



Maurice, who left Austin shortly after the last murder; three years later, he turned up in London just as the Jack the Ripper murders were beginning...

Ernie Lee, an award-winning author and poet from Texas, has written a thrilling novel about the Malay cook suspect. It's a picaresque work that promises marvels and horrors and delivers them

in abundance. It's easily one of the best Ripper novels of the last few years.

It turns out that Maurice is not Malay at all; he belongs to the Moken people, a nomadic, seafaring race dwelling off the west coast of Burma. Maurice is portrayed as the privileged son of a spice merchant, living in a grand house and waited on by servants, who learns to speak English from a British governess. His best friend – his only friend – is Mawken, an incredibly secretive and mysterious feral boy who lives in a makeshift camp in the forest surrounding Maurice's home. Maurice hopes for a respectable career in trade and commerce; Mawken is adept at trapping and slaughtering muntjacs for food. In time, Maurice allows Mawken to share his bed.

The terms of this novel are set in the traumatic childhood experiences of the two boys. When pirates invade King's Island and slay both Maurice and Mawken's parents, the youths flee the island and make their way by ferryboat across the bay to Mergui. Thus begins a series of exciting, colourful, dramatic adventures as the boys grow to manhood and make their way in the world. They board a triple-masted schooner sailing out of Rangoon for New Orleans, but a storm forces them into the Gulf of Mexico where they are shipwrecked off the coast of Texas near Galveston. Across the low, swampy marshland lies Austin, with its bars, gambling halls, and servant girls...

Mawken keeps out of sight for long periods during the story, but he is always present as a background influence, acting as Maurice's protector, saviour, and avenger. It won't spoil your enjoyment of the story to know that Maurice isn't the Austin Axe Murderer or the Whitechapel Ripper. Mawken is the culprit, of course, with his love of kitchen knives, hatchets and axes.

Him is an intelligent novel about friendship and loyalty, jealousy, hate and sexual love, and the ties that bind people together. Ernie Lee has woven together adventure, tragedy, history and myth, to create an intensely powerful work of fiction. The novel is full of danger and excitement in faraway exotic locations, and riddled with dark

supernatural forces from Southeast Asian folk mythology – the Oily Man, the Pontianak, the vampiric Pananggalan. Ernie Lee brings a poet's sensitivity to acts of the most appalling cruelty across three continents. A wonderful book, highly recommended.

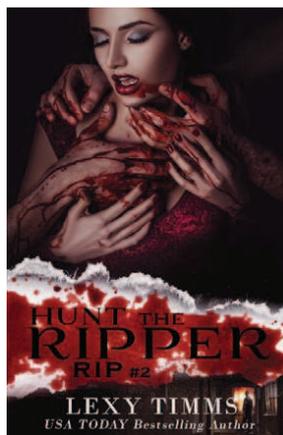
HUNT THE RIPPER

Lexy Timms

2017

Kindle Edition, 268pp

£2.43



Last issue I raved about *Track the Ripper*, the first volume in Lexy Timms's trilogy of Ripper-themed paranormal murder mystery novels (the RIP series). I've now found time to read the second volume, *Hunt the Ripper*, and I am going to rave again.

It's 30 September 2017. We're back in Lexy Timms's off-kilter alternate East Edge. Chief Inspector Frank Abberline has just been made lead investigator in the Ripper enquiry, but he feels powerless and frightened. He's witnessed terrible scenes in a brothel as a creature half way between a man and a beast gnawed off its own morphing hand/paw to evade capture. The Double Event is looming, the denizens of Whitechurch are agitating for police action, and in a basement morgue the sinister Dr Llewellyn feeds on the blood of his autopsy patients.

Supernatural entities, wolfmen, the burgundy and gold wagons of a freak circus rolling into town, the misshapen Rhinoceros Man, a virus called Green Stare that turns the eyes a sickly verdigris before blinding the patients completely, and Jack the Ripper tearing and clawing his way through the city... Lexy Timms has created a whole universe of pain and terror, populated by dark monsters out of nightmare. It's a noir erotic thriller, bold and imaginative, sensual and strange. It injects new life – and new death – into the Ripper story. And the rumours are that the author is expanding the trilogy into a five book series.

