



Flying Blind

Max Allan Collins

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For Chicago P.I. Nate Heller, guarding Amelia Earhart against death threats has its side benefits. But when Amelia goes missing in the South Pacific, Heller mounts a one-man search that will lead to success, heartbreak...and revenge.

Flying Blind Details

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Author : Max Allan Collins

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From Reader Review Flying Blind for online ebook

OMalleycat says

This was a departure from the usual Nate Heller book and I didn't like it. Collins messes too much with his usual parameters involving Nate in historical events and goes too far in my opinion. Having Nate and Amelia fall in love, have a longstanding affair, having her possibly become pregnant with his child just before her last flight, all stretched my suspension of disbelief to the breaking point. Before, during, and after that element of the story, Collins pads the book with unnecessary description and detail. The book is half over before there's any real intrigue (and, let's face it, how much intrigue can there be--we know Amelia disappeared!) Get on with the story already, without interspersing a detailed description of a ballgame with a Nate's conversation with Earhart's concerned colleague. I read the Nate Heller books as a quick diversion. This did not fill the ticket.

Johnny says

Readers should be very thankful for the factual appendices in the back of Max Allan Collins' historical novels (usually solved by Nathan Heller, but sometimes by Jack Starr or others). The history and Collins' well-considered speculation weave together so seamlessly that it would otherwise be difficult to tell the verifiable from the imaginative. In *Flying Blind*, that blend of fact and fiction involves Amelia Earhart and her last flight. If the news story about Amelia dying as a castaway (as deduced by forensic evaluation of bones discovered two decades ago) is true, Collins' speculation is not too far off. Indeed, the 2016 news story about forensic study comparing the bone measurements of two decades ago with pictures of Amelia's arms compared proportionately with her known height, mentions accounts of radio transmissions purported to be from the aviatrix long after the mysterious crash. Collins does a great job of blending those accounts of radio broadcasts into his story.

Of course, his story is better than just having her die as a castaway. It even pulls in information from an old woman claiming to be Amelia Earhart. Further, Collins weaves together rumors of Earhart's bi-sexuality and her controlling husband's (manager's) jealousy of stunt flier Paul Mantz (who crash-landed a bomber as a stunt for the movie *12 o' clock High* and then, ironically, died crashing a unique plane for *Flight of the Phoenix* in 1965). Yet, Collins has even more intrigue in mind. He plays off the "Amelia Earhart as spy" rumor and gives it the ultimate conspiratorial slant.

Frankly, I like the skepticism about the U.S. government's motivation(s) in at least two of these Nathan Heller novels—this one and *Better Dead*. Collins doesn't raise his concerns to the point of paranoia. It's not a morality play like the graphic novel, *The Watchmen*, but it certainly makes clear that the government's interest isn't always in the interest of the individual citizen. Protagonist Nathan Heller and, at least in this account, Amelia Earhart, discover that certain types of extortion are presumed to be the order of the day in some of the government bureaucracy.

As one can tell from this brief review (it's hard to call out much more without risking significant spoilers), *Flying Blind* encouraged me to check out some other facts about the characters in this book. What more can one ask of historical fiction than that it offers an engaging story, interesting characters and an inspiration to know more about the historical situation. *Flying Blind*, so named for a slang reference to flying by instruments, gives readers all three facets of good historical fiction. The title notwithstanding, it is clear that Collins *doesn't* fly blind when he puts together mysteries such as this one.

R.J. Huneke says

An excellent historical story in the Al Capone age of pre and post WWII - Heller is a great character and all of the world was fleshed out beautifully. The prose is great!

Lansing Public Library says

In the 1930's Amelia Earhart's husband hired private investigator Nathan Heller to be her bodyguard and to determine if she was having an affair. She was!

With Heller! Now it's 1970 and semi-retired Heller has been asked to help solve the mystery of her disappearance. For Heller, this was the chance to finally learn what happened to the woman he once loved.

