

Critics' and Writers' words on Michael Stanley books

Short Takes – A DEADLY COVENANT

“Edgar finalist Stanley’s excellent eighth mystery ... Stanley gets everything—the dialogue, the terrain descriptions, the plot beats—right. More prequels fleshing out this complex and endearing protagonist would be welcome.”

Publishers Weekly **starred review**

“*A Deadly Covenant* provides the reader with an exciting insight into crime in Botswana. A thoroughly enjoyable read.”

Alexander McCall Smith, worldwide best-selling author of the Mma Ramotswe novels set in Botswana.

“The unmatched beauty, spirit, and mystery of Africa never fails to come to life in Michael Stanley’s award-winning Botswana-based series. *A Deadly Covenant* is an irresistible page-turner and a powerful contribution to the Kubu saga.”

Jeffrey Siger, best-selling author

“I found *A Deadly Covenant* completely intriguing and engrossing, and the Bushman scenes fascinating. Vividly painted scenery, and I can feel the oppressive heat. Talk about Sunshine Noir!”

Kwei Quartey, best-selling author

Comments

"Michael Stanley presents a complex narrative, full of twists, turns and misdirection. It is a dark story of conspiracy, corruption and revenge, but Stanley leavens this with humour, and with characters that convince and engage. *A Deadly Covenant* is a real page turner, perfect for those who like their mysteries complex, and want something a little different."

Strand magazine

“The many threads that are successfully woven into one cloth by the talented Michael Stanley make for a very rich reading experience. This is one of the strongest novels in the series.”

Aunt Agatha’s

“A Deadly Covenant Earns 5/5 Water Spirits & Secrets...Engaging Must Read!...A top contender for my Best of 2022!”

Kathleen Costa, Kings River Life Magazine

“As has been common throughout the Detective Kubu series, Michael Stanley weaves together the core mystery and the landscape of Africa in magical ways. ... Here’s hoping for a few more “early” Kubu cases, as there is still so much to learn about this unique character, his colleagues, and the country he calls home.”

Bolo Books

"As engrossing as the investigation is, the icing on this very delicious "cake" is Kubu's courtship of his future wife, Joy. ... Any book featuring this detective from Botswana will be one to look forward to with a great deal of anticipation... and to savor every word once it is in my hands."

Kittling Books

"Not much like Precious Ramotswa's version of Botswana, the Botswana shown here is more realistic, with the intricacies and the contradictions to be expected of such an ancient land. The resolution is far more complex than I imagined, keeping me in suspense until the final pages. A fine addition to the series."

Aubrey Hamilton, Kevin's Corner

"Kubu, despite personal insecurities concerning love and social skills, sets his keen mind to work, absorbs, solves – gains confidence in handling police procedure, single-malt whiskey, and love."

Ethan Boatner, Lavender Magazine

"The sandy stretches of northern Botswana may appear simple but they have a complex past and a complicated present that will not yield to comfortable resolutions. Kubu is an excellent, if large, companion for readers entering his unfamiliar land."

Yvonne Klein, Reviewing the Evidence

"The intelligent writing and short, snappy chapters had me hooked from the outset, keeping me glued to the page from beginning to end. Kubu himself is a larger than life character who I couldn't help but fall more and more in love with as his story continued."

Cal Turner Reviews

"The combination of magical, the mystery and a much loved character together, meant I absolutely adore every signal page of the story."

Books Are My Cwtches Reviews

"I find the pacing of the books is just perfect, the mystery and tension pitched just right to keep me completely engaged by the story, but they always leave me wanting more."

Jen Med's Book Review

"*A Deadly Covenant* is a textured, layered novel with a strong narrative arc that brings together many threads and weaves them into a rich and colourful tapestry."

Live and Deadly

"*A Deadly Covenant* is more than a detective novel, although it is a very good detective novel. It is also an examination of the poison of racism and the power of greed. Secrets of evil deeds can sprout into future evil deeds, and none of us can truly escape our past."

Scintilla

"This was a fun, sometimes sardonic novel set in the Botswana desert, filled with interesting, sympathetic characters and enough twists and turns to intrigue the most avid mystery reader."

Ellenzreads

“A huge part of the fun is watching how the story unfolds as the authors weave together multiple threads to form a suspenseful and fascinating mystery!”

No More Grumpy Bookseller

"The roots to the mystery have been lain with the bones in the history of the region in a revelatory and multi-faceted story."

