



## The Iron Duke

*L. Ron Hubbard , Michael Yurchak (Reading)*

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**He's a lady's man, a man's man and a wanted man, on the run in 1930s Europe....**

Meet Blacky Lee, ruggedly handsome with a quick wit and a roguish charm. Think Clark Gable with larceny in his heart and a price on his head. A price put there by the German Gestapo. But Blacky's always got an angle, and this time it's as audacious as they come. He'll hide in plain sight, impersonating the crowned head of a Balkan kingdom. He'll become The Iron Duke.

Can he pull it off? Win the love of a country...and of a beautiful woman? All Blacky has to do is risk everything and, for once in his life, find a way to do the right thing. Get in on the deception as the audio version of The Iron Duke puts you in the middle of the royal con game. *"Filled with realistic sound effects...and a classic film noir atmosphere, this inspired and well-polished entertainment will immerse listeners."* —Publishers Weekly

**Hubbard and Gable were fast friends and fellow adventurers. While Hubbard was writing for Columbia Pictures in 1937, the studio often called upon him to doctor scripts for Gable—giving him a unique knowledge of the man and inspiration for characters like Blacky Lee.**

\*An AudioFile Award Winner

## The Iron Duke Details

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Author : L. Ron Hubbard , Michael Yurchak (Reading)

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## **From Reader Review The Iron Duke for online ebook**

### **Rob Slaven says**

As usual, I received this book for free in a LibraryThing giveaway. It's also worth noting that I'm not typically a fan of the audio book genre so when this one showed up at my doorstep I was not disappointed but I was a bit out of my usual familiar literary format.

On the positive side, the whole thing is professionally and crisply presented. Rather than being a mere narration of the text of the novel, the presentation features half a dozen or more voice actors, sound effects and musical score. It's really more of a radio play than an audio book. Those nostalgic for the golden days of radio may get their fix here.

On the negative side, the story was nothing special. This is merely pulp which has as its primary draw the fact that there's so much of it rather than any thought-provoking novelty. Hubbards story is rather predictable and cliché but for those who are fans of the pulp genre, that's entirely to be expected. Also, some of the voice characterizations were entirely over the top, but again, that's in line with the radio dramatization tradition. I just wouldn't want to be buttonholed by some of these gents at a party.

In summary, a well appointed vocal adaptation of a less than stellar work of writing. There's no great depth to be plumbed here for readers but I suspect that's what most fans are looking for so have at it with gusto.

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### **EZRead eBookstore says**

Eternally brief and pulpy, L. Ron Hubbard's "The Iron Duke" is a brazen romp through pre-WWII Europe, complete with radical communists, looming Nazis, and drunk monarchists. Blacky Lee, the sneaky little liar, takes refuge in Aldoria via a handy moustache and prince impersonation. Drama, romance, and ridiculousness ensue. So how does "The Iron Duke" fare against other WWII pulp fiction and work I've reviewed by L. Ron Hubbard? Read on!

At somewhere around fifty pages, "The Iron Duke" is formatted in the classic pulpy way. We are dropped into the action, exchange quick handshakes with the characters, and get cozy as everyone is injured. Always the contrarian, I actually would have liked to see this story longer. There is simply too much goodness in a story about royalty impersonation and a con artist that perpetually calls his partner "sweetheart". Blacky is a studly dudly, but he also has so many winning quotes, like: "remember, don't be careless with good liquor." I won't, Blacky! This hero was part Frank Abagnale Jr. from "Catch Me if You Can", part Tom Sawyer...it all makes sense. And for the ladies, we even have a bit of romance between Blacky and Countess Zita; the marriage blackmail is an especially touching moment. Sniffle.

"The Iron Duke" might be trapped endlessly a 50-page jail, but I like to think that a book starring a hunkosaurus such as Blacky could be easily stretched into a 200 page novel. It could also make a pretty successful two hour movie, in my opinion. In fact, just send me a check for the idea, I've been wanting one of those "3D" TVs recently. What works well for pulp fiction, and especially works by L. Ron Hubbard, is the combo of hilarity, adventure, inappropriately timed romances, one liners, and gunfire that make standard, but always surprising, pulp fiction fare. The royalty mix-ups just make "The Iron Duke" that much classier.

Don't you think I look a little like a female Prince Charles...? Just a thought.

EZ Read Staffer Jenifer

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### **Andrew says**

I don't generally read this kind of thing, but it was given away free by a very nice lady on the L. Ron Hubbard stand at the London Book Fair earlier this year. I don't like to write anything off without having read it first, so I thought I'd give it a try.

