



Black Cherry Blues

James Lee Burke

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BACK IN THE UNDERWORLD HE TRIED TO LEAVE BEHIND

Haunted by the memory of his wife's murder and his father's untimely death, ex-New Orleans cop Dave Robicheaux spends his days in a fish-and-tackle business. But when an old friend makes a surprise appearance, Robicheaux finds himself thrust back into the violent world of Mafia goons and wily federal agents. From the Louisiana bayou to Montana's tribal lands, Robicheaux is running from the bottle, a homicide rap, a professional killer and the demons of his past.

Rich with fascinating characters and dramatic plot twists, the audio debut of James Lee Burke and his Cajun detective Dave Robicheaux recalls the best of Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe -- tough, complex and thoroughly entertaining.

Black Cherry Blues Details

Date : Published December 1st 1990 by Avon (first published September 13th 1989)

ISBN : 9780380712045

Author : James Lee Burke

Format : Mass Market Paperback 366 pages

Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Crime, Thriller

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From Reader Review Black Cherry Blues for online ebook

Eric_W says

Audiobook: James LeeBurke is a master. His writing is vivid, the characters well-drawn, and the plots intriguing. Dave Robicheaux is an ex-New Orleans cop whose-partner, Dixie Lee, now a “lease-man” for an oil company thinks he has overheard two other lease men discussing burying a body. Unsure as to what he heard and what to do about it, he seeks Dave’s help. In the meantime Dave chain-whips a bad guy (he really should have known better) and the guy turns up dead so Dave is facing a murder charge. He’s been a homicide detective but apparently has little faith in their ability to solve the crime and find the real killer so he heads for Montana to sort things out where his murder charge is resolved (are you really surprised) in the midst of Native Americans fighting against a land hungry oil company (that’s probably a redundancy).

There was something a bit off about this novel. Perhaps it was that Dave was no longer in Louisiana; perhaps it was the -- to my mind -- excessive guilt-ridden self-examination that seems more a plea for forgiveness from others than seeking to understand himself; perhaps it was the excessively slow cadence of the reader who I normally like very much (Will Patton); perhaps it was the implausible plot and would you take your six-year-old daughter on a dangerous mission? or, perhaps it was that I didn’t get the same sense of place that usually pervades Burke’s Louisiana Robicheaux novels. Then again it might have been the outrageous way he solves the case.

Personally, had I been the social worker, there is no way I would ever have placed Alifair with Dave given the level of violence with which he surrounds himself.

But he does write beautifully.

WortGestalt says

Landschaftsmaler James Lee Burke hat auch im dritten Band der Reihe um den Ex-Cop Dave Robicheaux ein Händchen dafür, die üppige Natur Louisianas und hier auch Montanas auf Papier zu bannen. Im Kontrast dazu gibt es harte Kerle, harte Worte, harte Taten. Diese Mischung macht immer Freude, liest sich sehr süffig und lässt einen dank der geschickten Figurenführung gespannt auf die weiteren Fortsetzungen warten.

StoryTellerShannon says

This novel is best suited for people who like a darkness of human character intertwined with an engaging clue trail amidst melancholy yet beautiful writing.

Robicheaux is back and not too soon. This time around he's recovering from a horrible loss in his family, getting over his binge with alcoholism and wouldn't you know it but the poor guy tries to help an old college friend and gets framed for murder.

What's a detective to do?

Apparently, drive to Montana with his foster daughter.

I'm kidding, really. The clue trail leads that way and so we're off to another state in the Union. Additionally, the head honcho who is responsible for framing Robicheaux is up there as well as an old friend from the first novel. Robicheaux also has two "romances" in Montana but you can tell they're both short term.

Again I could say a lot more but I'd give spoilers so here are some particular passages I enjoyed (which don't give too much away):

p. 26

"A woman once told me my face looked like soil erosion. I think it was my wife."

p. 29

I am not going to get involved with his troubles, I told myself. When you use, you lose. A mean lesson, but when you become involved with an addict or a drunk, you simply become an actor in a script that they've written for you as well as themselves.

"I can't come, Sister. I'm sorry," I said.

