



## Swing: A Mystery

*Rupert Holmes*

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## Swing: A Mystery Rupert Holmes

“Swing just might be the best historical thriller of the year. Certainly it is the most creative.”

–Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

In the swinging big band era, jazz saxophonist and arranger Ray Sherwood is haunted by personal tragedy. But when Gail Prentice, a beautiful and talented Berkeley student, seeks his help in orchestrating an original composition slated to debut at the newly created Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay, Ray is diverted from his worries and drawn to the beguiling coed. Within moments of their first meeting, however, Ray witnesses a horrifying sight: a woman plunging to her death from the island’s emblematic Tower of the Sun. Ray soon finds himself trapped in a coil of spiraling secrets in which nothing is certain, including Gail’s intentions toward him and her connection to the dead woman. And as events speed toward the shocking climax, Ray must unlock an ominous puzzle with sinister implications that stretch far beyond anything he could imagine.

## Swing: A Mystery Details

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Author : Rupert Holmes

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## From Reader Review Swing: A Mystery for online ebook

### Joe Logan says

A jazz mystery. How bizzare is that? Quite, but it works. This book is like the movie 'Lone Star' in that I can't tell you why it is so good without ruining it for anyone who hasn't read it. Pick it up, check it out. It's worth your time. Besides, it's set in San Francisco during the 1940 World's Fair, and the history woven into it is interesting. Who knew that the Army Corps of Engineers had created an island for the World's Fair? I didn't until I read 'Swing.'

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### Red says

It was okay. Rupert Holmes has such a great feel for the Depression era. I don't know that the mystery was all that great. The characterizations were very strong. You read many books and they could take place in any time. Holmes makes you feel the thin shoe leather, hear the crackling radios and breathe the air of that bygone period. A fun twist with this novel, is that much of the story revolves around music and particular tunes. The book comes with a CD of the music, and if you are reading a copy that doesn't, you can download the music from his website.

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### Michele says

This is a great period book with likeable characters and snappy dialogue. This is a mystery novel that takes place in the Bay Area during the 1940's. This is a must read.

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### Priscilla says

A really fun mystery set at the 1940 Golden Gate International Exposition in San Francisco. A great combination of mystery, music and history.

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### NK says

A great twisting tale of mystery, murder and espionage. I found this in a thrift book store and it looked interesting. I recognized the author's name. Happy find. It is a great story - set in pre-WWII San Francisco, California - describing in great detail the music vibe and mood during this Era. I like Swing music and get most of the references, although I cannot vouch for the composition and score references because I cannot read music and do not play an instrument, but you don't have to - all is explained in great detail. Didn't want to put it down. I highly recommend this as a Good Read and suggest reading through the Acknowledgement section (which I would normally skip) for more insight.

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## Bookmarks Magazine says

Holmes's Broadway musical *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, for which he wrote the book, lyrics, and score, won five Tony Awards. Strangely, no fuss was made that he was also the, um, genius behind the pop hit "Escape (The Pina Colada Song)." Since then, he's tried his hand at fiction\_\_and won two Edgars. He dedicates *Swing* to his young daughter, who died in 1986. Despite its lightweight veneer (supplemented with a CD of Big Band-style music, written and orchestrated by Holmes), the novel touches on themes of guilt, loss, and wartime tragedies. Critics found great beauty in the novel's nostalgic evocation of 1940s Bay Area culture. The mystery itself is clever, if a little flat; clues that emerged through songs eluded some critics. Still, readers who appreciate a good period mystery "won't regret taking Holmes's latest novel for a Swing" (*Rocky Mountain News*).

This is an excerpt from a review published in Bookmarks magazine.

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## nfwbls says

Swing is a period mystery, and like many period mysteries it tends to favor period over mystery. In this case, the period is just prior to WWII, the setting is the 1940 Worlds Fair in San Francisco, and the title refers to big-band swing jazz. If any of that sounds appealing, then this book is highly recommended. Even if it sounds only marginally appealing, the writing is clever and fast-paced, literary enough to elevate it above your standard period mystery without ever being intrusive or false. Rather like really good swing jazz, it's appealing to the masses but it's got complexities beneath the surface when played by someone with skill.

