

Feature bestsellers

Crime pays at Sydney's Abbey's Bookshop, which is why the bookstore can afford to have such a well-stocked crime fiction section. (The Abbey's team likens the store to five specialist bookshops in one, with dedicated sections for history, science, philosophy, classics and, of course, crime.) In February, the bestselling crime novels were a mix of the well known (the latest titles from Alexander McCall Smith, Janet Evanovich and Steve Berry) and the lesser known.

John Misto is a Sydney writer who's only recently made the transition from stage and television to books. His first novel *The Devil's Companions* is a cold-case story; it follows a fresh investigation into the disappearance of a young girl who was snatched from a crowded church on Christmas Eve 20 years ago.

Natsuo Kirino may not be a big name in Australia but in her home country of Japan she's a celebrated novelist. Kirino's crime novels have won some of Japan's highest literary awards, and several more have been turned into movies. *Grotesque*, the second of her novels to appear in English, follows the murder of two bright young girls who end up working as prostitutes in Tokyo. Using excerpts from the victims' journals, Kirino's novel portrays the gritty reality of life in the modern city.

Abbey's Bookshop, Sydney

- 1 **Blue Shoes and Happiness**
Alexander McCall Smith, Little, Brown
- 2 **Plum Lovin'**
Janet Evanovich, Penguin
- 3 **Good Husband of Zebra Drive**
Alexander McCall Smith, Polygon
- 4 **The Good German (film tie-in)**
Joseph Kanon, Little, Brown
- 5 **Foreign Correspondent**
Alan Furst, Weidenfeld & Nicolson
- 6 **The Devil's Companions**
John Misto, Hodder & Stoughton
- 7 **Death of a Dreamer (Hamish Macbeth Mystery)**
M C Beaton, Warner Books
- 8 **A Long Shadow (Inspector Ian Rutledge Mystery)**
Charles Todd, HarperCollins
- 9 **Grotesque**
Natsuo Kirino, Harvill Secker
- 10 **The Alexandria Link**
Steve Berry, Hodder & Stoughton

Tamra Dempsey's reading tastes have changed over the years. When she first joined Mostly Books in SA's Torrens Park she was a passionate crime-fiction enthusiast. Now her tastes cover a much broader range of fiction, as well as food books and the odd biography.

The Gypsy Tearoom (Orion), a new novel by that other sparkling Italian, Nicky Pellegrino, is at the top of her reading list for May. 'I read her first book *Delicious* and it was absolutely brilliant,' says Dempsey, describing Pellegrino's novels as a combination of 'literary, romance and food ... always set in Italy.' True to form, *The Gypsy Tearoom* takes place in the southern Italian town of Triento and follows the romantic fortunes of a down-on-her-luck Italian lass. 'The publicity material describes it as a book for people who loved *Chocolat* and *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*,' says Dempsey, as if she needed any more persuasion.

In May, Dempsey is looking forward to two new titles with a Sebastian Faulks connection: one is written by Faulks, the other has echoes of Faulks' World War I epic *Birdsong*. 'I absolutely adored *Birdsong*,' says Dempsey. Michael Wallner's *April in Paris* (John Murray) is the story of a German soldier who goes to France in World War II and falls in love with a bookseller's daughter. By contrast, Faulks' new novel *Engleby* (Hutchinson) is a contemporary tale. The story of Mike Engleby, an Englishman whose education has left him without scruple or self-pity, is billed as like

nothing Faulks' has ever written before. But for Dempsey, the subject matter is almost irrelevant. 'I just want to read it because it's him,' she says.

Tim Warmington, the eponymous director of Tim's Bookshop, which has two stores in the Melbourne suburbs of Kew and Canterbury, is presently immersed in a little crime fiction. He's got an advanced copy of Donna Leon's *Suffer the Little Children* (Random, May), the latest in Leon's series of Commissario Brunetti mysteries. 'I've enjoyed reading and selling all her previous books,' he says. 'It is great to see the world through the eyes of Commissario Guido Brunetti and his wife Paola.'

There's more crime fiction to follow with the latest Maloney novel *Sucked in* (Text) featuring political dogsbody-turned-backbencher Murray Whelan. 'The earlier titles in the series were very entertaining,' says Warmington. 'I haven't read this one yet but early reviews are promising.' Warmington recalls rubbing shoulders with local author Shane Maloney in the past. 'I did meet Shane once and I liked his concept of the weatherboard think-tank.'

Warmington also has a hot pick for May, care of his sons James (10) and Harry (8). They're both big fans of the 'Ranger's Apprentice' series and can't wait to get their hands on book six—*The Siege of Macindaw* (John Flanagan, Random). Warmington recalls Harry's effusive praise. 'Harry once mentioned (without prompting) that the 'Ranger's Apprentice' books are the best books he has ever read!' Also popular with the kids, and customers, is author Anthony Horowitz. *Nightrise*, volume three of 'The Power of 5' series (Walker Books), is due out in May. 'He is another super-popular author with our customers and while what they really want is another Alex Rider novel we will all settle for this series for now,' says Warmington.

