



## Whiplash River

*Lou Berney*

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Next thing Shake knows, his restaurant’s gone up in flames and he’s on the run from Baby Jesus, two freelance assassins, and a beautiful but ferocious FBI agent. Out of options, Shake has to turn to the mysterious Quinn for help. Suddenly Shake’s up to his neck in a dangerous score that he’ll never pull off unless he can convince an even more dangerous ex-girlfriend to join him.

## Whiplash River Details

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Author : Lou Berney

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## From Reader Review Whiplash River for online ebook

### Jim says

Yeah this is an author to follow.

Laugh out loud dialog, very well written characters. Author Berney takes the time to develop minor characters, and it pays off in the reading. Whiplash River takes you on a wild ride, yet I'm eager for the next one.

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### Joe Young says

A remarkable action packed story with a basically "Good Man" career criminal wheel man, Charles "Shake" Bouchon, who has paid his price and is trying to go straight as a highly leveraged restaurant owner in Belize. Characters abound filling out the story with an assortment of memorable, strange people ranging from a FBI Special Agent taking her vacation in Belize to try to squeeze Shake for damning info on the Armenian Mob to a loving pair of "Would Be" assassins trying to earn their credentials at Shakes restaurant, an evil killer and bad guy, Babb who is masquerading as an FBI Special Agent, Idaba, Shake's second in command and conscience, Quinn, an ancient but colorful and talkative restaurant customer reputed to have a CIA background and maybe some current connections to the agency, Baby Jesus and his strong arm henchman who insured that Shake satisfied his loans from the local island mob gangster, a lovely lady, Gina, who Shake would love to get to know better and break his long dry spell at romance and a link to former associate, Sticky Jimmy who is now cleaned up and has political aspirations for high political office. The story just keep looping around with the poor sympathetic anti-hero Shake constantly running to just avoid getting further behind and being threatened from all sides. One of those people who can't get a fair break in life but, is loveable still and you can't help but keep on rooting for him. Keeps you interested and involved throughout without even a hint of a slow place. The fast paced action, tension and concern for the health of Shake and his assortment of peers keyes this book as one of the better books of the season. Treat yourselves with a great read!

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### Lisa Black says

This book was a lot of fun to read--kind of like the old Ross Thomas books I devoured years ago--with a cast of characters so well-defined and unique that you won't forget them for a long time, and miss them a bit after the last page.

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### Michael Martz says

'Whiplash River' is a fast-paced sequel to Lou Berney's Gutshot Straight, with lots of whacky characters, humor, action, exotic locales, violence, a little sex, and a plot that's made for the movies. I'm not sure who'd play the part of the inimitable Shake, but there's everything here for a high budget blockbuster.

Shake had a problem. His restaurant wasn't doing well, he was late in repaying a loan to a gangster, a pretty FBI agent is tracking him down for his past sins, people are shooting at his patrons in his restaurant, his place of business explodes, and he needs to get out of town, fast. Problem is, town is a tropical island and all he has is an old ex-CIA guy who won't shut up and who's also being chased and a slow tourist boat they stole to get them to Mexico. That's only the beginning.....

It'd be very easy to spoil the remainder of this and I won't do it....the fun is just starting and you just have to get to know the characters. This book is a blast!

By the way, I've heard comparisons of the writer to Hiassen and I can certainly see them. He also has a lot of Elmore Leonard in there as well with the great dialogue and characters that may be a little criminally-inclined but fun to hang with as well.

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### **Carol Evans says**

I thoroughly enjoyed Whiplash River by Lou Berney. It made me gasp and smile. It's a romp, a caper, a slightly mad-cap thriller.

Opening line:

The view from the veranda was a killer.

A sugar-sand beach, palm trees, the Caribbean glittering beneath a full moon. A wooden pier curved out over the water, with a thatch-covered palapa perched at the end. Straight off a postcard.

Shake had bought the Sunset Breeze more than two years ago. You'd think he wouldn't even notice the view any more, but he did. Every single time he stepped onto the veranda of the restauant, his restaurrant, that was still his first though: Straight off a postcard.

Shake's an ex-con who is trying to go straight. Unfortunatley, Shake's one of those loveable guys that fate just seems to want to screw with, of course, his own decisions don't help.

