



## Cross and Burn

*Val McDermid*

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Someone is brutally killing women. Women who bear a striking resemblance to former DCI Carol Jordan. The connection is too strong to ignore and soon psychological profiler Tony Hill finds himself dangerously close to the investigation, just as the killer is closing in on his next target.

This is a killer like no other, hell-bent on inflicting the most severe and grotesque punishment on his prey. As the case becomes ever-more complex and boundaries begin to blur, Tony and Carol must work together once more to try and save the victims, and themselves.

**Breathless, gripping and thrilling -- the Queen of the Psychological Thriller is back with her most spine-chilling novel to date. The perfect introduction to the unforgettable world of Tony Hill and Carol Jordan.**

## Cross and Burn Details

Date : Published October 10th 2013 by Sphere (first published January 1st 2013)

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Author : Val McDermid

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## From Reader Review Cross and Burn for online ebook

### Beth says

#### 1.5 stars

If you loved, *loved* the other books in this series, you'll probably at least like this one. I've read 3-4 of the Hill/Jordan books, usually sporadically and out of order, but most of them are definitely a cut above the standard crime novel. McDermid has a way of writing her killers-of-the-book and (particularly) her victims-of-the-book which makes them actual human beings. I've never felt such sorrow for a victim as I have in her second book in the series, "Wire in the Blood." I know I negatively reviewed them when I first read them, but I re-read them a few months ago and appreciated what good novels they are.

This one, however, lost its punch for me. I would never usually spend this long reading a book (save the 900-page monstrosity that is Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*) but I actually quit reading it altogether. I didn't exactly plan to go back to it but I saw it on my Kindle screen and thought, damn it, I've paid for it now, I might as well finish it. Some of McDermid's usual talents have deserted her for this one. The victims are quick strong-woman sketches, and then they're brutally-murdered with conveyor-belt precision.

Confession: I have never been particularly enthralled by the relationship between Hill and Jordan. Crime novel convention dictates that the attractive cop must have a relationship with his/her companion, be it partner, murderer (in the case of *Silence of the Lambs* and *Heartsick*) or, in this case, psychologist. This book is definitely self-contained, and can be read alone, but follows on directly from the previous book in the series, *The Retribution*, in which disposable supporting characters were either murdered or mutilated at the hands of another savage killer of women. The blurb says that "Guilt and grief have driven a wedge between long time crime-fighting partners psychologist Tony Hill and ex-DCI Carol Jordan", and this is certainly true, but their methods of coping are so traditional and bog-standard - Tony is lonely and isolated and guilty, Carol is lonely and isolated and angry - that my eyes glazed over.

I usually like McDermid's epic take on the crime novel, where all people have a voice, but due to repetition and the general tick-box averageness of the novel, it felt padded by about 200 pages. This might have more impact to someone who really, really cares about Hill and Jordan - and I certainly like them as characters - but there was no particular originality or spark in the tale of their grieving.

Which brings me neatly to the case-of-the-book. A control-freak man is kicking women to death and gluing up their labias - a horror show which is so blatantly designed to bring Hill and Jordan back in the same room together that it left a bad taste in my mouth. The blurb also says "when the evidence begins to point in a disturbing direction, thinking the unthinkable seems the only possible answer", which seems to be total false advertising to me. At least in McDermid's first, *The Mermaids Singing* she delivered pretty richly on the promise that Tony would be changed forever by his run-in. As you might guess, the blurb implies that Tony comes under suspicion for the murders. This is the biggest wash ever.

Neither of the two non-Tony POVs ever doubt - Carol and Paula, Carol's once-junior, now promoted - that Tony is innocent. Nor does the reader. (I know, I know, all you Hill/Jordan fanatics are coming after me with pitchforks: "OF COURSE WE WOULDN'T THINK THAT OF TONY!!!") Even worse, though, I never doubted that Tony would get out and be exonerated, and - worse still - neither does Tony. The killer brutally murdering women who just happen to look like Carol Jordan (and, yes, it does turn out to just be a coincidence) is so blatantly a *catalyst* for Carol to emerge from her little isolated cottage and get back to

police work that it made me roll my eyes hard. There's no dramatic tension in this particular plot contrivance at all. I almost wished that McDermaid had just written on the pages concerning this, "Look, I have to bring my two lead characters back in the same room *somehow*."