Fiction from Afar

“I never fail to enjoy a Detective Kubu book and *A Deadly Covenant* is another cracker. Loved it.”

Grab This Book

“Bravo, Michael Stanley, you have me absolutely hooked!”

On the Shelf Books

Short Takes – FACETS OF DEATH

Awards

Finalist for the Silver Falchion Award for Best Investigator, Killer Nashville 2021

Accolades

The Times and Sunday Times Crime Club Pick of the Week

Comments

“*Facets of Death* is easily one of the best heist novels I’ve read since Gerald Browne’s classic *11 Harrowhouse*.”

Bruce Tierney, BookPage **starred review**

“A thrilling and intriguing ride-along with Botswana’s number-one good-guy detective”

Tony Park, Best-selling author

“A thrilling and enthralling novel that is just so beautifully easy to read I raced through it while inhaling every word ... Set in 1998 *Facets of Death* is an atmospheric, intriguing, and wonderfully readable crime novel I most definitely recommend.”

Liz Robinson, Love Reading

“The local colour is as delightful as the intriguing investigation.”

The Times and Sunday Times Crime Club **Pick of the Week**

“Besides being an exciting police procedural, this book helps us understand this big, likable detective who loves food and singing arias when he’s alone. It should send readers unfamiliar with the series right to the bookstore.”

Marry Ann Grossmann, Pioneer Press

“Those who are familiar with Kubu will rejoice over this latest entry... As for readers who are new to Kubu and Botswana, *Facets of Death* functions as the perfect place to jump on. Every fan of mystery novels already should be reading and enjoying this series...”

Joe Hartlaub, Bookreporter

“I’d no more miss a Detective Kubu mystery than I would forget to brush my teeth in the morning. If you haven’t had the pleasure of meeting David “Kubu” Bengu, get your hands on a copy of *Facets of Death*. You can thank me later.”

Cathy Cole, Kittling Books

“The series you didn’t know you needed in your life ... an absolute joy.”

Nick Triplow, Grab This Book

“Parallels to Alexander McCall Smith ... are clear, but Kubu’s distinctive personality, juxtaposed against scenes of his country’s darker sides, help his adventures stand out.”
Adam Woog, The Seattle Times

“...between Kubu and Alexander McCall Smith’s Precious Ramotswe, the tradition of *botho*, humility, dignity, courtesy, and respect for others is upheld in all its richness, which makes for a reaffirming read every time.”
Jane Murphy, Booklist

“Entertaining... Series followers will enjoy the backstory.”
Publishers Weekly

Short Takes – SHOOT THE BASTARDS (North America) & DEAD OF NIGHT (outside North America)

“An extraordinary tale of the extreme measures taken to combat international poaching and smuggling.”

C.J. Box, bestselling author

“...an entertaining page-turner. Readers will look forward to the sequel.”

Publishers Weekly

“I love Crys Nguyen, an intrepid environmentalist, quick thinking and fearless. Although tiny, she fights way above her weight. With a bit of karate and a deep commitment to yoga and meditation, she is a young woman after my own heart. I can't wait to see what she gets herself mixed up in next time out.”

Susan Hoover, reviewingtheevidence.com

“It's an enthralling immersive read that won't disappoint.”

Lizzie Hays, Promoting Crime Fiction

“This story is brutal, brilliant and utterly breath-taking, my favourite of this writing duo so far... Totally stunning in every 'sense' of the word.”

Books from Dusk Till Dawn blog

“I don't think I caught my breath properly the whole time I was reading it. It is the best thriller that I have read in a long while.”

A Little Book Problem blog

“*Dead of Night* may belong with the darkest of Noir writing, but it is also utterly thrilling—multi-layered, skilfully executed, educational, thought-provoking, and ultimately a really satisfying read.”

TripFiction blog

Short Takes – DYING TO LIVE

Accolades:

One of The Strand Magazine's Top 25 Books of the Year

Comments:

“Stanley keeps the intriguing plot twists coming.”

Publishers Weekly starred review, August 2017

“...the best yet, with both an ingenious mystery and a deeper and more textured depiction of modern Botswana and Kubu's piece of it.”

Kirkus Reviews, August 2017

“Stanley once again mixes strongly developed characters, puzzling plot twists, and a textured African setting in an international police procedural with heart and soul.”

