



## Dixie Noir

*Kirk Curnutt*

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## **Dixie Noir** Kirk Curnutt

He wanted redemption....But could he keep clean in the Dirty South?

When disgraced former Alabama football star Ennis Skinner is released from prison after ten years, all he wants is to make his amends. Earning forgiveness isn't easy in an unforgiving town like Montgomery, Alabama, however—not in a Southern capital still haunted by its complicated legacy as the birthplace of both the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement. Ennis is no sooner reunited with his ailing father—a one-time hero in the Movement—than he is drawn into investigating the disappearance of the daughter of the dead girlfriend responsible for his downfall. As a vulnerable nineteen-year-old incapable of distinguishing fantasy from reality, this girl—nicknamed “Dixie”—may just hold the key to mysteries that will determine whether Montgomery will put its past to rest by electing its first-ever African American mayor....

As Ennis's search for Dixie becomes a quest for personal redemption, he encounters a colorful cast of characters, each with his or her own peculiar ties to Alabama history: High C, the methamphetamine cook-cum-hometown publishing magnate whom Ennis tried to kill a decade earlier; Walk Compson, the “Great Man” of history who returns to the fight for racial equality after a curious period of self-exile; Amory Justice, the incumbent mayor who, with his dirty-tricks loving daughter, Reese—known locally as “the Kudzu Ann Coulter”—will go to any length to stay in power; and, finally, Red, the Zelda Fitzgerald-quoting painter whose body art represents a uniquely alluring effort to exorcise the demons of the South....

At once fast-paced and character driven, *Dixie Noir* is as sticky and overheated as an August afternoon in the land of cotton.

## **Dixie Noir Details**

Date : Published December 1st 2009 by Five Star (ME) (first published November 2009)

ISBN : 9781594148217

Author : Kirk Curnutt

Format : Hardcover 291 pages

Genre : Fiction, Mystery, Noir

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## **From Reader Review Dixie Noir for online ebook**

### **Jason says**

A peach of a crime novel. With peach pit. It's tangy and smartassed good fun and then you lose a tooth. Twisty in the classic sense (which is not to say it didn't load up some nice surprises), and you'll have a blast even if all you want is to listen to a great musician play the hell out of some familiar chords.

But what I particularly loved are the ways King™ Curnutt weaves in other obsessions (Zelda F, a thick description of Montgomery and the contemporary South, the lingering and evolving complexities of race relations) and an abiding love for being mouthy.

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### **Georgiann Hennelly says**

When Ennis Skinner a disgraced former Alabama football star is released from prison after ten years, he just wants to make amends to people he hurt. And get on with his life. But earning forgiveness isn,t easy. Especially in Monttgomery Alabama the birth place of both the Civil war and the Cival rights movement. He is no sooner reunited with his ailing father , a one time hero in the movement than he is drawn into investigating the disappearance of the daughter of his dead girlfriend who was responsible for his down fall. Will he be able to find her in time?

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### **Erin says**

A pleasant surprise with lots of twists! I felt Ennis' drive to redeem himself from his past life, only to get caught up in a scandal that was too much for him to handle. Despite doing some awful things in the past, Ennis was good at heart. His father told him, "You remember what I used to say about expectations? I used to say you were a victim of too many high ones... I put them on you, and you cracked. Everybody deserves redemption. But redemption is about expectations, too.... You'll only ever get one second chance, Ennis". This is so true! I truly enjoyed this one! I hope to read more of Curnutt's work.

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### **Books Ring Mah Bell says**

What a great escape! I mean, reading this book and unplugging from the real world...

Presented with an amazingly colorful (heh) group of characters, I could not help but root for the bad guy ex-con turned renegade with a purpose! Oh, and how loathsome was High C!?!?! (loved how he got his name, btw)

The whole story made twist and turns when I least expected it to, and the ending was NOT at all how I thought it'd go. I do love surprises.

I also love how the author's sense of humor shines thru - "Kudzu Ann Coulter"; along with his passion for all things Fitzgerald...

