

# Cutting Edge

## *Rick Blechta merges music and murder*

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### *Suspended Sentences*

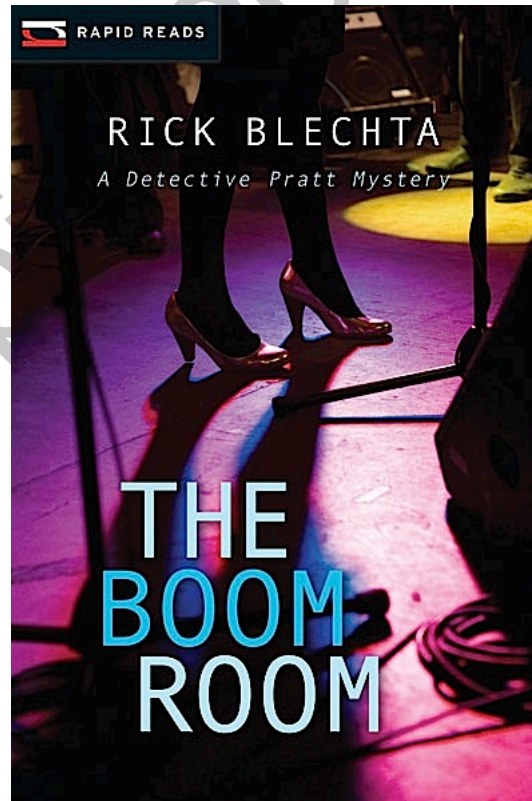
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by Jim Napier

Author Rick Blechta has, if you'll excuse the expression, carved out a unique niche in Canadian crime fiction by deftly combining music and murder. His works to date include nine novels, one of which, *Cemetery of the Nameless*, was shortlisted for the Arthur Ellis Best Novel of 2005. An accomplished musician himself, in *The Boom Room* Blechta shares his inside knowledge of the club scene to fashion a tale with all the ingredients of a classic murder mystery.

Homicide detective Lieutenant Mervin Pratt and his newbie partner David Ellis are called to the Boom Room to investigate the fatal stabbing of its owner, Joseph Lewis. Ellis's halfbrother, Jamie Clark, and his band had been performing at the club. Before long they discover a knife which belonged to Jamie Clark, and which he previously

claimed had gone missing. The case gains traction when they learn that Jamie had been seen



arguing with Lewis over money. Concealing from Pratt his relation to the prime suspect, Ellis jeopardizes the case.

Faced with a rash of incidents involving club violence over recent months, Pratt's chief wants

the case wrapped up quickly. Clark's girlfriend, Carolyn Tucci, insists Lewis was sick during the intermission between sets and spent the entire time in the washroom, but there are no other witnesses to this. Not buying his paper-thin alibi, the police charge Lewis with murder.

Pratt decides to visit the victim's widow, a bottle blonde named Margerie Lewis, and is surprised to find that she's disinterested in her husband's death. She only wants to know when she can reopen the club. She's anxious to sell it, and the club's manager, Carl Thomson, is a possible buyer. Pratt questions one of the club's bartenders, who reveals that the late owner had been mismanaging the business, and that things had only turned around when he brought in

Thomson as the manager. Even with several suspects it all seems very cut and dried. But Pratt will have to dig deeper if he's to get at the heart of the matter.

In 2010 Orca Publishers introduced its Rapid Reads series of crime fiction novellas written by established authors. One of the latest in the series, *The Boom Room* offers a quick and enjoyable puzzle with an obvious suspect, leavened by a twist in the tale. Writing novellas is not an easy task: the inherent confines of the form provides limited scope for rounded characters and developed plots. But *The Boom Room* is an engaging tale that will earn Blechta even more fans.

*Rick Blechta's The Boom Room was published by Orca Books in 2014.*

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Since 2005 Jim Napier's reviews and interviews have appeared in several Canadian newspapers and on such websites as *Spinetingler*, *The Rap Sheet*, *Shots Magazine*, *Crime Time*, *Reviewing The Evidence*, *January* magazine, the *Montreal Review of Books*, the *Ottawa Review of Books*, and *Amazon.com*, as well as on his own award-winning site, *Deadly Diversions*. He can be reached at [jnapier@deadlydiversions.com](mailto:jnapier@deadlydiversions.com)