Library Journal starred review

“Beautifully constructed and wonderfully told... What propels the book, and wondrously so, is the mystery at the heart of it and the deep uniqueness of the personalities who move through the story, some from its beginning to its end and others momentarily, never to be seen again. The result is more than a great mystery. It is a tale for anyone and everyone who finds joy in reading that is well-written and lovingly so. This volume, like its companions, is a must for your bookshelf.”

Bookreporter, October 2017

“The book sustains the quality of earlier titles—in fact, I think the series may be getting better.”

Crime Review, July 2017

“This is a crime story with a generous dose of tenderness.”

Anna Stroud, Sunday Times

“This series is definitely on my to-read list, and if you want an entertaining, intelligent series that provides insight into life in Botswana, I'd highly recommend adding it to yours too.”

Criminal Element

Short Takes – A DEATH IN THE FAMILY

Comments

“Under the African sun, Michael Stanley’s Detective Kubu investigates crimes as dark as the darkest of Nordic Noir. Call it Sunshine Noir, if you will – a must read.”

Yrsa Sigurðardóttir

“Kubu returns with a vengeance – but what is prowling in the darkness of Botswana is more dangerous than the four-legged predators. Then there are the Chinese who just may be the most dangerous of all ... I love it!”

Charles Todd

“The lovable larger-than-life detective Kubu is back; frustrated this time because it is his father who has been murdered and he is banned from involvement in the investigation...Writers Michael Sears and Stanley Trollip deliver a great story set in Africa.”

Cape Times, August 9, 2015

“The fifth rip-roaring mystery in the Detective Kubu series. If you haven’t read the others, the lovable return characters, exceptional police procedural plot, and close-to-home Botswana setting will make you want to.”

Sunday Times, August 16, 2015

“Stanley and Kubu deserve much more critical and commercial attention than they have been receiving; hopefully this latest installment will rectify that shortcoming.”

Bookreporter, November 13, 2015

“This fifth mystery featuring Detective Kubu is another fast moving procedural notable for its warm characterizations and vivid sense of place.”

Booklist, September 15, 2015

“*A Death in the Family* is fast paced and gripping; Kubu’s frustration at his exclusion ups the tension, while his final lines offer a superb eulogy for Wilmon as a father and as a man.”

Lavender Magazine, October 1, 2015

“The Stanley novels deliver intricate plots and a cast of regulars well worth following.”

Kirkus Review

“...engrossing...As always Stanley brings to life a Botswana different from the one familiar to Alexander McCall Smith readers.”

Publishers weekly

“This is an involving and inventive series that introduces modern South Africa through the eyes of an endearing protagonist.”

St Paul Pioneer Press, October 23, 2015

“...a fantastically complex and artfully crafted plot that brings together political corruption, the incursion of foreign powers and companies in search of Botswana’s mineral wealth and the chilling, dangerous paths taken to satisfy greed.”

MumblingAbout, September 15, 2016

“I am loving this series!!!”

Bibliophile Book Club, September 1, 2016

“...the writing duo of Michael Stanley have already established a firm place on my 'must read' list.”

Rachel Hall Reviews, August 13, 2016

Short Takes – DEADLY HARVEST

Awards

Finalist for the International Thriller Writers Best Paperback Original for 2013

Accolades

The Strand Magazine Top 12 Mysteries for 2013

Comments

"...a fascinating police procedural," and "(it) is the most complex book in this series. Besides being an intricate crime puzzle that Kubu and his team must untangle, it also looks at societal issues."

St Paul Pioneer Press, April 28, 2013

"*Deadly Harvest* is number four in this fascinating crime series. Detective David "Kubu" Bengu is a wonderful creation, complex and beguiling. The exotic smells and sounds of Botswana fill the pages as well as the changes and struggles of a country brimming with modern technology yet fiercely clinging to old traditions. Compelling and deceptively written, it's the perfect summer read."

New York Journal of Books, April 30, 2013

"Tight plotting is seasoned with African culture and the uglier presence of political corruption, AIDS, and black magic. Detective Kubu is joined by Detective Samantha Khama, who helps unravel a mystery involving a witch doctor who is believable and utterly menacing."

Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, July 2013

"These darker, grittier entries featuring the portly and perceptive Detective Kubu blend intricate plotting and a compelling cast...Though the cat-and-mouse chase that ensues propels the novel ever forward, Stanley also peppers the tale with richly detailed descriptions of Botswana and the lively lives of its citizens."