I also liked the subtle shout out to Michigan.

Your Petoskey stone is in the mail, Shat.  
Thank you so much for the *very* pleasant distraction!

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### **Dennis Willingham says**

Enjoyable, fast paced thriller. Good, but not well written enough to be great and not cheezy enough to be a noir homage. Had all the right elements, but they never quite jelled for me, Ennis never seemed desperate enough and it was too easy for him to be the hero. I would say his character should have been developed in much greater detail, but it seemed the author was limited by the length of the book and maybe the desire to keep the plot moving. I thought the character with the most potential was dead before the story began but she made quite an impression in her few cameos, I hope Faye's story will be his next book.

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### **Michele says**

A really fast paced read that I truly enjoyed and will definitely read again. I didn't want to put the book down it was that good.

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### **Leann says**

What a great book! Not what I was expecting at all, but was very pleasantly surprised with this story. Lots of unexpected twists & turns. You won't be able to put this one down! I'll definitely be looking for more books by Curnutt & recommending this one to friends!

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### **Dan Burt says**

With the literary equivalent of Southern jiu-jitsu, Dixie Noir grabs readers by their gi and launches them full speed into the story. Readers will be so breathless by the end they'll feel like they've fought off an army of ninjas. Now bow to your sensei! (Note: this is not a martial arts novel).

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### **Nicole says**

Ennis Skinner hasn't even been out of prison for a day when trouble finds him. An old drug supplier forces him to look for a lost girl, Dixie, and won't take no for an answer. Soon Ennis is trapped in a mystery so

convoluted, it's difficult to tell who's legit and who's waiting for the opportunity to stab him in the back. It's surprising how many people are involved in Dixie's disappearance: from the local drug supplier turned publisher, to the local restaurant owner, and even the mayoral candidates for the upcoming election, everybody seems to have played a part in Dixie's disappearance and nobody wants to help Ennis find out what happened to her.

Dixie Noir is an edge-of-your-seat thrill-fest... Just when you think you have a handle on what's going on and which direction the story will head, Curnutt throws something in out of the blue that's totally unexpected. The story only takes place over the span of one week, but the amount of action involved could span a person's lifetime. Curnutt's writing is crafted in such a way that you actually care about the characters and the conclusion of the story, which is rare in most novels. Not only that, but Curnutt leaves you with an ending that will blow your mind.

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### **Scott says**

Very quick moving. A page turner. The ending capped a fun and interesting read. The author sent a personalized copy, which was very cool. Thanks.

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### **Sarah says**

[image error]

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### **Sarah says**

I love hardboiled crime fiction and this book has it all: tough, anti-heroic amateur sleuth with a past, beautiful femme fatale, twists, turns, red herrings, shoot-em-ups, liquor, drugs, burritos, sex, greed, politics, urine, jizz, blood, and baseball.

And holy freaking poo, Kirk Curnutt can write an ending.

\*Signed & inscripted by author\*

\*ARC\*

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### **Amanda O'Donnell says**

*When disgraced former Alabama football star Ennis Skinner is released from prison after ten years, all he wants is to make his amends. Earning forgiveness isn't easy in an unforgiving town like Montgomery, Alabama, however—not in a Southern capital still haunted by its complicated legacy as the birthplace of both the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement. Ennis is no sooner reunited with his ailing father—a one-time hero in the Movement—than he is drawn into investigating the disappearance of the daughter of the dead girlfriend responsible for his downfall. As a vulnerable nineteen-year-old incapable of distinguishing fantasy from reality, this girl—nicknamed “Dixie”—may just hold the key to mysteries that will determine*

## Jason says

I'm not generally in the habit of reading books written by people I'm friendly with, because then I'm always afraid the book is going to suck and I'll be forced to either lie to the friend about what I think of his book, or worse, tell him the truth and then feel horribly guilty about it afterwards. And plus, if the book is going to suck (which it invariably will if one of my dumb friends wrote it), then there's also the added issue of me spending my time reading something I doubt I'll even like. I mean, it isn't as though I have all the free time in the world, right? Can't I at least spend that time reading books that I think will be interesting?

