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Binary



Synopsis

Political radical John Wright is plotting an act of mass destruction and federal agent John Graves has him under surveillance, trying to figure out what the plot is. When a government computer is hacked and a high-security shipment of nerve gas gets hijacked, Graves puts the pieces together but can he stop Wright from unleashing his weapon before it kills a million people including the President of the United States?

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Customer Reviews

Although it took me a long time to find that this book was published under the pseudonym John Lange, and then it took me even more time to find the book itself, it was extremely worth it. It keeps a great pace and is better than many standard Crichton works. This book should be reprinted with the Crichton name so it will be easy to find for everybody.

This book is a kind of bridge between Crichton's early Hard Case Crime series and his later work. Even his early work contains elements of a technical nature, but this is a little more exotic, a few more twists and turns, while retaining that early "whodunnit" theme. I've read 23 of Crichton's 30 published works, and this is definitely in the upper half of his offering. This used hardback arrived promptly and in good condition. Very satisfied.

Less is not necessarily more. Binary is one of Michael Crichton's shorter novels, and it's not at all bad, but it does feel a touch underdeveloped, rather like an adapted short story or a novelised

television movie. It's a curious novel about a security agent, John Graves (aptly named for he has to save the day) and his protagonist the ingenious plotter John Wright. Graves is the man assigned to track Wright, who is regarded as suspicious and possibly subversive. It's played out against a 12-hour countdown to mass murder and with Wright's knowledge of Graves' psychological profile built in to his intentions. The word Binary is literally two chemical agents that produce a result together but it also represents the duel between the two men to 'out-puzzle' each other's actions and motives. Both are intelligent gamblers. Wright is rich and crazed; Graves is hamstrung by bureaucracy. It's a good read, but in the end, its brevity prevents any real depth to the characters when this is a psychological thriller. I wanted to know more about them. It's hard to think Crichton would write this without considerably more depth today. Frederick Forsythe would have made a lot more from the very good idea that forms the basis of the plot. The two writers have a lot in common. That said, it's hard to stop turning the pages. This is spare: no aimless diversions, existentialism or sub-plots. You just wish there had been more of it to bring the characters fully to life! It's worth adding this was written in 1972 and Crichton has always been one or two steps ahead of the game. The detail he routinely deploys to add credibility to his plotting is good, though not as detailed as many of his best efforts, and his vision of political terrorism remains ominous and unnerving.

This was a fun read, especially since I knew it was Crichton's early work. You can see how his writing developed from these early works. Truly, an homage to his later works. He is missed but it's nice to know that there are vestiges of him left to read. Good story, but the characters were a little stilted. Looking forward to reading the other 7 early works.

I like some of Michael Crichton's "John Lange" work better -- "The Venom Business," for example -- but this was satisfying enough. I only wish I could find more of these now very out-of-print early novels.

John Lange was one of the early pen names of Michael Crichton, best known for *The Andromeda Strain* and *Jurassic Park*. While enrolled at Harvard Medical School, Crichton began publishing a number of novels. This is one of a number of Crichton's early novels that have recently been re-released by Hard Case Crime. The others are *Scratch One*, *Zero Cool*, *Easy Go*, *The Venom Business*, *Odds On*, *Grave Descend*, and *Dealing*. I have read a number of these already and, while not perfect, they are fun, light, fast reading that I have found worthwhile. I haven't read any of

Crichton's more famous works, but I will note that these early novels compare favorably to many of the bookstand pulp/adventure/crime novels that could be found in the late sixties and early seventies and these books should be read in that context. The title of *Binary* refers to the fact that the evil genius in the book (Wright) has stolen two one-ton tanks of chemicals that, when combined, produce a devastating nerve gas. The plot involves Wright arranging the theft of the nerve gas from the US Army and his counterpart in the US Intelligence field (Graves) tracking him down to San Diego, where the Republican Convention is underway and the President is about to speak. The book is filled with plotting and counter-manuevers between these two geniuses, Wright and Graves, and how Graves uncovers the plot and deals with the fact that within an hour a million people including the President could perish from nerve gas. It is fast-reading and compelling plot-wise, but it is all too obviously an early work by Crichton and the characters are a bit on the cardboard side. Often, it is difficult to really distinguish one character from another. The story in places feels stiff. All in all, however, if one keeps in mind, that it is an early work by Crichton, it is not bad reading.

When I finished *Micro*, I couldn't help but feel a little depressed. Yes, it wasn't his best work, but it was the last chance to read the author that I'd grown up on. Having read everything else available, I assumed this was the end to the Michael Crichton collection. Fortunately, *Hard Case Crime* came along and expanded the catalog! *Binary* was the first I picked up, and while it's short (I finished in two days while on vacation), it's a solid story that felt like vintage Crichton! It certainly doesn't rank among his best, but it's a solid story that kept me turning the pages, and even followed his classic "this is how technology could go awry" format. Don't judge this book by its cover... which is an odd one considering there isn't a naked woman in the entire story (or even a female character aside from a minor one). Guess that's what suspense thrillers used to look like in the 70's? It's a quick and easy to read thriller that's a little smarter than I expected it to be. I'm excited to move on to the next one and continue working through this collection!

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