



The Quick Red Fox: A Travis McGee Novel

John D. MacDonald , Lee Child (Introduction)

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She's the opposite of a damsel in distress: a famous movie star, very beautiful, very much in control of her life. She's just made one little mistake and now she needs Travis McGee to set it right. The money is good and Travis's funds are in need of replenishing. But that's not the only reason he takes the case. There is the movie star's assistant—efficient and reserved, with a sadness underneath that makes McGee feel he'd brave any danger to help her.

“John D. MacDonald is a shining example for all us in the field. Talk about *the best*.”—Mary Higgins Clark

Sultry movie star Lysa Dean has gotten herself into a spot of blackmail, posing for naked photos while participating in a debauched party near Big Sur. If the pictures get out, Lysa's engagement to her rich, strait laced fiancé doesn't stand a chance. Enter Travis McGee, who's agreed to put a stop to the extortion, working alongside Lysa's assistant, Dana Holtzer.

They begin by tracking down everyone associated with the lurid evening, and soon enough they're led on a chase across the nation as murder after murder piles up. Further complicating matters, Travis and Dana's relationship soon turns steamy. And just when he thinks he knows exactly where things are headed, one big twist shakes McGee's life to the very foundation.

Features a new Introduction by Lee Child

The Quick Red Fox: A Travis McGee Novel Details

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Author : John D. MacDonald , Lee Child (Introduction)

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From Reader Review The Quick Red Fox: A Travis McGee Novel for online ebook

Greg says

I think I missed the fox in this. I really thought Travis McGee would either be helping out or partnering with an actual fox. Or maybe just hanging out on his houseboat with one. You know sort of a Disney-esque entry into the series.

There is very little Disney-esque in this book.

Tony says

THE QUICK RED FOX. (1964). John D. MacDonald. ***.

This started off as if it would be an exemplary Travis McGee novel, but started to fizzle out about two-thirds of the way through. The basic plot is that McGee is engaged by a film star to find out who was blackmailing her by threatening to expose her participation in a free-for-all orgy at a California hideaway. She was at the peak of her career and certainly couldn't afford the negative impact of the release of these photos – especially when a big deal on a new film was on the agenda. McGee reluctantly agreed to see what he could do, although how he would be compensated was only murkily defined; his usual fee being 50% of any recovered money. Our starlet had already paid out over \$100K to this unknown blackmailer, and how he would get that back was problematic. There was a catch. Our screen idol assigned her private secretary to be McGee's sidekick in this venture. She was to both help and to report back to her boss on progress. She was a sharp cookie, and McGee, in spite of his knowing better, worked his way into a brief affair with her. As they get closer to learning more about the orgy and its participants, bodies begin to drop. Pretty soon – almost as by a process of elimination – the field of suspects narrows until the perp appears. The perp comes out of left field, although he is in cahoots with one of the members of the party. What made the novel disappointing was the result of the relationship with McGee's girl Friday. It turned out that the whole thing got washed down the drain when she came to her senses, in a way that made no sense to this reader. I almost got the feeling that MacDonald was going to add her to his lineup of regulars, but changed his mind at the last minute. The first two-thirds, however, were pretty good. Unfortunately, the last third left a bad taste in my mouth. Bad plotting?...Maybe. Desperation to finish the story? Seems more likely.

Lyn says

John MacDonald's 1964 contribution to the post-modern mythic Florida legend that is Travis McGee (the fourth in the series) is more of tough guy with a mind McGee taking care of business and doing a "favor for friend".

This episode finds our salvage consultant hero covering the backside of a Hollywood vixen with some indiscretions and some film. Sex, Lies and Videotape in 1964 does come across as somewhat dated in our Reality TV Blurred Lines morality, but as in most of these novels, the real action, the lasting literary significance is what is going on between the lines and behind the scenes.

What I love about MacDonald's work, especially about the Travis McGee books, is his ability, akin with Hunter S. Thompson, to write like he was forecasting a cultural storm; he had the ironic sociological sensitivity to see a change in the wind, a canary in the coalmine au courant, that allowed him to see way ahead of his time what was coming down the pike.

The casual reader will see a knock-off James Bond, a Mickey Spillane with some loose fitting sophistication, but if a reader tunes in just right, MacDonald was one crying out in the wilderness, WAY BACK in the 60s of a dehumanizing efficacy that has since transformed our world today, fifty years later. Do we still need romantics? Are there still windmills to be attacked, and symbolic dragons to be slain? Yes, and Travis McGee was the vehicle, the instrument, the barometer, that MacDonald used to warn us that this passion in our souls was in danger.

