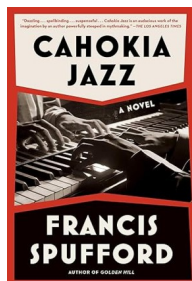




Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians



Cahokia Jazz
By Francis Spufford
Discussed March 2025

Dramatis Personae

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joe Barrow (Detective, Cahokia PD, takouma) • Phin Drummond (Detective, Cahokia PD, takata) • Frederick Hopper (victim) • Claire Choucouma Hashi (The Moon) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sebastian Cuauhtemoc Hashi (The Man of the Sun) • Oscar (driver/bodyguard, First Guardian to the Man of the Sun) • Dolphus Henderson (jazz band leader, friend of Joe Barrow, taklousa)
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Discussion Questions

1. Did you enjoy Cahokia Jazz? Why or why not?

For questions 2-4: Cahokia Jazz is described as “noir murder mystery in an alternate history USA.”

2. If you’re a fan of noir fiction or film noir, did Cahokia Jazz meet your expectations? Does it satisfactorily include such elements as femme fatale, amorality, hard-boiled detection, and government corruption? What did you think of the “murder mystery” aspect of the novel?
3. If you’re a fan of alternate history, did Cahokia Jazz meet your expectations? Does it provide a satisfactory “point of departure” from our timeline? Does the current socio-political situation in Cahokia make sense?
4. “You got your chocolate in my peanut butter!” Did the combination of noir fiction and alternate history work for you?
5. How effective is the novel’s depiction of a big mid-Western city in the early 1920s (with Cahokia as an analog for St. Louis)?
6. Alternate history stories are often seen as a commentary on “our” timeline. Does Cahokia Jazz do this?
7. Each “section” of Cahokia Jazz (Monday, Tuesday, etc.) begins with an “historical document” that reveals an aspect of Cahokian history (as well as a photograph). There are also a couple of maps. Did any of this affect your enjoyment of the novel?

8. Over the course of the novel, Detective Joe Barrow's character, interests, attitudes, and life history are gradually revealed. Did this add to your enjoyment of Cahokia Jazz?
9. Spoiler: Were you surprised at the ending? In fact, are you confident you know what the ending is?

Definitions

Film noir (meaning "dark film" in French) is a cinematic style, not a genre, characterized by a dark, often cynical, and morally ambiguous atmosphere, featuring high-contrast visuals, hard-boiled detectives, and femme fatales, emerging from the post-war era.

Noir fiction, a subgenre of crime fiction, is characterized by dark themes, gritty urban settings, morally compromised protagonists, and a bleak outlook on human nature. It's often associated with film noir and hard-boiled detective stories.

