

WHEN IT RAINS

DAVE WARNER

ABOUT THE BOOK

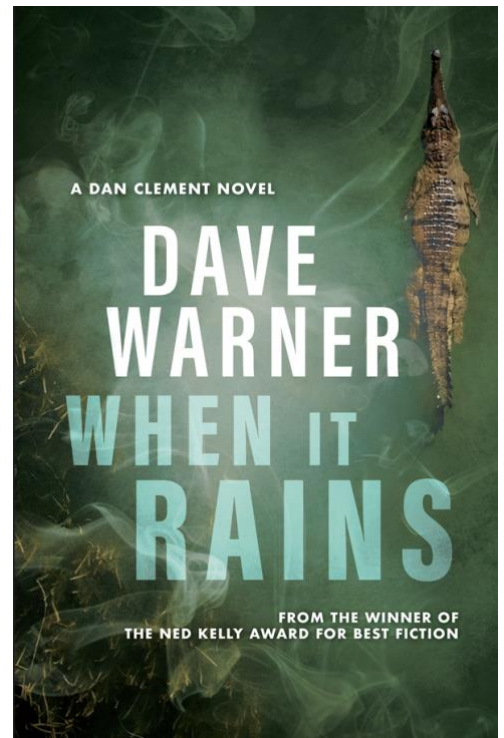
Following a long dry-spell of major crime in the Kimberley, Broome detective Dan Clement, suddenly finds himself inundated. When his sergeant is beaten up, and a woman is brutally assaulted, it appears the same two suspects are behind both incidents. The stakes rise after the remains of a body are discovered tied to a post in crocodile-infested waters, and a journalist covering the crimes is abducted. Never have Dan and his team faced more terrifying outcomes than in this complex and baffling case.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dave Warner is an author, musician and screenwriter. *When It Rains* is his thirteenth adult novel, with previous novels winning the Western Australian Premier's Book Award for Fiction and the Ned Kelly Award for best Australian crime fiction. Previous Dan Clement novels are *Before It Breaks*, *Clear to the Horizon* and *After the Flood*. Dave first came to national prominence in 1978 with his gold album *Mug's Game* and his band Dave Warner's from the Suburbs. Dave continues to write and record music, has been named a Western Australian State Living Treasure and has been inducted into the WAMi Rock'n'Roll of Renown.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is this novel called *When It Rains*?
2. What are some of the themes it explores?
3. What moral codes do you see at play in this novel?
4. Who are the victims and who are the perpetrators in this novel?
5. In what ways does the landscape shape the crimes?
6. What is the relevance of the prologue to the novel?
7. Why do you think the author has chosen that particular scene?
8. What elements of this work can be attributed to the sub-genre of outback noir?
9. What elements of masculinity and mateship are at play in the culture of the police force?
10. How does Dan Clement's inner commentary reflect on his age and his time of life?
11. Do you think that Lena helps to change the way Dan sees the world?
12. In what ways is Clement only as good as his team?
13. Why do you think he makes the career decision he does at the novel's end?
14. Why has the author chosen that particular final line?
15. Do you feel that the social order has been restored by the novel's end?



INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR

What is it like to work with a protagonist over a number of books? Do you think about Clement between times?

It can be quite challenging working on book series where your main character, in this case Dan, has a lot of internal reflection. Poirot and Sherlock Holmes give us little or no insight into their own thoughts but with Dan I have to ask myself what has happened in his personal life lately and how does this affect his behaviour generally and in particular, his relationship to the case. So, yes, even while working on other books I do spare a thought for Dan. It has become a bit of a cliché that no detective can be well-adjusted and happy, and I try to fight against this. I want Dan to be happy just not boring.

Do writing crime and writing songs have anything in common?

I can only answer for myself, and I'd say that many of the songs I have written are from a persona, not Dave Warner's personal autobiography. That persona may have nothing of me in it or quite a bit and so with the characters in my books. Another common point is the moment of inspiration. An idea for a song can often hit me – a few words and a melody together and then not long after a song theme is teased out. With my crime novels, it can be a similar moment – a short but almost fully formed snapshot of an idea that might sustain a whole book, like looking down at an island through a bank of clouds and getting a clear picture for a second or two.

How do you go about plotting a crime novel? What comes first?

When It Rains is an exception for me. I wanted to write a Dan Clement book and the title popped up in my head suggesting a mood for the book – an inundation of crime with Dan feeling like he's bailing out a boat destined to sink. Usually though it's an idea that grabs me – a 'wouldn't it be great if ...' and the idea of that 'if' arrives almost fully formed; if – in 1961 a hitman hears surf guitar and tries to reshape his life using a guitar instead of a gun (*River of Salt*); or if – Sherlock Holmes never died when he fell off the Reichenbach Falls but was frozen until a new female Watson could unfreeze him in the present (*Over My Dead Body*), etc. Once I have the germ of the idea, I set about constructing a basic skeleton that will largely remain intact until the story is completed. Then I flesh out all the major plot points. Once that's done, I try to lift it all by more complex twists. Sometimes those only happen in the midst of the first or second draft.

What is next for Dan Clement? What's next for Dave Warner?

I really have no idea what is next for Dan. Other than desiring to do another Dan Clement story, I have nothing in train. However, there is plenty for Dave Warner. My next novel is already at first draft, and it will be another change of pace and style as I strive to deliver a Golden Age classic whodunnit in the Agatha Christie-style, set in 1929. Live event-wise I will be looking at doing library talks – books with music where possible. I'm also working on a stage musical, a new album of country/rock songs, and a couple of screenplays, and yes, I do have at least two more sketchy ideas for crime novels that I will be developing, one that involves my other WA detective Snowy Lane.