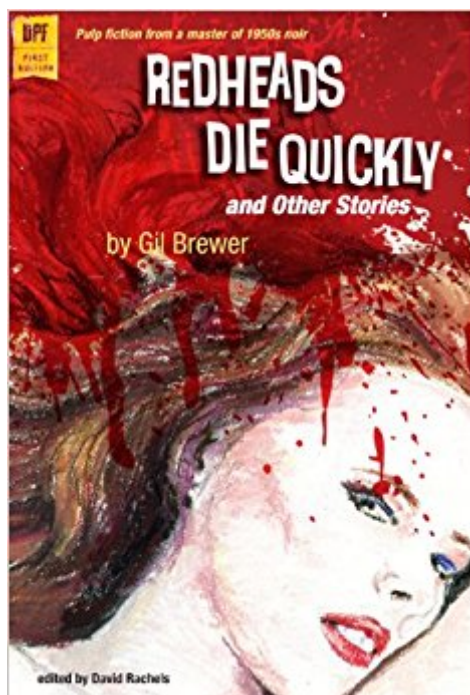


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Redheads Die Quickly And Other Stories



Synopsis

Gil Brewer (1922–1983), a second-generation noir writer, followed in the footsteps of Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, and James M. Cain. He spent most of his life in the Tampa Bay area, where he also set most of his fiction. Like his characters, he was a victim of his own weaknesses, dying as a result of the alcoholism that plagued his whole adult life. Brewer published prolifically under various pseudonyms and in a variety of niche genres including mystery, romance, and pornography. Over the course of his career, he published more than 100 short stories and 50 novels, including *A Taste for Sin*, *Satan Is a Woman*, and *The Girl from Hateville*. He is known for his everyday characters—often underdogs, frequently downtrodden, and desperate to get ahead in life—who ultimately succumb to their own weaknesses and desires. Brewer revolutionized the availability of reading-as-entertainment for the American people by helping to exploit a new market: the paperback original. Many of his novels, including the bestselling *13 French Street*, have recently been reissued for a new audience. However, *Redheads Die Quickly and Other Stories* is the first collection of his short fiction. Because his work was published in a large number of pulp magazines, and because he regularly didn't publish stories under his own name, Brewer's fans—and fans of hard-boiled noir fiction in general—have often been frustrated in their efforts to find the work of this mid-century American crime writer. David Rachels has sifted through the Brewer papers at the University of Wyoming, thumbed thousands of publications, and tracked down rare pulp magazines on eBay, to create the first-ever authoritative list of Brewer's short stories, with the best featured in a single volume.

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Customer Reviews

In writing short stories for the crime digests of the 1950s, Gil Brewer had greater artistic freedom than when he wrote novels for the paperback houses, so these stories are even more outrageous and unpredictable than the Gil Brewer novels that you (hopefully) already know and love. This book collects the following 25 gems from the 1950s, the glory decade of Gil Brewer's career: "With This Gun--" (Detective Tales, March 1951) "It's Always Too Late" (Detective Fiction, April 1951) "Moonshine" (Manhunt, March 1955) "My Lady Is a Tramp" (Pursuit, May 1955) "Red Twilight" (Hunted, October 1955) "Don't Do That" (Hunted, December 1955) "Die, Darling, Die" (Justice, January 1956) "The Black Suitcase" (Hunted, February 1956) "Shot" (Manhunt, February 1956) "The Gesture" (The Saint Detective Magazine, March 1956) "Home" (Accused, March 1956) "Home-Again Blues" (Pursuit, March 1956) "Mow the Green Grass" (Pursuit, March 1956) "Come Across" (Manhunt, April 1956) "Cut Bait" (Pursuit, May 1956) "Matinee" (Manhunt, October 1956) "The Axe Is Ready" (Trapped, December 1956) "On a Sunday Afternoon" (Manhunt, January 1957) "Prowler!" (Manhunt, May 1957) "Bothered" (Manhunt, July 1957) "Smelling Like a Rose" (Mr., July 1957) "Death of a Prowler" (Trapped, April 1958) "Getaway Money" (Guilty, November 1958) "Redheads Die Quickly" (Mystery Tales, April 1959) "Harlot House" (Mystery Tales, August 1959)

If you're ever having depressive summer weekend with a bottle of bourbon and no left shoe, I recommend this collection be your companion. Or, as is more likely, I recommend this collection for anyone taking an ill-planned family vacation to Florida. Or for reading the john while pondering the terrible wreckage of your career and/or personal life and/or lunch. The stories are pure pulp pleasure, peopled by the usual compliment of dangerous blondes, languid brunettes, and heavily armed men whose mothers probably didn't hug them enough. Weeks after reading the individual stories fuse a bit in memory. This is more of a testament to their adherence to genre and the demands Brewer's career placed on his writing than to any particular shortcomings in construction. Settings are gloriously concrete. Characters are at once typical and archetypal. Some stories suffer a bit from weak plots, driven more by a nearly pornographic impulse to violence than narratives' more frequent engines. Others are gloriously twisted in ways better suited to O'Connor or O. Henry than the mass market. Brewer's prose is as wasted as his urban and tropical landscapes: occasionally verging on such wit that one can imagine him an altogether different career in literature. Brewer never achieves the noir mastery of Chandler and Cain, but his nearness to it both

tantalizes and frustrates. In short, the collection is a desultory, dirty way to pass an evening but is clever enough you won't feel too ashamed in the morning.

I'd read Gil Brewer's longer works before, but never been exposed to a long collection of short stories from the 1950's. Although the cover is lurid, and the title provocative, these are really well done stories. The short story format forces an economy of words and plots. Brewer clearly shows himself to be a master of the format. All of these stories are about men and women in the hot Gulf sun, trying to live up to what 1950's morally expects of them when in fact their desires and emotions tug them forcefully in another direction all together. Brewer uses the oppressive heat to melt away inhibitions and the result is almost always mayhem. In some cases, the protagonist finds himself in a very different position than he expected when he decides to let his urges run wild. In other cases, tragic endings are shared by all. I don't think there were more than one or two clunkers in the whole batch of twenty-five stories. Several of them display plotting skilled enough to be worthy of a Rod Serling Twilight Zone episode. If you're new to Gil Brewer, this is a fine place to start. I'd also recommend *A Devil for O'Shaunessy* as well. Highly recommended.

Among noir fiction writers, I call Gil Brewer my sentimental favorite. I use the word sentimental because I can't quite put my finger on why Brewer is one of the best, ever. That is more a comment on my ability to articulate. But David Rachels' anthology is the ultimate celebration of Gil Brewer, a writer whose life and fiction is the embodiment of noir.

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