Well, a few months ago Curnutt wrote a short biographical fiction piece called "I, Jozan" for *Map Literary*, a contemporary writing journal published by William Paterson University. It's about—and if you know Kirk you won't be remotely surprised—F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald. (He's sort of a Fitzgerald junkie, to put it mildly.) (To put it non-mildly, he's vice president of the F. Scott Fitzgerald Society.) (Yeah, I know, seriously.) Anyway, the story caught my attention, not just for its subject matter, which has to do with an affair Zelda allegedly has with a French pilot named Edouard Jozan during her marriage to Fitzgerald, but also for its writing quality. I was delighted! Curnutt struck a remarkable balance, painting Fitzgerald in somewhat of a negative light (for the purpose of the story) while still allowing the awe he has for the Fitzgerald family to shine through. Here's the story, by the way, in case you want to read it.

And that's when I decided to take a chance with one of the guy's novels. I picked *Dixie Noir*, probably because it was on sale and I'm a total cheapskate, and do you know what I discovered? This book is great! It is essentially a Southern crime novel and though it does start off with a bit of a hardboiled edge, it finds its groove as more of a crime thriller, I think, in the form of someone like Tom Franklin. But I say "essentially," because it also has some literary elements and, of course, an intertextual tribute to Zelda Fitzgerald's own writings. (I'm not even kidding. This guy needs, like, serious help.) Curnutt, a Montgomery resident, bases his story there and, just as he does with Scotty Fitz in "I, Jozan," effectively unites the flaws he sees in his city with a competing amount of admiration that he can't help but have for it, as well.

*"I love this city. I believe that Montgomery's contribution to America lies in its complexity, the fact that this is the birthplace of both the Civil War and of Civil Rights. Everybody wants to resolve the opposing forces that those two things represent, but they can't be resolved, and they shouldn't be, because they're the yin and yang of America."*

I drove through Montgomery once, about twelve years ago, and while the particulars of it escape me, I recall feeling as though I were passing through the epitomical center of the nation's Deep South. Which I suppose in a way I *was*. And now that I've read this book, I wonder if I might not have a better appreciation for a city that is home to such a dizzying array of American history, dizzying not just by the volume of its history but by the sometimes dualistic nature of it.

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## Kim says

Wikipedia defines 'Noir Fiction' as "Hardboiled crime fiction is a literary style distinguished by an unsentimental portrayal of crime, violence, and sex."

Otter Penzler of The Huffington Post states "I am constantly baffled by the fact that a huge number of those readers don't seem to know what noir fiction is"

and

"Look, noir is about losers. The characters in these existential, nihilistic tales are doomed. They may not die, but they probably should, as the life that awaits them is certain to be so ugly, so lost and lonely, that they'd be better off just curling up and getting it over with. And, let's face it, they deserve it. "

Allan Guthrie (???) lists what he considers to be some of the best noir fiction:

BRAIN GUY Benjamin Appel  
DOUBLE INDEMNITY James M Cain  
KISS THE BLOOD OFF MY HANDS Gerald Butler  
THE BROTHERHOOD OF VELVET David Karp  
HOME IS THE SAILOR Day Keene  
WAKE UP TO MURDER Day Keene  
IF THE COFFIN FITS Day Keene  
THE DAMNED John D MacDonald  
THE KILLER INSIDE ME Jim Thompson  
YOU'LL GET YOURS Thomas Wills  
NOTORIOUS Day Keene  
THERE WAS A CROOKED MAN Day Keene  
HOMICIDAL LADY Day Keene  
THE SEARCHERS Alan Le May  
ROGUE COP William P McGivern  
THE BROTHERS RICO Georges Simenon  
BLOOD MERIDIAN Cormac McCarthy  
SHOCK CORRIDOR Michael Avallone  
THE GRIFTERS Jim Thompson  
GOODNIGHT MOOM Jack MacLane

And so on.... (if you want the full list: <http://www.allanguthrie.co.uk/pages/n...>)

I have read maybe 3 from his list of 200. I don't remember them. I've seen more film adaptations (maybe a dozen) and I sort of get it. The definition of what 'noir' is but I really never gave a thought to it being a genre. This is my ignorance, I accept it. (You have to admit that some of those are 'first-rate' titles, though.)