She paused.

"Is that all you want me to tell him?" she asked.

"He needs a lawyer. I can give you a couple of names in Lafayette or St. Martinville."

She paused again. They must teach it in the convent, I thought. It's an electric silence that makes you feel you're sliding down the sides of the universe

"I'm sorry."

"To be frank, so am I," she said, and hung up.

p. 39-40

We sat at one of the checker-cloth tables on the screen porch by the way, a big bib with a red crawfish on it tied around Alafair's neck, and looked out at the sun setting across the miles of dead cypress, saw grass, the sandy inlets, the wetlands that stretches across Texas. The tied was out, and the jetties were black and stark against the flat gray expanse of the bay and the strips of purple and crimson cloud that had flattened the western horizon. Seagulls dipped and wheeled over the water's edge, and a solitary blue heron stood among the saw grass in an inlet pool, his long body and slender legs like a painting on the air.

p. 47

(letter)

P.S. If you run into Lois, tell her I'm sorry for ripping her off. I left my toothbrush in the bathroom. I want her to have it.

p.72

I heard his pistol come out of his leather holster, felt his hand clamp down on my neck as he stuck the barrel of the revolver behind my ear.

“You’re under arrest for murder. You think being an ex-cop lets you write the rules?” he said.

Out of the corner of my eye I saw Alafair staring at us with the stunned, empty expression of person wakened from a nightmare.

p. 91

. . . and I wondered if I had any chance at all of having a normal life again, of being an ordinary person who lived in an ordered town like this and who did not wake up each morning with his fears sitting collectively on his chest like a grinning gargoyle.

p. 274

After supper we did the dishes together while Alafair watched television. When her leg bumped against me, she smiled awkwardly as though we had been jostled against one another on a bus, then her eyes looked at my face with both expectation and perhaps a moment’s fear. I suspected she was one of those whose hearts could be easily hurt, one to whom a casual expression of affection would probably be interpreted as a large personal commitment.

p. 307

“I think she reminded me of one of those girls whom Catholic boys were always told, when I was growing up, that they should marry. I doubt that a girl of that kind ever existed, but we believed she did, anyway.”

p. 364

“I believe every middle-aged man remembers the girl he thinks he should have married. She reappears to him in his lonely moments, or he sees her in the face of a young girl in the park, buying a snowball under an oak tree by the baseball diamond. But she belongs back there, to somebody else, and that thought sometimes rends your heart in a way that you never share with anyone else.”

Overall, a very satisfying conclusion.

CHARACTER/PLOTTING: B to B plus; STORY/PLOTTING: B plus; SETTING: B plus to A minus; CLUE TRAIL: B plus; WRITING STYLE: A minus; OVERALL GRADE: B plus; WHEN READ: May 2012 to January 2013.

Aditya says

Burke is the kind of author that makes you give a smug grin to all those who denigrate genre fiction and suggest them they have no idea what they are missing. The picturesque description of Louisiana is the most obvious example of Burke's talents but his effective dialogue and excellent characterization show off a more holistic skillset. In my reviews for the first 2 books in Dave Robicheaux series I had sung my fair share of praises for his writing but this time I will talk about the ways it differentiates Dave Robicheaux from almost every other crime series out there.

The hard boiled genre stripped to its bare bones is a celebration of masculinity. Burke turns it on his head and makes it a criticism of the same. The protagonist Robicheaux isn't a swaggering iconoclast or a stoic loner, he is as lonely as a forgotten punchline to a bad joke and as happy as a man jumping between the twin towers of guilt and regret can be. While in other books the onus is on solving the mystery, here the focus is on surviving it. In this series no personal tragedy is a narrative exclamation point but a moment that defines the character. The bad decisions taken by the protagonist doesn't feel like a way to move the plot forward but a genuine moment of indiscretion on part of a broken man. It is moments like that which separates it from the pack.