Sure, this is a pulp fiction action adventure with a granite jawed leading man and a made up sensationalist story, but sitting in front of the typewriter was a man of consummate observatory and culturally analytical skill. Read Travis McGee books for the fun misanthropic and politically incorrect action, but read closely and pick up on some poignant social commentary.

Anthony Vacca says

Ah, the 1960's--back when a man could fend off a pack of "butch" lesbians with whacks to the ass from a golden putter.

Carla Remy says

I liked this the least of the Travis McGee books so far (it's # 4). The mystery started intriguingly but ended convolutedly. it seemed slapped together. But how many books did the man write in 1964? I can forgive.

Darwin8u says

"The world is shiny and the surface is a little too frangible. Something can reach out of the black and grab you at any moment. Everybody wears a different set of compulsions. You can be maimed without warning, in body or in spirit, by a very nice guy. It is the luck of your draw. I did not feel like a nice guy."

- John D. MacDonald, The Quick Red Fox

A solid, early addition to the Travis McGee series. All the cynical, hard John D. MacDonald prose I could ask for. Part of what I love about MacDonald is his ability to both write like a cheap 10¢ noir novelist and at the same time like an iconic, modern-day Cassandra. 50-years ago, inside these pulp detective novels, he was warning past readers about our sick, slick present. Reading MacDonald is to constantly come across sentences and paragraphs that fill you with unbounded joy. Seriously. Here he is describing San Francisco:

"San Francisco is the most depressing city in America. The come-latelys might not think so. They may be enchanted by the sea of mystery of the Nob and Russian and Telegraph, by the sea mystery of the Bridge over to redwood country on a foggy night, by the urban compartmentalization of Chinese, Spanish, Greek, Japanese, by the smartness of the women and the city's iron clutch on the culture. It might look just fine to the new ones.

But there are too many of us who used to love her. She was like a wild classy kook of a gal, one of those rain-walkers, laughing gray eyes, tousle of dark hair -- sea misty, a lithe and lovely lady, who could laugh at you or with you, and at herself when needs be. A sayer of strange and lovely things. A girl to be in love with, with love like a heady magic.

But she had lost it, boy. She used to give it away, and now she sells it to the tourists. She imitates herself. Her figure has thickened. The things she says now are mechanical and memorized. She overcharges for cynical services."

But he is best when he is bemoaning the loss of privacy, the loss of liberty, the creep of industry and government interference.

"I get this crazy feeling. Every once in a while I get it. I get the feeling that this is the last time in history when the offbeats like me will have a chance to live free in the nooks and crannies of the huge and rigid structure of an increasingly codified society. Fifty years from now [this book was originally published in 1964, so 2014] I would be hunted down in the street. They would drill little holes in my skull and make me sensible and reliable and adjusted."

Not quite Philip K. Dick, but close. Different genre, different prophet writing in the wilderness, but same damn brain-dead apocalypse.

Maggie K says

So far, I've been quite taken with this series....McGee is a man who comes off as simple, but is anything but...and when he goes to the deep place you dive right in with him!

After the last 2 books, I was starting to see a little bit of a formula, and was concerned that as a series, McGee was going flat. But this installment was actually different and darker. Sordid is probably the best word.

Here, McGee reluctantly takes a job from a beautiful movie star to track down her blackmailer. Except he feels kind of squeamish about it. And the movie star thinks she has him hooked. and the blackmail is ugly. and none of the people involved are very nice. When he figures out what's happening, it's too late to stop the dominoes that have started falling.

He has completed the job, but what about the price of the fallout it has caused? Definitely the smarmy side of life....But if all endings were nice and happy, McGee could turn jovial....Now that would be a crime.

Col says

Synopsis/blurb.....

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McGee, the hard-boiled detective who lives on a houseboat.

She's the opposite of a damsel in distress: a famous movie star, very beautiful, very much in control of her life. She's just made one little mistake and now she needs Travis McGee to set it right. The money is good and Travis's funds are in need of replenishing. But that's not the only reason he takes the case. There is the movie star's assistant—efficient and reserved, with a sadness underneath that makes McGee feel he'd brave any danger to help her.

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They begin by tracking down everyone associated with the lurid evening, and soon enough they're led on a chase across the nation as murder after murder piles up. Further complicating matters, Travis and Dana's relationship soon turns steamy. And just when he thinks he knows exactly where things are headed, one big twist shakes McGee's life to the very foundation.

Well, I'm continuing my McGee journey month by month. This was the fourth instalment in the twenty-one book series which MacDonald wrote and had published between 1964 and 1985. Incidentally, the first four were all published in 1964. I don't believe that would happen today.

