



Mission to Paris: A Novel

By Alan Furst

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“A master spy novelist.”—*The Wall Street Journal*

“Page after page is dazzling.”—James Patterson

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

Late summer, 1938. Hollywood film star Fredric Stahl is on his way to Paris to make a movie. The Nazis know he's coming—a secret bureau within the Reich has been waging political warfare against France, and for their purposes, Fredric Stahl is a perfect agent of influence. What they don't know is that Stahl, horrified by the Nazi war on Jews and intellectuals, has become part of an informal spy service run out of the American embassy. *Mission to Paris* is filled with heart-stopping tension, beautifully drawn scenes of romance, and extraordinarily alive characters: foreign assassins; a glamorous Russian actress-turned-spy; and the women in Stahl's life. At the center of the novel is the city of Paris—its bistros, hotels grand and anonymous, and the Parisians, living every night as though it were their last. Alan Furst brings to life both a dark time in history and the passion of the human hearts that fought to survive it.

Praise for *Mission to Paris*

“The most talented espionage novelist of our generation.”—Vince Flynn

“Vividly re-creates the excitement and growing gloom of the City of Light in 1938–39 . . . It doesn't get more action-packed and grippingly atmospheric than this.”—*The Boston Globe*

“One of [Furst's] best . . . This is the romantic Paris to make a tourist weep. . . . In Furst's densely populated books, hundreds of minor characters—clerks, chauffeurs, soldiers, whores—all whirl around his heroes in perfect focus for a page or two, then dot by dot, face by face, they vanish, leaving a heartbreaking sense of the vast Homeric epic that was World War II and the smallness of almost every life that was caught up in it.”—*The New York Times Book Review*

“A book no reader will put down until the final page . . . Critics compare [Alan] Furst to Graham Greene and John le Carré [as] a master of historical

espionage.”—*Library Journal* (starred review)

“Alan Furst’s writing reminds me of a swim in perfect water on a perfect day, fluid and exquisite. One wants the feeling to go on forever, the book to never end. . . . Furst is one of the finest spy novelists working today.”—*Publishers Weekly*

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Mission to Paris: A Novel By Alan Furst Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #70753 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Random House Trade Paperbacks

- Published on: 2013-06-04
- Released on: 2013-06-04
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x .70" w x 5.20" l, .46 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 272 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Guest Reviewer: Justin Cronin on *Mission to Paris* by Alan Furst

Justin Cronin is the New York Times bestselling author of *The Passage*, *Mary and O'Neil* (which won the PEN/Hemingway Award and the Stephen Crane Prize), and *The Summer Guest*. Other honors for his writing include a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts and a Whiting Writers' Award. A Distinguished Faculty Fellow at Rice University, he divides his time between Houston, Texas, and Cape Code, Massachusetts.



Fans of Alan Furst are a passionate lot, and I count myself among them. Put a group of Furst's readers in a room, and before long they will be ardently advocating for their favorites (I always come out swinging for *The World at Night*), only to change their minds, and change them again, as they are reminded of an especially harrowing episode in *The Polish Officer*, or a perfect turn of phrase in *Blood of Victory*, or a sumptuous love scene in *The Spies of Warsaw*.

So which of Furst's novels is his best? In my opinion, it's an eleven-way tie.

Now, make that twelve.

Furst's elegant thrillers of World War II Europe are often grouped with the works Graham Greene and John le Carré for the literary quality of his prose. The comparison is apt, but Furst is really one of a kind: a novelist whose body of work has recast his genre, elevating it to the level of literature. He has a way of getting everything right, putting every sentence to flawless use with a compact, suggestive style. In just a few brush strokes, Furst can capture the essence of a character—man or woman, friend or foe, Gestapo officer or society doyenne—and his ability to evoke a setting makes me weep with envy. Furst's foggy Paris streets and glittering salons aren't just places we see; we actually seem to visit them, bathing in their rich atmospheres. When a Furst character steps into a café in the 16th Arrondissement, you can practically smell the Gauloises smoke wafting from the pages.

But what truly sets Furst apart is his characters' alignment with their circumstances. Like every great novelist, he understands that history is an overlay of private lives and public events, and therein lies the richest, most morally edifying human drama. Furst's protagonists aren't professional spies. Dashing, yes. Romantic, to be sure. Capable of the bon mot, without doubt. But in their hearts, they are men and women like the rest of us, adrift in the currents of their lives. It's the exigencies of war, with all its political murk and

unlikely gunpoint bedfellows, that ignite them to personal heroism. You can hear them saying, with existential fatalism, “Well, it’s been a marvelous life—wonderful food, sumptuous parties, and surprising nights of love—but I guess it’s over now. I’ll have to become something more. Count me in.”

