



Dead Men's Trousers

Irvine Welsh

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Mark Renton is finally a success. An international jet-setter, he now makes significant money managing DJs, but the constant travel, airport lounges, soulless hotel rooms and broken relationships have left him dissatisfied with his life. He's then rocked by a chance encounter with Frank Begbie, from whom he'd been hiding for years after a terrible betrayal and the resulting debt. But the psychotic Begbie appears to have reinvented himself as a celebrated artist and – much to Mark's astonishment – doesn't seem interested in revenge.

Sick Boy and Spud, who have agendas of their own, are intrigued to learn that their old friends are back in town, but when they enter the bleak world of organ-harvesting, things start to go so badly wrong. Lurching from crisis to crisis, the four men circle each other, driven by their personal histories and addictions, confused, angry – so desperate that even Hibs winning the Scottish Cup doesn't really help. One of these four will not survive to the end of this book. Which one of them is wearing Dead Men's Trousers?

Fast and furious, scabrously funny and weirdly moving, this is a spectacular return of the crew from *Trainspotting*.

Dead Men's Trousers Details

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Author : Irvine Welsh

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From Reader Review Dead Men's Trousers for online ebook

Ross Cumming says

Ever since reading Trainspotting, all those years ago, I've been a huge fan of Irvine Welsh and especially of his novels involving the main protagonists from that first novel.

In this the latest and apparently last novel in the series, the gang, now all in middle age are thrown together for one last enterprise.

Mark Renton (Rents/Rent Boy) is now manager to a small stable of club DJ's and spends his life on planes and in hotels, seeing to their every need.

Simon Williamson (Sick Boy) is based in London and owns a dating agency or shagging agency, where he links up young up and coming professionals basically for sex. He himself is still addicted to sex and will dive at the chance to get it on with whoever any chance he can get.

Begbie, as we learned from The Blade Artist, is outwardly apparently a reformed character and is now Jim Francis, artist and sculptor living in California with his wife and two young daughters.

Danny Murphy (Spud) is the only one still living in Edinburgh and is still an addict, spending his days begging on the street for change.

Begbie reunites the group in order to produce a work of the four old pals heads cast in bronze for an upcoming exhibition in the city not before Sick Boy and Spud have fallen under the grip of local gangster Syme who has them embroiled in a human organ smuggling operation. Welsh also works the novel around Hib's historic Scottish Cup win with him and the fictional characters all being supporters of the club. The novel also features several cameo appearances from characters from the previous novels including Mikey Forrester and the hilarious Juice Terry.

The story builds to a thrilling climax which is both tragic, life affirming and a bit sentimental.

I loved this book as for me Welsh is a true voice of Scottish writing. I'm not from Edinburgh but I can recognise similar characters from my own life echoed in these pages, albeit Welsh magnifies the characters to larger than life proportions. He also captures the spirit of Scottishness brilliantly in his characters, especially where we like to downplay our abilities. The writing is very funny and there are always quotes that I come across that I try to remember but never do. Welsh's writing is also very crude and the violence and sex scenes are very graphic but hey you wouldn't be reading this book if you knew otherwise. Must admit I'm sad to see the end of Rents, Sick Boy, Begbie and Spud but hopefully the individual characters may still pop up in Welsh's future publications.

Ian Mapp says

Picking up from the exact spot at the end of The Blade Artist. Renton meets Begbie.

Its not long before the whole trainspotting gang are back - Sick Boy, Spud Murphy and Juice Terry dominating the early part of the books.

The sleeve overview of the book sets the scene and reveals that not all of them are going to make it to the end of the book - so this is not a spoiler. It's fun to work through the well constructed, often hilarious set pieces trying to determine who it is that will be lost. I won't give away spoilers.

And that's what this is - a series of well constructed set pieces that moves the book forward and links back quite well to the Blade Artist Story. Sick Boy's brother-in-law gets into rather a lot of bother at the family

Xmas celebrations - all caused by SB's liberal sprinkling of MDMA in his drink on a Xmas Eve. Everything conspires to work forward from that moment - all roads leading to Berlin and a hilarious Turkish Anesthetist.