A much-noted things in other reviews is the introduction of DCI Fielding, played by Siobhan Lahbib in "Wire in the Blood", the television series, who was Carol's replacement after Hermione Norris, who played Carol, left for pastures new. I can understand why McDermaid needed to change up Fielding's character as, in the TV series, she is a little too much of a Carol-substitute, so, even though Lahbib is really good from what I remember, there's not a whole lot of distinction. Still, that is no excuse to relegate strong, interesting, maternal Alex to the supporting, non-POV role of a bureaucratic pen-pusher who could come with a sign over her head saying "CONFLICT."

We only see her through Paula's perspective and Paula constantly unfavourably compares her to wunderkind Mary-Sue Carol Jordan and accuses her of being a clueless bull in a china shop who won't listen to her own underlings, pursues innocent men and just wants to get a result (and the reader is meant to agree). Of course these police officers do exist, but I'd prefer for Alex to have her own POV so she could be her own character, rather than a mindless antagonist and Carol foil (by being everything Carol's not - by which I mean a mindless, idiotic dictator who rules over her team with an iron fist). This is irritating and unforgivable and made attractive, strong, sympathetic, intelligent, always-right Carol even more of a Mary-Sue. Paula is almost as bad - the only interesting thing about her is that she's a lesbian and she takes in the son of a murder victim (and it was nice to see Dr. Blessing again). Nevertheless, this plot thread comes to nothing - like almost all of them in C&B - and Paula's voice and outlook is nearly indistinguishable from Carol's.

In summary:

As a character study of survivor's guilt and recovery, it's a limp part-failure. If you are really invested in the characters of Hill and Jordan, their endless trudge to be back together - in however small a capacity - might seem thrilling. For me, it just felt like every other depiction of guilt I've ever seen in a crime show (Carol thinks she should have died instead! Carol blames for Tony for not being psychic! Tony blames himself! Tony stares lovingly at Carol! Carol is having none of it!) with absolutely no variation.

In another review, I saw a Hill/Jordan fan agonising over a quote from one of McDermaid's interviews, saying that she could never conceive Hill and Jordan in a normal relationship. Well, it's starting to show. Having smoothed out most of the uglier aspects of their characters (Tony's impotence gets not even one mention, which wasn't surprising, as McDermaid admitted to regretting this choice. Yes, it's dark, but it's one of the few distinguishing strokes in the Hill/Jordan novels), we're left with a "will-they-won't-they" which is stuck in total stalemate, and so lacks any punch or verve. Although C&B closes out on a note of mild hope for Hill/Jordan shippers, it confirmed for me what McDermaid's novels' central relationship have become by book eight: one baby step forwards, one massive shove backwards. This is wearing for me. Another tune, please.

As a detective novel, the police work is even worse. It's non-existent. Everything we need to know about the killer (and I mean *everything* - motives, means, opportunity, even job type and how he knows the victims) is revealed in his POV. Interesting components of his back-story, like his stepmother and father, are never seen. Instead we're left with a misogynist killing women and revealing all his vital information in the chapter before the team are supposed to know it, which makes the tiny segments of "police work" feel like trudging through endless wheel-spinning pages to play catch-up. As a result, Tony's supposed genius and Carol's return to work seem psychic, convenient and dry. Tony is the only other suspect and it comes to one of the least exciting conclusions I've ever read.

Fingers crossed for a return to form in book #9.

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### **Sophie Hannah says**

Totally gripping as ever! Tony Hill and Carol Jordan are my favourite detective duo!

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### **Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says**

I thought it would be time to finally read this book since I have been granted the latest Tony Hill & Carol Jordan book (*Splinter the Silence*) and it was great to return to where we left Tony and Carol in the last book. Well great is probably the wrong word since the catastrophically ending of the last book with deaths and Carol and Tony's relationship in tatters.