Mission to Paris is trademark Furst, a book not merely to read but to luxuriate in. Vienna-born Fredric Stahl, nee Franz Stalka, is a Hollywood actor of modest renown sent to Paris to star in a French movie named, ironically, “Après la Guerre” (“After the War”). The year is 1938; Hitler has just taken Czechoslovakia and set his sights on Poland. With his American connections, high profile, and Germanic ancestry, Stahl attracts the interest of the political arm of the Reich’s Foreign Ministry; their goal is to manipulate him into making a public declaration against French rearmament. Initially, all Stahl wants to do is enjoy his time in Paris, where fond memories and sensual adventures await, and finish his film, for which he has high hopes. But he can’t stay on the sidelines for long; the next thing he knows, he’s flying to Berlin to judge a film festival of nakedly propagandist “mountain movies,” with stacks of Swiss francs stuffed inside his suit to purchase Nazi secrets. The night he meets his contact—the glamorous Russian actress Olga Orlova, who proves surprisingly adept with a silencer—Stahl awakens to the smell of smoke and the sound of shattering glass: beyond the windows of his hotel room, *Kristallnacht* is in full swing.

What happens then? Please. I’ve said too much as it is.

Suffice to say that for Furst’s legion of the obsessed, the novel is everything we crave and more. And for newcomers—why there should still be any, I simply don’t know—it’s certain to send them back into his rich body of work, hungry for more.

Review

“This is the romantic Paris to make a tourist weep ... The brilliant historical flourishes seem to create – or recreate – a world ... In Furst’s densely populated books, hundred of minor characters – clerks, chauffeurs, soldiers, whores – all whirl around his heroes in perfect focus for a page or two, then dot by dot, face by face, they vanish, leaving a heartbreaking sense of the vast Homeric epic that was World War II and the smallness of almost every life that was caught up in it.”

—*The New York Times Book Review*

“Alan Furst again shows why he is a grandmaster of the historical espionage genre. Furst not only vividly recreates the excitement and growing gloom of the City of Light in 1938-39, as war with Nazi Germany looms, but also demonstrates a profound knowledge of the political divisions and cultural sensibilities of that bygone era ... As summer or subway reading goes, it doesn't get more action-packed and grippingly atmospheric than this.”

—*The Boston Globe*

“Between them, Fredric and Paris make this a book no reader will put down to the final page. Furst evokes the city and the prewar anxiety with exquisite tension that is only a bit relieved by Fredric’s encounters with several women, each a vivid and attractive character. Critics compare Furst to Graham Greene and John le Carré, but the time has come for this much-published author (this is his ninth World War II novel after *Spies of the Balkans*) to occupy his own pinnacle as a master of historical espionage.”

—*Library Journal (starred)*

“Furst conveys a strong sense of the era, when responding to a knock might open the door to the end of one’s days. The novel recalls a time when black and white applied to both movies and moral choices. It’s a tale with wide appeal.”

—**Kirkus (starred)**

“[Furst] is most at home in Paris, which is why legions of his fans, upon seeing only the title of his latest book, will immediately feel pulses quicken ... Furst has been doing this and doing it superbly for a long time now ... Long ago Furst made the jump from genre favorite to mainstream bestsellerdom; returning to his signature setting, Paris, he only stands to climb higher.”

—**Booklist (starred)**

“Alan Furst’s writing reminds me of a swim in perfect water on a perfect day, fluid and exquisite. One wants the feeling to go on forever, the book to never end ... Like Graham Greene, Furst creates believable characters caught up, with varying degrees of willingness, in the parade of political life. And because they care, the reader does, too ... Furst is one of the finest spy novelists working today, and, from boudoir to the beach, *Mission to Paris* is perfect summer reading.”

—**Publisher’s Weekly**

“The writing in *Mission to Paris*, sentence after sentence, page after page, is dazzling. If you are a John le Carré fan, this is definitely a novel for you.”

—**James Patterson**

"I am a huge fan of Alan Furst. Furst is the best in the business--the most talented espionage novelist of our generation."

—**Vince Flynn**

“Reading *Mission to Paris* is like sipping a fine Chateau Margaux: Sublime!”

—**Erik Larson**

From the Hardcover edition.

About the Author

Alan Furst is widely recognized as the master of the historical spy novel. Now translated into eighteen languages, he is the author of *Night Soldiers*, *Dark Star*, *The Polish Officer*, *The World at Night*, *Red Gold*, *Kingdom of Shadows*, *Blood of Victory*, *Dark Voyage*, *The Foreign Correspondent*, *The Spies of Warsaw*, and *Spies of the Balkans*. Born in New York, he lived for many years in Paris, and now lives on Long Island.

From the Hardcover edition.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Lawrence Rowe:

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Irene Carpenter:

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