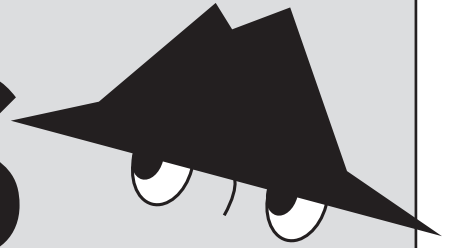


100 EYES

of the Mystery Scene Era



by Kevin Burton Smith

From the moment the first issue rolled off the press way back in 1985, *Mystery Scene* has had a special connection with private eyes—its two co-founders, Ed Gorman and Robert J. Randisi, are two of the subgenre’s shining lights. So now, with the publication of our 100th issue, is a good time to look back at some of the eyes who have left their mark on the shamus game.

This is by no means a definitive list, and I know I’m going to kick myself the moment I hit “SEND.” Most of these characters are from novels, but there are also eyes drawn from film, television, short fiction and comics—and from all over the world.

Some of these guns for hire are personal favorites and a few are guilty pleasures, some are no-brainers and there are even one or two I don’t particularly like, but can’t in all honesty ignore. But one way or another, for better or worse, they have all bent, folded and mutilated the genre—or otherwise stuck in my craw.

They’re in alphabetical order—any other sort of order would surely lead to madness—with their creators’ names in parentheses. And no, I don’t expect everyone—or even anyone—to agree with all my choices, but here they are.

- 1 JINX ALAMEDA** (Brian Michael Bendis)
This foul-mouthed Cleveland bounty hunter is one of the fiercest gumshoes to ever hit the comic rack—or anywhere else. A night out with her and Max Collins’ Ms. Tree would be fearsome.
- 2 FITZROY MACLEAN ANGEL** (Mike Ripley)
A cat named Springsteen, a taxi called Armstrong, and a pub-ready sense of humor made the screwball capers of this trumpet-playing slacker London cabbie/PI a true joy to read.
- 3 ANDY BARKER** (Conan O’Brien and Jonathan Groff)
Accountant by day, private eye by accident This recent, already doomed sitcom starring Andy Richter had more wit—and genuine affection for the genre—than anything on the tube since *Rockford*.
- 4 EZELL “EASY” BARNES** (Richard Hilary)
Unjustly forgotten, this African-American eye from Newark



bridged the gap between Mr. Shaft and Mr. Rawlins. Hard as nails, but his best buddy was a ditsy transvestite named Angel.

- 5 PHIL BEAUMONT & JANE TANNER** (Walter Satterthwait)
Dashing Pinkerton op and his rookie partner Tanner swapped *Thin Man*-style banter and conjured up echoes of Hammett. The Dirty Thirties never seemed so much fun.
- 6 TOM BETHANY** (Jerome Doolittle)
Vietnam vet, and former Olympic-class amateur wrestler, CIA op and bush pilot turned quirky PI hanging out at a Harvard Square coffee shop. The missing link between Henry David Thoreau and Mike Hammer.
- 7 “BOGIE”** (John Wagner and Alan Grant)
A cheekily subversive UK comic book re-imagined Don Quixote in fedora and trench coat, with all the world as his windmill.

8 **BURKE** (Andrew Vachss)

The avenging saint of NYC's abused children. As relentless, deadly, and humorless as a shark. The Big Apple never seemed so rotten.

9 **VINCENT CALVINO** (Christopher G. Moore)

A transplanted New York shamus is our man in Bangkok, doing the ex-pat shuffle. This is the world calling.

10 **LYDIA CHIN & BILL SMITH** (S.J. Rozan)

She's young and Asian-American. He's not. But, together or separately, what a team!



11 **FRANK CLEMONS** (Thomas H. Cook)

A bleak trilogy featuring an Atlanta cop turned NYC eye captured perfectly all the crushed romanticism and world-weariness of Chandler—and upped it. Sad and beautiful.

12 **ELVIS COLE** (Robert Crais)

When nobody was looking, this goofball baby boomer unexpectedly morphed into one of the finest PIs of the rock'n'roll generation. No more jazz—this was the real deal, and his first name was the tell.

13 **TIMOTHY CONE** (Lawrence Sanders)

This ruffled dick worked for a Wall Street firm specializing in corporate hanky-panky. And nobody ever did hanky-panky better than Sanders.

14 **JOHN FRANCIS CUDDY** (Jeremiah Healy)

Sure, he speaks to his dead wife, but an awful lot of readers listened in. Compelling and compassionate, tough without being a cartoon—and the short stories may be even better than the books.

