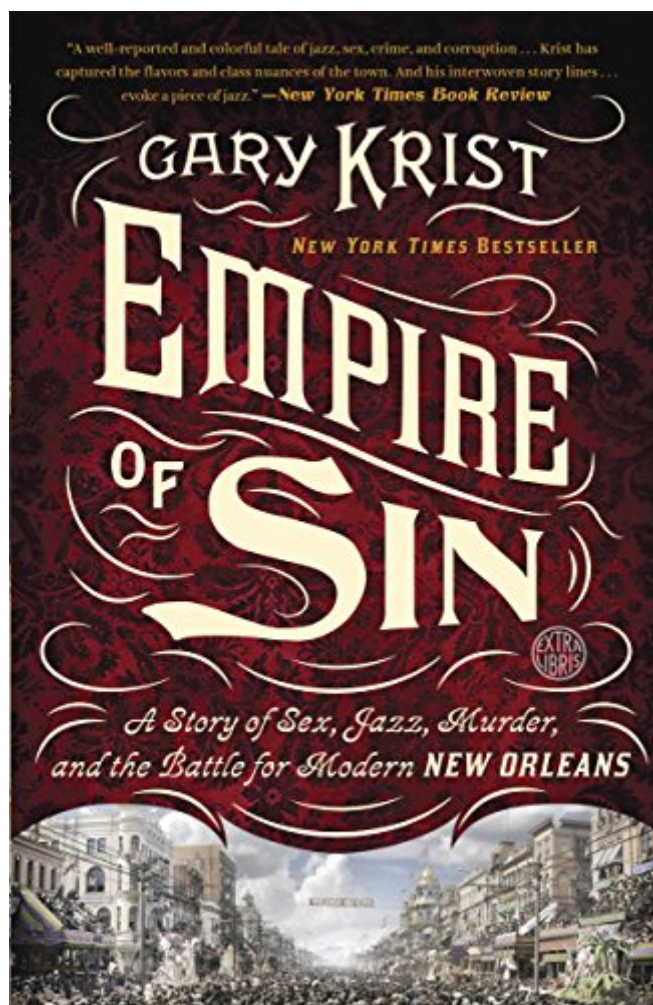


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Empire Of Sin: A Story Of Sex, Jazz, Murder, And The Battle For Modern New Orleans



Synopsis

From bestselling author Gary Krist, a vibrant and immersive account of New Orleans's other civil war, at a time when commercialized vice, jazz culture, and endemic crime defined the battlegrounds of the Crescent City. *Empire of Sin* re-creates the remarkable story of New Orleans's thirty-year war against itself, pitting the city's elite "better half" against its powerful and long-entrenched underworld of vice, perversity, and crime. This early-20th-century battle centers on one man: Tom Anderson, the undisputed czar of the city's Storyville vice district, who fights desperately to keep his empire intact as it faces onslaughts from all sides. Surrounding him are the stories of flamboyant prostitutes, crusading moral reformers, dissolute jazzmen, ruthless Mafiosi, venal politicians, and one extremely violent serial killer, all battling for primacy in a wild and wicked city unlike any other in the world.

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Customer Reviews

Gary Krist has done it again. For readers familiar with his previous work on 1919 Chicago, "City of Scoundrels," Krist once again takes on a big, corrupt city and profiles its most violent era, from 1890

to 1920. This is an era when grandchildren of former slaves are now reaching adulthood, and see an entire new world unlike that of their grandparents. This also included intense race riots targeting innocent blacks that were egged on by the ruling whites. Krist's engaging writing style keeps readers riveted to each page. This thrilling narrative starts out with two murders. One victim is the brother of a popular prostitute, the other is the police chief himself. Italian "Dagos" are blamed for the murder, although no juror could prove without a doubt. Italian-hating mobs storm the prison and take justice into their own hands. Thus was born the infamous reign of New Orleans police chief Tom Anderson, a man who seemed to foment racial hatred but who was no more a product of the times as the people he was sworn to protect. These early mob riots were the vanguard of the Black Hand over a decade later. The book is divided into four parts: from 1890-1891; mid 1890s to 1907; 1907-1917; 1917-1920. The stories in each may not relate directly to each other over the years, other than that police chief Anderson was in charge and rather than keeping the city safe, only got himself and his friends entwined in more corruption. The stories reflect the racial tension of the times. Anderson was a seriously flawed man, and his madam friend Josie Arlington kept the part of New Orleans known as Storyville alive with a sexual liberty unknown in the rest of the country, and it is in Storyville that so much of the crimes described in this book play out.

Empire of Sin by Gary Krist, is another riveting account of the history of New Orleans. This history takes place after the restoration failed and begins in 1890 and carries on until 1920. I have recently read, *The Great New Orleans Kidnapping Case: Race, Law, and Justice in the Reconstruction Era* and this book picks up when that one ends. There was much progress made during the Restoration and folks by law were made to live together in peace. Black people in the community were able to have good jobs and many blacks served in the community as policeman and held prominent positions. But, by 1890, that progress was lost and Jim Crow laws were quickly put back into place. Empire of Sin, isn't an exploration of this process but it is a story that portrays New Orleans in a time where crime, prostitution, and corruption pretty much ruled the city. Many facets of the population of New Orleans are explored here. This is the story of the many brothels in Storyville and why women in the city worked in them; women were given menial employment opportunities, and this was a job where they could make a decent living providing a service to the city, where even the most prominent of politician could be either visiting the brothels or helping to run them. It's also the story of race where mobs could instantly form to lynch or punish when the law didn't seem to be making the correct call. This is also the story of how The Black Hand, the mafia, made it's way to the city-attracted by the lure of easy money and how it could benefit from such a place. Stories are

culled from the local papers and where possible, relatives and others tell the accounts of murder and mayhem in the Crescent City.

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