I'm Gone - A Novel

Winner of France’s prestigious Prix Goncourt and a runaway bestseller, Jean Echenoz’s I’m Gone is the ideal introduction to the sly wit, unique voice, and colorful imagination of “the master magician of the contemporary French novel” (The Washington Post). Nothing less than a heist caper, an Arctic adventure story, a biting satire of the art world, and a meditation on love and lust and middle age all rolled into one fast-paced, unpredictable, and deliriously entertaining novel, I’m Gone tells the story of an urbane art and antiques dealer who abandons his wife and career to pursue a memorably pathetic international crime spree. “Crisp and erudite” (The Wall Street Journal), “seductive and delicately ironic” (The Economist), and with an unexpected sting in its tail, I’m Gone—translated by Mark Polizzi—is a dazzling, postmodern subversion of narrative conventions and an amused look at the absurdities of modern life. With a wink and a nod and a keen eye for the droll detail, Echenoz invites the reader “to enjoy I’m Gone in the same devil-may-care spirit in which it is offered” (The Boston Sunday Globe).

I'm Off - One Year

'I'm off', says Felix Ferrer to his wife. 'I'm leaving you'. And closing the door on their suburban home, Ferrer, a creature of appetite, impulse and habit, a man of our times, embarks on a journey to the extremes. Not weighing up every girl he sees. Not ignoring his doctor's warnings to avoid the very hot and the very cold.

Ravel - A Novel

“A tiny miracle of a biographical novel” inspired by the life of the brilliant French composer (Booklist). Shortlisted for the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award This beguiling and original evocation of the last ten years in the life of a musical genius opens in 1927 as Maurice Ravel—dandy, eccentric, curmudgeon—crosses the Atlantic aboard the luxury liner the SS France to begin his triumphant grand tour of the United States. With flashes of sly, quirky humor, this novel captures the folly of the era as well as its genius, and the personal and professional life of the sartorially and socially splendid ravel over the course of a decade. From a winner of the prestigious Prix Goncourt, Ravel is a touching literary portrait of a dignified and lonely man going reluctantly into the night. “A beautifully musical little novel.” —The New York Times Book Review “The most distinctive voice of his generation.” —The Washington Post

Lightning - A Novel

Inspired by the life of Nikola Tesla, the author tells the story of Gregor, a young engineer from Eastern Europe, who travels to America to work alongside Thomas Edison, with whom he later holds a long-lasting rivalry.
**Special Envoy - A Spy Novel**

“Special Envoy is an exceedingly French spy thriller.” —New York Times Book Review

A dazzling satirical spy novel, part La Femme Nikita, part Pink Panther and part Le Carré—from one of the world’s preeminent authors Jean Echenoz’s sly and playful novels have won critical and popular acclaim in France, where he has won the Prix Goncourt, as well as in the United States, where he has been profiled by the New Yorker and called the “most distinctive voice of his generation” by the Washington Post. With his wonderfully droll and intriguing new work, Special Envoy, Echenoz turns his hand to the espionage novel. When published in France, it stormed the bestseller lists. Special Envoy begins with an old general in France’s intelligence agency asking his trusted lieutenant Paul Objat for ideas about a person he wants for a particular job: someone to aid the destabilization of Kim Jong-un’s regime in North Korea. Objat has someone in mind: Constance, an attractive, restless, bored woman in a failing marriage to a washed-up pop musician. Soon after, she is abducted by Objat’s cronies and spirited away into the lower depths of France’s intelligence bureaucracy where she is trained for her mission. What follows is a bizarre tale of kidnappings, murders and mutilations, bad pop songs and great sex, populated by a cast of oddballs and losers. Set in Paris, rural central France, and Pyongyang, Special Envoy is joyously strange and unpredictable, full of twists and ironic digressions—and, in the words of L’Express, “a pure gem, a delight.”