The reading group rated this book a 3.

Because of the subject matter I thought this book would be a great discussion. Some in the group didn't care for this book. They all agreed that the government probably played a big part in Amelia's last flight. Also, they liked the details about life in Chicago and Hollywood in the 1930's.

Richard Block says

Heller Takes Off

By now we know that in MAC's noir historical fiction, Nate Heller is going to f**k with real people back in the 1930's and 1940's. This time, he really does - with Amelia Earhart, famed aviatrix of old. The clever mix of tough guy detective story and historical whodunit is on display once more, as is Heller's caustic wit and ability to meet, Zelig like, every important figure of the the 20th Century and somehow, become central to their lives. Its an amazing trick.

The story is at once credible and fantastic. GP Putnam (yes, that publisher) hires Heller to see if Paul Mantz is schtupping his wife AE. He isn't but soon, Heller is. Their wild romance is complicated, to say the least, by her lesbianism, his money grabbing antics and, oh yeah, flying espionage against the Japanese. This is the biggest stretch for Heller I've read so far, and that's saying something. MAC makes Heller very compelling, a mix of macho action man and sympathetic ladies man - a perfect blend.

The writing is compact, exciting and twists and turns like a 300lb. fish out of water. It's overlong but once you're hooked, be prepared to be dragged underwater a few dozen times. MAC is noir fast food, but Heller is like a big bucket of noir chicken. Yummy but your stomach hurts after.

Marley says

This is my second Mate Heller book. (I think I need to start reading them in order). I loved Stolen Away, but

Flying Blind is tamer (at least until Part 2) and more of a love story. Well researched, Collins has constructed great portraits of Amelia Earhart (and her failings in a loving way) Paul Mantz, Fred Noonan, and the despicable GP Putnam. With husbands like him, who needs an enemy? I wish he'd done more than mention Gene Vidal, though. I've been fascinated by Amelia since I was a kid and have read a lot about her and her fatal voyage over the years. I think it's really possible she and Fred made it to Saipan, and I think she would have been valuable to the Japanese alive than dead, but who knows what really happened.

Paul Goble says

Even though we all know some of the key point of the plot (the disappearance of aviatrix Amelia Earhart), the story is riveting and intriguing. Through careful research, a strong case is made for what some would consider a crackpot theory: that Earhart was spying, was abandoned by her own government, and was captured by the Japanese.

People and places are painted with a rich linguistic brush. Each place had its own ambiance, and each character--even the minor characters--had depth and personality.

For me, this otherwise fine book was marred by unnecessary, explicit sex scenes. I wouldn't recommend the book to children or teenagers for this reason. Morally sensitive readers may want to just skip chapter 6.

Richard says

Great fictional treatment of a familiar story.

Michael Stokes says

No words for what this book does.

Hugh McBride says

The 10th entry in Max Allan Collins's "Nathan Heller" series, FLYING BLIND focuses on Heller's efforts to protect, then find, famed aviator Amelia Earhart. Consistent with previous Heller novels, FLYING BLIND is built on a foundation of meticulous research, with Heller interacting with both actual historical figures and the occasional composite or fictionalized ones. As Collins has also made a habit of doing in the Heller series, FLYING BLIND also features an alternative theory (extrapolated from existing research and a bit of poetic license) on an enduring mystery -- in this case, the disappearance of one of America's most famous aviators.

FLYING BLIND is a solid addition to the Heller canon, but by the end of the novel I was left with the sense that this story got away from the author a bit -- or, at least the pre-disappearance portions of the narrative did. The result is that Heller's efforts to find Earhart feel a bit rushed. Attempting to remain as spoiler-free as possible, the day Heller spends on Saipan feels especially abrupt, with events that strain credulity even within the world of a detective who pops up in so many high-profile cases.

