

A Must Read! February 13, 2012

By R. Hastings

Guillermo Paxton, author of the *THE PLAZA*, has written an intriguing contemporary novel about the devastating drug wars in Juarez, Mexico. This modern work is filled with suspense, emotional upheaval, romantic encounters, bizarre action, and riveting ups and downs experienced by an array of diverse characters. Paxton has described a world that is rich in fascinating detail. The fact that this is a piece of fiction based on actual events witnessed by the author only makes the story more compelling and the anticipation of reading it more exciting. It is an unforgettable novel that you won't put down.

The Plaza was an amazing story, the characters really matched up with the story line to make it all pop. As a reader it captivated my attention and made me ponder the fate of those involved. I couldn't put it down! . I have to admit, I was very sad and cried during the murder of one of the characters. Mr. Paxton captured attention most with just one single character. You got to experience his desperations, his struggles, frustrations, and the love he had for his city, and family.

The way the author presents the entire setting, you almost feel as if you're sitting on a bench in the park watching the other families, or a fly on the wall watching the gruesome scenes. I'm excited to see what else the Author has in store, and ready to read more!

Andre Lucero - This review is from: The Plaza

Based on actual events, Guillermo Paxton's "The Plaza" is a brutally honest and absolutely chilling account of the daily atrocities that are occurring in Juarez, Mexico. As a result of the horrific violence, Juarez has earned the title "the most dangerous city in the world". Drug Cartels have been battling for the control of this city because it is the gateway to El Paso, TX and the lucrative US drug market.

Mr. Paxton brilliantly captures the sense of despair and hopelessness that encompasses the daily lives of the citizens of Juarez. They are caught in the crossfire, with nowhere to go. They can trust no one and if they dare speak out, they are killed. Not even the innocent escape the wrath of the cartels.

We are given a glimpse of the cartel's interworking through the genuinely frightening and psychopathic personalities of some of their members. Each is driven by greed, sex, violence and power. They are chillingly sinister; amoral, corrupt and devoid of any semblance of mercy or humanity. We are provided insights to the rivalries and secret alliances that are taking place and come away realizing that the cartels are capable of anything and their influence is far reaching. Even into the Federal Police and the highest offices of government.

This is a captivating and gut-wrenching book. I highly recommend it. It's definitely not one for the squeamish, but once you start you will not be able to put it down. You will

come away feeling shocked and with a new understanding of what is really taking place at America's doorstep.

From CrimeFictionLover.com

Written by Guillermo Paxton – Seventy per cent of the heroin and 90 per cent of the cocaine in the USA comes in across the country's border with Mexico. The war on drugs has been fought for over a decade with the American government concentrating on halting the supply and the Mexicans trying to reduce violent crime in their country. Guillermo Paxton, previously an investigative journalist in Mexico, now resident in the States after threats were made against him and his family, tells us in his novel just who is winning.

Prior to the election of President Felipe Calderon, there was an implicit arrangement of non-interference between narco-traffickers and government. Calderon's decision to send in the army to challenge the cartels changed all that. Since 2006 as many as 40,000 people have died. Leadership vacuums within the cartels have led to increased violence as they fight amongst themselves. Meanwhile, bribery, intimidation and corruption have damaged law enforcement efforts at every turn. Paxton tells a fictional story of several people connected through the drug wars to paint a picture of life in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, across the border from El Paso, Texas.

Felipe is a freelance killer for the cartels. Drunk and paranoid, he trusts no-one, moving from job to job, killing with impunity. However, at night he is haunted by visions of his victims. Forced to choose sides as the war between gangs intensifies, he forms an attachment to the prostitute Ruby, and senses his salvation through her. However Ruby sees the riches that pass through the fingers of gangsters, and doesn't want to settle for someone so low down the totem pole. Her betrayal of Felipe may lead to both their deaths.

Saul Saavedra is the crime reporter for the Juarez Daily, and despite the risks to his family – no crime reporter has a picture with their byline for fear of reprisal – continues to investigate both the criminal gangs and corrupt law and army personnel. He has struck big with a mafia informant known as The Lic (short for *licenciado*, or counsellor) and is in possession of a video of soldiers shooting gang members they've arrested in cold blood.

Then there's Juan, who arrives in Juarez having agreed to be deported to Mexico in exchange for early parole from an American prison. He is already an experienced gang member, and his tear-drop tattoos testify to his capacity for violence. It is no surprise his talents are quickly recognised and he begins working for a cartel. For Juan though, violence is not just business but also pleasure, and his sexual sadism quickly spirals out of control.

What Paxton delivers with *The Plaza* – Mexican slang for gang turf – is partly an action-thriller, and partly heart-felt plea for his own country. His journalism skills help him to dissect the roles that government, army, police and criminals play and he doesn't shy away from pointing out there is no easy solution. His writing, particularly his descriptions of violence, and the way it has become everyday, even mundane, reminds me of Roger Smith's novels set in South Africa.

One criticism would be that the author's story-telling skills are not as sharp as Smith's. Sometimes I felt the book read more as a series of vignettes rather than a cohesive novel

in which developments in one story line bring changes in another. Perhaps Paxton felt that tying things up like this would have compromised the essential truth of his story but I feel it would have made an already very satisfying read even better.

Kirkus Book Reviews

In Paxton's novel, a journalist fights for his sanity and his life on the cartel-infested streets of Juarez, Mexico.

Juarez is not your typical city. With an early crash course in local and national Mexican politics, readers will quickly realize that the imminent rise of drug cartels is a highly political affair. That's not to say Paxton is arguing an agenda. On the contrary, his novel presents the city of Juarez as it is: overrun by well-funded, organized cartels that are savvy enough to hire professional assassins and connected lawyers for their defense, all while common street thugs look for any opportunity to intimidate and steal from local businesses and townsfolk. In the midst of all this chaos is Saul Saavedra, a veteran journalist at *The Juarez Daily* ("the only professional newspaper" in town). Consumed by the constant violence perpetrated by the cartels and thugs, as well as the inefficient and corrupt police force willfully abetting them, Saul reports on the near-daily executions, extortions and robberies that are rampant in the city. His work has hardened him, but his loving wife and two young daughters are what keep him fighting the good fight to reveal and right the torrent of injustice. The violence may not shock some readers, since newspapers—even here in America, where the overflow is less frequent—are eager to jump on any sensationalist morsel, so the frequent assassinations have become somewhat unsurprising. It is, nevertheless, disconcerting to read about Saul's casual adjustments to the murderous climate, not only for the sake of his career, but also for his life. For instance, in case of a sudden shootout, he has trained himself to seek alternate routes and escape points while driving. Details like this offer an eerie believability to the real-life dangers in Juarez; there are moments, however, when the narrative slips into the trappings of parody and genre. For the most part, though, the novel's daringness and its dark, all-too-real conclusion put an unsettling perspective on the alarming situation south of the border.

An engaging read that will undoubtedly awaken readers to the horrors of the drug war.