**Ravel - A Novel**

Ravel is a beguiling and original evocation of the last ten years in the life of the musical genius Ravel, written by novelist Jean Echenoz. The book opens in 1928 as Maurice Ravel—dandy, eccentric, curmudgeon—crosses the Atlantic aboard the luxury liner the SS France to begin his triumphant grand tour of the United States. A “master magician of the French novel” (The Washington Post), Echenoz captures the folly of the era as well as its genius, including Ravel’s personal life—sartorially and socially splendid—as well as his most successful compositions from 1927 to 1937. Illuminated by flashes of Echenoz’s characteristically sly humor, Ravel is a delightfully quirky portrait of a famous musician coping with the ups and downs of his illustrious career. It is also a beautifully written novel that’s a deeply touching farewell to a dignified and lonely man going reluctantly into the night.

**The Queen's Caprice - Stories**

Seven short stories by the Prix Goncourt winner—“the most distinctive voice of his generation . . . master magician of the contemporary French novel” (The Washington Post). France’s preeminent fiction writer, Jean Echenoz is celebrated for his ability to craft stories with such precision that readers are caught off guard by the intense emotion and imagination just beneath the placid surface of his writing. As Gary Indiana put it in his essay “Conjuror of St. Germain”, “Echenoz risks everything in his fiction, gambling on the prodigious blandishments of his voice to lure his readers into a maze of improbabilities and preposterous happenings.” The Queen’s Caprice—seven stories available in English for the first time—reveals Echenoz at the height of his talents, taking readers on a journey across radically different landscapes. The title story explores a tiny corner of the French countryside; “Nelson” offers a brilliant miniaturist portrait of
the hero of the Battle of Trafalgar; “In Babylon” sketches the ancient city of Mesopotamia, based on trace descriptions from Herodotus; and other stories visit the forests of England, the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris, Tampa Bay, and the interior of a submarine. Amid the thrill and allure of this voyage of words, “again and again we pause to savor the richness of Echenoz’s startling, crystalline observations” (Lydia Davis). “[A] terrific sense of humor tinged with existential mischief.” —L'Express

1914 - A Novel

Five Frenchmen go off to war, two of them leaving behind a certain young woman who longs for their return. But the main character in 1914 is the Great War itself. Jean Echenoz, the multi–award–winning French literary magician whose work has been compared to Joseph Conrad and Lawrence Sterne, has brought that deathtrap back to life, leading us gently from a balmy summer day deep into the insatiable—and still unthinkable—carnage of trench warfare. With the delicacy of a miniaturist and with irony both witty and clear–eyed, the author offers us an intimate epic with the atmosphere of a classic movie: in the panorama of a clear blue sky, a biplane spirals suddenly into the ground; a tardy piece of shrapnel shears the top off a man’s head as if it were a soft–boiled egg; we dawdle dreamily in a spring–scented clearing with a lonely shell–shocked soldier strolling innocently to a firing squad ready to shoot him for desertion. But ultimately, the grace notes of humanity in 1914 rise above the terrors of war in this beautifully crafted tale that Echenoz tells with discretion, precision, and love.

Chopin's Move - A Novel

With his trademark comically wry phrasing and a sure eye for quirky detail, Echenoz has produced his oddest and most enjoyable novel to date. Chopin’s Move interweaves the fates of Chopin, entomologist and recalcitrant secret agent; Oswald, a young foreign-affairs employee who vanishes en route to his new home; Suzy, who gets enmeshed in a tangle of deceit and counterdeceit; the mysterious Colonel Seck, whose motivations are never quite what they seem; and a typically Echenozian supporting cast of neurotic bodyguards, disquieting functionaries, and crafty double agents. As the plot thickens, the characters become embroiled in layer upon layer of deception and double-dealing, leading them further into a world in which nothing can be taken at face value and in which "reality" hinges on apparently harmless coincidence.

Big Blondes

Jean-Claude Kastner is assigned to find Gloire Stella, a popular singer who disappeared four years earlier

Una Mullally
Tell us your story Did you have a family member in the national struggle or the first World War? Tell us: century@irishtimes.com ...