The main character, a musician/composer named Ray, is appealing and though there are parts of his personal history that seem a bit cliché and manipulative, the writing was good enough and I was sucker enough to get all weepy anyway. The history of "Treasure Island" - a completely manmade island built in San Francisco bay solely for the World's Fair, is fascinating.

The mystery itself is a bit workmanlike, and the "surprise" coda isn't much of a surprise at all, but not so predictable that it detracts significantly from the story.

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## John says

Rupert Holmes is a renaissance man. He has written many a hit pop song ("Escape: The Pina Colada song), had Broadway hits (*The Mystery Of Edwin Drood* which he wrote book, lyrics and music – an rather uncommon feat, *Curtains*) and a much loved TV show on AMC, (*Remember WENN*). He has written two mystery novels: *Where the Truth Lies* which was turned into quite a good film starring Colin Firth and Kevin Bacon . His latest, *Swing*, is a fun romp set during the last days of the Golden Gate International Exposition (1939 San Francisco World's Fair). This book had me written all over it. Breezy mystery set in the 1940s with wisecracking dialogue. Worlds Fair setting! Claremont Hotel and other local landmarks form a backdrop. The hard cover version comes with CD of swinging tunes that help give clues to the mystery (later versions allow you to download the music). A very fun read. A nice puzzle. Overall a really diverting

enjoyable ride.

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### **Ruth says**

I almost didn't bother to read this, having picked it up at the library, as the trite cover lacked any appeal whatsoever. What possessed the UK publishers to use this rather than the original evocative cover I do not know! <http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/10...>

The title change (from *Swing: a mystery*) also seems superfluous.

Having picked it up a little suspiciously, I found it was a somewhat *noir* tale of a jazz musician, set in 1940, narrated lightly enough but with some dark bass notes. I am ashamed to say I knew next to nothing about San Francisco's Treasure Island & the World Fair (Golden Gate Exposition) which form the backdrop, so was fascinated by the setting and had to find out more, having had my appetite whetted by the tale and the period photos included in the book. The evocation of the setting was perhaps more successful than the resolution of the mystery itself, but that is a niggle; I thoroughly enjoyed the read.

I also enjoyed the accompanying music available for streaming and free download; a gimmick, maybe so, but a successful one for me in setting the mood and, should one have the energy, perhaps uncovering some clues...

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### **Suz Davidson says**

Very good "old school" mystery, with enough intrigue and historical reference to make the world seem more real than your average whodunnit.

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### **Niall Mor says**

Do you love classic mysteries with a noir feel? Do you love swing and big band music from the 1930s and 40s? If so, you'll love *Swing*. Rupert Holmes, composer of "Escape: The Pina Colada Song" and creator of the TV series "Remember WENN," turns his talents to mystery writing and delivers a smart, well-crafted, novel that combines music, mystery, and murder in an ingenious and absorbing way.

Like many members of the Jack Donovan Orchestra, a lesser-known big band from America's swing era, Ray Sherwood is a man with secrets, regrets, and a past he'd like to forget. However, as one of the band's saxophonists and its principal arranger, he gets along all right. In San Francisco for a gig in the fall of 1940, Ray figures his luck might be changing for the better when he's approached by Gail Prentice, a lovely and talented Berkeley coed, with a job offer: arrange her avant garde piano composition "Swing Around the Sun" for a jazz ensemble in time for its first public performance by a Japanese swing band at an international exposition in San Francisco.

Almost from the moment Ray agrees to take the job, however, strange and increasingly sinister things start to happen. A young French Jewish woman, who had proposed marriage to Ray just moments before, in order to avoid returning to her Nazi-occupied homeland, plunges to a grisly death from the top of a bell-tower. Or does she? A strange figure resembling the dead woman reappears at crucial moments and seems to be shadowing Ray and Gail. Gail herself disappears to make unexplained phone calls and apparently writes

incriminating letters. She then denies it or contrives a patently false explanation. Who is she talking to and why?