(I believe that this perception is at least somewhat vindicated in the acknowledgements at the end of the novel, when Collins noted needing a few uncharacteristic-for-him deadline extensions before turning in the final manuscript.)

That said, a four-star Nathan Heller outing is still an excellent experience. Collins's ability to blend fiction with reality remains as impressive as ever, as does his capacity for breathing life into historical events & characters.

Victor Carson says

I read this novel about Amelia Earhart because I am interested in her disappearance and because I like the detective novels of Max Collins. I have read his novel True Detective (Nate Heller) and a collection of his short stories, Chicago Lightning. All of the Nate Heller series were offered recently by Amazon as Kindle books, at very reasonable prices. I like the style and swagger of Detective Nate Heller but moreover I appreciate Collins' attention to the historical detail of the 1930s. I was very impressed by the amount of research that went into Flying Blind, the use of many actual persons and events, and the convincing argument the author makes that Earhart's final round-the-world flight was paid for by the U.S. military. The U.S., it seems, supplied a new Lockheed Electra, with much more powerful engines, when Earhart's first round-the-world flight ended in a crash, taking off from Honolulu. Collins captures Amelia Earhart's personality very well and he is not afraid to suggest some faults or weaknesses that Amelia's biographers ignore.

Not everything about the book is perfect. A segment that imagines an attempt to rescue the flyer and her navigator from the Japanese-controlled island of Saipan in the Northern Marianas, goes beyond the plausible, but everything else in Flying Blind is only too believable. The U.S. was very anxious to obtain intelligence about the Japanese military build-up in the Pacific, and might well have risked Amelia Earhart, a friend of FDR, to gather that information.

I am not ordinarily a detective novel fanatic. I read a few mysteries and very few mystery or detective series. However, The quality of Flying Blind encourages me to read more of the Nate Heller series.

David Williams says

Once again Nathan Heller is on the case. This time his job is to protect Amelia Earhart from anonymous threats that she has received. Of course that is just the tip of the iceberg. Naturally Heller becomes romantically entangled with the famous aviatrix. Later Heller becomes involved with an attempt to uncover the sinister government plot behind Earhart's mission. Finally he goes undercover in Saipan to try and verify rumours that two American pilots are being held as prisoner by the Japanese.

I have enjoyed reading through the Heller books. This one feels like it is the most strained of all the books. There seems to be a lot of unnecessary filler. Long, uninteresting conversations about the nature of the plane, the route taken by Earhart, and other scenes drag on for page after page without adding anything to the actual story. As always with a Nathan Heller book there is plenty of intrigue, sex, and smart-mouthed comments from the main character.

roark says

Back when everything was tied in with Chicago mobsters in the 20's, the protagonist's presence woven into actual historic events was plausible. He was an ex-cop turned PI, after all. But in this book, and in the later novels in the series, his presence is somewhat contrived. This is easy to get past, though, because all of the Max Heller series goes beyond the headlines of the day (which is what we are familiar with) and delve into the day-to-day that allows you to see how these major events developed. I love that. At the end of each book, the author provides the sources of his meticulous research, points out which characters are composites and, for actual persons, often provides a short epilogue for each.

Raymond Chandler fans will love Max Heller. He is a Phillip Marlowe knock-off, but who can get enough of that, right? Mix that with into well-done historical novels and period pieces and you get a series well worth reading.

As in actual events, not all mysteries are actually resolved as in this book (the disappearance of Amelia Earhart). The author does not leave you flat, however. You will have already learned more about the background of the main event and characters than you ever imagined. You will also learn about a number of prevailing theories that attempt to resolve the mystery.

Mikey says

Entertaining jaunt based on an interesting character

Didn't know what to expect with this book but the story is loosely based on true events and the pacing is pretty good. Action packed end drew the story to a good close. Strange that the subject of the story was recently in the news.

J Mark Harrison 3 says

Very entertaining take on Amelia Earhart's disappearance. Fiction, but roughly follows some facts and people in her life.