15 **DAVID CUNANE** (Frank Lean)

Quirky, idealistic and screwed up as hell, this haunted finder of lost children is Jack Liffey's UK counterpart.

16 **MATTHEW DAIN** (Christopher Mills)

In just two short stories, Mills created an eye as memorably dark and brooding as the Maine woods he calls home.

17 **VIC DANIEL** (David M. Pierce)

A big goofy Hollywood dick—the Shell Scott for a new generation—with Sara, an adolescent punkette, playing the role of Gal Friday.

18 **DAVID DIANGELO** (Tim Broderick)

A web comic whose intentionally rough artwork belied the sophistication and compassion of his writing. A shamus takes on those “odd jobs” nobody else wants. “Someday they'll all be odd jobs.” Take heed.

19 **HARRY DOBBS & STELLA WYNKOWSKI**

(Alan Rudolph) Two PIs (Tom Berenger and Elizabeth Perkins) on each other's case in *Love at Large*, a sawy, saucy, head-spinning romantic-comedy.

20 **JACKSON DONNE** (David White)

Tragedy seems to follow this brooding young PI from Rutgers, but his great battered heart beats on. A series to watch.

21 **SEAN & MATT ELLIS** (Benjamin M. Schutz)

The Hardy Boys grow up to become process servers.

22 **LIONEL ESSROG** (Jonathan Lethem)

Lethem's National Book Award-winning *Motherless Brooklyn* was a bold, noirish literary tour-de-force farce fierce narrated by a detective defective selective with Tourette's Syndrome. Skindrome. Skin drum.

23 **BUDDY FARO** (Mark Frost)

This TV romp boasted a Rat Pack-era dick trying to wise up a modern-day LaLaLand that lost its sense of cool long ago.

24 **WESLEY FARREL** (Robert Skinner)

He can pass for white, which comes in handy for this slick nightclub owner and sometimes-private eye in Depression-era New Orleans.

25 **KEVIN FITZPATRICK** (Bill Dodds)

It took contest-winner Dodds a weekend to write *O Father*, but this zippy novella featuring a Seattle gumshoe with a three-year-old daughter and a thing for *Rockford* reruns takes a lot longer to forget.

26 **LEW FONESCA** (Stuart Kaminsky)

Tired, beat-down and downbeat, this gumshoe's peaceful Florida retirement hasn't worked out well so far. Lucky for us.

27 **BRENDAN FRYE** (Rian Johnson)

Teenager Brendan's mean streets are a high school in the endless Southern California suburban sprawl in *Brick*. Not to gum it, but this 2005 cult flick managed to channel the spirit of every RKO noir ever made.

28 **PAT GALLEGHER** (Richard Helms)

This Big Easy eye and horn player proved self-published didn't have to suck. Evidently solid storytelling, fresh characters and a razor-sharp sense of place and time help.



Andy Barker (Andy Richter), an accountant/PI and all-around funny guy.

NBC

29 **CHET GECKO** (Bruce Hale)

And now, something for the kiddies: a lizard detective, plus some of the ripest puns to ever be left out too long in the sun make these books ideal for hip kids—or their parents.

30 **DIRK GENTLY** (Douglas Adams)

The reality check stops here, and the giddy interconnectiveness of all things soon becomes apparent. If a salmon answers the phone, hang up.

31 **MEG GILLIS** (C.J. Songer)

A refreshing change from most of the female eyes to pop up in the eighties, moody, morose, paranoid Meg was nobody's Little Miss Sunshine.



Bruce Hale offers lessons on drawing his reptile 'tec, Chet Gecko, among many other activities at his amusing website. <www.brucehale.com>

Bruce Hale



32 GORDIANUS THE FINDER (Steven Saylor)
Rome, 80 BC. Gordianus is a professional finder, a “con-sorter with assassins and a professional ferret.” And the glory that was ancient Rome never seemed less glorious... or more familiar.

33 LEW GRIFFIN (James Sallis)
Don't let all the lofty literary ambitions scare you. This ac-claimed series, featuring a New Orleans professor/poet/pri-vate eye, kicks ass. It's just smarter than most about it.

34 RENÉ GRIFFON (Didier Daeninckx)
War is hell. But profitable. A Parisian eye caught in a post-WWI France still reeling from the “war to end all wars” takes note. Bleak, bitter, angry.

