

Alice
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EDITOR'S CHOICE

FICTION

The new year may have just started in terms of publishing but there may well be a contender for book of the year already . . .

This time last year in this column I pondered the wisdom of declaring my book of the year in March but was happily vindicated when George Saunders' *Lincoln in the Bardo* went on to win the Man Booker Prize 2017. So, thus emboldened, I'm going to call it again (my book of the year, not the Man Booker Prize); *The Western Wind* by Samantha Harvey (Jonathan Cape). It is quite unlike anything else I have read.

On the crime and thriller front it was a joy to read Laura Lippman's latest, *Sunburn* (Faber), a classic noir tale transplanted to the 1990s with a beguiling femme fatale at the centre of the action. As psychological thrillers continue to dominate the sales charts, this month sees the return of three tried and tested top-selling authors in this area; B A Paris has *Bring Me Back* (HQ), Avon says C L Taylor's *The Fear* will be its book of the year and Clare Mackintosh's *Let Me Lie* should do well for Sphere.

Finally this month, there were two books I was looking forward to but sadly no reading material was available in time for this preview; Kit de Waal follows the terrific *My Name is Leon* with *The Trick to Time* (Viking), set in 1970s Birmingham I'm told and dealing with themes of mental health and pregnancy and *From a Low and Quiet Sea* (Doubleday) is the latest from the wonderful Donal Ryan which moves from war-torn Syria to small-town Ireland.

EDITOR'S CHOICE/BOOK OF THE MONTH

Personal favourites

TOP SELLER

Likely to be the biggest selling titles of the month based on an author's sales history

ONES TO WATCH

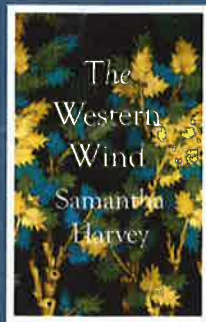
Titles with strong sales potential and publisher support, regardless of sales history of the author

DÉBUT BOOKS

Indicated by the icon below



BOOK OF THE MONTH



LITERARY

SAMANTHA HARVEY
THE WESTERN WIND

JONATHAN CAPE,
1ST, £16.99, HB,
9781787330597

For an author who has appeared on the

longlists of the Man Booker Prize and the Bailey's Prize, and the shortlists of the James Tait Black Award, the Orange Prize and the Guardian First Book Award, Samantha Harvey is not half as well-known as she should be. Her astonishing 2009 debut *The Wilderness* was praised by the *Times* as "an extraordinary dramatisation of a mind in the process of disintegration" and subsequent novels *All is Song* and

Dear Thief were widely acclaimed.

This, her fourth novel, deserves to break her through to a wider audience.

The Western Wind is set in the remote village of Oakham, beside a big river with no bridge. It is narrated by the village priest, John Reve, and begins when he is woken early on the morning of Shrove Tuesday, 1491, with the news that the body of a drowned man has been sighted in the river. The richest man in the village is missing and the mystery must be solved. The story unfolds backwards, beginning with Day 4 and ending with Day 1. The truly extraordinary thing about this novel is the way Harvey re-creates the mindset and beliefs of the medieval world, and makes the concerns of 500 years ago vivid and immediate



LITERARY

ALEX HOURSTON
LOVE AFTER LOVE

FABER, 1ST,
£12.99, HB,
9780571316939

There are shades of Louise Doughty

and Zoe Heller in this well written, very grown-up novel about adultery. Nancy is a psychotherapist who runs into an old acquaintance from her student days at a conference. She is married with three young children, but embarks upon a long-term affair with Adam, made logistically easier by the fact that he is a therapist too, so they can rent neighbouring consulting rooms. Hourston is especially good on the parent/child relationship—the push and pull of that bond as a child grows older—and the growing realisation of one of her children that something is wrong.



CRIME AND THRILLER

LAURA LIPPMAN
SUNBURN

FABER, 1ST,
£12.99, TPB,
9780571335664

In the endless pursuit of the new, we can sometimes forget

about the more established authors. I wouldn't say I had completely forgotten about Laura Lippman, but I had forgotten just how stunningly good she is. This transplants the elements of a 1940s classic noir to 1990s Delaware, where a beautiful woman has arrived in the small town of Beauville, seemingly unencumbered by family or a past. But who is she really? Lippman's structuring is masterful; a peripheral character in one chapter takes centre stage in the next as the story unfolds, and layer after layer of secrets, lies and double-crossings are revealed. Don't miss it.

BookScan **