In this book is Carol trying to move on after a personal loss, she isn't working and she refuses to have anything to do with Tony. Tony meanwhile is struggling to go on with his life without Carol in it. But when Tony is suspected as a serial killer is it Carol that have to come to his rescue, she is still angry with him, but she knows he is innocent and out there is the real killer...

*Cross and Burn* is a really good suspenseful thriller and I was really happy to read about Tony Hill again since he is one of my favorite characters. I do hate to read about main characters being accused of something they haven't done and I must admit that I wasn't looking forward to reading about that. But I knew that would bring Carol back into Tony's life so I prevailed and was rewarded with a very good ending. One of my favorite parts of the book is Carol turning to one person she doesn't like, but she knows will help her getting Tony of the hook.

Now I'm looking forward to reading the next book!

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### **Melissa says**

[Disclaimer: I received a review copy via Netgalley in exchange for my honest review.]

*Cross and Burn* is the eighth installment in Val McDermid's Tony Hill and Carol Jordan series, which follows a criminal psychologist, a police detective, and the crimes they solve. Except, because of the extreme events of the previous book, *The Retribution*, Tony and Carol become side-players here, while supporting character Paula McIntyre takes the lead. It's an interesting departure from the established format, and I really enjoyed the results.

In *The Retribution*, Tony and Carol's relationship and, in effect, lives were thrown into complete disarray by the actions of a serial killer. It was dark and it was painful and at the time I remember feeling that the stakes were ultimately too high, to the point that it was hard to see a road back for either of them. *Cross and Burn* deals with the aftermath of those events, and by minimising their roles, allows for breathing room and time for the healing process to begin. It's cathartic, realistic, and ultimately re-instilled hope for both their futures.

The case at the centre of the book is an interesting one (and unsurprisingly graphic) - a killer is bumping off

blondes who look like Carol, leaving Paula to deal with the aftermath both on a personal and professional level. She's always been one of, or even the most promising supporting character, and easily shoulders the additional weight she's granted in this book. Given her recent promotion to a new firm, the characters from the MIT that have formed the focal point of many investigations from previous novels are either absent entirely, or reduced to a few walk-on scenes. I actually had no problem with this, given that I'd personally found the cast a little over-full in the past few books anyway.

Where things do get a bit weird is with Paula's new boss, DI Alex Fielding. Viewers of the Wire in the Blood TV series will know her as Simone Lahbib's character - Carol's replacement post-Hermione Norris's departure - secondary star of the show for three series. This is the first time she's popped up in a McDermid novel, and the result was puzzling. McDermid presents Fielding as the novel's secondary antagonist, second to only the bloke brutally murdering blondes in his garage. She's petty, officious, short-sighted and self-serving. Everyone who comes into contact with her actively dislikes her, and I don't understand the motivation in presenting her this way. I even went back and re-watched her first WitB episode to see if she started out that way and subsequent character growth had caused me to forget, but... not *really*. There are *shades* of her novel characterisation there - initially abrasive, by-the-book and resistant to Tony's skills - but within literal seconds of meeting him, she's also smiling at his foibles, divulging details of the case and letting him listen in on an interview. And by the end, she seeks out and is grateful for his help. I don't know if this is the start of a longer arc for her in the books, but I was a bit bewildered by her depiction.

On the whole, I found a lot of things to enjoy here. The writing was sharp as ever - in less skilled hands, Tony's pining and Carol's residual anger might have veered into melodrama, but most assuredly didn't. I enjoyed the interactions between Paula and Tony, even (maybe especially) the painful moment he accidentally called her Carol. I loved the humour that still lurked beneath the surface despite the circumstances ('He grabbed one of the sturdy reusable carrier bags that Carol - ouch, no, let her go, you can't get sentimental over a bloody carrier bag'). I particularly think keeping Carol and Tony apart for three quarters of the novel was a positive move, building towards their eventual meeting and allowing their interactions to be less raw and fraught than where *The Retribution* left them. Ultimately, book seven left me worried about where this series was going. Book eight has me pleasantly hopeful for the next installment.

