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Delacorta , Lowell Bair (Translator)

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Set in the neon lights of the Parisian punk underground, Diva is a rollicking tale of 2 infatuations, 2 stolen tapes and 3 sets of competing blackmailers. It is filled with double-crosses, cunning reversals and a cast of wild characters.

Diva Details

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Author : Delacorta , Lowell Bair (Translator)

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From Reader Review Diva for online ebook

J.P. says

This is the second opportunity I've taken to read Delacorta's Diva. The first was after the first time I'd watched the movie of the same name. The second was after the second time I'd watched the movie and gotten to meet Wilhelmina Wiggins Fernandez at the foreign film festival here in Lexington (she now teaches special ed kids here in Lexington and spoke at the showing).

The book itself is enjoyable, but what I think I like even more are the changes that were made to turn the book into the movie - one of my most favorite movies. And while reading it, I inevitably have the aria from La Wally (it opens the movie <http://youtu.be/2hsmoo97CVA>) stuck in my head. Diva is a good book, but it is a wonderful (IMHO great) movie.

Mandy says

Started reading in rebellion while waiting for appointment to start at the Genius bar (they were late by 10mins).

Many more plot twists than the movie, but in the end a fantasy of the Paris underworld & infatuation with a star that both have the best possible endings and so, unbelievable & unrealistic but still a fun read. One super creepy thing that's not entirely clear in the movie: Alba is 13 in the book so her relationship w Gorodish is that of an inappropriate & unrealistically willing Lolita to Gorodish's less salacious Humperdink.

Jim says

very stylish, as you would think from the movie. The movie might be somewhat better though it's been thirty years -- I was an impressionable teen and was swept away with its style. I suspect this was written when the author was at USC. The plotting is very tight and though somewhat suspect, keeps things moving enjoyably enough to outmaneuver any uncharitable questions. interesting how easily corruption and innocence coexist in this book...

Andrew says

I was overjoyed to find this book secondhand because Diva is one of my favourite movies and I have fond memories of it as one of the first 'foreign' film I saw. From memory, the plot is almost identical in the book, with just a slight diversion towards the end when it all kicks off. The prose is short and sharp, the plot intricate yet simple. I would describe it as a perfect crime novel which has made me want to see the movie all over again.

Tfitoby says

I recently saw the movie version of this book and switched it off half way through, not because it was bad but because I was so excited by the style and content that I simply had to read the book first. It arrived today and I devoured it in no time.

It's a light, fun, read; an enjoyable update of the hard-boiled style in to what I can only agree with others is quite similar to French New Wave but from the 80's instead of the 60's. The content is all pulp crime staples; underworld figures, innocent men caught up in something unwholesome, murder as a matter of course and in the figures of Able and Gorodish you have the beginnings of a great pair of crooks who would go on to star in several other novels. I think somebody else mentioned Charles Willeford in their review and from my experience of his work that seems to be quite accurate. Light, enjoyable with a dark undertone. Only Delacorta refrains from inflicting the existentially downbeat ending on his light breeze of a story.

A brief note on the lead pair from this series; he is an older man, a former concert pianist (echoing the protagonist from Shoot the Piano Player, a favourite David Goodis novel of mine and highly popular in France, made in to a French New Wave film by Truffaut) who admits early in this book to having previously taken nude photos of underage girls (an anti-hero who is an admitted paedophile????) Whilst she is a 13 year old in a hurry to grow up and be 'loved' as a woman should be by her man, she is a talented thief aware of the machinations of those around her but seemingly quite innocent of the ways of the underworld.

I'm sure this kind of partnership will unsettle a lot of people but there's something about the matter of fact, unseedy way that Delacorta writes their relationship that seems to make it acceptable; there's no sex for example, he makes a point of rebuffing her advances throughout and he tries his best to care for her in his own way.

Whilst this wasn't as incredible as I had hoped it would be, it did provide me hope that the series will grow and I might be lucky enough to enjoy the later books even more.

Davidg says

Warning: The Alba series of books centre on the relationship between a 13 year old girl who is frequently described in sexual terms and a man in his late 30s. Although it is made clear that no sexual intercourse occurs, their sharing of beds and nudity is unsettling to the modern reader. However, the fact that Alba is more mature than most 18 year olds makes it possible to enjoy the stories despite the qualms as it hard to believe that the character described is really only 13. I suspect that Delacorta only gives her the age of 13 just to shock, he could easily have made her 15 (the age of consent in much of Europe) without changing anything else.

Having got that out of the way, Diva is a fun read as anyone who watched the film will know. The amoral nature of the 'heroes' is great fun and the comeuppance for the baddies is very satisfying. Compared to the other books in the series, the secondary characters and plots are very well drawn. The noirish plot is good fun.

Michael says

I won't rate this book as I bailed on it after four pages.

The author seems to think that paedophilia is hip and cool, but I don't. Maybe he just put this element in to shock, in which case it worked too well for me.

David Tate says

The most famous of the "Alba and Gorodish" novels of Delacorta, thanks to the excellent 1979 film of the same name. It has more plot than most of those novels, without sacrificing the somewhat surreal bohemian style of the others. It's hard not to like Jules, the "young man with an old name", who becomes infatuated with the opera singer Cynthia Hawkins.

Stylish, tantalizing, at times breathless and at other times contemplative. Not a timeless classic, but an awfully good book.

