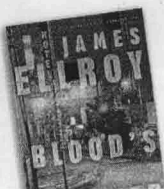


Roundup | Mysteries/thrillers



Blood's a Rover

By James Ellroy
Knopf, 640 pp., \$28.95

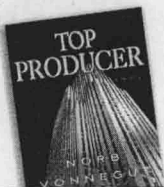
Readers who love their noir blood-red will be giddy over *Blood's a Rover*, the bang-up conclusion to James Ellroy's Underworld USA trilogy, which began with *American Tabloid* (1995) and *The Cold Six Thousand* (2001). Ellroy's prose is spare and riveting as he takes readers deep within American culture of the late 1960s. Blending fact with fiction, Ellroy starts with an armored-car heist, then drags his twisted characters through the Las Vegas underworld and the conspiracies surrounding the assassinations of JFK and Martin Luther King Jr. Ellroy's plot is hardball start to finish.



Hardball

By Sara Paretsky
Putnam, 446 pp., \$26.95

Private investigator V.I. Warshawski has starred in 13 Sara Paretsky mysteries. Author and protagonist are in top form in *Hardball*, a novel about Chicago politics past and present and just how far some people will go to protect a candidate. Social conscience and the fight for justice are key plot points as Warshawski's hunt for a dying woman's nephew pits her against heartless goons who will stop at nothing — including firebombing and murder — to prevent her from finding him. Bonus: We meet V.I.'s niece Petra, who appears to have inherited her aunt's penchant for risk-taking.



Top Producer

By Norb Vonnegut
Minotaur, 342 pp., \$24.99

Finding fault with the Bernie Madoffs of the world seems the perfect inspiration for a novel. Norb Vonnegut, who has made a career out of wealth management, pulls off a compelling thriller that centers on the murder of hedge-fund schemer Charlie Kelemen: He's tossed into a public aquarium and munched by sharks. Kelemen's best friend, Grove O'Rourke, risks his career to ferret out Charlie's killer. Vonnegut (a distant cousin of the late Kurt Vonnegut) deftly portrays the Ponzi scheme victims. This novel ponders the age-old ramifications of greed, but Vonnegut gives it a fresh, timely twist.



Evil at Heart

By Chelsea Cain
Minotaur, 306 pp., \$24.99

She's the most twisted — and most beautiful — serial killer on the planet, and she's back with a vengeance in *Evil at Heart*, the third novel in Chelsea Cain's fantastic series that began with *Heartsick* and *Sweetheart*. Gretchen Lowell has been wreaking bloody havoc on Portland, Ore., and its environs for years. Archie Sheridan, the cop who loves and hates her, and also was once her captive, is still trying to catch her. Cain's wonderfully over-the-top series takes a new turn when fans of Gretchen try their hand at killing. It's not to be missed.

— Carol Memmott