



Mark Anchovy

Books Reviewed:

[Mark Anchovy: Pizza Detective](#) [1]

Issue:

[241](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Stuart Dyer](#) [3]

Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

3

In this modern take on the classic detective genre, a pizza delivery boy with an unusually good memory joins a secret network of young investigators.

Colin Kingsley's family own the local pizza delivery and, tired of cycling people's dinner all round town, he dreams of something more, and fancies himself as an amateur sleuth. The pizza delivery/private detective crossover caters for a somewhat niche market, but, nevertheless, Colin draws the attention of the Golden Spatula League - the most important crime-fighting agency you've never heard of.

Colin is thrilled to learn that not only does there exist a covert collection of secret agents who are all vendors of fast food, but they have a headquarters just round the corner from his house! The League are impressed by the perception and memory skills that Colin shows during the initiation phase, and give him his very own code name (Mark Anchovy), a mentor from the local kebab shop (Princess Skewer) and a mission to stop the fattest gangster on the planet from stealing a priceless painting in Rome. Fortunately, his school happen to have organised a field trip to Italy just at the right time.

The book is packed with action and revels in the classic tropes of traditional secret agent stories. Villains are garish and menacing, heroes are brash and confident, and settings are dominated by dark shadowy corners - you can virtually hear the echoing footsteps as the characters chase one another across courtyards and up and down concrete steps. Goldsmith's illustrations are a perfect accompaniment to these dramatic scenes, drawn in monochrome, and clearly inspired by the clean lines and expressive characterisation found in the comics of the most famous boy-detective of all, Tin Tin.

The powerful nostalgic effect of Goldsmith's writing and art might go slightly over the heads of younger readers, but they will certainly be engaged by the relentless speed of the story and by the extent of the danger...and the massive explosions. The fast food context becomes slightly tiresome and is only sustained through large coincidences. It's somewhat convenient that the gangster's favourite food is pizza, for example, and the Golden Spatula League has an unbelievably massive budget for an organisation of teenagers in the service industry. **Mark Anchovy**

is dramatic and exciting with well-crafted set pieces and striking illustrations that will captivate many readers: it's just a shame it has such a silly premise!

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[1] <http://ww.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/mark-anchovy-pizza-detective>

[2] <http://ww.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/241>

[3] <http://ww.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/stuart-dyer>