The characters are exquisitely drawn with only the recurring motif of guilt tying them together. Dave Robicheaux who hoards guilt till it's a tangible presence by his side is a paragon of good intentions and bad decisions. It is up to the reader to decide whether anyone can be held guilty for essentially trying to do the right thing or absolved for risking innocent lives in pursuit of obsessions. Clete Purcell who is completely honest about the need to be dishonest has just enough guilt to keep him awake at nights but not enough for him to stop doing what he does. Sally Dio who is fortunate enough to convince everyone that he is meaner and tougher than he actually is and unfortunate enough to believe his own hype. All the main players possess surprising depth and inspite unruly levels of violence they help to inject a grounded realism into the narrative.

The plot is the only part which is less than perfect. It has a few too many dream sequences for my liking and a love interest that crops up at the end of the story feels utterly forced. They are minor blemishes in essentially side stories. The main narrative itself is tightly plotted and always remains interesting. So I won't be too bothered about them.

Heaven's Prisoners still remains the best Robicheaux book and I remain skeptical how this level of consistency can be maintained through a series as long as this one but for now Robicheaux is firing on all cylinders and in absence of half stars I will round my rating off to 5 stars. Rating - 5/5.

Jane Stewart says

I felt down and depressed until the very end. But I loved the author's phrases and the art of his writing.

Plot: the main guy Dave is framed for a crime. He does not do strong or smart things to save himself. I was worried and feeling down during most of the book. If the hero is going to be framed, then I want a hero I can root for, feel hope for, and enjoy watching him give it to the bad guys. But this was not. However, I know many readers like this type of fiction. For me at least the ending was happy, and I really enjoyed the unique phrases and rich descriptions.

Dave is a flawed hero. He is smart, but he does reckless and careless things which get him into trouble. He also did a stupid thing which almost got him killed. And he admitted to himself how stupid it was. He wasn't

thinking. I have moments like that. Dave is a former cop, a former alcoholic going to AA meetings. He grieves for his wife who was murdered a year ago. Dave has several sensitive and loving conversations with his dead wife. These are dreams, daydreams, or his imagination. They add a nice touch, seeing his relationship with his wife's ghost.

The group of characters are intriguing, interesting, and wonderfully developed - bad guys and good guys. Most of the good guys are flawed. I liked that.

I loved the little girl's dialogue and her questions. I loved Dave's relationship with her.

PHRASES:

The author used many phrases, metaphors, and similes. Many I had not heard before. Some I just liked the way he used them. They surprised and delighted me. Some examples.

Cars cross the bridge and "thump onto the road"

About a rhythm and blues singer, someone must have "rubbed a lot of pain into him" when he was young
"When the mosquitos started to boil out of the shadows."

"Those who began each day with a nervous breakdown, people who held onto the sides of the planet with suction cups"

Girl with a swimsuit "that was tight as tin on her body"

(What does that mean? I don't know but I liked it.)

This book won the EDGAR AWARD for best novel in 1990.

THE AUTHOR LIVES IN THE PLACES HE WRITES ABOUT.

The two main locations in this story are Louisiana and Montana. The author has homes in both of those places. I'm sure that helps his descriptions be so rich and lush. I wonder about authors who write about places they've never visited but instead rely on online research.

NARRATOR & SOUND EQUIPMENT PROBLEM:

Mark Hammer was excellent with his timing and interpretations. His southern accent was comfortable to listen to. I loved the way he spoke for the little girl. He gave her an attitude that touched my heart. I loved the way she said the word Dave - in such a gentle and caring way.

I think there was a problem with the sound equipment. It picked up the narrator's breathing making it sound as if he had trouble breathing. His breaths were noisy and distracting.

DATA:

Narrative mode: 1st person Dave Robicheaux. Unabridged audiobook length: 12 hrs and 26 mins. Swearing language: strong but rarely used. Sexual language: none. Number of sex scenes: 1. Setting: around 1989 mostly Louisiana and Montana. Book copyright: 1989. Genre: mystery suspense.

Bob says

Finally, a modern author who isn't afraid to take his time and use language as it is meant to be used in a novel! Patterson tells a hell of a story...but Burke makes the read wholly worthwhile and rewarding.