(If there is one truly horrifying event in this novel, it's Carol leaving behind her beloved cat Nelson and getting a dog. Far more dreadful than all the murders combined, clearly.)

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### **Rick Soper says**

I found Val McDermid through the BBC series Wire in the Blood, which is based on this series of books that highlight the exploits of psychologist Tony Hill and DCI Carol Jordan. I've enjoyed every book in this series, especially the last one Retribution, which played out like Wire in The Blood Part 2. I was having some trouble getting into this book, until it took "The Turn", and then I started reading at a fevered pace. At the outset all the players are still reeling from the devastation of the last book. They're separated, scattered, and lost in their own problems, but events unfold that force them back together, and when that "Turn" happens it's like a bright light goes off and you remember why Val McDermid is one of the best Thriller writers out there.

I need to note that this is a series and to properly enjoy the nuances in character relationships you really need to have read the books that come before, but if you have this is a great addition to the series and a stellar follow up to the devastatingly good Retribution. Wire In The Blood is one of my all time favorite TV series,

some of that is great acting on the part of Robson Green and the fact that BBC makes great TV, but most of it is the fact that Val McDermid is writing awesome books.

I need to also say that these are not books for the light hearted. Val McDermid writes about some incredibly demented individuals who commit some of the most atrocious crimes you'll ever read about. So if you don't want to read about things like that, don't read these books. But if you can handle the horrible details, these are some of the best books I've ever read.

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### **Brenda says**

This book was calling to me so loudly that I had to set aside a book I'd already started. Better to get this one done and then give my full attention to the other. That seemed the only fair thing to do.

We are brought up to date with the after effects of what happened in the previous book. Carol and Tony are still on the outs, and honestly, Carol and I are, too. Carol isn't even in law enforcement any more. Paula is now a DS and plays a major role. She reports to a different DCI who can be difficult, but Paula still has that independent streak. Of course, there are at least two crimes to solve. I won't go into the plot much more than that. I'll just say that by the book's end, I was satisfied.

Val McDermid seemed to pick up the pace a little bit here, and I appreciated that. She sure puts variety in her books. I'm never bored with them. It'll be interesting to see what she's got in store for these characters in the next book.

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### **Maia Osborne says**

As a massive Val McDermid fan I had high expectations of this book, and it did not disappoint. I would however recommend you read the series in order because there are a lot of references to what has already happened in previous books, and to get the most out of the book you really need to understand the Pecos relationships between the characters.

The book begins by updating us on the main characters and what has happened since the last book. The last case the MIT team worked together was that of serial killer Jacko Vance (they had already caught him once before, and he came back for retribution in the book with that title!) Vance had murdered the brother and sister-in-law of DCI Carol Jordan, who together with oddball psychologist Dr Tony Hill and the rest of their team had caught him first time around.

Carol is now living in the house her brother was murdered in, now a bit reclusive, having quit the police and blames Tony for not figuring out what Vance had planned.

Paula, also part of the maverick team previously led by Carol, is starting a new job as DCI Fielding's bagman. Her first case in this new job is the abduction and subsequent murder of two strikingly similar looking women—they also look like former DCI Carol Jordan. When the blood of Dr Hill is found on the sleeve of one of the victims, and his finger print on the others phone, the new DCI insists he must be guilty and locks him up. It is now down to Paula to persuade Carol to help free Tony, and with his help from the cells to find the real killer.

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## Val Penny says

As a writer I am in awe of both the quality and quantity of Val McDermid's novels. As a reader I revel in both. Several of her books including *Torment of Others* and *The Skeleton Road* are reviewed on this site: <https://bookreviewstoday.info/2013/05...> and <https://bookreviewstoday.info/2016/07....> I bought *Cross and Burn* the last time I met Val at the Bloody Scotland Crime Writers' Festival in Stirling, Scotland, 2016. It is the eighth book in her series about Tony Hill and Carol Jordan. Tony Hill is a forensic psychologist and Carol Jordan is a police Detective Chief Inspector who team together in order to solve particularly brutal crimes of all kinds.