The writing was not bad, and the plot moved along quickly, with lots of twists and turns. The only problem was that the characters did not feel like human beings. And that, for me, is a big problem. There was a hero, a dame, a sidekick and a villain, and at no point did they threaten to break out of those narrowly-defined roles and acquire the complexities of real, living people. At no point was there any doubt that the hero would coolly win every battle, the dame would fall for the hero, the sidekick would provide occasional comic relief, and the villain would curse as his dastardly plots were foiled.

If you like a good, exciting plot with lots of action, this is the book for you. If you are interested in character, and want to read books that make you think about the world slightly differently, it's probably best to look elsewhere.

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### **Lu Patterson says**

As thrilled as I was to be able to read and review a book, this exact kind of book written over 50 years ago worried me a little for the language that would be used. As English is only my second language, I'm not 100% familiar with archaic terms or old sayings, so I was afraid the book was going to be full of them, that I would have trouble understanding things thus getting frustrated and not finishing the book :(

But I was pleasantly surprised by how easy was to get through the pages and I also found an handy glossary on the back of the book that explained the terms I wasn't familiar with....made me feel so much better that I wasn't the only one needing the explanations!

And I was able to finish the book in less then 3 days taking breaks; it could be easily be finished in one breath all in one day, I just don't have the luxury to do that with family and all XO

Speaking of surprises: the ending is breath taking!!! I didn't see it coming even when I thought I totally got the characters and what they were thinking! Still believable and in line with their behaviors through the book, just unexpected.

I must confess that I totally fell in love with 2 out of the 3 main characters.

Blacky Lee, of course, everybody loves him. He's handsome, always so confident. And he knows is too! But he always show a glimpse of humanity underneath his arrogance and conspiring mind.

Countess Zita, the woman of the story. So strong and determined, but so vibrant and full of emotions. She's the one that will surprise the reader the most. Continuously!

The only character that I didn't care for is Stub, Blacky Lee side kick. Honestly I think he could as well be totally missing from the story and the book wouldn't lose any quality. Some readers might argue that he's like a conscience for Blacky Lee, someone to keep him with the feet on the ground when his mind is too busy

making strategic schemes. But I personally find him weak and uninteresting, with such a small personality and not thoughts of his own that all he can do is to follow Blacky Lee around in every trouble he find with envy and anger. No matter how bad the situation become, he wouldn't leave the friends side of his own will. I find his figure pretty pathetic.

This novel, in my opinion, had everything: action, history, politic and romance. Just the right mix. I felt several life morals where passed to me from L.Ron words in a very inspiring way.

Mainly, that no matter what, if you really really want something so bad, it's worth to risk everything you have for it.

Another point is that if you love someone with all you heart, then you should trust them enough to let them go too.

And finally, not matter how bleak the situation might seems and how much conjectures and angles to look at it with no way out, things have simply a way to work themselves out when you least expect. Simple things that we need to remind ourselves daily and I'm glad this author wrote this novel to remind me that through his words and characters.

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### **Cory Jackson says**

Surprisingly good? A clever little tale of a con-man turned good. A quick, fun, refreshing read.

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### **Janelle S says**

The story of The Iron Duke by L. Ron Hubbard is a tale full of twists and turns. You never know where it will end. You jump right into the middle of the story of Blacky Lee and his counterpart fleeing for Aldoria. After selling dud weapons to the Nazi's and being highly sought after men, Blacky Lee jumps a train in an attempt to flee. But when he is suddenly confused with being the Archduke of Aldoria, he decided to use his new found "power" for his own benefit. At first, Blacky was only going to use it to get him out of the country but when Countess Zita wished for his company and then the eventual return to the palace, Blacky Lee inevitably is found out to be an impostor.

Will Blacky Lee escape? Or will he be sent to a firing squad?

This short work of fiction is interesting to read but I found it hard to keep the whole story straight with all the different twists and turns. I would NOT recommend this for children since there is some rougher language and pushes dishonestly and bad morals.

The book is overall small in size, making it perfect to tuck inside of ones purse or briefcase. Both the front and back cover are folded in so you can use those as a way to mark your place in the book. The cover is also made out of a heavier type of paper that would hold up better to a lot of use. At the end of the book, they have a story preview for one of L. Ron Hubbard's other works of fiction, as well as a list of all the books that were written by Hubbard.

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## **Nick says**

Why did I read it?

