



Chris Simmons interview

- 1) What prompted you to start Crimesquad.com?

I was perturbed with not being able to find reviews of crime fiction in the newspapers, plus I have a love and joy for the genre. The few reviews I did find simply relayed the story and not what they thought of it. This didn't enlighten me at all as to if it was worth reading or not!

- 2) I know that you are very rightly proud of Crimesquad.com and what has been achieved in the short time by all of us reviewers. What plans if any do you have for crimesquad.com in the future?

I want to make Crimesquad.com into a more recognised brand and I have plenty of other ideas so watch this space!

- 3) I have been good naturedly heckled by authors regarding their lack of inclusion in Crimesquad.com's reviews. Others have admitted to me that they thought they had done something wrong while some authors have publicly said "anything for crimesquad." Why do you think that your site is held in such high regard?

Because the site is clean, fresh and packed with great reviews. Non-inclusion is usually down to there being too many books and authors and not enough hours in a day. Although, if we do not like a book, we prefer to say nothing instead of saying something nasty. An author may write a dodgy book but usually their next one can be astounding.

- 4) As our editor you are also on the judging panel for the CWA John Creasy New Blood Dagger and it is no secret that you are a champion of new authors and that the "Fresh Blood" review for new authors is very heavily contested and authors are delighted to be included. How do you decide who gets in and who doesn't?

When I first started Crimesquad.com I felt there was no champion for new authors. Now the slot is contested very heavily and publishers love the publicity which goes with it. Our biggest success" to date is Stef Penney who won the Costa book of the year award. I seem to have a sixth sense and the biggest criteria is that it must be fresh and exciting. I love to read a new author who has tried to push the boundaries of crime fiction to deliver something fresh and new.



5) What makes for a good book in your opinion?

Something which is new, innovative and has the legs to run. I like books which think outside the box and try new things.

6) What five crime books would you like to take with you to a desert island?

**Asta's Book by Barbara Vine** – one of Rendell's best in her Vine 'persona'. For me, Rendell is a Goddess in crime fiction!

**Taste of Fears by Margaret Miller** – a classic by an author sadly no longer in print. A brilliant mystery and a snapshot of fifties America. Millar was one of those great authors who wrote about issues that were still taboo in that time.

**A Caribbean Mystery by Agatha Christie** – you couldn't go anywhere without a Christie to pass the hours and if on a desert island why not one in a hot climate???

**The Children of Men by P.D. James** – not a Dalgliesh but I loved this futuristic novel when I first read it. I was quietly chuffed that although not her biggest seller when first released it reached new heights and brought James to a new readership with the movie of the same name.

**Bad Penny Blues by Cathi Unsworth** – a chilling, dark, Gothic tale of sixties London. Richly textured with every smell, taste and sound backed with an amazing soundtrack of its own.

I've just realised all my authors are women! Sorry, guys!!!

7) What elements do you consider most important in the reviews that feature on Crimesquad.com?

That the reviews promote the genre and that the readers of Crimesquad.com have confidence in us and our reviews. Every month I make sure our reviews are the best of the current bunch and different books and sub genres are all included so that there is something for everyone.

8) There are many sub genres to the whole crime genre, with action thriller, historical, futuristic and police procedural to name but a few. Where can you see the crime writing heading in the next few years?

Scandinavian crime is very very big just now and I have a feeling that the next big thing will be more Southern European crime in sunnier climes like David



Hewson; Daniel Silva et al. Noir is also making a return in a big way and I can see people going back in time for their gore.

9) What feedback if any do you get from authors, publishers and readers?

I always send publishers a link when the site is updated and the responses are always positive. The current Author of the Month (Adrian Magson) sent a lovely email saying he was thrilled and thanking us. Crimesquad.com is there to promote good books and thankfully there are a lot out there that is VERY good. Crime fiction is on fire!

10) Kindle or paper? Which do you prefer and why?

Paper every time for me. Nothing can replace the smell, touch and feel of a book in my hands. It is what gets me and a lot of other readers around the world excited when you open that book hoping and expecting to be thrilled, turning those pages as you become enraptured by the story. Nothing can beat it!