"I believe every...man remembers the girl he thinks he should have married. She reappears to him in his

lonely moments, or he sees her in the face of a young girl in the park, buying a snowball under an oak tree by the baseball diamond. But she belongs to back there, to somebody else, and that thought sometimes rends your heart in a way that you never share with anyone else."

Carol. says

Sometimes I wonder if you can really *like* the Robicheaux series. It isn't easy witnessing a man struggle with his demons, both internal and external, to root for him and watch him both succeed and fail, sometimes in the same breath.

Dave isn't a simple person, which is one of the attractive aspects of him as centerpiece to a series. He knows his weaknesses, fights them and yet is unable to avoid following his pattern, like Sisyphus hauling the boulder again and again only to watch it roll downhill. He's been seeing a therapist since his wife died, and they have an oddly telling discussion:

"Cut loose from the past. She wouldn't want you to carry a burden like this.'

'I can't. I don't want to.'

'Say it again.'

'I don't want to.'

He was bald and his rimless glasses were full of light. He turned his palms up toward me and was silent."

Beautiful.

Book three in the Dave Robicheaux series opens in a motel, Dave dreaming of the helpless night his wife Anne was murdered. Restless and haunted, he heads to an all-night diner and runs into Dixie Lee Pugh, former roommate, master blues singer, old-time rock-n-roller and dedicated drinker. They only spend a few minutes together, but shortly after, Dixie looks Dave up for help with a couple of thuggish business acquaintances. From there, Dixie's flailing, drunken attempts to stay out of Angola pull Dave into a world of hurt. As he asks a few questions on Dixie's behalf, he runs into his former partner Clete. Dave watches him drive away and wishes him a powerful blessing:

"Whatever you're operating on, I hope it's as pure and clean as white gas and bears you aloft over the places where the carrion birds clatter."

Dave almost breaks free of Dixie's situation when the thugs threaten Alafair; Dave's inner demons take over and he finds himself facing a murder charge. Freeing himself will mean digging deeper into Dixie's connections in Montana.

Burke weaves his trademark beautiful, evocative beginning, bringing the varied landscape of the deep south to life, from Louisiana to the edges of Texas. In fact, it's fair to say that the setting stands in for Dave Robicheaux's emotions, and it seems to be raining quite a bit in the bayou these days. Unfortunately, setting doesn't seem to work as well after they head up to Montana, the land of pines, mountainous geography and multi-colored streams. Memories of the south stand in instead.

There is just a touch of humor in this, the kind that makes me smile, albeit crookedly:

"But I had never bought very heavily into the psychiatric definitions of singularity and eccentricity in people. In fact, as I reviewed the friendships I had had over the years, I had to conclude that the most interesting ones involved the seriously impaired--the Moe Howard account, the drunken, the mind-

smoked, those who began each day with a nervous breakdown, people who hung on to the sides of the planet with suction cups."

Once the story moved to Montana, I found Clete and Dixie rapidly took over the story with their extravagant personalities. I didn't mind, but if anyone is more flawed than Dave, it's Clete. Clete is no fool either, and is well aware he's Dave's stalking horse:

"'Why'd you keep partnering with me at the First District after you saw me bend a couple of guys out of shape?' He grinned at me. 'Maybe because I'd do the things you really wanted to. Just maybe. Think about it.'"

Character arcs and redemption go farther than I expected, and if the villain is a bit of a sociopath, he's a frustrated sociopath with resources and it's no less frightening for it. Batiste is well done and avoids both disrespect and pitfalls of the loyal support character. Alafair is written appropriately for a young child, and one of my favorite moments is when Dave acknowledges the foolishness of telling her to be brave: **"She had experienced a degree of loss and violence in her short life that most people can only appreciate in their nightmares."**

The first read was somewhat less than satisfying, perhaps because I was pushing the mood and the speed. Burke does not write thrillers, although they certainly have their share of violence and mayhem, and his stories are not conducive to skimming. Visual setting and childhood memories are as important as suspect interviews. The second time--largely accomplished on a comfy lounge chair in the sun--was far more successful and satisfying. I *always* want to visit the bayou after I'm finished with Dave Robicheaux.