Stories from the Golden Age is a new series that is assembling stories from L. Ron Hubbard's time as a pulp fiction writer. My library was given some free copies, so I figured I'd read one of them. First of all because our Acquisitions Librarian nor myself selected them, and secondly because I thought L. Ron Hubbard was better known for his Scientology religious beliefs than his writing ability.

What happened?

While the phrase, Pulp Fiction might conjure images of the Quentin Tarantino movie, pulp fiction was also a craze of short stories, published in the 1930s and 1940s, on cheap paper called pulp. Although I didn't know this, L. Ron Hubbard was actually one of the most prolific and popular writers of pulp fiction during their golden age.

But enough about the background. The Iron Duke deals with Blacky Lee, a notorious arms dealer who is wanted by most of the European nations in the 1930s. Escaping from a deal gone bad, Blacky crosses into Aldoria, and is mistaken for the Aldorian Prince Philip.

Much to the chagrin of his partner, Blacky actually did this on purpose. Years before he had noticed his resemblance with the prince, and even though he couldn't use it to his advantage then, he is definitely planning something now. But, Blacky isn't the only one who has schemes for the Aldorian prince, and this time, he might be in over his head...

What did I like or not like?

I've become familiar with pulp fiction while researching the history of comic books, and I totally get the appeal of them now. The stories are short, simple, and to the point, but they keep you interested throughout the pages.

On the other hand, I couldn't help but think, "I've heard this story before." But then I remembered that pulp fiction did all of these stories first, and then stereotypes were made from them. These fly-off-the-shelves stories built the stereotypes we have today, and while he might have created Scientology, L. Ron Hubbard can definitely write a pulp!

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## **Jennifer says**

I've never even read a pulp fiction story until Galaxy Press provided an audio copy to me of The Iron Duke by L. Ron Hubbard to read. Pulp fiction? I instantly had visions of kitschy plot lines mixed with bad writing. What had I gotten myself in to?

I popped the CD into my player in my car and was sent back to another time. I felt like I was listening to an old radio cast of the story, acted live. My first thought was, "Boy, this is cheesy." But to be honest, it worked. The stories themselves don't pretend to be high art. Instead, I found myself enjoying the sheer entertainment value of the production, which is truly well done. I realized it was the ultimate beach read but

for boys. After all, what boy doesn't love danger, intrigue, mystery and a hard-to-get woman!

In *The Iron Duke*, shifty Blacky Lee is wanted by almost every European government. He is down to his last trick when he uses his uncanny resemblance to the Archduke of Aldoria to live the highlife. Along with his sidekick partner, Blacky pulls it off until he gets ensnared in a Communist plot to rig the country's election and take over. Will Blacky finally do the right thing in his life rather than choosing the easy way out? *The Iron Duke* is too complex for younger kids. However, I could easily see this genre as a staple for boys eight and older. So many boys hate to read. But with the fun action, easy-to-digest plots and crazy cover artwork, I know we'll be checking out these stories for my boys soon enough.

About the Author: Does the name L. Ron Hubbard sound familiar? It should. He's the creator of the religion Scientology. However, these stories have nothing to do with the religion he is well-known for. In fact, Hubbard was a prolific pulp fiction writer, publishing more than 200 works of fiction.

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### **Nicole says**

I wasn't aware that this was an audiobook when I entered and won it in a GoodReads giveaway. This is my first audiobook so if I miss something important please keep that in mind.

The audio was clear, no fuzziness or muffled parts. The worst thing I can say is that one of the voice characters sounded a lot like a character portrayed by The Jerky Boys in one of their many albums. It was easy though to quickly get over the humor of similarities and get into the story.

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### **James Mourgos says**

Being a collector of pulp mags, I recognized the painting at the cover of *The Iron Duke*; I think it's from *Argosy Magazine* as I remember. I know that the company Author Services had a reprint project going on, but leather covers and expensive paper made a \$50 a book subscription a bit expensive. Regardless, I collected a few of these books to get my Hubbard fix of fantasy and science fiction. Galaxy Press has been on a project recently of publications of Hubbard's old pulp stories.

The pulps had a lot going for them in the old days. It's really what kids were gravitated to. They were cheap entertainment and helped take the mind off The Great Depression and the Nazis. *The Iron Duke* is clearly attempting to do that.

For a rather cheap price (I got mine from the library, yay) I got a bit of light entertainment and recognized the satire regarding a charlatan who just happens to be the near twin of Archduke Philip of Ardoria. That other Philip is a drunk and a raving lunatic who is kept under close watch by the royal family and a discredit to the monarchy.