Booklist May 1, 2013

"This book took me to a world I didn't want to leave. It kept me reading, it kept me guessing, and it kept me gasping at its many twists and surprises. Highly recommended."

R.L. Kline

"...richly atmospheric...gritty depiction of corruption and obsession"

Publishers Weekly Starred and boxed review, March 25, 2013

"...one of the finest crime thrillers of 2013..."

The Strand Mystery Magazine, Feb-May, 2013

“Deadly Harvest is a fantastic read, with a tense original story that draws you in and holds you enthralled from the first to the last page.”

The Library Door, September 22, 2016

“...a brilliantly written police procedural with a cast of chilling characters who draw you in from page one until the very end.”

Damp Pebbles, August 14, 2016

Short Takes – DEATH OF THE MANTIS

Awards

Winner Deadly Pleasures Barry Award for Best Paperback Original

Finalist Edgar Award for Best Paperback Original

Finalist Minnesota Book Awards in Genre Fiction

Finalist Anthony Award for Best Paperback Original

Accolades

Rated as Number 5 by The Strand Magazine in its selection of best 12 mysteries for 2011.

Library Journal top 10 mysteries for 2011

Comments

“...a must-read for anyone who enjoys clever plotting, terrific writing, and a fascinating glimpse of today’s Africa.”

Charles Todd, New York Times bestselling mystery author

“...the best book yet in one of the best series going... I loved this book.”

Timothy Hallinan author of *The Queen of Patpong* and *A Nail Through the Heart*

“...the best book I’ve read in a very long time...*Death of the Mantis* is a fantastic read. Brilliant!”

Louise Penny multiple award-winning author of the Inspector Gamache mysteries

“Impossible to put down, this immensely readable third entry from (Michael Stanley) delivers the goods. Kubu’s painstaking detecting skills make him a sort of Hercule Poirot of the desert.”

Library Journal starred review

“The information on the Bushmen ... is fascinating. Stanley does an exceedingly good job of presenting their plight and culture in an interesting and sympathetic manner. He also conveys the other characters, both black and white, in rich, multi-layered dimensions... a very readable novel that offers fascinating reflections on life in modern Botswana.”

The Canberra Times, November 5, 2011

“... *Death of the Mantis* is a wonderful piece of work, a novel that is quietly perfect in every way ...one of those rare books that transcends its rich genre. While there is a mystery at its core, it is also a study of the human condition, of the best and worst of people who do what they do for the best and worst of reasons. And Kubu is one of the best friends you will make between the pages of a book.”

Bookreporter October 27, 2011

“Most fascinating is that the story surrounds and reveals many of the ancient traditions and current ways of the Bushman in the red Kalahari ... you will want to keep reading about the desert and its prey to the very end.”

Cape Times June 3, 2011

“...the authors have created a solid plot and thrown in enough curved balls to keep you turning the pages. It is an absorbing read, made more enjoyable by a cast of characters you find yourself caring about from the beginning.”

Business Day June 21, 2011

“The authors have gone to great pains to achieve verisimilitude in this tale of misadventure in the Kalahari sands of Botswana ... Now with three Detective Kubu, a.k.a Rra David Bengu, crime-fiction thrillers out, a firm foundation has been set for many more.”

Mmegi Online June 10, 2011

“Kubu himself, intelligent, honourable, a fine detective, a loyal friend, and proud family man who delights in good food and drink, is always a pleasure. In him, Trollip and Sears have created a robust and believable series character... Full marks.”

The Witness July 20, 2011

“Alexander McCall Smith fans interested in a different take on modern-day Botswana will find it in the intriguing third mystery (from Michael Stanley)... The cultural conflict between the Bushmen and their fellow countrymen lends color.”

Publishers Weekly July 4, 2011

“As in the previous titles, Stanley creates a seamless and complex mystery, replete with the unique atmosphere of modern Botswana.”

