOUR PLANET

Swartzwelder, catching on, brings Frank Burly back to the fore. He's still a private detective, he's still pretty bad at it, and he's still stumbling backwards into strange cases (and sometimes plate glass windows). This time the case may have something to do with Martians. Or maybe it's Neptunians. They're both very similar,

as far as aliens look, although it's harder to pronounce the word "Neptunians." While going about his daily routine of getting in the way of things, Frank ends up alienating (nyuk, nyuk) all sorts of planetary species. And, of course, he conquers your planet. Not as consistent as "Time Machine," but much sharper than "Double Wonderful." 4 Stars. FAVORITE LINE: Frank Burly, on his new alien secretary -- "...I discovered that I had hired a surprisingly dedicated secretary, who listened in on my phone calls, patted down my visitors, looked through my desk for me each morning before I got in, even appeared in my dreams taking notes."

THE EXPLODING DETECTIVE

Frank Burly's back, this time augmenting his act with a mostly-malfunctioning jetpack. His inability to steer is overshadowed, however, by his ability to withstand multiple explosive collisions, and he becomes something of a superhero. The new title doesn't fit him so well, because it requires that he get up before noon and commit all kinds of acts, most of them selfless and painful. He ends up getting involved in a battle against a super villain, a washed up James Bond type, and another time machine. Although this book is as funny as the previous, it makes it obvious that, while Burly's adventures through time and space are all well and good, Swartzwelder might do well to actually keep his gags confined to the realm of detective work. I doubt it took the man longer than a couple of days to write any of these books, but this is the first time I felt it really showed. 4 Stars. FAVORITE LINE: Frank Burly has infiltrated a Secret Club for Super Villains, searching for his would-be assassin -- "I continued around the room ... making it sound like I was a new member who was just making conversation. "Have you been trying to kill me?" I would ask, casually. "I'm just curious. Or we could talk about the weather, if you like. The weather's been trying to kill me too."

Brian says

John doesn't write to the tastes of the literary world. He writes for himself. He writes about time machines and fist fights and carnies and aliens and gangsters and explosions. If you don't like these things, then head right over to the David Sedaris aisle. -

<http://techland.time.com/2008/04/12/s...>

I loved that review, but couldn't get into the book itself.

Christabel Seneque says

This was my introduction to the Frank Burly series, and while he is indeed a detective it's not in any way a detective novel--instead it's a very silly romp through such science fiction fare as robots, cloning, time travel, superheroes and their nemesii (not sure of the plural there), and a lot of jetpack love. While the antihero's definitely unlikable, the one-liners come thick and fast and there are some very funny moments. A pile of fun.