Shake's Bad Ideas:

- 1.Going in debt to the local drug lord, Baby Jesus, to open his restaurant. Baby Jesus wants paid, and he wants paid on time. Tough to do when when your restaurant goes up in flames.
- 2.Turning to Quinn, an elderly man who is full of stories, when you're in trouble. After all, he almost got killed in the middle of your restaurant and now the assassins are after you too, along with a gorgeous FBI agent who wants to nail your former employer, the Armenian mob.
- 3.Agreeing to a major score, stealing a historical American artifact currently in a collection in Egypt, conned into the heist by Quinn.
- 4.Bringing in your dangerous, and very attractive ex-girlfriend to help with above score. After all it's impossible without her, isn't it?

Yeah, not the best choices, but it does make for a great novel, where events just keep spinning farther and farther out of Shake's control. You have to love Shake, he's charming, handsome, one of the good guy crooks. Quinn is a mysterious man, you don't know how much of his stories to believe, but you know he's bound to get Shake into trouble. And Gina, the ex, is a strong woman, smart, lovely, better prepared for life

than Shake by far, and Berney plays with the romantic connection well. Not only do you want Shake and Gina to pull off the score without getting caught, you want them back together by the end.

Exotic locales, a larger than life cast of characters, a fast-paced plot and snappy dialogue made this my favorite read of the summer so far. It made me laugh and cringe, a good combo.

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### **Kirk Smith says**

Tone: pitch-perfect. Tempo: driving. Enjoyment: 10. One of the most enjoyable books of this year! Great plot and adventure, lovable criminal characters. Recommend: Everyone.

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### **Jamie says**

Ten hours flat, start to finish. Ten hours and I stopped to eat lunch and to eat dinner and that was the problem! Both were food that took both hands and how could I eat but also keep reading?

If I really, really liked *Gutshot Straight*, I loved loved loved this one. This guy is—hang with me here—the William Gay to Elmore Leonard’s Cormac McCarthy. At first glance, he’s got Elmore’s language, he’s onto the master’s tricks. But any look closer and it’s not even close to imitation. It’s not even homage. It may be a debt owed but he’s doing something so completely his own, from his own heart and guts, it’s in another zipcode.

And this zipcode is *my* zipcode, you better believe it. There are Shake and Quinn who joke about Faulkner and *Don Quixote* and *Ten Wanted Men*. Baby-faced crime bosses named Baby Jesus who read *The Four Hour Workweek* to decide if they should shoot their gun thug for putting a scratch on their boat. There’s twists and flips and triple-crosses and I laughed out loud and chewed my nails and held my breath and got choked up until I had to look away and blink to see the page. The crackling chemistry Shake had with Gina is missing but you don’t even notice until the halfway mark and holy shit, the hot blue spark is back. Then it’s just two Evinrude motors, full bore, breakneck.

Plus this time, there’s a lady Fed with a SIG Sauer and Cairo, Egypt and Terry and Meg, my darling Meg. The plot’s a little tighter. The love’s a little deeper. There’s bullshit by the metric ton but all the earnestness a heart can hold and there’s not a trace of anything ironic or detached within a square mile. Everybody’s self-aware and badass and scared shitless and bold and smart and dumb and funny and unexpectedly deep, all of my favorite things in a person.

Like Elmore said, a sequel’s got to be better than the original or it’s not gonna work. This one proved the first one wasn’t a fluke. Now I just wish Berney’s catalog was already sixty deep so I could read so much more.

P.S. *Nice* with the hat tip to Ted Griffin via Shake and Gina’s bit on the writer of *Ocean’s Eleven*. (“The one with Sinatra, you mean?”)

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**Re-read September 2013:** I was going to read this a second time, longer and slower this time. I guess I did. It lasted two days. So then I tried a third time and finally did it, taking a whole week to savor the fun.

I wouldn't even know how to explain how to push all my buttons, but boy, this sure does. Quinn and Meg and Terry and Shake and Gina! I could grab this book and pick a chapter, any chapter, any time I want to brighten my day.

It's goddamn delightful. It might be one of the books I read most this year.

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### **James Thane says**

This is the second very entertaining novel from Lou Berney featuring Charles "Shake" Bouchon, who first appeared in *Gutshot Straight* in 2010. Shake is a former wheel man and ex-con who's determined to put his checkered past behind him. He's made his way to the Caribbean paradise of Belize and realized his life-long dream of opening a restaurant.

