



# Simon Baatz

Reviews



## For the Thrill of It: Leopold, Loeb, and the Murder that Shocked Chicago (New York: HarperCollins, 5 August 2008)

### Reviews

"Simon Baatz's *For the Thrill of It* is likely to be the definitive work on this infamous crime ... It is impressive in its research, even-handed in its tone and immensely readable.... Without falsely heightening the drama, Mr. Baatz keeps the reader entranced by a story whose central event – the murder itself – is well known, though its aftermath less so.... The crime may now be forgiven, but it is not forgotten, as Simon Baatz's excellent book demonstrates. Although the names Leopold and Loeb can no longer be used to frighten young children, the calculated viciousness of their crime, so compellingly captured by Mr. Baatz, remains a major event in the annals of human depravity." (Wall Street Journal)

"[Leopold and Loeb] had the world on a string in 1924: rich, smart, good looking, well connected and with the brightest of futures ahead of them. So why did they murder a 14-year-old schoolboy, stuff his naked body in a drainage pipe and send his parents a ransom note demanding \$10,000? The answer is in the title of Simon Baatz's altogether absorbing history of the case *For the Thrill of It*. It was that, and they wanted to prove to themselves they were smart enough quite literally to get away with murder. Mr. Baatz ... has done meticulous research, and he writes extremely well. As a result he brings to vivid life the major characters. Not just the two murderers, but also the judges and lawyers.... Clarence Darrow's brilliant legal strategy – the depiction of which is one of the more compelling sections of this page-turner of a book – saved [Leopold and Loeb] from the hanging that most thought they richly deserved. ...Simon Baatz's book on the Leopold and Loeb case is the best we'll have for a long, long time." (New York Times)

"Meticulously researched ... More than 80 years later [the crime] still has the power to daze us, one of those benchmark crimes that is burned into our consciousness, even as an increasingly violent world desensitizes us to the most horrific atrocities." (Chicago Tribune)

"Exhaustively researched and rivetingly presented ... One of the best true-crime books of this or any other season." (Booklist, starred review)

"Baatz lucidly lays out the complicated courtroom maneuvers and also provides a fascinating, skillful analysis of two different legal philosophies ... A solid true-crime thriller that's also a masterly analysis of postwar shifts in society's ideas about crime and personality." (Kirkus Reviews)

"Simon Baatz has worked for six years unearthing every detail of the proceedings – court reports, newspaper accounts, witness recollections, and a host of other sources – but this has not produced the tunnel vision that might be expected. His obvious intention is to step back from the dramatic events and personalities he's writing about and let them do all the talking. His book is full of direct quotations taken from a variety of official transcripts, and as a result the pages read like the very best crime fiction. This kind of editorial restraint is rare in cases like that of Leopold and Loeb, and for good reason: they don't deserve it. And even when on occasion Baatz slips in an opinion, the reader is grateful for it – he's the expert, after all, so any of his thoughts on the case are of interest. ... Reading Baatz's compelling, definitive book brings it all back to life." (Open Letters Monthly)

"Baatz breaks his fascinating narrative into two distinct Law and Order-type sections. He starts with the kidnapping and murder of 14-year-old Bobby Franks, abducted while walking home from an afterschool baseball game. While it might be easy to dismiss the murderers – Nathan 'Babe' Leopold Jr. and Richard 'Dickie' Loeb – as bored rich kids, Baatz shows that there was much more to this story." (Library Journal)