

Coffin's Got the Dead Guy on the Inside

Keith Snyder

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Keith Snyder's high velocity prose keeps things moving along in his second mystery novel about starving musician Jason Keltner and his starving artist friends, a cast familiar to readers of Snyder's first novel, *Show Control*.

The plot is kicked into gear when Jason's spy-masterish employer assigns him to take a miscreant, Paul, to a party to see what happens when Paul meets a pioneer of virtual reality. What happens is that the pioneer, in a drunken stupor, says "Steamafuggn drngwooja!" and falls over dead. That sets off a race to find a missing computer gizmo. Thugs pop out of the scenery like gophers popping out of a bang-the-gopher game.

There's lots of California freeway action in which the downwardly mobile good guys drive rattletrap junkers and the hapless bad guys drive white Tauri. Tauri is plural for Taurus. (If that strikes you as funny, you'll probably like this book.)

The novel's brilliance springs from the intelligent banter of Jason and his friends, Martin and Robert. Think of your most literary friends from high school or college and meld them with your friends who were the most fun and you might come up with an approximation of this crowd. Call them Nice Guys with Attitudes. Jason copes with the slings and arrows of his situation, shines at a jam session with hip West African musicians, fails to finish his "Untitled #23" music composition, and thinks amazingly realistic thoughts: "What I find depressing is not that I'm giving up a station in life for art," he tells Robert. "It's that I'm giving up the station and not getting the art done."

The author, on the other hand, has his part down. He's written a highly artful mystery.
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