It's a lot of work, and building a successful enterprise like this takes time and money. To make ends meet, Shake has borrowed money from a violent drug lord known as Baby Jesus. He's in danger of missing his next payment, and this could lead to serious problems. But this restaurant is a labor of love, and Shake couldn't be happier until one night a gunman barges into the restaurant in the middle of the dinner hour and attempts to shoot an elderly customer. Shake intervenes and saves the customer, breaking the gunman's nose in the process. But in doing so, he effectively blows up his own island dreams and puts himself in considerable jeopardy.

The assassin's target is a gentleman of the old school named Quinn who appears to have stepped directly out of the pages of a Ross Thomas novel and onto the stage in this book. He claims to have been involved in nefarious adventures in various parts of the world over the years. Maybe he was with the C.I.A.; maybe he was on the other side of the law; maybe both. It's not exactly clear.

Quinn attempts to enlist Shake in his next grand scheme and, against his better judgement, Shake agrees. What follows is an excellent adventure that sounds like a mash-up of Elmore Leonard and the aforementioned Mr. Thomas. There's action galore, exotic locales, interesting and very dangerous adversaries, and--even better--some interesting and very dangerous women. It's a lot of fun and a worthy sequel to *Gutshot Straight*, although any reader contemplating this book would certainly want to read "Gutshot" first.

Lou Berney won the coveted Edgar Award for Best Paperback Original for his novel, *The Long and Faraway Gone*, and he's clearly a rising star in the crime fiction field. The guy can't write books fast enough to suit me, and any fan of crime fiction who hasn't yet discovered him will be very happy to make his acquaintance.

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### **Carole (Carole's Random Life in Books) says**

2/20/15: Free on Amazon! <http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B007...>

Also free on Nook! <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/whipl...>

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### **Kathleen Huben says**

Whiplash River is second in Lou Berney's series featuring former getaway driver, Charles "Shake" Bourchon. I've read and thoroughly enjoyed both books and do believe it really helps to have read Gutshot Straight before Whiplash River.

Bourchon is the classic "criminal with a sense of honor" - a basically good guy who's taken a couple of wrong turns but still has a strong sense of "right and wrong" (he would never turn in any of his former associates to lighten his sentencing), and is now attempting to go straight.

As Whiplash River starts, he is living out his dream of running his own restaurant on the Belize coast, but is deep in debt to a Belize loan shark/drug dealer. Anything that can go wrong does and ultimately "Shake" is back to try "just one more job" and get his life back together.

I like Berney's combination of humor and suspense and thoroughly enjoy the oddball cast of character he assembles. Looking forward to see what happens to Shake next.

I won Whiplash River from LibraryThings.com Early Reviewers.

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### **Daniel Villines says**

From cover to cover, *Whiplash River* is completely entertaining. It grabs your attention from the start with an exotic destination that happens to be one of my favorite places: the Caribbean. Then the book pulls you in, willingly, with its wonderful characters. Each one is different and unique, but more to the point, each one is real in terms of their individual hopes, regrets, and personalities. There are no favorites, which makes switching between storylines a real pleasure. As you leave one character's story, the next character in line is enthusiastically received.

Based on the above, you might believe that this is a character-driven book. However, the plot drives this story in that there is never a dull moment. It's an extraordinary find to come across a book that provides deliciously interesting characters that are entwined within a captivating plot, but be assured, this is one of those books.

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### **Melanie says**

I'm physically exhausted after reading this hellish good follow-up spree all the way to the pyramids.

Love the 'Shakes & Gina' team and all the new brazen, crazy, loveable characters - zowee Meg aka Peppermint Patty, big smile Evelyn, chatty Harry and batshit Babb. Tough Meg deserves to lead next and maybe Jasper can help a gal out.

Back to being exhausted: the reader is never in on the con and you can't guess quick enough, the author has so many balls in the air and he's a consummate juggler.

Heart pounding, belly aching fun. Highly recommend.

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## Kara Jorges says

I loved Lou Berney's first novel, Gutshot Straight, so I was thrilled when I saw he had written another. I was even happier when I realized this book also starred Shake Bouchon, ex-wheelman for the Armenian mob. Shake apparently decided to start living quietly and bought himself a bar in Belize. Life would be great, if it wasn't for the fact that he owes cocaine runner Baby Jesus several thousand dollars he can't pay back. Then his bar gets shot up when someone tries to kill one of his customers, and before he can sweep up all the broken glass, the place explodes. It's suddenly time to get out of Belize, so he turns to the one man who says he can help, who's also the same guy who started all the trouble in the first place.