Their relationship is ambivalent and hovering between close and distant. Still, they are a great pair for the reader even though they cannot seem to work out their important to each other personally. Ms. McDermid manages this personal part of their story with admirable restraint. This is the first book where Hill and Jordan are separated due to the events of McDermid's book, *The Retribution*. In *Cross and Burn*, Jordan is trying to move on after a personal loss, she is not working and refuses to have anything to do with Tony Hill. Meanwhile, Hill is struggling to go on with his life without Carol in it. But when Tony is suspected as a serial killer it is Carol Jordan who must come to his rescue. She is still angry with him, but she knows he is innocent and out there is the real killer.

Paula McIntyre, familiar to readers of the series, takes center stage as she tries to determine who is killing women who look just like Carol Jordan. Hill and Jordan, although in this book, the story is more about the people who worked with them, their team, and the sudden disbanding of that. Everybody has to move on after that, whether they want to or not. It was interesting to have McIntyre's character fleshed out more in this book: also to watch Tony and Carol find some new ways to proceed in the world and to deal with the glimpse into the notion that while they are valuable, the world still goes on around them and without them.

*Cross and Burn*, although self-contained, and can be read alone, but follows on directly from the previous book in the series, *The Retribution*, in which disposable supporting characters were either murdered or mutilated at the hands of another savage killer of women. I did not enjoy *Cross and Burn* as much as most of McDermid's other crime novels. That does not make it a bad book, just slightly less awesome than most. Val McDermid deserves her place as a No. 1 bestseller whose crime novels have been translated into more than thirty languages, and have sold over eleven million copies.

She has won many awards internationally, including the CWA Gold Dagger for best crime novel of the year and the LA Times Book of the Year Award. She was inducted into the ITV3 Crime Thriller Awards Hall of Fame in 2009 and was the recipient of the CWA Cartier Diamond Dagger for 2010. In 2011 she received the Lambda Literary Foundation Pioneer Award. She writes full time. She is married and McDermid and her wife divide their time between Cheshire and Edinburgh.

Valerie Penny

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## **Matt says**

McDermid left some substantial threads hanging at the end of *THE RETRIBUTION*, leaving the reader to wonder what path things might take. Picking up the story mere months after the Jacko Vance sequel, the scene is as follows: the MIT is no more, her team reassigned; Carol Jordan is no longer a DCI, nor does she work with Bradfield or any other force; and Tony Hill has been cut out of Jordan life entirely, for reasons related to Jacko Vance and his fallibility. All this while McDermid pushes a new case to the forefront, complete with a new and sadistic killer, a man seeking the perfect wife. Women with a strong resemblance to Carol Jordan are being kidnapped and eventually killed, their bodies brutalised and dumped. DS Paula McIntyre, formerly of MIT is working the case in Bradfield, while trying to hunt down an acquaintance who may have become tangled in this web. Away from all the action, Jordan herself has taken to the like of a Do it Yourselfer, in the hopes that this will bring her solace, and adapting to the life of a private citizen. While DS McIntyre continues piecing things together, with the help of the ever-resourceful Dr. Hill, himself dealing with the loss of Jordan and the MIT, she stumbles upon some evidence that blows the investigation in a direction no one saw coming. Calling on Hill's mental acuity and Jordan's sleuthing skills, they are forced to work together to ensure this serial killer does not slip through their fingers and the wrong person is left to bear the brunt of justice's fine fist. A page-turner that surpasses much of what McDermid has brought to the reader up to this point.

With a protagonist shift from Hill-Jordan over to DS McIntyre, McDermid paints a different picture in this novel and one that is highly enjoyable. While always on the periphery, McIntyre is now front and centre and faces much of the strain readers are used to seeing yoked upon Jordan. Multi-layered and quite intriguing, the reader learns much more about McIntyre and her skills, using old connections and forging new ones to set her apart from the DC role she played on the MIT crew. Wonderfully woven into the story line, McDermid offers both sides of the story and breaks the novel into day segments (but in a more effective way, as I lamented gargantuan chapters in an earlier review). Highly addictive and surely one that will keep the reader up late into the night.