35 AARON GUNNER (Gar Anthony Haywood)
He ain't no Shaft—he's just a working dick trying to make sense of an L.A. rocked by riots, crack and that old crowd-pleaser: racism. Defiant and unapologetic.

36 BERNIE GUNTHER (Philip Kerr)
Ex-cop Bernie wants to be a good German, but WWII-era Berlin isn't the best place for it. Still, there's good money to be made looking for missing Jews. Potent.

37 LEO HAGGERTY (Benjamin J. Schutz)
Imagine if Spenser was darker, more cynical...and not Su-perman. This Washington, D.C. eye's feet of clay may have been his best feature.

38 MAIKU HAMA (Kaizo Hayashi & Daisuke Tengan)
This Japanese take-off on B-films and crime fiction tosses in martial arts, the Yakuza and a bespectacled, bumbling loser PI who thinks he's—who else?—Mike Hammer. It's Hama Time!

39 MAX HAMM (Frank Cammuso)
Sure, he's a pig, but this subversive spin on nursery rhymes and fairy tales is great fun for smart aleck kids of all ages. So those rumors about Snow White are true....

40 HELENA HANDBASKET (Donna Moore)
Crime and PUNishment, writ large. This post-post-everything goofaroo is arguably the best (or at least most unhinged) mystery parody ever.

41 JOE HANNIBAL (Wayne D. Dundee)
Neo-Spillane, transferred to the Midwest, boasting a wild, rough energy and two-fisted swagger that hits the spot. Ya got a problem with that, bub?

42 WIL HARDESTY (Richard Barre)
The surfer dude as angst-ridden PI. Personal tragedy? Catch the wave.

into a tough-minded tale of loss and redemption, revenge and forgiveness.

48 TOM HICKEY (Ken Kuhlken)
The Loud Adios, which introduced Hickey, is a modern classic, a vivid slice of border town malaise set in a WWII-era San Diego primed for Nazi invasion.

49 NATE HOLLIS (Gary Phillips)
Slick as spit, big-shouldered Hollis walks the walk and talks the talk in the *Angeltown* comics, taking on a star-studded scandal that could rip the roof off post-Rodney King L.A.

50 JERI HOWARD (Janet Dawson)
Rising out of the glut of post-Grafton/Paretsky private janes, this Bay Area gumshoe soon proved herself a determined, shrewd—and popular—sleuth.

51 MORGAN HUNT (Geoffrey Norman)
A backwoods version of Travis McGee. There were many pretenders to JDM's throne, but Norman came closer than most.

52 CAL INNES (Ray Banks)
The PI as screw-up seems to be a developing trend, with the UK grabbing more than its share. Manchester's Innes is self-destructive, cynical and doesn't give much of a damn anymore. Bleak, but also oddly uplifting.

53 MATT JACOB (Zachary Klein)
Another screw-up. This former social worker/slacker's low rent, smoke-filled escapades made for some most excellent adventures. He lost his ambitions, but not his ideals. Inhale.

54 MILAN JACOVICH (Les Roberts)
Cleveland rocks in this unapologetically working class se-ries. Say it loud, he's Slovenian and he's proud.

55 KEMAL KAYANKAYA (Jakob Arjourni)
Seedy, modern day Frankfurt, and it's not easy for a Turkish detective raised by German foster parents and forever caught between two solitudes. The perpetual outsider looks in.

56 MIKE KELLERMAN
("Kellerman, PI: Part One," story by Julie Martin, Tom Fontana; teleplay by Joy Lusco, and "Kellerman, PI: Part Two," story by Eric Overmyer, Tom Fontana; teleplay by Sean Whitesell. *Homicide*.) The best TV eye of the last 20 years. After a long, slow, career crash-and-burn on the classic cop drama *Homi-cide*, Detective Mike Kellerman (Reed Diamond) returned as a PI doing dodgy domestics on two bleak, heart-break-ing episodes.

57 PATRICK KENZIE & ANGELA GENNARO
(Dennis Lehane) Ambitious and angry, these books lashed out, as fierce and unapologetic in their own way as an abusive husband after a few beers. Oh, the irony.

58 KIDD (John Camp aka John Sandford)
Finally, a PI who knows how to turn on a computer. This

**“Not to disparage
the work I do,
but most of it
requires
no intelligence
whatsoever.”**

Stanley Hastings, PI

43 ART HARDIN (Robert E. Bailey)
Presenting the family man as detective, marked by an earth-bound domesticity and the author's quirky, distinctive voice, but the PI stuff is never skimped on.

