

Prelude to a Blast

Jazz Jones

Jazz Jones (Jul 10, 2009)

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Prelude to a Blast, by Jazz Jones, tells the story of Sonny Russo, a mob tough guy with a sensitive side. As someone holds a gun to his head, Sonny's tumultuous past unfolds for the readers. As the back cover states, Sonny is going to die.

Sonny joins the mob as a teenager, and because he is the strong, silent type, he gets in deep. Best friends with sons of the top mob bosses in Brooklyn, Sonny relishes belonging to something, a feeling he never had as the child of a poor Italian bus driver and a half-black, half-Jewish housewife. Romance ensues when Sonny meets his soon-to-be bride Jenny, but Edie, daughter of Black Python gang leader Danny Rod, is hell-bent on claiming Sonny as her own.

Telling the story almost entirely in flashback, Jones chronicles forty years of Sonny's drama-filled life. So much happens that most readers will have a difficult time finding something to grasp. Each element of the narrative reads at the same level of emotion, lending *Prelude to a Blast* the feel of a soap opera. Though the book promises to be a mob thriller, the story shifts almost immediately into melodrama. Such pathos can be entertaining in short bursts, but it quickly becomes exhausting.

Though Jones's premise is intriguing, the story's pacing and lack of depth are problematic. Individual chapters contain multiple events that are told rather than described. Chapter seven alone includes an overabundance of subplots: Jenny having a miscarriage and leaving Sonny; revelations from Sonny's father; Sonny spiraling deeper into crime; the death of Sonny's father; and Jenny's return. Sacrificing twists and turns for more focus and detail would significantly improve the plot.

Readers will be interested in Sonny. A lover and a fighter, a painter and a killer, a hero and a villain, Sonny is the kind of character we love to root for. Unfortunately, because the story is built around the fact that Sonny has a gun pointed to his head and will die, many readers may be reluctant to connect with him on an emotional level.

Repetition, typos, and convoluted syntax abound. There are significant errors in chronology, most notably when Sonny's marrying Jenny is the only way to foil Edie's manipulations, though, in fact, the pair has been married since the night of their senior prom, referenced in the second chapter. As for formatting, spaces between paragraphs are used instead of indentation, which does help break up lines of small type but lends the text an amateurish feel. As well, the cover—the white silhouette of a tree against a tan background—does not connect to the book's content.

More romantic melodrama than mob thriller, concern for Sonny may be what gets readers to the conclusion of his story, and a surprise ending will likely leave them feeling both relieved and disgruntled. Editing at the plot and sentence levels would certainly help Jones create a more suspenseful, focused work.

MARGARET FEDDER (May 10, 2013)

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