

## ‘Lido Shuffle’ is better than most TV dramas

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*“Lido Shuffle: A Justice Security Novel” by T.M. Bilderback. Cleveland, Ohio: Sardis County Sentinel Press, 2021. 120 pages, \$12.95 (paperback).*



“I leaned back in the chair I occupied, and thought about the last time I had seen Joey Justice and Justice Security,” T.M. Bilderback explains at the beginning of “Lido Shuffle,” the 13th installment of his Justice Security series. “The Mexican drug cartel led by Gen. Esteban Fernandez had attempted to take over the drug trade in Chicago. Justice Security had come to town and drafted Capt. Baker, Sam Tanner and me into their attempt to stop him.”

“Because it had been a national security situation, none of us were permitted to talk about it,” the author continues. “We had all received presidential citations for helping ... including my smarmy ex-partner, Manny Salazar, who just happened to save the life of Joey Justice. I had also met FBI chief Marcus Moore, the FBI’s liaison to Justice Security. We had developed an interesting relationship outside of the case.”

So begins another gritty and all-too-realistic crime novel that could

easily have been pulled from today’s headlines. As many readers know, I don’t often delve into fiction; I usually leave that to my partner-in-crime Fallon Willoughby. But when my old friend from high school contacted me about reviewing his latest novel, I couldn’t resist. I heard through the grapevine that he ventured into the literary realm, but until now I hadn’t had the opportunity to read any of his work.

I was impressed.

The unique and unforgettable characters Bilderback meticulously crafted over the course of his previous books in this series are funny, witty, incredibly memorable, strangely relatable and

eerily familiar. Their fast-paced and reflective interactions bring the story to life in an almost visceral way. After only a few pages, I found myself completely caught up in the tale being told. I also felt as if I knew the main characters on multiple levels, such is the power of the author's prose.

The central figure in the current storyline, Lido Bouvier – known on the streets as Lido Shuffle due to the lack of a discernible pattern to how he kills – is a Cajun hitman who has been hired by Fernandez to eliminate the threat posed to his empire by those seeking to shut him down (and for personal reasons, as is always the case in these good-vs.-evil sagas). In an effort to keep them alive, Joey invites Lt. Michelle (Mickey) Rooney of the Chicago Police Department, along with Detective Sam Tanner and ex-cop Manny Salazar to Sardis County, “in the middle of nowhere,” where they can hopefully elude Lido, who, by the way, also has a gambling addiction.

And that's where things really get interesting.

Bilderback is a former radio announcer; interestingly, most of his novels are based on, or inspired by, classic songs. He still resides where we both grew up in rural west Tennessee and is on a mission to bring all the stories he has rummaging around in his head to life. Christi, his wife, is an artist as well as an art teacher; she designs most of the cover art for his books. A prolific writer with an almost limitless imagination, his other series/collections include “Tales of Sardis County” and “Colonel Abernathy's Tales.”

The edge-of-your-seat factor is a key feature of Bilderback's narrative, together with the contemplative inner-dialog and reflective introspection that augments and illuminates and informs the action sequences. Witness the following from the eighth chapter (as Lido closes in on his intended victims):

“Unaware of these events, Lido Bouvier was planning his next move. He knew that the grenade didn't take out any of his targets, but he didn't care. It caused death and destruction, and was demoralizing to his enemies. Lido wasn't in the room that Toal had provided. He was, once again, in the juke joint car. The car was parked two blocks away from the Justice Security building.”

“The assassin studied the area closely. He studied the roofs of the buildings surrounding Justice Security. He studied the sidewalks. He studied possible paths of escape. Lido's dilemma was simple. He had to get Joey Justice, Mickey Rooney and Manny Salazar out of the Justice Security building so that he could kill them ... or, Lido had to get inside the building. There had to be a way!”

So does the determined assassin succeed in his quest to eliminate the rivals of his boss? In order to find out, you'll need to pick up a copy of “Lido Shuffle” and submerge yourself in the world this gifted storyteller has created for your exploration. Honestly, it's better than most of the crime dramas you see on TV these days. You won't be disappointed.

Order your copy of Lido Shuffle today at [www.overdrive.com/publishers/sardis-county-sentinel-press](http://www.overdrive.com/publishers/sardis-county-sentinel-press). And strap on your safety belt.

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