Gradually, Ray is drawn more and more tightly into a web of lies, conspiracies, espionage, intrigue, and murder involving both American Nazi sympathizers and agents of imperial Japan. Eventually, Ray is presented with the stunning possibility that Gail may actually be his long-lost daughter, the result of a one-night stand almost twenty years earlier. Is Gail really Ray's daughter? Is she a pawn in a spy ring or a willing accomplice? Is "Swing Around the Sun" really an elaborately coded musical message designed to pass vital information about national defense to America's enemies? The answers to these questions will help Ray come to terms with his past and have vital implications for America's future as the nation stands on the brink of entry into World War II.

This book is more than just a crackerjack murder mystery and spy story. It's also a multimedia experience. The hardcover edition includes a CD of several original compositions by Holmes, both instrumental and vocal, in the big band style, that are referred to in the book, and may even provide alert listeners with clues to the solution of the mystery. The audio version, available through the library-based digital media service, Hoopla, integrates the songs into the story at appropriate points. I listened to it at a clip because once I got far enough in, I just couldn't switch off my smartphone. In the words of one of the songs this, "myst'ry with musical diction . . . speaks to me." I hope it speaks to you too.

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### **Marisa says**

Read because it was one of the San Francisco Public Library's "Book of the Month" selections. It's an easy, digestible vacation read for a San Francisco local who loves history. (Oh wait, that's me!) There's also a jazz CD that goes along with the book for the musically inclined -- supposedly the score contains hints that will help you solve the mystery!

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### **Gill says**

This is an unusual book, written in an ironic, period style. Rupert Holmes brings the era and the milieu to life even for me, a British non-musical reader. A good mystery.

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### **Barbara says**

As soon as I saw that this book was about the Golden Gate exposition on Treasure Island -- I picked it up. People who grow up in San Francisco have a great tendency towards nostalgia! I was born after this event but one of my memories was of my father with two of my sisters walking through the fair--fedora and double breasted suit and baggy trousers!!! And that's how I pictured this book's main character! Ray Bradbury, a member of a swing band, is playing at the nearby Claremont Hotel in Oakland. He's a tenor sax guy and also a very talented composer and arranger. He meets Gail (of course--boy meets girl!) and is also a witness to a rather grizzly death. Events evolve and twisting plot is rather brilliant! Never thought I'd find an "Oakland Noir" book! I recommend to all who like a good convoluted mystery!

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## Daniel says

This review originally published in Looking For a Good Book. Rated 3.5 of 5

I was walking through one of my local libraries recently, just looking to see what caught my eye when this book popped out at me. Rupert Holmes...a name with which I am familiar, and 'Swing' ... one of my favorite styles of music. This looked tailor-made for me.

Ray Sherwood is a jazz saxophonist. He also happens to be an accomplished arranger. Currently, Ray is in the San Francisco area with the Jack Donovan Orchestra for the Golden Gate Exposition and there is no shortage of attractive co-eds to add to the excitement of the World's Fair. One such beguiling co-ed, Gail Prentice, seeks Ray's help. A composition she wrote has been selected as a composition winner and will be performed at the exposition. Now Gail needs someone to arrange her piece for a full band.

It's a lot of work, and Ray looks to lose money on his time investment, but music (and women) are his life and he's impressed enough with Gail's composition that he looks forward to the challenge. It will also take his mind off another young woman he encountered about that same time - a woman who leaped to her death from Treasure Island's Tower of the Sun.

What I was hoping for ... and got ... was a mystery in which music played a key role. I can't say too much about it without giving a lot of the mystery away, but trust that music is key.

While the mystery itself starts off pretty spectacularly, much of the book is a slow process of character introduction and establishing location and talents. The meat of the mystery doesn't really develop until three-quarters of the way through and most who've read a fair number of mysteries can probably anticipate where this story is going. Still, it is, in fact, Holmes' character development and knowledge of music that keeps the story interesting. The chapters are quite short, making this a very easy read.

Anyone who can get a copy of the book that includes the CD will be rewarded with some fine music.

This was just what I was looking for while trolling the local library and I enjoyed the read.

Looking for a good book? *Swing*, by Rupert Holmes, is a delightful read and the perfect sort of mystery to read on a beach in the summer or while settling down in front of a fire in the colder months.

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