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Off To Be The Wizard



Synopsis

It's a simple story. Boy finds proof that reality is a computer program. Boy uses program to manipulate time and space. Boy gets in trouble. Boy flees back in time to Medieval England to live as a wizard while he tries to think of a way to fix things. Boy gets in more trouble. Oh, and boy meets girl at some point. Off to Be the Wizard is a light, comedic novel about computers, time travel, and human stupidity, written by Scott Meyer, the creator of the internationally known comic strip Basic Instructions. Magic will be made! Legends will be created! Stew will be eaten!

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Reading this book was a great time. The type of humor that you see in the Basic Instructions webcomic is throughout, but magnified a thousandfold by the fact that there are more than four panels of words. :) The characters are nicely developed without being overdone, and the interactions between and among them are great. The use of different eras of technology shows a little of the author's geekiness (which is a good thing!). For a first novel, taking on time travel is a bit ambitious. But the boundaries are well-laid out up front, sensible (as much as time travel can be :) and internally consistent. And the use of characters from different times all together is very well executed -- more sophisticated than a lot of established authors' attempts at the topic. Plus, the shout-outs to other culture (Star Trek, Star Wars, Tolkien, Apple, mythology, music, and so on) are nice touches without being gimmicky. All in all, it was fun and funny AND quirky and clever. *Really* great when you remember it's a first novel. I highly recommend it, and I'm a fairly tough customer. The

E-bookversion is a steal, as well -- the ratio of enjoyment/\$ is WAY upthere. Rob

I became aware of this book because I'm a longtime fan of the author's webcomic, Basic Instructions. I wasn't sure whether I'd really like it - I love the comic, but a full-length novel's a different thing entirely - but the Kindle version is super cheap, so I gave it a shot, and was pleasantly rewarded. In fact I had trouble putting the book down until I had reached the end. Not only was the book filled with a very enjoyable brand of wry humor - and a more sophisticated, subtler type of humor than usually appears in the comic, in my opinion - it was well-written, with likable characters, good character development, a rewarding (if fairly standard) plot, and just about zero time-travel inconsistencies or plot holes. That last bit is important to me because I'm picky enough that any incongruencies can definitely un-suspend my disbelief, but the author defined the rules early and then stuck by them fastidiously. The prose, sure, is not going to compete with Updike or Wallace for sheer sentence-by-sentence beauty or complexity, but it's really quite good, and never clunky or strained. Better than the prose in a lot of the novels on "best seller" lists, at any rate. All in all, the book delivers exactly what it says on the tin - "a light comedic novel about computers, time travel, and human stupidity" - and delivers it well. A really enjoyable read. Scott - Mr. Meyer? - if you chance to read this: Well done! You clearly left yourself some room for a sequel, and I think you should go for it! :)

This is a lightweight spoofy Matrix novel where, at the start, the protagonist learns that the universe and most notably, the humans in it, are really just entries in an editable .txt file. That discovery leads to his adventures most notably in time travel. In more deft hands, say a Terry Pratchett or John Scalzi, this setup may have led to some sharp satire but here we only get a straight ahead bash them on the head, get frantic and then charge to the ending sort of short novel. There is nothing wrong with that except perhaps some lost opportunities, but gosh, no novel or any art form is really complete in the fullest sense. The upsides to this bit of fluff have been lauded by other reviewers here so I won't repeat them. The issues I had which others may not have had are a few and lead to the docking of a few stars. First, I'm fine with suspension of disbelief. There is no way you can enjoy this novel if you can't accept the existence of that .txt file and I can. What bugs me is when authors distort what we know is real. Frax, if I am reading about dragons attacking France, I'll go for the dragons but if the author has Germany west of France just over the Pyrenees, I don't buy that. Here the time travel takes us to roughly King John era England. The protagonist specifically travels there because they speak English and by gosh, they do. They speak 21st century American English as

well. Gimme a break. Then we have the natives who are casual with not only modern devices (among them a Pontiac) but 'wizards' who have more tricks than Superman and Batman combined. However, we're told they won't accept a female doing these tricks. So the natives aren't disturbed by Pontiacs but they are by tricky females. Hmmmm. Toward the end of the novel, the author stumbles upon a rather interesting philosophical argument. One character takes the position that if the only thing people are is a few lines in a .txt file, then do we have any ethical obligations to them? However, this rather interesting line is abandoned instantly and the bash on the head full steam forward pace picks back up. Another hit against this one is that it's not a novel. It's a Part 1 of what's clearly a series. So again, and this is getting to be a tedious trend in Kindle editions, we get a piece of a novel masquerading as a complete book. The end isn't an ending but almost a cliff hanger which clearly telegraphs that 'this thing is NOT over'. Entertaining, but also disappointing.

A very pleasant surprise. Being now in my mid 30's, this book reminds me of the type of fare I read on a regular basis in my younger years. It is a pretty straight forward young male geek fantasy, and that fits me to a T (although, not as young as I used to be). I did get several chuckles, and enjoyed the book as a whole enough that I've gone ahead and purchased book number two as well. It is a very quick and light read. The one time I thought that he was going to pull a fast one story wise, it turned out I was over-analyzing it. As a general comparison, I would rate this book as readable as very good fan fiction. It could have benefited from a little more work with an editor, but otherwise is pretty good for the genre, and much better than books I've read considerably more for. Being an extreme prude I will now state for the record that "Off to Be the Wizard" is very clean. Profanity is little to non-existent, and toilet humor as well is fairly limited mild (although it does exist and comes up several times). I would recommend this book to others.

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