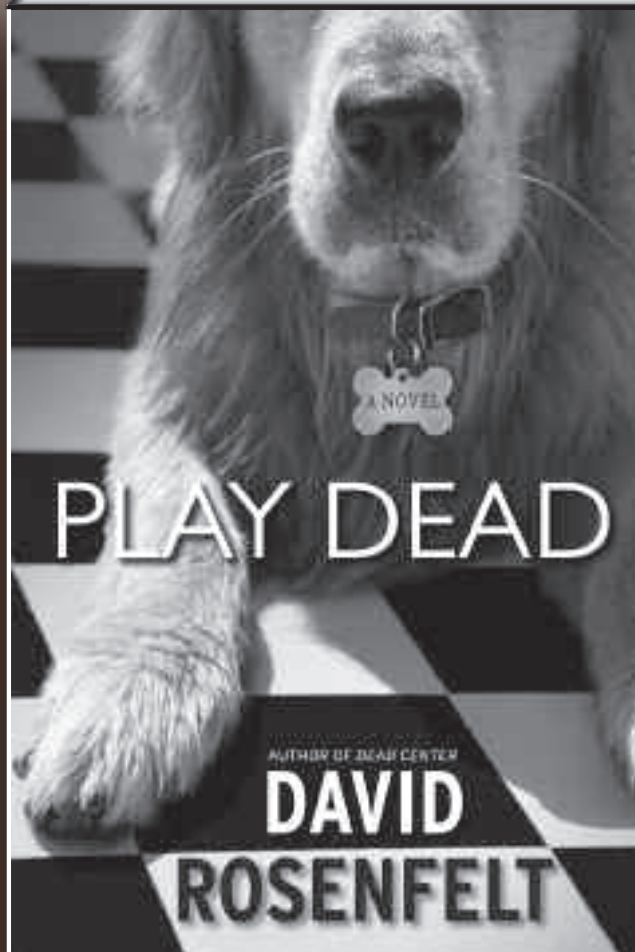
44 HARDING (John Wessel)
A disgraced former PI from Chicago (those convictions for manslaughter are a real turn-off for clients) tries to scrape by, working under the table. Nasty, nasty, nasty.

45 STANLEY HASTINGS (Parnell Hall)
“Private investigator” Hastings works for an ambulance-chasing NYC lawyer, but he hasn't got a clue. Fortunately, he has a smart wife.

46 TAMARA HAYLE (Valerie Wilson Wesley)
A black single mom works as a PI and takes no guff, while raising a son. Breezy, sassy and smart.

47 JACK HERRIMAN (Ed Brubaker)
One-eyed Jack's a San Francisco shamus in an intriguing 1999 comic mini-series from DC/Vertigo that parlays just the right Chandleresque mix of cynicism and vulnerability

**How do you solve a murder when
the only witness is a dog?**



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She ain't no Nancy...Veronica Mars (Kristin Bell) brought the teen sleuth to a whole new level.

hacker's no geek, either—he's actually kinda cool, a sort of Paladin of the cyber age. Have mouse will travel.

59 LOUIS KINCAID (P.J. Parrish)

A beat-down former Detroit cop of mixed race heads home to the South, and finds trouble everywhere he goes.

60 DAN KRUGER (Michael Cormany)

A Gen X sex, drugs, and a rock'n'roll eye from Chicago trying not to die before he got old. Imagine if Paul Westerberg wrote mysteries.

61 JOE KURTZ (Dan Simmons)

This Buffalo ex-con private eye is the star of several stark, ballsy thrillers that never—ever—let up.

62 MEG LACEY (Elisabeth Bowers)

A Vancouver PI raising two kids alone takes on child pornog-

raphy and sexual abuse in *Ladies' Night*, an unflinching feminist PI classic.

63 LAUREN LAURANO (Sandra Scoppettone)

Supposedly the first mainstream hardcover lesbian private eye, but it's Laurano's sense of her Greenwich Village neighborhood (and humor) that make this series really stand out.

64 TRU LEWIS (Robert Randisi)

"Mature Male in Sixties Available for House-sitting, Non-Smoker, No Pets, Widower." A PI-by-chance makes house calls in a series of charming short stories. When's the novel, Bob?

65 JACK LIFFEY (John Shannon)

Pound for pound, Shannon's the best current Los Angeles PI writer around, and Liffey the true successor to Dan Fortune. He's looking for lost children in an L.A. presented warts and all, neighborhood by neighborhood. Now is the time for your tears.