Highly recommended. Note: it won Burke's first Edgar Award.

Four and a half, five stars.

Cross posted at <http://clsiewert.wordpress.com/2013/0...>

Steven Godin says

Burke is a master of crime fiction, with not a weak book in the Dave Robicheaux series is a testament to his skills as a writer. He delves that little bit deeper with his characters, with themes of redemption, family ties, guilt and ghosts from the past, mainly set in a sweltering Louisiana. In places they don't even feel like crime novels, but rather standard fiction. But when the action does take place he doesn't hold back!. And in Dave's buddy Clete Purcell, we have one of the best supporting characters ever!. Black Cherry Blues, the third in the series concerns links to a Great Sioux Reservation and some rather unpleasant gangsters, not as big as his later novels but it still packs a punch. For any crime fan Burke is a must, for my money the earlier novels are his best.

Cathy DuPont says

Wow! This is the first time I've read James Lee Burke but have wanted to a long time since this book won the Edgar Award. I like to follow those books which are nominated and/or receive an Edgar.

Must check it out but thought this was the first in the series, and I hope so because just read something which said, 'it just keeps getting better.' That's quite a compliment since this book was a great read with all the elements I, personally, love in a book.

The characters were described with clarity, were easy to keep up with and the plot was fantastic. One of the elements I really love though, is the description of the landscape and this was full of wonderful adjectives taking the reader from southern Louisiana to Texas and Montana.

The character, Dave Robicheaux, obviously has had his share of sadness and how he responds to trouble is based, in part, to his past experiences which he describes in almost a mystical manner. Just another reason I like Burke's writing.

So glad my reader friend Sandy found this one for me. I owe it to her!

Gave four stars but waffled...without much effort I could have given it five. I really like everything about this book. Aw, hell, I'm changing it and giving it five stars. I really, really liked it!

UPDATE: Just read an article passed to me by Goodreads friend Lynette. By the way, I compared books and there are 131 books we both have read. It goes without saying that our tastes are **definately** similar...we laugh about it, too. And for those who do not know my (and Lynette's) favorite genre, it's mysteries; James Burke, T. Jeff Parker, Michael Connelly, John Lescroart, Robert Crais and oh, Robert Crais. And I say above, Burke can only get better, and yes, I was right. Dave Robicheaux has only gotten better.

Lynette is on her way to read John D. MacDonald who she's never read and I'm on my way to read J. A. Jance, who I've never read. That's what GR friends are for!

The article she thought I would like (and I loved it) was an interview with Scottish crime writer Ian Rankin who said "The opening chapter of Black Cherry Blues, his first Dave Robicheaux novel, it is an absolute classic. If I was going to take a class on crime writing I would just give the students this chapter. It's the perfect opening chapter of a book. Everything you need is in there – the characters, the situation, a suggestion of what might happen, what the theme might be – bang, in one short chapter."

Here's a link to the article on Ian Rankin (creator of Scottish maverick Rebus) who is also on my to-read list now with his love of the masters, Raymond Chandler, Leonard Ellroy, Leonard Elmore and of course, James Lee Burke: [Blood and Beer With Ian Rankin](#)

Thanks to Lynette for bringing this article to light (or dark murder.) Great observations on American crime writers by Ian Rankin.

Steve says

Yup, that's why (even if I was late to the party, even if James Lee Burke appeared on my radar screen later than most) I keep reading these books. Sure, they're dark (noir?), brutal, depressing, disturbing, and ... periodically, graphically violent. But, at the same time, they're lyrical, almost elegiac, bordering on literary ... poetic (no, not necessarily), almost meditations. But most of all, they're compelling, riveting, addictive, and, ... I dunno, relentless.

For better or worse, when I pick one up, I want to keep on reading ... until I finish it.

At this point, I've read as much Dave Robicheaux as I have Hackberry Holland, the latter of which I originally found more appealing. But Dave has grown on me... I met Dave Robicheaux very late in the series (a much longer series than Hackberry has been granted) and was disappointed when I went back to the beginning to find that (duh, why should I have been surprised?) that Burke was not quite the master of his craft when he first introduced Dave Robicheaux to the reading public. A few books in, and it's pretty clear he hit his stride (many years ago).