Usual Irvine motifs are all here - what binds friends since childhood, raging against both the dying light and the machine. There is a wonderful eulogy at the funeral scene. At least better than the one Juice Terry attempted in an earlier book.

Most of the action is cartoon outlandish and I still can't get my head around the calculating Begbie - but this is a joy of a book that will make you howl with laughter.

I doubt it will be the end of the characters in written form. Things are wrapped up rather nicely and you do wonder where it goes from here.

Wherever it is, I will be there.

effie says

Well, Irvine Welsh's still got it!

I'm in the greatest position to say that this book is worthy of its predecessors and, what's more, it's exhilarating, action-packed and, all in all, an ultimate joy. I enjoyed most parts of it. It's almost like Welsh created these characters so solidly that he's lived with them ever since. As a result, when the time comes to write down their thoughts and situations, they say no word less or more or any different than you would expect them to. I was very emotional reading through the epilogue (and some other parts as well, but this will be a non-spoiler review). A decent sequel to keep you on your toes, a hundred per cent recommended to everyone who's loved Trainspotting, Porno, Skagboys and Blade Artist.

Kat says

"No friends in this game" :(

F says

LOVED this book!

Great to be reunited with my favourite boys again.

Did not disappoint.

Good laughs and feels!!!

Brian says

Completely implausible, but undeniably entertaining.

Angus McKeogh says

Great stuff! I love Welsh. It was love at first read when I went through Trainspotting in the 90s. It was so out there at first in how it was written but then the voice just locks into your heid...uh...I mean head and thereafter it's smooth sailing and brilliant. After Trainspotting I've gone on to read pretty much everything Welsh has written. This series that keeps popping up is classic. Skagboys unfortunately seemed forced and contrived and ended up boring me to death. But this one is a bit of a return to where I thought The Blade Artist took the story. Much better plotting. Better stuff. I thought this one was great.

Adam McPhee says

Ah fuckin hate the way some American cunts call lassies cunts. Fuckin offensive, that shite.

Better than Filth and Porno, just behind Glue and Skagboys.

I loved it. Though I can see why the critics don't, especially if they're expecting Trainspotting 3. It's Welsh's turn to the cartoonish that makes his books so great, that and the essayistic digressions disguised as stream-of-consciousness ramblings. Anyone expecting harrowing junkie trauma probably shouldn't have read Trainspotting in the first place.

The cartoonishness was best on display in the (view spoiler) and then literally during the (view spoiler)

New definitive ranking of the novels of Irvine Welsh:

1. Skagboys
2. Glue
3. Trainspotting
4. Dead Men's Trousers
5. Filth
6. Porno
7. A Decent Ride
8. The Blade Artist
9. The Sex Lives of Siamese Twins
10. Marabou Stork Nightmares
11. Crime
12. The Bedroom Secrets of the Master Chefs

Highlights:

(view spoiler)

(view spoiler)

(view spoiler)

(view spoiler)

(view spoiler)

Rachel Halls says

I was 15 when I first read *Trainspotting* back in the 90s and it led to an Irvine Welsh obsession, with me reading every single book he's written without fail. Even once I started hating them. Like many, I am compelled to find out what happens to Renton, SickBoy, Spud and Begbie- but I'm just disappointed every time. I just don't believe any of it... *Trainspotting* and *Scagboys* - yes. But *The Blade Artist* and now *Dead Mens Trousers* just don't ring true. I struggle to believe this group of ex skag heads (bar Spud) have all financially (but not morally) come good. The events of both books are just ridiculous.

I wanted to re-read *Trainspotting* but I'm afraid it might ruin it for me and I might just find out that it was never as good as I first thought.

JK says

At the end of *The Blade Artist*, I was crapping it to find out what was happening next. After ending on a totally *holy shit* moment, Welsh picks up *Dead Men's Trousers* from that precise point - thank fuck.