Rich Gamble says

The source material for the visually stunning 1981 French film of the same name, *Diva* is an interesting but not essential companion given the films lack of emphasis on narrative. The clearest difference here is that Alba the 13 year old nymphette is here a blonde French girl rather than a Vietnamese orphan while other plot points were rightly streamlined and omitted from the movie. On its own *Diva* stands up as a quick, sleek crime read. Forgotten by many this is the first in a series of six translated books which probably got lost between readers of popular fiction gravitating toward big 500 page tomes and serious readers that would be put off by its lack of literary aspirations. If you approach this with an open mind it makes for an interesting euro curio and a fun way to spend a few hours.

Christopher says

This is the book that French film director Jean-Jacques Beineix adapted into his marvelous 1981 masterpiece of the same name, a movie which marked both his feature debut and the start of what was retroactively labeled as the "cinéma du look," a grouping of films noteworthy for their beautiful visuals. Who can forget the breathtaking aria from Catalani's "La Wally" that opens the film (<https://youtu.be/mTLF9TIx6lE>)? I remember, the first time I watched the movie, being blown away by the combination of a police-thriller story and lush art-film aesthetics. So I was curious to know the source material.

Unfortunately, while Delacorta's book is an entertaining enough read, it has none of what makes the movie so special. Somehow, without Beineix's flourishes, the plot coincidences feel stale. It's a functional thriller. No more; no less.

Jonathan says

Spoiler*****spoiler*****spoiler*****

This was an interesting read, especially if you have seen the movie. For me, the changes that were made for the film make the story more interesting and more believable. I can't see the affair with the Diva, and the motivations presented in the book don't ring true. It is better to not present them and have audience wonder than to give things that ring false.

Steve says

Like everyone else here, gonna do the movie (which I saw when it was first released, and still remember as a fun romp). Yes, a quick read, and fun. Plot holes here and there. And really, it is quite superficial about opera and Classical music. A lot of name dropping, but that is about as deep as it gets (the author's wife is a classical musician).

Maybe it is a European thing, but I find it quite creepy that the lead female is 13 going on 14, and has quite an adult attitudes towards sex. Well, at least the 40'ish lead male (who she is love with, despite their age difference, of course!) is gentleman enough not to want to take her until she turns 14!

Quick read and the plot rolls along quite quickly. I'll probably look for some of the other books in this series. And rewatch the film (which does have some differences, from what I remember).

Linda Barlow says

Good story, very poor writing. Rarely can I say the movie was better, but definitely in this case.

George K. says

Μικρ? αστυνομικ? μυθιστ?ρημα που διαβ?ζεται μονορο?φι μ?σα σε δυο-τρεις ?ρες. Σ'αυτ? το βιβλιαρ?κι βας?ζεται η ομ?τιτλη γαλλικ? ταιν?α του 1981, την οπο?α κ?ποια στιγμ? θα κατεβ?σω και θα δω.

Είναι το πρώτο βιβλίο μιας σειράς με ήρωες τον πρώην πιανίστα και νυν κομπινάδωρο Σερζ Γκέροντις και την δεκατριχρονη προστατευμένη του Άλμπα, που από μικρή έχει φέση στο να κλίνει αντικείμενα από μαγιάζι και πορτοφύλια από άντρες που θαμπώθηκαν από την ομορφιά της. Στην ιστορία μας, θα μπλεχτούν με έναν λήτρη της πέρας και εξωτερικά υπάλληλο μιας δυσκογραφικής εταιρείας, μια μαύρη σοπράνο διεθνούς φήμης, έναν βασιλιά του Παρισιού στον τομέα του εμπορίου λευκών σαρκών και σκληρόν ναρκωτικών, έναν διεφθαρμένο αστυνομικό διευθυντή και δυο καστές, μια σχετική με την σοπράνο, την Ντάρβα, και μια σχετική με τις βρωμοδουλείες του βασιλιά του εγκλήματος.

Η αφήγηση είναι πολύ ωραία, κινηματογραφική θα λέγαμε, τα πράγματα γίνονται πολύ γρήγορα και ο συγγραφέας δεν σπαταλάει πολλές προτάσεις για να πει αυτό που θέλει, ήταν σαν να βλέπαται ένα δράσης και όχι να διβάζα βιβλίο. Φυσικά δεν υπάρχει βήθος στην ιστορία και τους χαρακτήρες, αλλά σκοπός του βιβλίου είναι να διασκεδάσει για λίγες ώρες τον αναγνώστη με μια ενδιαφέρουσα και ευχάριστη αστυνομική περιπέτεια.

Στα ελληνικά έχει κυκλοφορήσει άλλο ένα βιβλίο του Ντελακέρτα (ψευδώνυμο του Ελβετού συγγραφέα Daniel Odier), με ήρωες πάλι τους Σερζ και Άλμπα, με τον τίτλο Λάλα, από τις εκδόσεις Λιβάνη. Θα ψέξω να το βρω και αυτό.

Joshua says

A quick, fun read that I have been meaning to get to for years. I remember seeing the 1981 movie made from the book (Diva) and enjoying it as a very stylized mystery that reminded me a lot of something a French Michael Mann would have made. Then I found this on the bookshelf after the kid woke me up at 2AM the other day.

This is the first of a four books: Diva, Nana, Lola, and Luna that feature Gorodish - a professional criminal in his 40s - and his 13 year-old ingenue partner Alba. The plot is interesting and fast-paced, and it reminds me of the pulp fiction books I inhale (Jim Thompson, Charles Willeford, Jim Tulley, etc.) save that they take place in Paris in the 1970s and are a departure in setting and style from what is usually identified as a typically American genre.

I'm looking forward to the other books...
