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QUICK CURTAIN

by Alan Melville

Price: \$12.95 ()
Published: December 05, 2017
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From the Publisher: 'Don't talk bunk!' said Mr Douglas. 'You can't carry on with the show with a man dying on stage. Drop the curtain!' When Douglas B. Douglas - leading light of the London theatre - premieres his new musical extravaganza, Blue Music, he is sure the packed house will be dazzled by the performance. What he couldn't predict is the death of his star, Brandon Baker, on stage in the middle of Act 2. Soon another member of the cast is found dead, and it seems to be a straightforward case of murder followed by suicide. Inspector Wilson of Scotland Yard - who happens to be among the audience - soon discovers otherwise. Together with Derek, his journalist son, Wilson takes charge of proceedings in his own inimitable way. This is a witty, satirical novel from the golden age of British crime fiction between the world wars. It is long overdue for rediscovery and this new edition includes an informative introduction by Martin Edwards, author of The Golden Age of Murder.

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About The Author

Alan Melville
ALAN MELVILLE (1910-1983) was a well-known television broadcaster, as well as a playwright, producer and scriptwriter. Among his works are several crime novels from the 1930s, often set in the popular entertainment world he knew at first hand.

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What We Say

Stuff and nonsense from start to finish. Huzzah! This dishy satire of the theater world and the mystery novel was first published in 1934. You wouldn't know it from the ribald characters on tap, including Douglas B. Douglas (the impresario capitalizing on a sudden death some 20 years before David Merrick appeared on Broadway), a starlet who entertains more people at her home than on stage, the unflappable stagehand named Robert and the critic who writes his reviews up beforehand because all these shows are the same -- just stuff and nonsense, from start to finish. Fans of the Great White Way will love how little has changed, including obsessed fans who descend on a funeral like locusts and egotistical stars on the rise and fall. Equally fun is Melville's tweaking of the conventions of the crime novel. He's got a police detective living in luxury a la Lord Peter Wimsey, the detective's son working on a lark at a newspaper and so many clues and twists and turns that I guarantee you won't figure out whodunnit or why. No really, you won't because the last thing Melville was interested in was playing fair and giving you all the clues. He pulls out the rug from under us during a farcical finale filled

with a flurry of letters and telegrams and confessions. The only real surprise is that this goof has never been staged before.
-- Michael Giltz

What Others Say

"I am going to go all out and say that Quick Curtain is the best detective novel I have read, after Agatha Christie's. A big claim, yes, but deserved - this was a huge delight of a novel....a thousand hurrahs to the British Library and Martin Edwards for rediscovering Alan Melville." (Shiny New Books) "Alan Melville's Quick Curtain is more than just a detective novel set in the theatre....Before the novel begins, there is a printed playbill of the characters and in the structuring of the novel itself where every chapter ends on a cliff-hanger, the way a melodramatic play might close an act or a scene. The style of writing, which is often used to set up a location or a character can be likened to a play script, concise, sharp and crisp...For all those who enjoy comic detective novels, which don't take themselves too seriously I would definitely recommend this tale; the humorous investigative style and dialogue of Inspector Wilson and Derek make this an enjoyable read." (Crossexamining Crime) "Full marks to Melville for his Pagliacci-like premise, which predates Michael Innes' better-known use of onstage homicide in Hamlet, Revenge! by three years, and for a confident, waspish wit perfectly suited to his theatrical milieu..." (Kirkus Reviews) "Melville's jaunty, chatty tone (he frequently reminds readers where they are in the plot) gives us an insider's look at everyone connected to the theater world, including critics who recycle their reviews. A wonderfully fun British Library Crime Classics revival." (Connie Fletcher Booklist)

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