As I have reached the 'up to date' point in my Hill-Jordan reading, I want to offer a short summary and add some comments on the series that I have seen progress in my time as an avid reader. Reflecting back on the eight books to date, much has changed and evolved over that time. First and foremost would have to be the evolution of the Hill-Jordan relationship. The attentive reader will have seen much percolating around these two, with little actual progress to push them together. There was a spark, one that almost cost Jordan her life, but little concrete movement towards the animalistic passions McDermid paints for the reader, leaving many to yell onto the pages of the book to "get on with it, already!". Secondly, the creation of MIT came at a time in the series where an injected new angle was needed. While Hill-Jordan are highly entertaining and intriguing, as I mentioned in an earlier review, both characters needed geographic grounding in order to bring some sense of normalcy to the story. Jordan flitted from job to job and Hill followed her (sometimes choosing a longer path), keeping them on one another's radar. However, MIT allowed some foundation-building and new characters that have come to grace the pages of the novels and produced some wonderful sub-plots. Great characters breed wonderful stories and McDermid has shown that repeatedly. Lastly, the crimes and victimology found within the series has been wonderful. I do not say that with a macabre twinge, but to have such detailed and sometimes horrific imagery helps personalise the story. A shooting or stabbing is one thing, but McDermid wants to really get under the reader's skin with horrific happenings, perhaps to fuel a desire to catch the killer. She has not shied away from any of it and I hope she keeps this angle of her writing strong and fresh, as it does wonders for my interest level.

Kudos, Madam McDermid for a splendid addition to the series. Where will you go from here?

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### **Pat says**

So it turns out I had actually read this ages ago, and written a review that never got onto Goodreads. And this is what I wrote...

Wow, well done with this. It hit all right notes. Readable as a stand-alone but much better if you've been following the series. I think I rated it highly because a) it was an engaging mystery that went down to the wire before you "got it" and b) the story spoke for itself, there were no ham fisted unnecessary embellishments. Tautly plotted, very gritty and unputdownable!

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### **Caitlin says**

I'm very fond of Val McDermid. I like her series and her standalones and remain impressed with both her output and her continued quality. McDermid tells stories and she tells those stories well. Her characters cover the waterfront of diversity and this makes her stories feel even more real to me - nothing is whitewashed or sanitized, it's all out there just like in real life.

*Cross and Burn* is number eight in the Tony Hill/Carol Jordan series. Briefly, Tony Hill is a forensic psychologist and Carol Jordan is a DCI (Detective Chief Inspector) who team together in order to solve particularly brutal crimes of all kinds (both serial and isolated). Their relationship is close and distant and hovering and complex, but they're great as a pair for the reader even though they can't seem to work it out. If Ms. McDermid were a more conventional writer the various kinds of flapping about and hand-wringing that accompany the ambiguous nature of the Hill/Jordan relationship would make me toss these books against the wall and move on, but she manages this part of her story with admirable restraint.

This is the first book where the Hill/Jordan team is separated due to the events of the previous book, *The Retribution*. Paula McIntyre, familiar to readers of the series, takes center stage as she tries to determine who is killing women who look just like Carol Jordan. Tony and Carol are in this book, but in many ways this is more a book about the people who worked with them, their team, and the sudden disbanding of it. I've always liked Paula as a character - she's so very straightforward and has a keen insight into the heart of a matter. It was lovely to have her character fleshed out more in this book. Equally lovely was to watch Tony and Carol find some new ways to proceed in the world and to deal with the glimpse into the notion that while they are valuable, the world still goes on around them and without them.

If you haven't read the series, it's accessible to entry at any point, although I would recommend going back to the very first one and reading through just for the pleasure of watching it all unfold. I enjoyed *Cross and Burn* and read it avidly like the treat it was - highly recommended for lovers of crime fiction in all its guises.