Time will tell ... when I next return to James Lee Burke (which I will) ... whether I'll continue with Dave's saga or experiment with Billy Bob Holland. Either way, it's pretty clear that Burke will remain a fixture on my want-to-read list for the foreseeable future.

Erik Bledsoe says

I often don't follow all the plot twists in mysteries, and this one is no exception. But I don't read Burke to try to figure out who killed who and why. I read Burke because he writes beautifully. *Black Cherry Blues* contains a set piece that could be pulled out and dropped into *The Nick Adams Stories*. And that final paragraph, oh my goodness, he's giving Gatsby a run for its money.

Mark says

Really outstanding stuff. Burke takes the detective/crime novel to a highly literate level without losing the gritty subject matter. Realistic characters, fantastic dialogue and a simple but engrossing plot make this story really jump off the pages. Burke shifts the bulk of the story to Montana, which was a refreshing change from the Louisiana setting in the first two books. Burke knows both areas intimately, and the descriptions of the settings are wonderful.

Robicheaux wants nothing more than to live a simple life on the bayou and keep his demons at bay, but his moral center won't allow him to steer clear of righting things that are wrong, especially when they involve people close to him. When his college roommate and has-been musician Dixie Lee Pugh fears that he has knowledge of a double murder, he asks for Robicheaux's help. Robicheaux reluctantly looks into the situation, and quickly finds himself in deep trouble, having to solve the crime to prove his own innocence in a third murder. The trail leads to Missoula, a mobster and the strong-arm tactics of an oil drilling company on an Indian Reservation, and his old partner Clete Purcel.

Through it all, Robicheaux must raise his adopted daughter Alafair, and protect her from the surrounding evil. I can't wait to dig into the fourth book and see where Burke takes these characters.

Scott says

The phrase "genre writer" is a term sometimes used as if it were a venereal disease, and in some cases a deserving critique. but there are the writers that occupy a narrow patch of literary turf that elevate the norm and transcend the genre itself. *Black Cherry Blues* is a dazzling story. Burke has created such complex and

fully rendered characters that we will overlook the fact that our protagonist Dave Robicheaux is not a very likeable character: I almost pickup a little of John D. MacDonald's creation, the wounded but honorable Travis McGee. but Dave is much more haunted and damaged. you can get the plot from a dust jacket so I won't summarize here and it doesn't matter much as I feel the story might be just a way for Dave to exercise his demons of grief, fear, and loss. Burke will have you care about Dave and this cast of characters. (the highest praise is to tell you there were moments I sat the book down, took a drink, and repeated: "it is only a book. these people do not exist") nobody describes scenery better than Burke, up to and including that last impeccable-nailed-it paragraph. I swear that was distilled essence of Ray Bradbury as he describes the fading Fall twilight. 5 star

Harry says

In previous reviews of the Dave Robicheaux series (#1 and #2) I spoke about having an edge in that I've lived in Southern Louisiana. The prose, the descriptions hit me squarely in the gut. I knew what Burke was describing having smelt, tasted and felt that world through recollections of my own.

In this book, for the first time I saw Burke as most readers see him... I read about a world I'd not visited as Robicheaux visits Montana and thereby could rely only on what I was given to me by Burke. It made no difference in my enjoyment. That is the genius of Burke. He can make you be there with Robicheaux, see things through Robicheaux's eyes as if you were seeing it yourself. The first person viewpoint is a great aid in this and as I think about it... most series I really enjoy are written from the first person (Dick Francis comes to mind, though not technically a series writer).

As with all the novels I've read so far, we continue to delve into the character of Dave Robicheaux. We continue to explore his addictions, his vices, and his determination to not let evil rule his life, but to confront it. Of course, to confront it he must face his greatest fear... the anguish that in order to confront evil it will come at the expense of that which he values the most: love. It is a continuing theme throughout the Robicheaux series.

I will say that the series continues to deepen, that the Robicheaux series get better as we read more of them. Black Cherry Blues won him the Edgar Award and it is most deserving.