Blacky and his sidekick Stub (cute name) take advantage of a case of mistaken identity and the Duke's convenient departure to make riches off the monarchy of Ardoria, avoid the Nazis and make a deal with "The Sons of Freedom", that is, a Communist movement to take over the monarchy.

Only one thing stops him: the love of a woman, Countess Zita.

Tossing grenades, being self-assured to the point of arrogance and somehow saving the day was typical plot of the Forties pulps. Taking a snide swipe at the Russians and Communism soon after WWII was daring to say the least.

Overall, not a bad book. Besides the story, Galaxy Press gave a short short of an upcoming adventure tale, a bit about the author, his list of pen-names, a short article on the history of pulp fiction and an invitation to read more.

Though I prefer Hubbard's horror (Fear) and his fantasy (Slaves of Sleep) and even his science fiction (Old Doc Methuselah), I have yet to check out further adventure and western tales. I may take Galaxy up on that offer! Critics to the contrary, Hubbard's science fiction output was quite low. Take a look at the biography!

Other books I recommend:

Battlefield Earth: A Saga of the Year 3000 [the book, NOT the movie!:]

The Professor Was a Thief (Stories from the Golden Age) [Somewhere Hubbard said this was his favorite.:]

Fear [a Stephen King favorite:]

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## **Michele says**

Blacky Lee has discovered that running a scam on Nazis can be hazardous to one's health. But even on the run a scoundrel is never without a plan. Impersonating the archduke of Aldoria, the eponymous Iron Duke of the title, this supposed blackguard must make an unexpectedly challenging choice between lucre and love.

The audio version of L. Ron Hubbard's 'The Iron Duke' is a multicast recording complete with wound effects and a soundtrack. It is a delightfully 'pulpy' 1940's era story complete with a debonair hero of dubious character and his loyal sidekick, the cold-hearted dame who eats men for breakfast and uses their bones as toothpicks at lunch, and a murderous villain whose ruthless quest for power presents a stark choice to our morally conflicted hero. The story is great fun and the voice talents are fantastic. As a long-time listener of Big Finish Audio Dramas, I was favorably impressed. Richard Rocco as Blacky Lee sounds exactly the way any laconic anti-hero should, with a vaguely Bogart air. Lori Jablons as Countess Zita is also good. But it is Michael Yurchak as Stub Doyle, the clichéd sidekick, who was my favorite by far. He is utterly delicious to listen to and I was smiling just at his tone of voice and line delivery. Ultimately The Iron Duke is absolutely what it purports to be: a story from the 40's 'Golden Age' of pulp fiction and as such contains all the expected stereotypes and tropes. If you enjoy sitting down with Bogart, Bacall and Gable then try this audio and be prepared to spend an entertaining 2 hours listening to an scrumptiously campy story and some wonderful voice talent.

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## **Katelyn says**

I received a free copy of this (physical) book from Galaxy Press.

It's a relative short story about two men, Blackey Lee and his traveling companion Stub Doyle. They are on



the run from their latest scheme that backfired, yet again, thanks to Blackey's overzealous and over confident nature. They find themselves in the Balkans, where Blackey is immediately confused with His Highness, a blubbering drunk who hasn't been out of the palace in three years, Phillip the archduke of Aldoria. But, the Countess Zita recognizes him and demands he returns back to the palace, where he'll be safe from the Sons of Freedom who are demanding an election to see if the monarchy should end. But, before he's taken to the palace, Blackey is captured by these men and promised 12 million francs if the election will happen, which is highly appealing to the vagabond Lee. But, he didn't count on several things, like falling for the Countess, being thrown in jail for impersonating His Highness, and an assassination attempt on his life.

The story was surprisingly fun. I really enjoyed reading it. It reminded me of so many different literary duos, like Sherlock Holmes and Watson, and like so many movies. One is the pawn along for the ride, the other is the big schemer always getting them in (and out) of trouble by the seat of his pants. It's very entertaining to say the least and very tongue and cheek. It was written well and was short and sweet. I also appreciated that the book included a glossary of terms used in the book, since the book was originally written back in the 1930s, and some references are beyond me.

Read my whole review here:<http://whatsupfagans.blogspot.com/201...>

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### **Leila says**

I have read several of L. Ron Hubbard's pulp fiction books and this one... this one was... weird.

I am not entirely sure what the entire goal was for Blacky Lee, but talk about one arrogant man! And the tricks he played! Daring! (And almost cunning!)

I found that Blacky Lee's arrogance and daring ways caused for some confusion, but once it all started to fall into place; one could really see what a conniving man he was.