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### **Heather Fineisen says**

Val McDermid is one of the rare breed of writers that only gets better with time and the eighth outing for Tony Hill and Carol Jordan is only proof extraordinaire. This can be read as a stand alone, but I recommend reading them in order to experience the psychological development of the characters. McDermid develops

the reader into an artful profiler as much as Tony Hill if they are willing to work for it. I liked this specific story line as the serial killer's search for the perfect wife was someone in their late thirties, rather than too young. I also appreciate the diversity of characters in race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation without becoming caricatured. An excellent read and a solid series!

Provided by publisher

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### **Sojourner says**

The super crack team of forensic psychologist Tony Hill and detective Carol Jordan's long-time crime-fighting partnership was dealt a lethal blow with the murder of Carol's brother and his wife. Jordan blames Tony's negligence for the double murder. Tony, on his part, was buried under the debris of guilt. They are no longer on talking terms. Detective Carol was so distraught she even hung up her badge. It was the doubled-edged wedge of guilt and grief that had driven them apart. But as the two were pondering over what went wrong with their professional and personal relationship, the killings continue unabated.

In an electrifying follow-up to *The Retribution*, one of today's best crime-story writers Val McDermid comes up with an astonishing, chilling read in *Cross and Burn* (Atlantic Monthly Press, October 2013).

DC Paula McIntyre was confronted with two cases - the missing case of a mother which was reported by her 14-year-old son and the brutal murder of a woman in an abandoned London flat. But when Paula sought the help of Tony, the case takes an extreme turn when preliminary investigations pointed the finger of suspicion at Tony himself. And there seems to be no let-up in the killings. More women were murdered. It was clear a psychopath was on the prowl.

In a quirky twist to the tale, the women found killed bear an unnerving resemblance to Carol Jordan. With Hill being one of the suspects, a frazzled Paula turned to Carol and the two embarked on a hunt to nab the serial-killer.

Will Tony and Carol resolve their differences and team up again? How will Tony absolve himself from being a suspect in the murder cases? Why is the psychopath killing women bearing striking resemblance to Carol?

*Cross and Burn* is an extraordinary page-turning thriller that will keep you on the edge of your seat until the last page is read.

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### **Raven says**

Well it is with great delight that I can report that in this humble reviewer's opinion, Val McDermid is back on form with her new outing for Carol Jordan and Tony Hill- hallelujah and saints be praised! After the relative disappointments of McDermid's stand alone *The Vanishing Point* and the last Jordan/Hill *The Retribution*, I was feeling a little deflated as I've always held McDermid in some regard and very much enjoyed her books previous to these two, so I did approach *Cross and Burn* with a slight sense of trepidation but my fears were quickly dispelled...

What I particularly enjoyed about *Cross and Burn* was the sense of readjustment that ran through the book

for all the protagonists, as after the horrific events of The Retribution, both mentally and physically for the main players, they are all in a state of flux in their personal and professional lives. Carol Jordan, now no longer a police officer, is still coming to terms with her familial loss and on a mission to erase these events, now firmly rooted in a rural idyll and her relationship with her former colleagues, and more importantly, Tony Hill completely severed. Our favourite bumbling but brilliant psychological profiler, Tony Hill is, well, bumbling along, pining for the loss of his relationship with Jordan, the drying up of his police consultancy work and his new life on the waves- okay- a canal. Newly promoted DS Paula McIntyre takes a larger part in the story, now part of a new investigation team under the steely leadership of another female boss- DCI Fielding- and finds her personal and professional life intermingling when a friend disappears. As a series of abductions unfold McIntyre and Hill join forces providing a different dimension to the plot, but Hill soon finds himself in the accusatory glare of the indomitable Fielding and Carol Jordan cannot help but be drawn back into the world she has left behind, despite the fragility of her relationship with him. This is the real strength of the book for me, as the abduction storyline was a little laboured (although I appreciate the need to draw McIntyre's personal life into the mix for the sake of the plot) but where McDermid excels is in her observation of the very human need for connection and reconciliation. I loved the tentative and thorny reactions between Jordan and Hill, the pressures on McIntyre to connect with a new team of detectives and her narrow minded boss, and the ruminations of Hill on his disconnection with a world that largely tolerated his own peculiar quirks of character and way of working. I enjoyed the depictions of the solitary lives led by Jordan and Hill- consumed in their own particular miseries- set against the sudden change in McIntyre's domestic set-up with the introduction of her own newly arrived waif and stray and how this impacts on her relationship with her partner Eleanor, and of course the very marked differences made in the characters and professional attitudes of Jordan and Fielding in their former and current roles of overseeing murder investigations.