Jim says

This book won the Edgar Award in 1990 and it is easy to see why. I have read several of the books in the Dave Robicheaux series and this may be my favorite ... so far. There are few authors that I have encountered who have the ability to set the scene so that you feel like you are actually there. His descriptions of a bayou, a lake, the mountains, the rain, even the local foods are masterful. As are the characters in his stories. A great story teller in every sense.

In Black Cherry Blues Robicheaux is still dealing with the death of Annie and being a single parent to Alafair. The love that he and Annie shared is still strong even in death. As is his love for Alafair, the girl he rescued from a plane that crashed in the bayou in Heaven's Prisoners. In this outing you can see the bond

between father and daughter. The smile on Alafair's face or the steps Dave will take to protect her. There are moments of comical relief such as when he constantly corrects her grammar ... "Don't say ain't". Alafair has apparently picked up some Cajun since the last novel. Maybe from Batist who works for Dave in his bait and boat rental business.

The story opens when Robicheaux runs into an old college roommate. Dixie Lee Pugh is a burned out musician. He had a brief taste of success but lost that to drink and drugs. Now he works for a Montana oil business and for a small time wise guy named Sally Dio. He has a problem he would like to talk to Robicheaux about. In very short time Dixie Lee's problem becomes Robicheaux's problem. Robicheaux finds himself framed for murder and the only way to clear himself and stop from being sent to Angola prison is to go to Montana and find the person who framed him. We once again meet Clete Purcel, his former partner on the New Orleans Police Department, who is also working for Dio. This is a story of a land-hungry oil company, the Mafia, and American Indian activists.

Dave Robicheaux is a very complex character. He is haunted by the memories of his mother who left the family when he was a boy, the untimely death of his father on an oil rig in the Gulf, his military service in Vietnam, his alcoholism, and of the murder of Annie who he could not save. He is not always easy to like but overall you can forgive these flaws for his just being human and dealing with life the best way he can.

Michael Martz says

James Lee Burke is the novelist that just keeps on giving... to me. I picked up his first in the Robicheaux series about a month ago, loved it, thoroughly enjoyed the 2nd, and just completed the 3rd, 'Black Cherry Blues'. It's equally good. Burke's literate, lyrical prose in the tough 'crime' genre is a breath of fresh air, his characters are wonderfully developed and memorable, and the star, Dave Robicheaux, is as complex a personality you'll encounter. This series, so far, is simply fantastic.

Black Cherry begins down in the bayou and ends there, but most of the action takes place in the mountains out west. Robicheaux runs into some old acquaintances and quickly gets mixed into a complicated situation with a couple really bad dudes who threaten his little daughter. That's too much for Robicheaux, a man of action if there ever was one, so he takes matters into his own hands and beats the crap out of both of them. However, one of the guys takes the opportunity to kill his fellow miscreant in a way that makes it appear Robicheaux did the murder. Dave's arrested, manages to get himself released on bond, and travels west with his daughter to track down the real murderer before he finds himself in prison among a population he, in many cases, helped put there. Early on and throughout the story Dave is helped by a Federal agent tracking the crew, his former partner on the New Orleans police force is likewise thoroughly involved in the action, and things get even more complex as Mafia characters are encountered and enmeshed in various conspiracies. Robicheaux nearly runs out of time before his murder trial, but a solution comes to him in a dream and things end up working out.

Robicheaux is a fantastic character, a tough recovering alcoholic Vietnam vet ex-cop with a highly developed conscience and a bias toward action, sometimes violent action. He's respectful toward women but has experienced tough luck (and then some) on the romantic side. Since his retirement from the force, he runs a bait shop in a little town on the bayou where he tries, unsuccessfully so far, to lead a quiet life. One interesting aspect of the series is the glimpse we get into 80's-era policing, racial issues, and other societal topics that are still relevant and evolving today. It's fascinating stuff.

The real 'star' of the series, though, is Burke's writing. He can paint a picture like no other in this genre, he's great with dialogue, he's not averse to using unique devices like dream passages in his stories, and his pacing is excellent. I'm not sure where this series is heading but I'm sure happy I jumped on the bus to find out.

