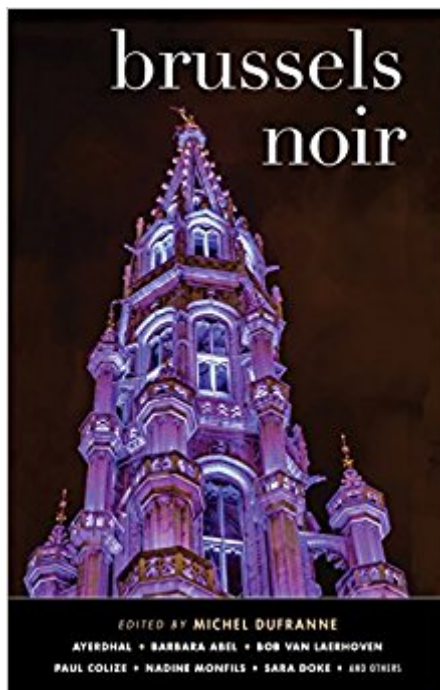


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## Brussels Noir (Akashic Noir)



## Synopsis

"Brussels, Belgium's cosmopolitan, multilingual capital, has its criminal underside, as shown in the 13 dark--and sometimes darkly humorous--stories in this strong Akashic noir volume."--Publishers Weekly "A perfect choice for those who love noir or those who love armchair traveling, this assortment of short stories gives the reader a glimpse into what life in the Belgian capital is like. An excellent entry in Akashic Books' noir series, which began with Brooklyn Noir more than a decade ago, Brussels Noir takes readers through the underbelly of yet another fascinating locale."-- Self Awareness for Readers "Akashic Books deserves kudos for their fine service to noir . . . If these volumes are designed to give crime writers a nifty forum and also capture the local flair and flavor, Brussels Noir is a fine come-hither."-- New York Journal of Books Akashic Books continues its groundbreaking series of original noir anthologies, launched in 2004 with Brooklyn Noir. Each story is set in a distinct neighborhood or location within the city of the book. Brand-new stories by: Barbara Abel, Ayerdhal, Paul Colize, Jean-Luc Cornette, Patrick Delperdange, Sara Doke, Kenan GÃ¶rgu, Edgar Kosma, Katia Lanero Zamora, Nadine Monfils, Alfredo Noriega, Bob Van Laerhoven, and Ã©milie de BÃ©co. From the introduction by Michel Dufranne: "For our grand tour, please be seated, ladies and gentlemen readers, in Tram 33...and no, there's no rain in the forecast today, just a leaden sky; for that matter, considering the timetables of the STIB, it's probably better to go on foot than to take public transport. We'll explore the city center, that pentagonal surface defined by urban highways and a canal, home to the real old Brussels, the historic core. We'll take a dainty stroll through an edifice that achieves the feat of being more vast and monolithic in style than St. Peter's Basilica: the Palais de Justice. From there, it's easy to glide down to the Marolles; then let your feet carry you from kabberdouch to stamcafÃ©, as you wander in an ethereal, even surrealist mode through the heart of the city, and finally come full circle. Having whetted our appetites, we'll play leapfrog along the boulevards to make our way to the inner ring road and tiptoe across the razor's edge of the city...And if the life of the abattoir hasn't sated you, you'll have plenty of room to maneuver as you stray from the center and discover the oh-so-serene neighborhoods of the greater ring, home to our venerable European institutions above all suspicion."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Michel Dufranne was born in Brussels in 1970. He is a workaholic who is constantly pursuing different career paths including headhunter, university professor, editor of science fiction and comics, and publishing consultant. He is currently a comics writer, and a book reviewer for a Belgian TV and radio show that focuses on thrillers and crime fiction novels.

Terrific read! Wonderful stories by gifted writers. As always Brussels is the city of layers ... full of excitement, intrigue, and stunningly interesting characters. Particularly liked the engaging story by Bob van Laerhoven and others. Mike Brogan

The Akashic Noir series is a strong series of short story anthologies that explore the world through literature. Each book in the collection is edited by a local writer, someone familiar with the area and its writers, with the ability to select the best noir fiction for their collection. People often write about how well an author captures the sense of place in their writing. Akashic Books ran with that idea and created an amazing series of anthologies, the best of the best. It is a nearly infallible formula. Brussels Noir, edited by Michel Dufranne is unique in the Akashic Noir series for me, a unique disappointment. It is the first time I have been disappointed in the selection. There were good stories that I enjoyed. The Beekeeper by Jean-Luc Cornette was a fun, though melancholy, caper. In the Shadow of the Tower by Émilie de Bacco was suspenseful, with skillful foreshadowing and brilliant execution. These two stories alone are worth the price of admission. There are a few other worthy stories as well, but overall, I was not happy with the selections. Michel Dufranne is not a mystery writer. His passions are science fiction and comics. That reveals itself in his selections, many of which are science fiction or surreal fantasies. The mysteries he selects are decidedly non-traditional. There is not a single whodunnit. In fact, we are most often in the mind of

the perpetrator or a victim, though victims, too, seem like perpetrators. No one is innocent. He likes stories that are told obliquely. I like it when writers expect us to figure things out, when they don't tell us everything, but when we are dropped into a fantasy world where Peter Pan is a real gangland leader, I want a clue whether it is real or a drunk hallucination. When you have a novel length story, it's a bit easier to let the world reveal itself bit by bit. When it's a short story and the setting is a dystopian future where the EU eradicates entire populations with a few bureaucratic machinations, a few hints to help it along rather than long narratives about the vicissitudes of commuting would be helpful. I guess it all depends on your definition of noir. For Dufranne, noir is relentless in its despair and dystopian view. Justice does not even exist as a concept, there is only revenge. Nearly every character is venal or violent or racist or depraved or dissolute. I don't mind unsympathetic characters. But the bleak absence of decency among the people of these stories is depressing. When the most likable person in the entire anthology is a retired pot dealer with too many cats, it's a sad collection. Despite the variety of plots and situations, there was a sameness to the selections that disappointed me. The true evil was almost always situated outside influence or agency, in government bureaucracy, in the media, in the nameless, faceless abusive police, in organized crime. So much of man against the machine and man losing because the machine is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent "god in the machine. Is Brussels really that depressing? Is there really no hope? I was disappointed in Brussels Noir but that is because I have come to expect so much from the series. I am not a fan of science fiction novels even though I like sci-fi tv series, but I have not even seen all the Star Trek or Star Wars movies and don't even care which is better. There is too much fantasy and science fiction for me in this collection. Other people may love this collection for that very reason. Our tastes vary. Knowing why I did not like this collection as much as others may suggest you will like it more. I hope so. I was provided an e-galley of Brussels Noir by the publisher through Edelweiss.

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