McGee is engaged by Lysa Dean, Hollywood hot property to get her out of a jam. After indulging in a sexual free-for-all with some guests on a break a year or so ago, she's being blackmailed with photographic evidence of the shenanigans. McGee's task is to remove the threat and try and recover some of the money paid.

Travis sets out on the recovery mission with the strait-laced Dana Holtzer, Dean's disapproving assistant in tow. After identifying most other of the other orgy members, Travis and Dana traverse the country, catching up with and eliminating some of the players along the way. As the journey gathers pace, there appears to be someone else, a step or two ahead of them eliminating some of the participants in the sex-games.

This book was more enjoyable for me than the second and third in the series, maybe a notch under the standard of the first – *The Deep Blue Goodbye*.

McGee; sage, part-time philosopher, granite chin, iron fists and with a tender, caring disposition is an interesting companion to share a few hours with each month. He strikes me as a deeply moral person. He has his own code to follow - a short-haired hippy, minus the predilection for meaningless sex and drug abuse.

Not adverse to violence when it is needed, but never as his first resort. I wonder how he would view the world fifty years on from this adventure.

4 from 5

Bought second-hand as an omnibus edition online recently, so books 5 and 6 are already lined up.

<https://col2910.blogspot.co.uk/2013/0...>

Elizabeth says

This book written in the sixties has scattered nuggets of McGee's (or MacDonald's) philosophy. Trav says 'I get the feeling that this is the last time in history when the offbeats like me will have a chance to live free in the nooks and crannies of the huge and rigid structure of an increasingly codified society. Fifty years from

now I would be hunted down in the street.'

Well fifty years have passed and I think McGee would be safe in the street, but he was right on the money about a codified society. Diagnostic codes, PIN numbers, passwords and on and on.

McGee is also quite a poet. 'The hushed cooled air made it an oasis, a thousand years from yesterday and ten thousand years from tomorrow.

These wonderful novels pack quite a punch.

Bill says

I finished *The Quick Red Fox* this morning during a quiet period at work.. shhhhhh, don't tell anyone.. ;0) I think this one was a bit grimmer in subject matter than the others, even though so far they all have a bit of an edge to them. I do like McGee's character, he's thoughtful, cynical, old-fashioned, treats women with respect and tough. It's a series I will continue. I'm glad that I was introduced finally to such an excellent series.

Cathy DuPont says

My "go-to" place for everything Travis McGee is D.R. Martin's blog *Me and Travis McGee*.

When I discovered D.R.'s site, I had read the entire 21 book series twice so I wasn't (and didn't) worry about spoilers. But going through some of D.R.'s entries (a synopsis of each book) and related comments, I noticed that readers had a 'takeaway' from the books that I had never thought of and in all sincerity, rather shocked and frankly annoyed me.

There were some comments about Travis being a misogynist and had no respect for women. In fact, some even said he treated them (my words) as throw-a-ways, simply using them for his own gratification and pleasure...using them as play-toys. Who and what are **THEY, THOSE** people talking about?

With that said, I decided that I would take note of just how Travis felt about women and boy did I hit on a gold mine in *The Quick Red Fox* for insight, in Travis' own words, his feelings about women.

Taking a look, here are some direct quotes:

Travis says to actress Miss Dean "Affection, understanding, need and respect. You can be sarcastic about that too, if you want. Bed is the simplest thing two people can do. If it goes with a lot of other things, it can be important, and if it goes with nothing else, it isn't worth the time it takes."

Leaving Travis said, "Love you, I said. It doesn't cost a thing. Not when you do." Travis sounds in love.

Travis and D... talking: "Don't do that to yourself, D... You are implausibility...astoundingly, unforgettably great. And I don't mean just in a..."

D...replies: I know. It isn't me, and it isn't you. Let's not talk about it. It's the total of us, the crazy total. I'm not going to talk about it or think of what comes after. Okay? Okay, darling?

No talk. No analysis."

And later: "We are kind of beautiful," she said. It's enough to know that, I guess. Alone I'm just ...sort of efficient and severe and a little heavy-handed. Defensive. Alone you're just sort of a rough, wry opportunist, a little bit cold and shrewd and watchful. Cruel, maybe. You and your sybarite boat and your damned beach girls. But we add up to beautiful in some crazy way. For now."

"For now, D...?" replies Travis (Trav in love?)

Obviously a woman's body is just that, hers to love and admire without categorization into the "perfectly sized" woman. (Whatever THAT is!) Travis says: "In the bathroom, in fading light of day, her body bore the halter marks of the long sunny ride, her broad flat breasts pale, responsive to soapy ablutions cooperatively offered."

