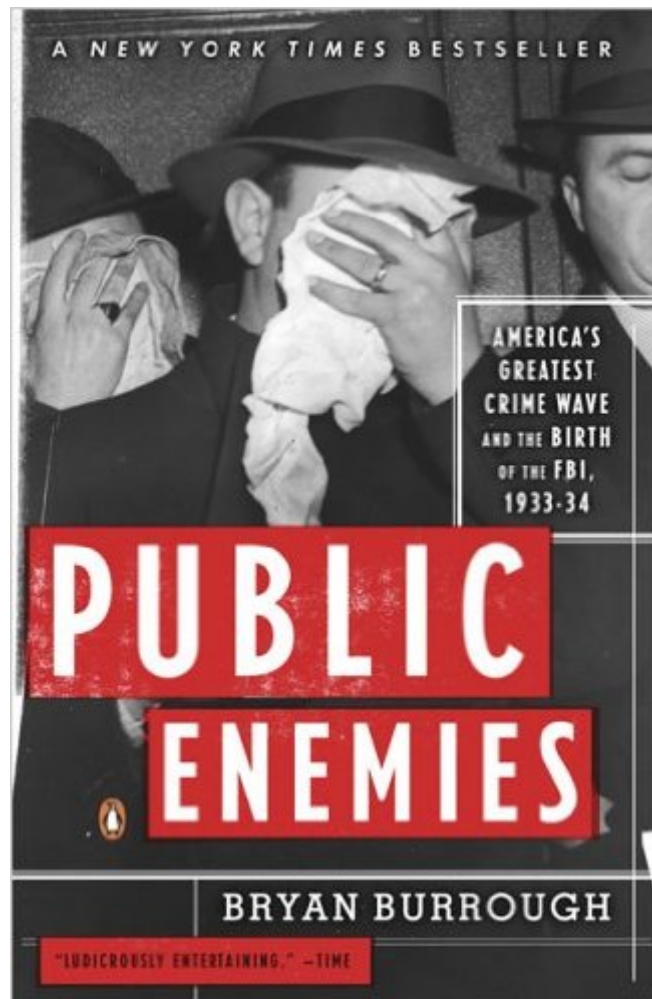


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Public Enemies: America's Greatest Crime Wave And The Birth Of The FBI, 1933-34



Synopsis

In *Public Enemies*, bestselling author Bryan Burrough strips away the thick layer of myths put out by J. Edgar Hoover's FBI to tell the full story "for the first time" of the most spectacular crime wave in American history, the two-year battle between the young Hoover and the assortment of criminals who became national icons: John Dillinger, Machine Gun Kelly, Bonnie and Clyde, Baby Face Nelson, Pretty Boy Floyd, and the Barkers. In an epic feat of storytelling and drawing on a remarkable amount of newly available material on all the major figures involved, Burrough reveals a web of interconnections within the vast American underworld and demonstrates how Hoover's G-men overcame their early fumbles to secure the FBI's rise to power.

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Customer Reviews

When I first opened this credible, well-researched book, I was delighted to see photos of the FBI agents I have admired in my own Dillinger research. For the first time, a face to the men who put their lives on the line to hunt the public enemies of the 1930s! Also, as a person who has researched the Dillinger women for almost two decades, my delight with the book was established at the respect Burrough paid to the molls. Doris Lockerman's eyewitness account of the night Melvin Purvis helped Frechette, by letting her sleep during the endless interrogation - that is not an anti-FBI story but a pro-FBI story. The term "plagiarism," in one review, confuses me completely. The use of quotes originally published under copyright by Melvin Purvis, is "fair use," not "plagiarism." Fair use is defined by publishing law, and there is no evidence of such encroachment here. In defense of

quoting Melvin Purvis - the man was hounded and silenced by Hoover. It is important that readers, who may not have purchased Purvis's book, get the vantage point of his own opinions. I agree with Rick Mattix that downloadable FBI documents are the tip of the iceberg. The FBI Reading Room holds the true history in the 38,000 pages on file in the stacks. Burrough has widely, and accurately, cited those documents. And where is it written that historians can no longer examine the role of Melvin Purvis? Mr. Purvis, one of my heroes in the Dillinger saga, has inspired controversy since his original role in the FBI ended. Mr. Burrough went to great length to feature the faces of the FBI agents in a never-before published photo gallery. He honored their role by doing so.

Between mid June 1933 and the end of 1935 Americans were caught up in the war on crime. J. Edgar Hoover's FBI were trying to rid the country of criminals whose names we still recognize today.....John Dillenger, Bonnie and Clyde,Baby Face Nelson,Alvin Karpis,Ma Barker and her boys. The Lindbergh kidnaping had left a deeply shaken nation, and Hoover wanted his department to lead the way to a new crime free era. Hoover's men didn't carry guns,they investigated. That set them at adistinct disadvantage to the gangsters, they carried guns and were willing to use them. Set against the backdrop of the Depression, Byran Burrough introduces us to a group of unforgettable persons,stripping away myth. Interestingly, Hoover, himself is responsible for many of the myths that sprang up about the G men. These G men were mostlycollege educated, mixed with some seasoned lawmen who shared the visionof a national bureau designed to stamp out crime. Some were more driven towards self promotion(Melvin Purvis's legend takes a beating)which was in direct competition with Hoover's need to micro manage and claim the glory. Familiar crime figures are given faces(not the most attractive bunch)and their backgrounds are fleshed out.The emergence of the planned bank robbery,with getaway car and lookouts raised the stakes. Many of these criminals shared loose ties and often you find members of one gang involved in another's scheme. In a somewhat telling moment Bonnie Parker, when asked what she wanted the public to know about herreplied "I don't smoke cigars". As crimes are carried out, these gangs seem to get away, almost at will. The FBI are slow on the trail, hampered by local police(often corrupt)and their own infighting and unwillingness to check tips and follow up leads.

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