



Midnight in the Garden of
Good and Evil

come to the next meeting of the
Highland Bookies

Wednesday, October 8, 1997
1 p.m.

We will review

**Midnight in the Garden
of Good and Evil**

by John Berendt

We will meet at the home of
Kae Kemmerling
(see other side of card)
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"A TOTALLY ENGROSSING MOVIE EXPERIENCE.

Razor-sharp performances by Kevin Spacey and John Cusack
and masterful direction by Clint Eastwood."

David Sheehan, CBS-TV



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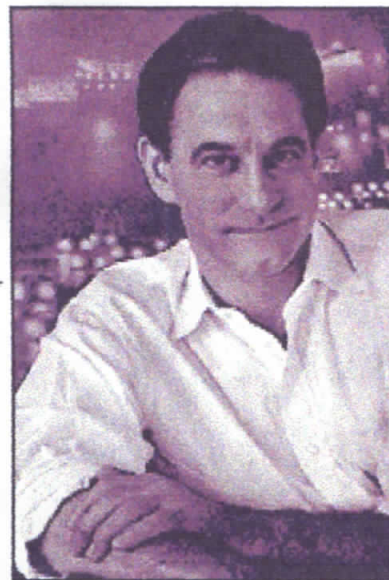
Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil by John Berendt

Name	Grade	Comments
Martha Boon ★	C	Interesting compilation of characters, yet I never got caught up in this book. Wasn't thought provoking. It didn't have enough mystery to the murder.
Anne Pinkerton ★	A	What wonderful character development! I disliked so many of the characters, but they were so vivid! I can see why people are flocking to Savannah - it sounds beautiful!
Sheryl Davidson ★	C	I had such a difficult time sticking to this novel. I'm still waiting to learn of the statue - just Bonaventure Cemetery I guess? Interesting characters - I found this book ok but not my favorite.
Nora Ruppert ★	A	I found the book & characters totally entertaining - I couldn't put it down. The characters are well drawn and the wit was amusing.
Kae Kemmerling	B	I didn't get the entire book read. The first part was a bit 'slow' & unexciting. Part II with the trial was interesting. I enjoyed the various characters & how well the author described them. I'll finish the book.
Judy Bush ★	B+	Started out very interesting - became boring & a little ugly in middle. Picked up again in end with the murder mystery plot. Description vivid & good.

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John Berendt

John Berendt writes a monthly column for *Esquire*. He has been the editor of *New York* magazine and lives in New York.



BookWire has information on the following John Berendt titles:

- [!Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil](#)
 - [Boston Book Review](#), "[Listen!](#)" Review by [Kate Sullivan](#) (8/1/95)

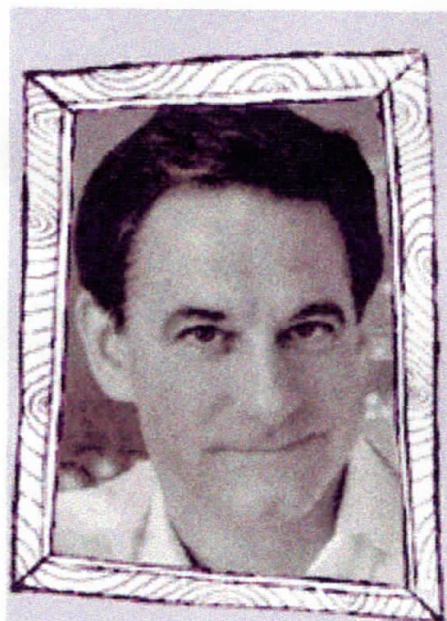
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MIDNIGHT in the Garden of Good and Evil, John Berendt's first book, transformed sleepy Savannah, Georgia, into a tourist destination and Berendt into the city's favorite son. "I can't walk on a street in Savannah without a car screeching to a halt and somebody saying, 'Mr. Berendt! Mr. Berendt! I loved your book! Can I give you a ride?'" boasts the fifty-six-year-old author, whose novelistic account of his stay in this unique Southern city was a runaway best-seller.

☐ Berendt reads from *Midnight*, pages 256-7: (983K WAV | RealAudio | About RealAudio)

But while Berendt is thrilled about his popularity in Savannah, *Midnight*'s staggering success has brought him face-to-face with a city he'd rather not have to deal with: Hollywood. Warner Bros. is currently prepping *Midnight* for the big screen, and the author views the film version with "huge" trepidation. Berendt declined to write the screenplay, leaving that task to *A Perfect World* scribe John Lee

Hancock, because "when [a studio] spends \$50 million, they have control," he says. "I don't want to know anything about it . . . if I don't see it, it isn't happening."