JACK THE RIPPER: LIVE AND UNCUT

Matt Leyshon

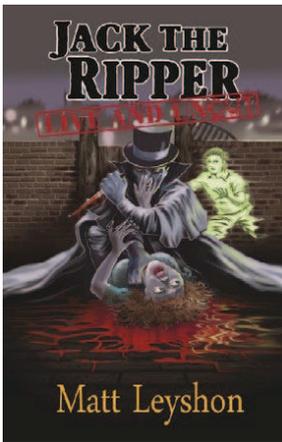
2017

Kindle Edition, 446pp

ASIN: B077679QDF

£6.11

In a sense, all fiction about Jack the Ripper involves



a journey back in time. But one of the virtues of *Jack the Ripper: Live and Uncut* is that author Matt Leyshon has taken the familiar time machine idea and done something special with it, fashioning a story that is fresh and exciting, dangerous and full of dark thrills.

Chicago-based investigative journalist Carl Axford is recruited by a clandestine organisation known as Limbo. They are a crime investigation bureau using time travel technology to solve cold cases. Agents are projected back in Time in an incorporeal state that allows them to witness historical crimes in situ without being observed themselves. For his first assignment, Axford is given perhaps the most famous cold case of them all – the Jack the Ripper murders.

Ironically, the time travel machinery used by Limbo seems rather antiquated, consisting of wearable ‘tin can’ communication devices that transmit text messages between the past and the present, and a dome-shaped Epoch Projector that wobbles like a jelly when it is switched on and shoots agents out of a chimney into the air. But I liked it! After considerable prep work and briefing, Axford finally arrives outside the Ten Bells in the early evening of 29 August 1888.

Matt Leyshon’s sense of period and place is convincing. Life in the East End is portrayed as short and brutish, beset with violence. Axford’s bodiless presence allows him immense freedom to explore in intimate detail the lives of the victims and the suspects. He is a sort of flâneur, detached from the East End throng rather than a participant: he stands over Mary Kelly and watches as she sleeps in Miller’s Court; he steps unseen into George Chapman’s dingy barber shop. Most horribly, he eavesdrops in a very creepy and macabre manner on the actual homicides. Axford has a list of possible suspects and as the novel progresses he whittles them down. But of course, things aren’t always what they seem. Axford discovers that another agent (operating in Interactive Mode) has already been sent into Whitechapel with a very different mission agenda – to conceal or obfuscate the identity of the Ripper rather than to solve the mystery. To make the cold case colder. What is going on?

Jack the Ripper: Live and Uncut can be enjoyed simply as a crime adventure yarn set in Victorian London, but the originality and the consistent ingenuity of the storytelling make this a deeply rewarding and sublime book on many levels. Time travel is integral to the plot, and the novel

intelligently explores the ramifications of this technology on the Ripper mystery. Appropriately, in an era of fake news, the author presents a multi-veiled tale full of deceits and forged documents and cryptic games. The book is filled with engaging characters whose passions drive them to acts of great evil and bravery, sacrifice and love. To survive they must not only battle their own demons, they must fight each other and face up to the ceaselessly hostile world of Jack the Ripper’s London.

Matt Leyshon has crafted an exciting thriller that combines 21st century time travel with the Jack the Ripper mystery. Impressively, it doesn’t just delve into the dark tenements and courtyards of Victorian London’s East End – it offers a moving story about loss and human evil that spans the centuries. *Jack the Ripper: Live and Uncut* is a cut above most Jack the Ripper crime and horror fiction.



IN THE NEXT ISSUE we review Sam Gafford’s *Whitechapel*, plus all the latest Ripper fiction.



A CONVERSATION WITH MATT LEYSHON

Matt Leyshon’s debut novel, *Jack the Ripper: Live and Uncut*, came out a few days ago (see review above). We caught up with the author and asked him a few questions about his book and Ripper studies in general. Interview conducted by email on 24 November 2017.

Q1. First off, can you tell us something about yourself and your background?

I was born and raised in Australia, where I lived for 32 years. I moved to Tampa, Florida in the US and have lived here since. I had an early affinity with the Jack the Ripper case and have been interested in it since my teens.

Q2. Have you always wanted to be a writer, or is it something that has crept up on you in recent years?

I was told by my first grade teacher to “write more stories” so you could say it started there. I guess she was fond of my tale of visiting a haunted house and eating chicken sandwiches. Throughout my life I have loved writing, harbouring an early ambition to be a journalist, and have received steady encouragement to write.

I’ve written a lot of poetry and made one other incredibly unsuccessful attempt at a novel before.

The catalyst for doing something serious about it came after I completed an online tutorial about writing conducted by James Patterson. It was the kick in the rear I needed! I realised that there were no excuses, a writer always finds time to write and that got me going on this