

You Couldn't Pay For a Review This Good, But I Did

by Con Chapman

The reviews are in for *Everyday Noir*, and they're . . . fantastic! Kirkus Indie says "There's a chuckle or a laugh in every one of Chapman's noir-tinged stories." You couldn't pay for a review that good!

Actually, you could. And I did.

I've previously tried the old-fashioned route to get my books reviewed, calling up editors, asking friends who work at newspapers and magazines to put in a good word for me, stalking . . . I mean, contacting freelancers who write book reviews. Nothing. Nada. Zip. Zero.

I've trolled the internet and found lists of the people to send your book to at major general circulation publications, and sent them unsolicited copies with phony-baloney press releases that I write myself. Those lists tend to have the life span of a mayfly, since fewer publications review books every year. Again, nothing.

I've been hounded by marketing professionals who, having found my books on the internet, offer to get me on TV and radio shows—for a fee of course. I think they have me mixed up with the author of "No Money Down Weight Loss." Which I will write someday—because it's one of those book titles that is guaranteed to sell, like "Lincoln's Doctor's Dog." I just haven't gotten around to it.

No, I don't think a bunch of "tongue-in-cheek" (Kirkus's words, not mine) short-short-stories would make good afternoon talk show fodder. I'd hate to get caught in a Hasselbeck-Goldberg crossfire on "The View."

So I bought a review from Kirkus Indie, which used to be Kirkus Discoveries. I guess they got rid of the old name because they don't

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“discover” you if you send them an email and offer them money. Did America call up Columbus and offer to be “discovered” for a fee?

Paying for a review seems . . . unseemly, like paying for sex, but I think it's better than reviewing your own book under a pseudonym, which I've also done—but Mark Twain did it too! That's more like what . . . you do in the bathroom by yourself. Not that I would know anything about it.

Just because you give somebody money to review your book doesn't mean you're going to get a good review. No way, nuh-uh. I know, because I've done this before, for my first novel, *A View of the Charles*, and here's what I got for my dough: “endless picayune detail and a slightly predictable plot.” The reviewer compares me unfavorably to Henry James, which I think any reasonable person would agree is a rather high standard. Henry James, who couldn't change my typewriter ribbon! Because he's dead.

Despite that unhappy experience, I decided to give Kirkus another try after reading about Darcie Chan, who paid for a review and saw her book “*The Mill River Recluse*” hit no. 5 on *The Wall Street Journal's* list of digital fiction bestsellers.

That's why I feel so good that Kirkus found my satire “light and gentle,” among other complimentary observations that I hope potential buyers of *Noir* will read, and then reach, as if in a hypnotic trance, for a major credit card to purchase the book on-line.

And now, when new friends leave our house after a dinner party, I'd like to think that when the wife turns to the husband and says “Did you like them?” he'll say “She's very nice,” and then recall the words of my anonymous reviewer and say “And he was saved from becoming tiresome by his fleet plotting.”