No question then in my mind that McDermid is back with style, not necessarily in the depiction of the central investigation, but in her capturing in the real frailties and strengths in her established cast of characters. It's no mean feat to reveal new aspects to such stalwart characters over the length of a series, but to me this worked beautifully throughout, and I thoroughly enjoyed the ebb and flow of them reconnecting them in the face of emotional and professional difficulties. Nicely done.

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### **Rachel Hall says**

The prevailing school of thought on the Tony Hill and Carol Jordan series seems to advise reading the outings in sequential order. Whilst I had read the novel which follows this, I had not read any of the previous outings yet managed to easily follow this one thanks to a succinct recap from Val McDermid. Admittedly though the starting point for much of the early detail that McDermid conveys is past events, serving to provide clarity on the working relationships of former DCI Carol Jordan's now disbanded Murder Investigation Team. All of that team bear the scars of the previous investigation into Jacko Vance, a fiendish psychopath whose vengeance took the lives of Carol's brother and his partner and left a colleague blinded.

Much of the early focus of the novel is filling in the blanks about how the disbanded unit have picked up the pieces in the wake of the fallout, all aware of the enmity of colleagues who see the dissolution of the "mavericks of MIT" as long overdue. For Carol, her career days are over with a hasty resignation following her failure to second guess Vance, or more specifically Tony Hill's failure to consider the possibilities of a depraved and sadistic lunatic. After all, blaming Tony is the only way that Carol can live with the survivors guilt that has driven her into gutting the treasured barn conversion which Michael and Lucy called home, determined to obliterate all traces of the massacre which claimed their lives. Psychological profiler, Tony

Hill, is coming to terms with the loss of Carol from his life, mourning his connection with just about the only person he ever felt truly socially at ease with. In the days of austerity with budget constraints holding sway, justifying the expense of a specialist profiler is out of the equation, leaving Hill to return to his consultant role at Bradfield Moor Secure Hospital. I expect readers who haven't followed the series will find themselves a little bogged down with just how much emphasis is put on the breakdown of relations between Dr Tony Hill and Jordan and at times I did tire, wanting forward progression in the current case and not rehashing the wounds of the past but I doubt whether many long term fans would complain.

Admittedly the actual investigation which reunites the team feels like an adjunct and a rushed necessity, but McDermaid handles the focus of this novel, and the altogether thornier relationship issue splendidly well. The case revolves around a man kidnapping and inflicting a series of depraved acts on his victims which render them unrecognisable before eventually discarding their bodies. Sadly, the portrait of the killer is rather simplistic and the route to identifying the murderer feels a little flimsy. His motives were never that clearly defined and his character evidenced none of the clear headed and cautious traits that his work indicated. However despite being a so-so mystery, Cross and Burn, is an exceptional portrayal of grief, with lessons on facing the demons of the past and well worth a read, if only in paving the way for the reunification of the former MIT and the excellent follow up, Splinter The Silence. Throughout Cross and Burn the newly promoted DS Paula McIntyre is the main focus for much of the legwork on this investigation. Paula's loyalty to Carol Jordan restricted her to a ranking of constable and having gained her stripes and stepped up she is pivotal in acting as peace broker and reuniting the former team to tackle a case which is thwarting her new boss, DCI Alex Fielding.

I appreciated McDermaid's commentary about the budget restraints of the force being clamped down upon, meaning that every expense had to be justifiable, often resulting in scrimping on forensic analysis due to a budget remit. McDermaid casts an eye over the future of a force where securing justice can simply boil down to the higher cost of ensuring the outsourced forensic evidence is enough to guarantee certainty of a conviction. McDermaid's appreciation of these boundaries was necessary and contributed to a realistic view of a police force attempting to banish the costly MIT set-up as a thing of the past.

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