I love these boys, and reading this book was murder. Desperate to just zoom through, to inhale the violence, the shagging, the plots, the revenge, I forced myself to go as slowly as possible and savour every moment. It was torture.

Where *The Blade Artist* focuses on Begbie, showing us how he believes he's changed, then highlighting how he hasn't changed at all, *DMT* finally gets all of the boys back together again - successful, off the skag, but still inherently the same boys they were when we first met them in *Trainspotting*. The old grudges are still there, their knee-jerk reactions are the same; Begbie's still a psycho, Renton's still battling demons, Sick Boy's still a selfish conceited shagger, and Spud - Spud is still that golden-hearted wee boy in a fifty year

old's body.

Seeing them all behave exactly as we would expect them to was gorgeous; seeing them do things we would never have cooked up in a million years was total fucking chaos. Organ harvesting, STDs, new hallucinogenic drugs, homewrecking, and, most inconceivably, our favourite catboy has got himself *a dug*. The pace was incredible.

We knew from social media (and, indeed, from the above blurb), that one of the boys wasn't going to survive the novel. Although it doesn't happen until the book is almost over, the finger points to one of them pretty quickly. You think you've cracked it until the boys start to turn on one another, and you really have no idea who is heading to the Embra in the sky. The tension was unreal, and when it finally happened I cried like a big embarrassment for about forty minutes. When I then realised where the title came from, it set me off again for another half an hour.

I can't see myself ever saying otherwise, but Welsh has played yet another blinder. Another speeding headfuck from my favourite band of former skagheeds.

"Ye dinnae fuck about wi me n what's mine, mate."

Krista says

You're nothing but a work-in-progress until that day you fall out of this world into the land ay dead men's trousers.

Because I read most of the books in this series before I joined Goodreads, I want to start with: I thought that Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* was an absolutely brilliant book – full of heart and laughs and subversive social commentary, amped up with a transgressive frisson and artfully dense dialect – and that *Skagboys* was a powerfully heartbreaking prequel. On the other hand, I found the sequel *Porno* to be campy and shallow, and the recent continuing saga of *The Blade Artist* to have been a disappointing betrayal of Welsh's world: what reader wants Begbie to be a buttoned-down straight citizen? Now with *Dead Men's Trousers*, we reconnect with the rest of the gang as they approach fifty years old, and as they jet around the world commenting on the evils of neoliberalism, Welsh seems to have become disconnected from everything that was subtle and engaging and true about his own characters; sure, people should grow up (and I'm glad none of the lads are skagboy Jakeys anymore), and it's good to revisit these storylines and see how details from a few books ago have played out, but this book adds nothing to the furtherance of truth; there's no art here.

I'm giddy with shock. My sweaty palm reaches into my pocket tae the comforting bottle of Ambien. This is not my auld mate and deadly nemesis, Francis James Begbie. The horrible possibility dawns on me: perhaps I've been living ma life in fear ay a man who no longer exists.

As the book begins, Renton (now a world-travelling manager of House Music DJs) runs into Begbie on a transatlantic flight, and as Begbie calmly introduces his old frenemy (after all, Renton ripped the old

psychopath off and left him for dead) to his stunning American wife, Renton isn't sure if he can trust in his old friend's newfound serenity. But as they both now have homes in California, they begin to socialise and Renton attempts to pay Begbie back for old debts. In shifting POVs, we also catch up with Sick Boy (now the owner of a high-class escort agency) and Spud (still a loveable loser, but getting by the best he can), and as the four eventually all cross paths again for the first time in decades, Renton finds himself forced to pay off even more debts (which leads him to plead poverty despite a first class lifestyle and homes on two continents). Characters get drawn into some campy (but enjoyable) crime capers, there is plenty of sex, experimentation with new drugs, and giving the boots to the wideos that deserve it, but the whole enterprise lacks heart. Most disappointingly, the political commentary that was indirect but so effective in *Trainspotting* is now constant and in-your-face, with both Renton and Sick Boy having these incongruous thoughts:

- Fear is an emotion best not expressed. Once acknowledged, it spreads like a virus. It's ruined our politics: the controllers have been dripping it into us for decades, making us compliant, turning us against each other, while they rape the world.
- I fight through the blocked-off roads into Soho. The IRA or ISIS never created anything like as much chaos and demoralisation in London as the neo-liberal planet-rapists with their corporate vanity construction projects.
- Global commercialism has compelled the Scots tae pretend tae like Christmas, but we're genetically programmed tae rebel against it.
- They were nice lads and the fact that they're in soldier uniform is constant proof that a nation state isnae a kind of construct if you urnae rich.

But everyone other than Spud is comparatively rich – most especially the Miami-based Welsh himself – and they all spend their time in pursuit of the “more” that will finally fill their empty spaces. Other than for the tying up of some old loose ends, *Dead Men's Trousers* is a fairly pointless read. Even so, every now and then, Welsh throws in an old school passage that made me smile:

The stewardess, not the lovely Jenny I was chatting tae, but a low-rent, pleb-serving, varicose-veined battleaxe, bike-rode into decrepitude over decades by the few hetero pilots, without even a hint of a sparkler thrown into the mix, is right over, her crabbit pus rammed into my coupon.

I may have been disappointed, again, but if Welsh writes another in the series, I'll probably pick it up, again.

Nigeyb says

Inventive, outrageous, funny, and life reaffirming

Since reading 'Trainspotting', when it came out in 1993, I have read all of Irvine Welsh's books and, to one degree or another, enjoyed them all, so - full disclosure - I came to 'Dead Men's Trousers' as a massive and long time fan of Irvine Welsh's work.

A new book by Irvine Welsh is always cause for celebration. When it's the next instalment of the Trainspotting saga even more so. This is the fifth instalment and fellow long time readers will doubtless share my strong emotional attachment to Renton, Sick Boy, Spud, and Begbie.

'Dead Men's Trousers' is for the faithful and would make little sense to anyone not steeped in the story and the characters. New readers need to rewind back to the beginning. For the Welsh faithful, this is right up there with the rest of the Trainspotting series and is variously inventive, outrageous, hilarious, touching, and is, in short, a life reaffirming read.

From the off this delivers. The prologue features Renton's worst nightmare, a chance meeting with Begbie on a plane, and so we're up and running.... Renton and his DJ management company - a hellish existence; a recap of Begbie's life (from 'The Blade Artist') & specifically the obsessed cop who loves Begbie's wife & is convinced she's married a psycho; Sick Boy, spiking his very straight brother in law with MDMA; and poor old Spud on his uppers. Then it's 400 more glorious pages of incident-laden plot with the usual highs, lows, and frequent hilarity. All life his here. Absolutely wonderful.

So what's in store? Drugs, sex, violence, profanity, scams, murder, organ harvesting, prostitution, football, jeopardy, friends making up, friends falling out, family loyalties, revenge, Brexit, music, clubbing, death, tragedy, STDs, blackmail, abuse, euphoria, and even that doesn't cover it all. It's genius.

5/5

Sam Berry says

Well, it was a fun read for sure, and for the most part it's lovely and nostalgic being back in the heads of Renton, Sick Boy, Begbie, and Spud. But it's also far removed from the books that made you care about this world and these characters. It's better than the Blade Artist, but is similarly cartoonish, over the top, and removed from reality. I can feel Irvine Welsh has a great time writing it, so fair play to him. I suppose it's a pretty great "holiday book".

Reading Badger says

It is no surprise to you that I am a devoted Irvine Welsh fan. For me, every book he releases is like a new series from my favourite show. The first book I read was Trainspotting, and I fell in love with the characters, the atmosphere, everything. So when I heard that a new book with Renton, Sick Boy, Spud and Begbie was up for grabs, it was on my pre-order list right away.