Travis thinks "...and I wondered if, when his (referring to a book character) physical resources began to flag he would stimulate himself by corrupting her. A woman to him would be something owned, to use as he wished."

Just to be fair, I did find one comment which surprised me and seemed to me, to objectify women; Travis said "The Swedes grow some of the finest specimens of our times." But Travis can be forgiven by me, out of 160 pages written in 1964, he was still far beyond some men I know today and this is almost 50 years later.

Also, I noted a few comments and words of introspection by Travis which I particularly enjoyed and I've included them:

"I was not a very earnest nor constructive fellow."

"And I have locked myself into this precarious role of the clown-knight in the tomato-can armor, flailing away at indifferent beats with my tinfoil sword. A foible of the knight, even the comic one, is the cherishing of women, and perhaps even my brand of cherishing is quaint in this time and place."

"I get this crazy feeling. Every once in a while I get it. I get the feeling that this is the last time in history when the offbeats like me will have a chance to live free in the nooks and crannies of the huge and rigid structure of an increasingly codified society. Fifty years from now I would be hunted down in the street. They would drill little holes in my skull and make me sensible and reliable and adjusted.

"Violence is the stepchild of desperation."

I've said my peace and offered support of my position that Travis McGee is not a misogynist. He treats women with respect and equality which was, in my mind, was unheard of in the '60's. If you disagree, watch Mad Men on TV, or offer your own support of your position.

Enough said. Oh, the book. The book was great, a bit slim on the storyline, but who cares? It's Travis McGee, so says me and Travis is and always will be **my guy!**

Francis says

I have mixed feelings about John D. MacDonald. First, there is his prose. I don't as a habit underline passages in books. I often admire the words but I move on, too absorbed in the story to slow down. Sometimes with MacDonald though, I reread the passage, maybe even twice, then I think about highlighting the passage and then finally I move on. Later I might regret not having preserved a particular passage or two with a highlighter. I tip my hat. The man could write.

The mixed part begins and ends with the character Travis McGee. The man is too confident, too self assured. It's like the outcome is never in doubt and if the outcome is never in doubt then the story loses it's tension; not a good thing. There is also this thing about McGee and his magical curative effect on women. I mean, it's never a permanent relationship, they always move on but in a good way. Once lost they are now found, and all due to a roll in the hay (well several actually) with McGee. Their once broken, empty and disillusioned lives have been fulfilled and they will never forget their experience with that one true man/beach bum. And, to his credit, he cures a lot of women.

OK maybe a bit harsh, a bit too overdone, sort of like McGee. But the words, I love the words. I mean the guy could write ...like a beach slumming angel.

Andy says

What I learned? Never turn your back on a homicidal nymphomaniacal 18-year-old from Iceland, especially if she's carrying a handbag with a murderously heavy stone rabbit inside.

Benoit Lelièvre says

I wanted to like this one more than I actually did.

It's far from bad and John D. MacDonald really nails his characters and Travis McGee's evolving relationship to his loneliness and to women, but the investigation takes forever to pan out and there's not that second gear the first couple books that that shift perception in the second half. Great era piece in many, many way, just not that great a mystery.

Jean says

A friend loaned me a paperback he had found at the library annual sale. It was published in 1964. The title is "*The Quick Red Fox*" by John D. MacDonald. I have not read a MacDonald book in years, so I sat down and devoured it.

MacDonald (1916-1986) was a prolific writer of novels and short stories. He wrote crime and suspense novels many set in Florida. This book is a Travis McGee novel one of his more popular series characters.

MacDonald was named a grandmaster of the Mystery Writers of America in 1972. He won many awards including the National Book Award. In 1939 he obtained an MBA from Harvard and in 1940 he became a First Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Ordnance Corp. He served in the OSS in the China-Burma-India Theater of Operation. His writing career started in 1945 while still in the Army when he had an article published in Story Magazine.

In this book, Travis McGee is recruited to help a Hollywood star find a blackmailer who threatens her career with some photographs of her. McGee ends up traveling around in this story such as New York, California, Nevada and Arizona on the hunt for the blackmailer. MacDonald describes McGee as tall, broad shouldered with a rugged face and a perfect gentleman who women are constantly attracted to.

MacDonald is a master storyteller. His plot twists and turns keeping the reader in suspense. JDM has a style of writing that keeps the reader fascinated by the story. MacDonald was a popular author during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. After reading this book today I can see he still holds his storytelling touch in our times of 2017. I am going to keep my eyes open for more of his books.

The book was 160 pages, published in 1964 by Fawcett Publishing.
