



Murder, Inc.: The Story Of The Syndicate

Burton B. Turkus , Sid Feder

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“Murder, Inc.” was the moniker of the Syndicate’s firing squad, a ruthless group of men guilty of professionally committing 1,000 murders. *Murder, Inc.* is the book that exposed the Syndicate to the eyes of the world. First published in 1951, it rose to the top of the best-seller list, but later fell out-of-print. Now, here is a new edition of the classic that tells all about the great gangsters of the late ’30s and ’40s: Frank Costello, Louis ”Lepke” Buchalter, Meyer Lansky, Lucky Luciano, Bugsy Siegel, Johnny Torrio, Willie Sutton, Joey Adonis, Dutch Schultz. Here are the stories of how Pittsburgh Phil and Bugsy Goldstein literally set Puggy Feinstein on fire; how and why Kid Twist Reles sang to the D.A. for twelve straight days, confessing dozens of murders; how the killers’ boss, Albert Anastasia, slipped through the arms of the law. From the highest levels of the U.S. government down to the lowest levels of street crime, the Syndicate infiltrated American life. *Murder, Inc.* tells how it was formally organized by the nation’s ranking mob lords at the end of Prohibition to control all crime, from gambling to crooked politics to labor extortion and murder. It describes the carefully built organization with its board of governors and its kangaroo court, and shows how this massive and powerful organization was finally broken. For it was only from the murderers themselves that the truth could be learned. And no man was more qualified to tell the whole story than Burton Turkus, the Brooklyn assistant D.A. who listened to the killers’ tales and who sent seven of them to the electric chair. Together with Sid Feder, a veteran journalist, they produced *Murder, Inc.*, the definitive work on the most dangerous group of gangsters the law has ever known.

Murder, Inc.: The Story Of The Syndicate Details

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Louis Spirito says

Written in 1951, before the average TV viewer was a mob cognoscento, Murder Inc. recounts the author's exploits in prosecuting some half-dozen of the syndicates ace killers. Not surprisingly, the book has an episodic, almost disjointed quality. While it offers a interesting if dated picture of organized crime in the 1930s and '40s, the lack of a cohesive plot might deter all but diehard crime buffs.

Heidi says

It's the "must read" of the topic, but some of Turkus' story has been proven false in the past 50-ish since it was written. Noirish in its writing, which can grow tiresome, but it was popular in the time, so...

Louis says

Burton B. Turkus and Sid Feder's Murder, Inc.: The Story Of The Syndicate is the story of the rise and fall of one of the most famous organized crime operations in the United States. The figures involve include well-known names such as Bugsy Siegal and Lucky Luciano, as well as more obscure but nonetheless important figures. The mob is aided and abetted by a number of people outside the underworld, including corrupt union officials and corrupt government officials. Turkus and Feder emphasize that the mob's influence would not be possible without such corrupt officials.

This book is more interesting yet also more horrifying than almost any fictional work about this subject. As bizarre and graphic as this book can be at times, it is a worthwhile read for anyone interested in the subject of organized crime or history in general.

Harold says

I love this book! I first read it when I was a little kid (my father had it). It gives a pretty accurate picture of how "The Syndicate" was formed in the early 1930s and how it developed through the next decade or two. Pretty accurate as far as I know. It also frames this story around the events leading up to the conviction and execution of Lepke Buchalter - the only big time syndicate guy to go to the chair. So we also have the saga of Abe "Kid Twist" Reles turning states witness for reasons unknown and his eventual and "mysterious" demise while under protection of the NYC police force.

Patrick C. Harvey says

Suffers from poor editing

Great story but the read suffers from endless typos. With copy editing this book would receive the full five stars. As is its frustrating

Trekscribbler says

As I've mentioned previously, the final season of HBO's stellar BOARDWALK EMPIRE set me out on my current path of reading a whole slew of true crime – not the kind of tabloid exposes that highlights the latest get-dead-quick tale of wayward husbands killing their dismissive wives but rather the true investigative history of gangland. I'd always known about how widespread the corrupting influences of America's Prohibition really put the United States down the path toward legitimizing lives of crime, but what was missing for me was how these little fiefdoms grew into a national conglomeration of like-minded, nefarious individuals.

MURDER, INC. has gone a lot way toward answering that question. And then some.

(NOTE: The following review will contain minor spoilers necessary solely for the discussion of plot and/or characters. If you're the type of reader who prefers a review entirely spoiler-free, then I'd encourage you to skip down to the last two paragraphs for my final assessment. If, however, you're accepting of a few modest hints at 'things to come,' then read on ...)