Cathrine ?? says

4.25★

Rather timely 27 years after publication I'd say. Up in Montana, Star Drilling is going after hundreds of millions of dollars in oil—only problem is, its under pristine wilderness and the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. Shades of Standing Rock. Twenty years ago that same company had a faulty platform out in the ocean that killed Dave's father. He's putting his nose where some don't think it belongs and threats to his six year old little girl are just one of the consequences. That brings out Dave's tendency to want to control the situation and of course the B word.

All right then, I thought I was making this variation up, but no, there it is on several sites (though for sure auto correct is like WTF and has it underlined in red).

Badassness.

Urban Dictionary: Badassness is the state of being badass.

Portland actually has a Badassness Map on Vimeo.

YourDictionary asks: How would you define badassness?

Wiktionary says it's a *state of having extreme appearance, attitude, or behavior that is considered admirable*.

Someone submitted a question: *I'm looking for a better way to say badass that doesn't use any words that could be considered profanity* (you won't find it here).

Trust me, this one was seriously good. I love to have girl-fun with my JLB reviews but alongside all that, this is worthy of the praise. Author Ron Hansen wrote: "There's plenty of action and adventure, but the novel is absorbing even in its quiet moments, when you watch Dave Robicheaux valiantly try to conduct his honest and honorable life." The reader always gets more.

I wonder where he's taking me next time? After this third date we're on third base and I'm ready for a black cherry tattoo.

Ya'll don't think I've lost my powers of discretion do you, or ruining my reputation and credibility on [Goodreads](#)? Be honest.

Wendy says

Black Cherry Blues

Another winner by James Lee Burke! I didn't find this one quite as good as the first two but it was close. I'm hooked on this series and I love James Lee Burke. He is a one of a kind writer!

Paul Nelson says

Black Cherry Blues is the third in the Dave Robicheaux series and a familiar pattern starts to emerge of a man shoving his nose where it has no place being, that generally puts both his life and everyone close to him in potential jeopardy. Thankfully Robicheaux doesn't fall of the wagon this time, so there's no depressing plummet into alcoholism but he does have some particularly annoying traits. You can't help thinking, your adopted little girl and the couple that run your business when you're off fucking everything up are gonna die, man, reign yourself back in. I guess this is why good old Dave is a character you can't help but get emotionally invested in, whether it be good shit or bad shit, you're in it for the duration.

To the story, Dave runs into ex college buddy Dixie Lee Pugh, in a diner. Dixie has problems and soon enough Dave's paying a visit to the hospital, he didn't want to get involved but you know, he might just end up helping the guy. When he does there's no going back and pretty soon he's up on a murder charge and linked to Dixie's mafia buddies. He makes bond by mortgaging everything he owns and then he's off with his adopted charge, young Alafair, to Montana desperate to prove his innocence.

He throws himself into dangerous situations with reckless abandon, with neither thought nor care for repercussion and it's this wildness that has you tearing your hair out. We also have the reintroduction of his old partner now working for the mafia, Clete Purcell and their relationship is yet another reason to draw you into a series that has some remarkably powerful characters. Mafia, the oil business and an Indian reservation all careen through Dave's life, even an Indian woman and the start of a relationship until the inevitable happens, destiny is a heavy weight on this man's shoulders and shit happens, as they say.

There's a lot of depth to the character, you frequently travel back with him to his armed forces days and Vietnam, he sees and speaks with his dead wife, dreams of her. Which reiterates the fact that she died because he was involved in something he really should have avoided but Dave Robicheaux is not someone who turns the other cheek. It's why bad things follow him relentlessly trying their best to cause him grief.

The writing is brilliant as ever, the prose is Southern fried at its most delicious, James Lee Burke paints a scene better than most, his characters are as gripping as a bear hug from the biggest wrestler and he is easily up there with my favourite authors.

Also posted at [http://paulnelson.booklikes.com/post/...](http://paulnelson.booklikes.com/post/)

Tom Swift says

I could read this author all day, every day.