All in all, I enjoy taking a break from my usual to take enjoy a pulp fiction read. They are short enough and provide excitement in those few pages!

All of the books I have read by L. Ron Hubbard have all been enjoyable and recommend him to anyone!

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### **Michelle says**

Playing Jokers Blog: all suits of genres and bookish news

To preface this review, this is the seventh book I have received for an honest review from Galaxy Audio. While they all generally have the same feel to them, my enjoyment does vary.

The Iron Duke was definitely one of the better ones. Blacky Lee and is awesomely named sidekick, Stub, are wanted by most European governments. On the run from Nazis, they end up in Aldoria (does that even exist?) where Blacky begins to impersonate the monarch, while Communists try to take over.

Most (I can't say all because I haven't read all) of Hubbard's stories take place in a specific time and place.

While the stories themselves are generally formulaic in terms of classic pulp fiction tropes, they are almost always 'current', whether in dealing with Chino-Japanese War, the beginnings of World War II, French-occupation and conflict in Northern Africa, and this one, dealing with communism before World War II. It's really quite fascinating to gain a small understanding of how perhaps American attitudes towards these events would be through the consumption of these stories.

Because at the core of it, these stories are definitely American. Blacky fills the billet for the clever, handsome, and masculine hero. The way this and the other stories are written are that the Americans are generally the ones in the right, while the strangeness of the other nationalities generally veer towards being morally questionable.

Putting my shoddy analysis rant aside, I really liked this story for its take on politics. It was less 'action-packed', guns-blaring than the others. There was a real question in the middle of it which made it compelling. And while I could easily question the romance part of it by putting my twenty-first feminist hat on, I won't. Because that's completely unfair to the story. It is what it is, and that is an enjoyable story with great production value.

And the actor for Stub was great.

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## **Laura Verret says**

Blacky Lee is on the run – and the people tailing him don't plan to throw him a party when they find him. They want his blood; his blood, and the blood of his sidekick, Stub. There's only one thing for it... Illegal entry into Aldoria!

Blacky didn't pick Aldoria randomly – he knows that he bears an uncanny resemblance to Phillip, Archduke of Aldoria, and plans to impersonate him if pressed. But the citizens are one step ahead of him – they are more than ready to bow down and serve Blacky. All, that is, except the Countess Zita.

The Countess is irate with him for having "left" his home and insists on returning him there. Blacky demurs, so she uses her guard to take him back. There Blacky must confront the real Philip. If he lives long enough, that is...

Will anyone believe Blacky's claims? Or will he and Stub be tossed out to the dogs who are chasing them?

## **Discussion.**

*The Iron Duke* was definitely a member of its genre. As a pulp story, it featured snappy descriptions and abrupt dialogue and focused mainly on the dare devil-osity [:)] of Blacky Lee. I enjoyed this – a little stereotypical adventure is fun - but I would have enjoyed it more had the characters been more developed, a few of their motives explained, and a little suspense thrown in. The story was short – only 77 pages – and I think that were it to be expanded, it would have big potential. As it is, it felt a little empty. Maybe if I had been expecting a short story (as opposed to a novel) I could have enjoyed it more.

All of that said, I really enjoyed the ending. For most of the story, Blacky Lee played the part of a mercenary cad who was willing to sell out to the highest bidder, however, in the last few pages, we realize that at least part of this was a blind. He displayed more uprightness of character in the last few pages than I thought he

possessed.

One last note – as I neared the middle of *The Iron Duke*, I was disappointed in what I perceived to be a blatant rip-off of *The Prisoner of Zenda*. While the circumstances were different, all of the same elements were there – the main character, through a freak in lineage, is identical to the ruler of Aldoria. He arrives in Aldoria and is hailed as its ruler. He meets the Countess Zita who, though she detests the *real* Philip, Archduke of Aldoria, is immediately attracted to the imposter. However, from thence onward, the plot diverged, and it ended quite differently from *The Prisoner of Zenda*.

This quote sums up the whole book. It comes from Stub, Blacky's sidekick.

*"Yeah. Yeah, you're always telling me how lucky I am to be alive," sighed Stub. "You pull me through hell and high dives with one of your ideas, and then when we escape on the razor edge of execution you tell me how lucky I am! I'm not complaining, you understand, but sometimes I think my nerves just won't stand it anymore. Tonight we should have been dining with generals and getting paid real money, but here we are, on a train without tickets, in a country which we didn't enter legally, without so much as an Aldorian dime or a forged birth certificate!"*

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**Conclusion.** Exciting and nostalgic, *The Iron Duke* is a galloping-fun read.

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