66 LOMAX (Paula Milne)

Die Kinder—not a Bruce Willis flick—was the best PI series PBS ever imported. An American ex-pat (Frederic Forrest) in Hamburg finds himself up against a gang of terrorists suspected of a 20-year old department store bombing.

67 XAVIER LOMBARD (Eric Leclere)

The Lost Son re-imagined Andrew Vachss' Burke as a disgraced Parisian cop living in London, on the trail of an international gang of child molesters. The film, starring Daniel Auteuil, wasn't bad either.

68 ED LOY (Declan Hughes)

Ross Macdonald and Ken Bruen walk into a bar in Dublin, and Ed Loy staggers out with a box full of family secrets. Heartache spoken here.

69 BUBBA MABRY (Steve Brewer)

Down the mean streets of Albuquerque a Bubba must go.... Light, but satisfying.

70 DECLAN "MAC" MACMANUS (D. Daniel Judson)

Mac's brooding, depressed and self-destructive, and possibly the most likable character in this bleak series. A beautifully rendered wallow.

71 JOHN MARCH (Peter Spiegelman)

This tightly wound scion of a Wall Street dynasty doesn't have to work—but he must. Angst? He's got more issues than a newsstand.

72 PHILIP E. MARLOW (Dennis Potter)

The Singing Detective was an all-singing, all-dancing fever dream meditation on art and creativity, pulp fiction and Cole Porter, love and death, and the heartbreak of psoriasis. Smart, savage and heartbreaking. And great television.

73 VERONICA MARS (Rob Thomas)

Nancy Drew re-imagined for the iPod generation, with hormones and Oh! What a mouth on her! Sassy!

74 SAM MCCAIN (Ed Gorman)

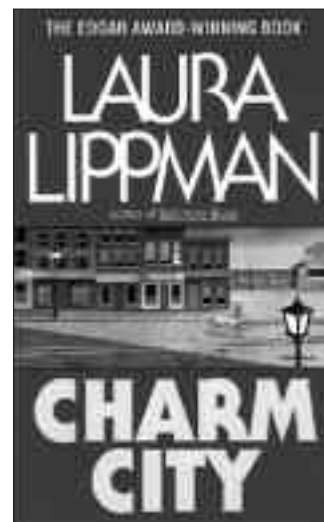
Small town, Iowa. The 1950s. What could be wrong? Lawyer, private eye, and decent-enough guy McCain knows the black heart that belies the rosy glow of *Happy Days* nostalgia.

75 ADRIAN MONK (Andy Breckmann)

Like it or not, this cross between *Columbo* and *Rain Man* is the current face of small screen private eyes. Now if only it wasn't so, so...uh, Monkish?

76 IVAN MONK (Gary Phillips)

The revolution might not be televised, but you can catch a glimpse in this politically charged series about a South Central shamus who runs a one-man agency...and a donut shop. Right on.



77 TESS MONAGHAN (Laura Lippman)

A former Baltimore reporter finds a new life as a PI. She wanted to be hardboiled but, to paraphrase Jessica Rabbit, she just wasn't drawn that way.

78 "FORD" MORGAN & ROY SHEPHERD

(Michael Collins) Collins' last crime novel, *The Cadillac Cowboy*, was a literary tour-de-force, an unflinching look at two "eyes"—more alike than either would ever admit—on a collision course.

79 CHARLIE "BIRD" PARKER (John Connolly)

He sees dead people. Sometimes they talk to him. Imagine if Chandler and Stephen King had a love child.

80 GAY PERRY & HARRY LOCKHART

(Shane Black) *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* was the big dumb buddy action flick for people too smart for big dumb buddy action flicks—and that definitely includes writer/director Black, who had way more fun skewering himself than anyone expected.

81 STEPHANIE PLUM (Janet Evanovich)

Screwball characters, raging hormones and more carnal naughtiness than Shell Scott could ever imagine.

82 "LE POULPE"

(Jean-Bernard Pouy, Patrick Raynal, and Serge Quadrupani, plus a cast of hundreds) It shouldn't have worked, but this collective pulp experiment about a hardboiled French gumshoe now numbers over 200 volumes—and almost as many writers. And yes, the pun in the hero's name is intentional.

83 RAFFERTY (W. Glenn Duncan)

There were enough varmints and rascals to keep this freewheeling, Spenseresque cowboy spinning his tall tales and kicking butt for six PBOs, all of them worth tracking down.