Quinn claims he's an expert at bringing people together, like the authorities and surrendering drug dealers, and now he's got a line on something that will make both him and Shake rich: a copy of Teddy Roosevelt's speech stolen from the American museum in Cairo. All they have to do is travel to Egypt and con it out of the guys who took it during the uprising. But to do it, Shake needs to bring in one more person: his ex-girlfriend Gina, who happens to hate his guts.

Shake is a great character, as are Gina, Quinn, and just about everyone else on these pages. I liked this book, but not nearly as much as I liked Gutshot Straight. This time, there were too many subplots going on, and most of them did not get the attention they deserved before the story moved onto the next phase. I love the relationship between Shake and Gina, and would have liked to see more of that, but it almost felt as if Gina was added to the story as an afterthought. Despite that, this was a very readable book--just not as good as the first--and I'll definitely read Berney's next one.

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## Still says

Can I rate this six stars? Is that permissible?  
I'm wrung out after that last 40 or so pages.  
Lou Berney is such an awe inspiring writer - long time, no Dutch.  
12 star rating.

This novel is a sequel to Lou Berney's Gutshot Straight .  
As much as I enjoyed that particular novel, Whiplash River: A Novel is even better.  
It's not necessary to have read that first entry in the series.

This is an international heist/crime caper with numerous killings.  
Starts in Belize, ends in Cairo.  
Amazing cast of memorable characters - almost all of whom could have strolled out of a middle-era Elmore Leonard novel.

Fast moving, brilliantly funny dialogue, suspenseful, and action-packed.

Might be my favorite read of 2016.  
Highest Possible Recommendation!

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## Col says

Synopsis/blurb....

Having left his life of crime behind, former getaway driver Charles "Shake" Bouchon has finally realized the dream of owning his own restaurant in Belize. Unfortunately, to do so he's had to go deep in debt to a murderous local drug lord named Baby Jesus. And when Shake thwarts an attempted hit on an elderly customer named Quinn, things go from bad to worse.

Next thing Shake knows, his restaurant's gone up in flames and he's on the run from Baby Jesus, two freelance assassins, and a beautiful but ferocious FBI agent. Out of options, Shake has to turn to the mysterious Quinn for help. Suddenly Shake's up to his neck in a dangerous score that he'll never pull off unless he can convince an even more dangerous ex-girlfriend to join him.

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My take....

Another mid-2016 read and my second time with author Lou Berney and his retired Armenian wheelman Shake Bouchon. Gutshot Straight introduced me to the character and was one of my favourite reads of 2012.

In Whiplash River, Shake returns and is trying to go straight. Needless to say things quickly get complicated. He owns a restaurant and he owes money. He saves the life of a customer in the restaurant, an old guy named Quinn, who was regaling him with tales of dark deeds in South America.

Shake's restaurant subsequently gets burned down and this time he is the target. Before long Shake is involved in a caper in Egypt, dreamed up by the mysterious Quinn and involving his ex-lover Gina.

The book had the right combination of ingredients that I enjoy in my reading.....an interesting but somewhat unlucky protagonist - one with a chequered past and in a tight pinch; a bit of a love interest, but as it's a former rather than a current beau there's plenty of scope for tension and humour; a couple of hitmen; a drug-boss money lender; a mysterious figure with a shady past, one who you aren't quite sure if he's a serial fantasist or if he has lived the life and the seemingly tall tales of derring-do are genuine; the FBI in pursuit and a proposal for a crime which if it can be pulled off might offer a get out of jail free card.

Plot – great, characters – interesting and funny, action – plenty, dialogue – entertaining, setting – Belize and Egypt – ok.

Enjoyable but not as memorable as the first. 12 months down the line, I can't actually recall what they went to Egypt to do, but that's fine. Not every book I read has to remain seared in my memory banks for ever.

Enjoyable, entertaining, nothing else I wanted to be reading once I got stuck into this one.

4 from 5

A few thoughts on Gutshot Straight here.  
<http://col2910.blogspot.co.uk/2012/12...>

I have another Berney book on the pile – The Long and Faraway Gone, a novel which doesn't feature Shake Bouchon and apparently won a few awards - an Edgar, an Anthony, a Barry, a Macavity.

Lou Berney has a website here.

<http://www.louberney.com/>

He's on Twitter - @Lou\_Berney

[https://twitter.com/lou\\_berney?lang=en](https://twitter.com/lou_berney?lang=en)

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