So, knowing this.... I delved into Dixie Noir. As I've made clear (I hope)--This is not my usual literary fodder and I went into this knowingly. Kirk, I find it easier to just address this review to you... Let's begin.

This is a story about Ennis Skinner (Q.1: Is it E-nis like The Dukes of Hazzard or Eh-nis, like Dennis without the D,Kirk? I read it like Enis... if it's wrong, it may actually change my whole opinion of this character.. Names are important) who definitely fits the above definition. He is a **L-O-S-E-R**. -- Beck's got nothing on this guy. What I'm not used to though, and what won my heart, is that he steps up and owns it. He's all about making amends and shit. He knows that he's fucked up and has adopted the motto 'Do No Bad'-- that's awesome. Seriously, who doesn't look to blame someone for the urine stained deck of nudie cards he's been dealt?

*"I've grown up since the last time. Your line of sight changes when you look at thing with a higher moral eye. I'm still getting used to the angles up here."*

I love this line.

So, Ennis is just a baby doll in my eyes. He really can't do no wrong in my world. THIS might have been a problem for the plot. I mean, I think that you're meant to feel for him and all that, but I just wanted to take him home and make him a cup of hot chocolate and tell him he can live rent free with me until he gets back on his feet. I'd totally enable him. (Q2: This isn't what you were looking for in a reader--were you, Kirk?)

I do have an issue with thinking that the characters in these types of book act and speak like this. I had to re-read passages so that I could digest the content and not just revel in the gangsta speak. I also became distracted (in a good way) with all the nicknames: Bubba, His Boy Elroy, Twitchy, Red, Treadface, High C, Wookie...Easy Bake Ovens-- (Q.3: Do you all really use nicknames for everyone? If so, please share...)

Your use of similes made me giggle. *"I was having so much fun egging her on I decided to egg harder. I wanted to embellish those eggs like it was the night before Easter."*

Your description of two meth heads enthralled in the act of love was both disturbing and mesmerizing:

*"As the rush overtook her, Faye closed her eyes and started rubbing the spot where I had slammed her--"slamming" being junkie lingo for shooting. She rubbed more and more vigorously until she finally looked like a carpenter trying to sand down a bump. Maybe that's what she was doing; the spot was engorged, after all. One peculiar side effect of meth is that it plumps up this particular part o the female anatomy. By this time in our lived Faye's particular part had taken so many direct hits that it bulged like a blueberry."*

*"We kissed, and a bit of acrid spittle passed from her mouth into mine. I attributed that taste to the lithium we stripped from batteries to cook our meth. We both stank of ammonia."*

Hypnotic.

I love how you weave the history of Montgomery throughout the story. The locations... the speeches...the protests.... Is that how it really is down there? It seems like you're (almost) defined by your history. I'm used to growing up around historical areas and such, but I don't believe it's ever encompassed me the way it does with your characters. It gave them another dimension... You're going to hate me for this one, Kirk. I thought 'Mobile' instead of 'Montgomery'--- All this time, I think I thought you lived in Mobile. I'm so sorry. Montgomery seems awesome, by the way.

I also have to say that I usually pride myself with figuring out the twist in movies and books. It made me feel more clever than the writers. I know, it's all formulaic, but it was something. I should have known it wouldn't be the case here... you stumped me, Kirk... I was blindsided. You got me.

Thank you for letting me experience this. I have really enjoyed reading your work. We've known each other, virtually, for about 3 years now and it's such a delight to see your personality emerge in these characters. It's a rare opportunity for a reader to have that insight. Now, if you can just forgive me the Mobile switchup...

Save Me the Waffles, Kirkley... ♥