84 PRECIOUS RAMOTSWE

(Alexander McCall Smith) A "traditionally built" cheerful young entrepreneur from Botswana sets up The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency and become her country's first female detective. Even a crank like me can find no other word for this series: charming.

85 EASY RAWLINS (Walter Mosley)

Easy, a black man, defiant but pragmatic, struggles to survive in an ever-changing Los Angeles that spans WWII to the present, and zeroes in on not just issues of race but of politics, culture, morality and honor. A sort of alternative social history.

86 JACK REACHER (Lee Child)

This ex-military wanderer is always willing to help a friend—or take out an enemy. Lack of confidence is not an issue.

87 MITCH ROBERTS (Gaylord Dold)

Wichita, Kansas, the late fifties and all this small-time peeper (and haunted WWII vet) wants to do is watch baseball, play chess, fish, read and forget. But the simple life ain't so simple....

88 DAVE ROBICHEAUX (James Lee Burke)

Not a PI, at least officially, but this Louisiana cop appar-



Mma Precious Ramotswe runs the No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency in Gaborone, Botswana.

**“People know
they're being followed
when they turn around
and see someone
following them.
They can't tell
they're being followed
if you get there first.”**

Daryl Zero, Zero Effect

ently doesn't know it. Poetic as hell and spooky as the dawn mist hovering over the bayou. Is it the booze or does he really see dead people?

89 DAN ROMAN (Edward Mathis)

Lew Archer in a cowboy hat, sure, but there's more, much more to this brooding, philosophical eye—a sense of loss as big as all of Texas.

90 HARRY ROSS (Robert Benton and Richard Russo)

Twilight (1998) was the unofficial—but logical—sequel to *Harper* and *The Drowning Pool*, with Paul Newman playing essentially the same character, older but not necessarily wiser. Imagine if Ross Macdonald had written *The Long Goodbye*.

91 JACK ROSS (Bernard Schopen)

Disillusioned, brooding Reno, Nevada private eye and bail bondsman tries to lose himself in the big silence of the desert, but fails. Powerful, literate and disturbing.

92 VINCENT RUBIO (Eric M. Garcia)

Private eye and undercover dinosaur, as hardboiled as foam rubber gets. What has Eric been smoking?

93 HECTOR BELASCOARÁN SHAYNE

(Paco Ignacio Taibo II) A one-eyed Mexico City gumshoe in a surreal dish of politics, sociology, history and mythology. Well worth a trip south of the border.

94 NICK STEFANOS, DEREK STRANGE & TERRY QUINN (George Pelecanos)

Nick is Greek, Strange is black, and Quinn's a Mick. Together and separately, they try to set the world (or at least Washington, D.C.) right in an ambitious series of sprawling interconnected novels. Powerful and political and never less than personal.

95 SALLY SULLIVAN & BERNIE FOX

(Chris Haddock) A Vancouver waitress turned gung ho novice gumshoe had two kids to feed and a rascal of a boss (Stuart Margolin to please in this witty Canadian sitcom from the creator of *DaVinci's Inquest*.

96 JOHN SWAN (John Swan)

This dark horse of a gumshoe never met an angle he didn't try to play. Or a friend that he could trust. Canuck noir as hard and cold as it gets.

97 JACK TAYLOR (Ken Bruen)

The screw-up PI, Irish division. With his finely rendered depiction of a world of dark hurt and a soul in torment, Bruen may just be the genre's next poet laureate. The darkness isn't on the edge of town anymore.

98 GEORGE WEBB (Graham Swift)

Remember when Spade told Brigid he'd wait for her? A Booker Prize-winning author did, and ran with it, conjuring up this long, dark look at the works.

99 SCOTT WEISS & JIM BISHOP

(Andrew Klavan) This full-throttled series about mismatched San Francisco eyes is like a pulp fiction buffet, except that Klavan's also got a fierce eye for the secret hurts we all carry.



100 DARYL ZERO (Jake Kasdan)

In the 1998 flick *Zero Effect*, Sherlock Holmes (Bill Pullman) gets updated and put in touch with his inner self—only to be revealed as a total whack job. Ben Stiller's Watson watches, aghast.

Agree? Disagree? You guys know where to find me.... ✦

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Kevin Burton Smith is the founder and editor of The Thrilling Detective Web Site, an encyclopedic guide to the private eye in fiction. <www.thrillingdetective.com>