Berendt's fear of filmmakers is well-grounded: he knows that when people see a movie, many of them think they've read the book. ("I was writing a piece about Pat Conroy for *Vanity Fair*, and I would ask people what they thought about Pat Conroy's writing. A lot of people said they didn't like *Prince of Tides*. I'd say why, and several people said to me, 'I didn't like Barbra Streisand.'") As a result, his biggest fear is that the *Midnight* filmmakers just won't get the book, and after the exchange Berendt had with one of the *Midnight* producers several months back, it's easy to see why:

Producer: "John, I have the perfect person to play you. Now don't say anything for ten seconds. Think about it. Think of the possibilities, and then tell me what you think."

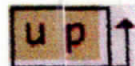
Berendt, ten seconds later: "OK, who?"

Producer: "Jodie Foster."

"I said to myself, 'I'm sure glad I'm not writing this piece of shit,'" says Berendt, who feels a little better--even "enormously flattered"--now that Tom Cruise has been mentioned for the role. If Berendt had his druthers, he'd cast Tommy Lee Jones as murder suspect Jim Williams, and Dolly Parton as Mandy, the robust former beauty queen. But don't expect to see the author himself in the picture. "I will *not* do a walk-on," he says. "I want complete deniability, and if I'm a walk-on, I've somehow got something to do with it." On the other hand, "If I like the film, I'll take *complete* credit for it. It's actually a no-lose situation." Spoken like a man who may learn to love Hollywood, after all.



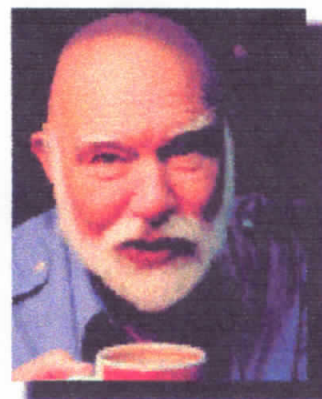
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Michael Maynez

Merry-Go-Round

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"Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil"

Three years after its publication, "*The Book* ", and I don't mean the Bible, I mean 'THE BOOK', is having a resurgence in sales, particularly in the South where all bookstore window's carry the signs saying, 'Yes, we have the book '.

Of course they are referring to John Berendt's mystery non-fiction novel, "*Midnight In The Garden Of Good And Evil* ". One of the reasons for its continued success, may be the fact that Warner Bros. is planning a December release for the movie version, which is directed by Clint Eastwood, starring none other than that Academy Award winning actor, Kevin Spacey, and what a nice stretch it will be for him as the antiquarian, with a passion for a young man, played by Jude Law. He was the young man who drew raves on Broadway, in the Kathleen Turner play "*Indiscretions* ", by doing a frontal nude scene coming out of the bathtub and lingering and languishing drying himself with not much of a towel. When I saw him on Broadway, all the opera glasses went up during this scene. So I imagine that Clint Eastwood made a great choice when he cast him, in this movie. Of course it will be interesting to also see the challenges that this movie provides for Mr. Eastwood. This is no western, like his, "*The Unforgiven* ". What with, Minerva a voodoo priestess, that practices the most primitive black magic, played by Irma P. Hall and a drag queen, with the unlikely name of The Lady Chablis, seems her mother saw this name on a wine bottle and decided to give her that name.

The real star of the flick of course is the city of Savannah; it reeks with Spanish moss. John Berendt did not want to write the screenplay of his book because he felt the movie would end up being twenty-five hours long, so the job went to the

screenwriter, John Lee Hancock, who proceeded to do research of the city for almost a year and half, before he could translate, the book into a screenplay. Now that it is in the can, Kevin Spacey, who seems to be just about every movie since he won the Oscar, says, "This is a film about tolerance, and I hope my performance will stop people from referring to Jim Williams, (His character in the film) in this limited way and defining him by his sexuality." Well, well hasn't Hollywood yet come to grips with the main character being gay. Here's one garden that is crawling with all kinds of weird, wicked, wild and demented characters, with John Cusack as the storyteller. The month of December is going to be a sensational month for movies.

Reference:

Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil: A Savannah Story

by John Berendt

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[Warner Brothers](#)

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