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Mr. Majestyk



Book Information

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Authors, A-Z > (L) > Leonard, Elmore

Customer Reviews

The story Mr. Majestyk is full throttle from the first page to the last. Typical Elmore Leonard with excellent characters and story line. You hardly have time to take a breath. It's a winner! However, please be advised you are paying \$11.00 for a 150 page Leonard story. has a note that the price is set by the publisher Harper-Collins. The book description in the Kindle store lists the book as 240 pages long. Just so you know, Mr. Majestyk is 150 pages in length. The balance of the 90 pages are adds for other Leonard books plus other filler. Had I known this up front, I would not have purchased this book. I'll not buy another Harper-Collins publication. Harper-Collins has gotten this customer for the last time! Fortunately I had already read most of Leonard's westerns. I'm now deep in Ben Bridges and Chet Cunninham westerns. They match Leonard and L'Amour for style, description and action. Plus, the price is right! - 'ole joe.

A classic Leonard novel that was the basis for the Charles Bronson film in the early '70s. Vince Majestyk, a decorated war veteran now making a living as a melon farmer in California, runs afoul of some local thugs and a mob hit-man. But one thing Majestyk doesn't do is back down. Full of the crackling dialogue and witty banter fans of Leonard have come to love, this novel hits full-drive a few pages in and never lets up. A wonderful book for those who only know of the author's later, better-known mysteries.

Many years back I profoundly recall reading an article that included Elmore Leonard's ten tips for better writing. In it, one particular entry stood out above the rest; "If it sounds like writing, I re-write it" or something similar to that effect. And so while attempting to canonize this 1974 work, "Mr. Majestyk," and with this also being my very first exposure to Leonard's thematic style, I'm inclined to agree that he has more than succeeded

with his *Rule 63*. Using only the sparest of language and minimum of character development, each scene is stripped absolutely bare of any ambiguity, forcing us to follow a raw and vengeful story of a simple man, interested only in harvesting his Arizona melon crop, but being thwarted by the *bad guys* at every step. Written during a time when Leonard was initially distancing himself from pulp western novels, *Mr. Majestyk* became one of his first attempts at writing mainstream crime/mystery novels. Viewing the story mainly from our hero's perspective, but with many asides from numerous other points of view, we quickly begin the story's perfidy when a group of strange, unknown pickers shows up in his fields one morning while he was away attempting to procure real, qualified and trained labor. Led by a skinny, hipless guy, long hair and Mexican bandit moustache, wearing sunglasses, with a big metal belt buckle, bright yellow shirt and cowboy boots, Vince confronts this Bobby Kopas, a sleazy opportunist who roams the Arizona countryside looking for places like Majestyk's to spread out his labor force, unannounced, and have them pick enough crop to charge the grower a top rate, thus making a big profit while repressing the local pickers. Not standing for it of course, Majestyk convinces Kopas to leave his farm immediately but soon the consequence of this convincing results in an arrest for aggravated assault. Inside the lock-up Vince meets Frank Renda, a hired mob hit-man who's been brought in on a broad daylight gunning down of a local man in plain sight of numerous witnesses. During the bus transport to the nearest criminal facility, a Renda auctioneered escape plot is hatched with Majestyk, as it turns out, being a key element in pulling it off. But as Renda solicits his support and loyalty afterward, Majestyk takes the stance that HE is in charge and that Renda follows HIS orders, an excellent expansion of Majestyk's character here by Leonard. Of course this does not go over well and the subsequent denouement of this book (with still over half of the 216 pages left) is rife with Charles Bronson-type maneuvering and violence (Bronson actually plays the main character in the film adaptation of this work). Leonard's simple but sinister dialogue and coarse descriptions of the violence leave the reader literally turning the pages in eager anticipation. I've rarely come across an author who can harbor so many inter-connecting tangents of his story while driving them to a realistic but simplistic ending. Leonard seems to have mastered this minimalist style of storytelling while still being able to keep his audience firmly engaged—a true gift and one honed from perhaps his biggest literary influence, Ernest Hemingway. So in summary, *Mr. Majestyk* is a work that further distances Elmore Leonard from the garden variety, dime store Western novelist to a more substantive and popular mystery/thriller genre author that solidifies his standing superbly in this league. An action filled and

literarily blunt tome, those who relish these quick, powerful and vengeful books will definitely not be disappointed. Grab a copy for a quick weekend or vacation read.

As always, Mr. Leonard has written a masterpiece. They should make this into a movie. Oh wait, they already did.

When someone tries to strongarm melon farmer Vincent Majestyk, he quickly ends up beaten and soon Majestyk is in jail. However, the prison bus is attacked and Majestyk finds himself on the run with Frank Renda, a hitman. That's when things get complicated. Will Majestyk be able to fix the situation and get his melon crop in on time? This early Elmore Leonard book is a pretty smooth read, like all of his stuff. Vincent Majestyk, melon farmer and Vietnam vet, is one of Leonard's typical good guys, rough around the edges and not entirely law-abiding. The plot's not all that complicated. Majestyk wrongs a couple people and they want him dead. Too bad no one told them he was a ranger in Laos and earned a Silver Star...Charles Bronson played Majestyk in the movie. I've never seen it but it was easy to picture Bronson in the lead role as I read. Majestyk is the take-no-guff kind of guy Bronson usually played. He's not John Rambo but he's definitely capable. He just wants to get his damn melon crop in on time! The bad guys are pretty par for the Leonardine course: slick but not as slick as they think they are. Unlike some of old Dutch's villains, I didn't find any of them to be very likeable and it was very satisfying once Majestyk starts taking the law into his own hands. If they had any redeeming qualities, I might have felt bad for them. The story is one long cat and mouse game and it starts feeling like a western close to the end, like a lot of Elmore Leonard tales. I guess what I'm saying is that while Mr. Majestyk feels like a lot of Elmore Leonard tales, it's definitely one of the better ones. It's a high three or a low four.

This was the best Elmore Leonard book that I have read so far. His main character, Vincent Majestyk, is a melon grower that is being extorted by a local punk. He beats up the punk and ends up in jail with a mob hit man. When he refuses to help the man escape, he is targeted to be one of his victims. What the hit man and the local police don't know is that Majestyk is an ex Army Ranger and former Ranger instructor. In the face of being pursued by the hit man, Majestyk is a cool customer as he methodically eliminates the henchmen. This novel also features a strong woman character. Strong women named Nancy seem to be a common theme in at least a couple of Leonard's books. The ending will not disappoint.

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