Booklist August 1, 2011

Short Takes – THE SECOND DEATH OF GOODLUCK TINUBU:

“...brilliant sequel to last year’s *A Carrion Death*.... Stanley is not content with a single plot line, effectively juggling the murders with cross-border drug smuggling and the circumstances surrounding an upcoming African Union meeting. Kubu, a dedicated gourmand, is just one of many fully fleshed and charmingly realistic characters. ...each character is memorable and adds depth to this tense and involving police procedural.”
Booklist starred review May 1, 2009

“...a smart, satisfying, complex mystery.”
Entertainment Weekly - A rating – May 6, 2009

“Detective Kubu is a real discovery: he already feels like an enduring classic to add to the mystery canon.”
Killer Book Reviews Vol 6, 2009

“Following his spectacular debut, *A Carrion Death*, Stanley comes roaring back with an even better tale. Bringing a love of Africa similar to Alexander McCall Smith's popular "No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency" series, the author has created an excellent new venue for those who love to read about other cultures while enjoying a good mystery. Highly recommended.”
Library Journal Reviews April 1, 2009

“Kubu’s second case is as leisurely and well-appointed as the first... Stanley should satisfy all armchair travelers and most mystery fans.”
Kirkus Reviews, April 15, 2009

“It's the same country as Alexander McCall Smith's wildly popular No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency series -- but hardly the same territory. Stanley offers a lot more action "out bush," while delivering a tale every bit as evocative in its sense of a place and the people who live there.”
The Times Picayune, June 8, 2009

“Detective Kubu is a gift to mystery readers – he’s an instant classic.”
Ann Arbor Chronicle, 13 June, 2009

“Kubu...is without doubt the most engaging literary detective in Africa.”
The Weekender, 19 September, 2009

“I was gripped and entranced from the first page. A wonderful, original voice – McCall Smith with a dark edge and even darker underbelly.”
Peter James, bestselling British crime writer

Short Takes – A CARRION DEATH:

Awards

Finalist Crime Writers Association Debut Dagger Award
Finalist Minnesota Book Awards in Genre Fiction
Finalist Strand Magazine Critics Award for Best First Mystery
Finalist Mystery Readers International Macavity Award for Best First Mystery
Finalist Mystery News and Deadly Pleasures Barry Award for Best First Novel Other

Accolades

Los Angeles Times Top 10 Crime Novel for 2008

Comments

"The gritty Botswana depicted in Michael Stanley's "*A Carrion Death*" (Harper) differs from Alexander McCall Smith's gentler vision, but the jovial, corpulent Det. Kubu is a winning creation."

Los Angeles Times - December 7, 2008. Favorite Crime Novels of 2008

"A first novel saturated with local color. . . . Happily, Kubu is also hugely appealing—big and solid and smart enough to grasp all angles of this mystery. Readers may be lured to Africa by the landscape, but it takes a great character like Kubu to win our loyalty."

New York Times Book Review, April 13, 2008

"This first novel, awash in local color, centers around shady business at a diamond mine and the land claims of the Kalahari Bushmen..."

New York Times Book Review – Paperback Row Review, April 26, 2009

"Delightful. . . . Plot twists are fair and well-paced, the Botswana setting has room to breathe and take shape as its own entity, and Stanley's writing style is equal parts sprightly and grave."

Los Angeles Times Book Review

"Characters in this first outing are utterly believable, for good or ill. . . . Kubu himself is a marvellous creation, his distinctive characteristics. . . as well considered as the plot. . . . This is a marvellous debut, and with any luck, Kubu's next outing will be as filling and tasty as one of the large man's dream meals."

Boston Globe April 14, 2008

"The intricate plotting, a grisly sense of realism and numerous topical motifs . . . make this a compulsively readable novel."

Publishers Weekly (starred review), February 25, 2008

"[A] fast-moving story... Rich with the atmosphere of modern Botswana, and peopled with interesting and well-drawn characters, this is an exciting debut."

Booklist, February 1, 2008

“Kubu follows in the literary footsteps of ... brilliant male detective with a love of classical music, a palate for good food and fine wine, distant but compassionate, who solves crimes with reason and resolve. . . . This is a deliciously satisfying first mystery.”

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, April 19, 2008

“This well-plotted debut introduces a new mystery series and will enthrall readers...”

Library Journal, March 1, 2008

“...David "Kubu" Bengu of the Botswana C.I.D.—is more exotic still, and in ways that continue to surprise and delight from beginning to end ...”

Ellenville Shawangunk Journal/Sullivan County Democrat (NY State), March 26, 2009

“There are diabolically cunning tricks to deceive the cops, but Kubu is not to be fooled, in a plot climaxing in a series of whizz-bang surprises.”

The Scotsman, November 29, 2008

“A *Carrion Death* is that perfect combination of ‘I don’t want it to end’ and ‘I can’t put it down’. Great African crime fiction.”

Deon Meyer, leading South African crime writer