The story left off at the end of Porno, with Begbie trying to kill Renton, and Renton scamming Sick Boy out of a lot of money. Dead man's trousers begins in 2015, with Renton, now a successful DJ Manager, when

he encounters Begbie (now a big time artist in LA, with a beautiful wife and two kids) on a transatlantic flight. Rather than the death threats he expected, Renton finds Begbie with a zen-like attitude.

Read our review: <https://readingbadger.club/2018/09/07...>

Isaac L says

I give up.

Another entry in the Trainspotting saga had my hopes high that Welsh might have returned to form after the slew of forgettable books he's churned out in the past decade or so. I was disappointed. If it wasn't for Skagboys, I might well be considering the idea that Trainspotting was indeed ghostwritten by Spud Murphy. Hell, maybe this is Welsh trying to tell us something? Unfortunately, this also has me questioning whether the other books are as good as I remember them being - a question which I'm sure will answer itself in due course.

Gone are most of the things which made Welsh great in the first place - the original cultural references, the Scots dialect, the counter-culture/drugs scene, basically anything distinctively to do with contemporary Scottish life. Dead Men's Trousers, like The Blade Artist, feels extremely Americanised (or at least obviously written by an author who no longer spends his time with the people and places he writes about - someone who is out of touch, to say the least). I think this might be one of the bigger reasons why his more recent work fails to hit the mark.

Stock semi-political jargon like 'neoliberalism' is thrown around throughout the book, without any attempt to portray or actually tackle the political reality these words are aiming to attack (a classic case of telling, not showing). Something, which ought to be noted, that Trainspotting did very well indirectly and that Skagboys pulled off quite nicely in a more direct fashion. A sort of template for language - a stock hackneyed-phrase generator, if you will - seems to occur often so that, while Welsh's phrasing is not cliché, it still feels like you've read it all before; it's not original, or clever (and, boy, does it think it's clever).

Most of the characters are flush with cash and have no discernible need - not real need anyway - seeming to kind of bounce off the walls wherever they go, with no significant danger or repercussions for their actions. More than this, a lot of characters' actions don't fit - not just with who the characters were in previous novels, but who they are within the internal context of this one; they are utterly changeable to the whims of the plot (e.g. Begbie to-ing and fro-ing from good guy to psycho and back whenever it suits the storyline). To top it off, the constant flying back and forth between countries every chapter gives the novel a strong feeling of vacancy and disconnection (and not the effective, intentional Bret Easton Ellis kind). Dead Men's Trousers feels like a mad dash through a pre-determined series of events rather than the exploration of character, circumstance and setting which astute readers and fans of the original might be seeking. And the events themselves alternate between the mundane and ham-fisted attempts at shock and revulsion, all of which are narratively confused.

The jet-setting, the money and the lack of a fixed locale only serve to show that Welsh is wealthy and living a different life now (and, unfortunately, do nothing for the writing). He no longer understands the everyday Scot. And, make no mistake: this. is. what. made. him. good. The brilliance of Trainspotting was that it accurately captured some of the lives and a lot of the emotional and social baggage of several generations of

Scottish society. This does not.

With *Dead Men's Trousers*, Welsh shows no interest in good - or remotely literary - fiction, writing in a fashion more akin to the ten-a-penny airport genre paperback than someone who came within a bawhair of winning the Booker prize. It feels rushed, it feels superficial, and the writing itself feels bare-bones and first-draft. This is not to say there are errors (I only saw about two overall), it's more that there's a distinct lack of craft and effort, like an author who churns out a title every year to keep the ATM reading six figures and above.

All of this is not to say that the book doesn't have its moments. The novel is a page-turner for several brief stints in the second half, there are moments of levity at times when Welsh hit the nail on the head again with the right turn of phrase or piece of undeniable Scottishness, and the use of illustrations is an innovative addition. But they are a rope of pearls in a slum. The good moments are fewer and farther between than what is needed to make this a worthwhile read.