I had heard of Abe Reles before. I'd read his name in any number of true crime narratives. His is a story that's kinda/sorta been lost to the greater history of criminal activity I think for two reasons: (1) he committed the unthinkable so far as ganglords are concerned by 'squealing' or 'playing the canary' the way he did; and (2) the federal government itself – under the auspices of the Kefauver Commission in the early 50's – tried to kinda/sorta reshape the historical legacy of any national syndicate perhaps in an attempt to (ahem) protect their own interests. History and governments have certainly committed greater offenses, but – for reasons too numerous to detail – it was important to contain what Reles' ultimately knew ... which is why his curious death remains a mystery to this date.

For the record, Brooklyn Assistant D.A. probably knew better than anyone other than Reles just what those secrets were as he was the man tasked with pulled back the veil, listening to the contract killer spill his guts for as long as he did. It's his expansive recollection along with veteran journalist Sid Feder's grasp of weaving a tale perhaps too fantastic to believe that makes MURDER, INC. revered (at least by me) as 'the Old Testament' of organized crime.

This is, at times, an exhaustive accounting of just how these various fledgling criminal organizations got their start and how they 'changed with the times,' adapting to local and national deterrents all with the hope of building a better organization. Turkus and Feder turn over every stone Reles points them to, and what they've done here is complete the kind of critical thinking that escapes federal groupthink: instead of homogenizing the Syndicate – as the feds eventually did – they dissect it through key people, places, and events for anyone willing to wade into the deep waters. In the end, they unquestionable show the death of the old world Mafia – along with the repeal of national Prohibition – made the times ripe for the emergence of a new form of 'government within a government,' all of it headed by shylocks, extortion artists, criminal dealmakers, and even hitmen.

Dare I say, you probably won't look at American History quite the same after digesting so very much of MURDER, INC. It isn't a pretty picture, and that's probably because it involves so much of how the structure of the people's government allowed precisely for organized crime to avoid prosecution much less detection for as long as it did. There are still folks today – let's just call them politicians – who would have you believe this story isn't quite true as it's told, but that's only because – much like the Kefauver Commission did as well as similar efforts before and after – they have a vested interest in having 'the regular folks' unaware of how the stewards entrusted to protect us missed or deliberately dropped the ball on this one. It's a frightening story told by Reles, and for that he had to be silenced.

But was it murder that did the man in for good?

Or was it suicide?

You'll have to decide for yourself after you've read it, though I suspect you'll find the official conclusion hard to believe.

HIGHEST RECOMMENDATION POSSIBLE. As I've said above, MURDER, INC.: THE STORY OF THE SYNDICATE is akin to the 'Old Testament' of organized crime. There just simply isn't a better investigation of the evolution of gangsterism as it changed from what it was at the dawn of the 20th Century through the early 40's, or – if there is – I remain completely oblivious to it. Abe Reles was as tragic a man as he was renowned (as thugs and killers go), and Burton Turkus and Sid Feder's book does an impressive job trying to expose Reles' life without glamorizing it in the slightest. Excellent, excellent reading, perhaps as good as it gets.

Lee says

This is an old book written in the 50's by the Assistant Brooklyn D.A who sent many members of Murder Inc to the Electric Chair. Many of the contentions he puts forth in the book have since been proven untrue, he talks many times about how the Mafia was replaced by the Syndicate. But the inside stories of Murder Inc, he talked with and debriefed the famous canary Abe 'Kid Twist' Reles, make the book worth reading.

Ed says

A factual account of the Mob, 1935-50, by the actual DA who sent some of the "plug-uglies" to the chair. In places the book gets a little bogged down with the apparent need to spare no details of the trials, but for the most part it reads like a series of Damon Runyon stories.

M. Newman says

Although this book had very good ratings and was about what to me is a very interesting subject, I found it to be very dry and somewhat boring.

Walt says

Although a little difficult to plow through, this is the best book on Murder, Inc. (1930s). Burton and Feder were the prosecutors and they knew the case better than anyone. They also stick solely to what they can prove and made few assumptions about the connections between the killers and other organized crime groups.

It is a must read for those interested in how organized crime operated in New York in the 1930s.

Nate says

A classic of the field. Totally unreliable but its where the legends became the facts.

Jennifer says

The first book I read on Murder, Inc. If this is a subject you're interested in, it's a must.
